



Letters to the Editor

August 6, 2007

Montana Meth Project

In recent years, Montana has made substantial progress against methamphetamine. We have brought a number of strategies to bear on meth abuse, and the combination has proven very effective. Stronger enforcement, restrictions on meth precursors, drug courts, extended treatment programs and increased community awareness are all making a difference.

The Montana Meth Project has been a significant factor in our success. It is hard to tackle a problem and to marshal the necessary resources when no one is aware there is a problem. When I first started speaking about meth over five years ago, I stressed that meth was different--that it is more addictive than other drugs, and more damaging to the health of those who use it and the families and communities it touches.

Clearly, the highly visible prevention campaign conducted by the Montana Meth Project has had an enormous impact by spreading that message.

The Montana Meth Project ads are not your typical "put-together-by-committee" public service announcements. They have an edge that grabs people's attention and gets people talking--and that includes kids and their parents. Whether kids were "grossed out" by the ads, or thought the characters presented were representative of kids they knew, or were surprised by the physical and emotional degradation meth can cause, they were talking about meth with their friends, parents and teachers.

The Montana Meth Project has changed attitudes. A 2006 survey of middle school and high school students administered by the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services found that 93 percent of respondents perceived meth use as having "great risk." Montana teens' perception of risk is 10 percent higher than teen perception nationwide. In addition, 73 percent of young Montanans ranked using meth once or twice as having great risk, compared to only 54 percent of teens nationally.

With Tom Siebel's support, the Montana Meth Project has been able to mount a campaign that holds people's attention and draws young people in long enough to convey the anti-meth message successfully. As Montana's attorney general, I'm grateful that Tom's vision has made a positive difference, especially among the young people in the state.

--Mike McGrath
Montana Attorney General
Helena, Montana

The highly positive impact of the Montana Meth Project, described in *Philanthropy's* May/June cover story, is now reaching well beyond that state.

The Arizona Meth Project, modeled after the successful Montana program, was launched this spring, and we're optimistic it will be similarly successful.

Meth use in Arizona has raised increasing alarm across the state. The 2006 Arizona Youth Survey indicated that 4.3 percent of Arizona youth have tried meth at least once--nearly twice the national average. The drug has had a devastating impact on our healthcare systems, child protective services and criminal justice system. The need for a statewide prevention campaign was vital.

The Arizona Meth Project is a partnership comprised of ten Arizona counties, the Attorney General's Office, and local meth coalitions throughout Arizona. Funding for this project includes both public and private sources. The creation of this coalition enabled us not only to bring the award-winning ads to our state, but also to tailor the campaign to fit Arizona's unique characteristics.

A number of different approaches are used to reach our diverse population. We produced part of the television campaign in Spanish. Radio testimonials featuring Arizona youth have included both English- and Spanish-speakers. Media placement has included English and Spanish television, radio and newspapers. Reaching out to other population groups, our print media placements have included African-American, Asian and Native American newspapers.

Recognizing the increasing impact of the internet on our teens, ads were placed on youth-oriented sites such as MySpace. Teens from both small and large communities are providing continuous feedback on the campaign through emails they send to our website.

And this summer the Arizona Meth Project strengthened ties with local anti-meth coalitions, Boys & Girls Clubs and tribal communities as we launched the "Not Even Once®" Youth Pledge. We are traveling the state to parades, music festivals, youth conferences, sports tournaments and other community events, encouraging young people

to make the pledge. When we kick off the next phase of ads in September, pledge placards signed by Arizona youth will be collected and assembled into one banner--a massive show of support that will reflect how the media campaign message has been reinforced as it moves from the television or computer screen to the individual level across Arizona.

Key to the development of the campaign in Arizona is the role of our Arizona Meth Project Advisory Board. Representatives from the ten participating Arizona counties sit on the board, along with experts from such areas as education, business, child health, law enforcement, substance abuse treatment, and leaders from the Hispanic and tribal communities. The geographic, professional and political diversity of the board is helping to ensure that the prevention campaign reaches all our Arizona youth and their parents.

Without the generosity of Tom Siebel's initial investment in the Montana Meth Project, Arizona couldn't have created this project in such a short period of time. We look forward to Arizona outcomes similar to those achieved in Montana. We expect the Arizona Meth Project will have a substantially positive impact on the attitudes and behavior of our youth.

--Terry Goddard
Arizona Attorney General
Co-Chair, Arizona Meth Project
Advisory Board

--Don Stapley
Maricopa County Supervisor
Co-Chair, Arizona Meth Project
Advisory Board

The average person cannot fully understand the effects of meth on a person, their family and the community. The manufacturing of meth, called "cooking," is very dangerous because the chemicals used are volatile and the by-products are toxic. The medical effects of meth use include high blood pressure, rapid and/or irregular heart rate, seizures, and blood vessel damage. Often our county jails are faced with the cost of medical and dental service to meth-using inmates. The medical cost alone associated with the incarceration of a meth offender can be significant. A recent survey of counties indicates the cost could triple for medical, dental and other related problems. Many counties affected are in a rural setting and already experiencing budget concerns. One county with a population of 12,800 reported five medical incidents involving meth inmates, the lowest cost at \$682 and the highest at \$9,630.

The Illinois Sheriffs' Association recognized there are several aspects to the meth problem, one of which is public awareness. In my opinion, the average teen and young adult are not affected by the messages we have seen in the past. When we found Montana

Meth, we knew we had found the right delivery mechanism for an anti-meth message: graphic advertisements of teen and young adult meth users.

We didn't have to re-invent the wheel; Montana Meth was eager to share their material. We didn't have to get involved in production; Montana Meth was able to adjust their ads to fit our need. I applaud Montana Meth for their work and success in fighting the most debilitating drug I have ever seen.

--Greg Sullivan
Illinois Sheriffs' Association
Springfield, Illinois