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“LPOHS students march against meth”

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March 31, 2010

By: Ralph Bartholdt

SANDPOINT — Honk if you hate meth.

The mantra of more than 100 students rang across Fifth Avenue on Tuesday afternoon and over the din of passing traffic.

Bearing placards and posters, the marchers from Lake Pend Oreille High elicited honks from motorists as part of school effort to keep the community’s mind on fighting its drug problem.

Tuesday’s march was the fifth since the school started the annual event in 2006 as part of a statewide anti-methamphetamine campaign, said Linda Spade, one of the school’s leadership advisors.

“It was a problem in our community,” Spade said.

Students and their parents looked for ways to take part, and ways to involve the community.

“We thought, Hey, let’s march against it,” she said.

Since then, the school has marched annually. In past years, speakers have been invited to address students and the community as part of a larger rally. This year, however, the community rally is set May 5 at an event called “Just Say Know.”

It is all part of the same plan: To educate and assist.

“We raise money for the Idaho Meth Project and develop community awareness,” Spade said.

The meth project is a statewide campaign that has taken a bite out of drug use by showing teens the stark reality users face, unveiling the misperception of drug use as something cool, and using images and testimony of people who climbed from the desperate pit of drug addiction.

A recent survey found that compared to 2007, before the Idaho Meth Project was launched, Idaho teens are increasingly aware of the dangers of using meth, are less likely to believe there are benefits to using meth, disapprove of taking meth, and are more likely to discuss drug use with their parents, according to the Idaho Meth Project.

“These new data show we are making significant progress in our efforts to prevent Meth use among Idaho’s young people,” Idaho Meth Project Executive Director Megan Ronk, said in a press release.

Awareness has risen considerably since 2007, Ronk said.

The survey shows that 87 percent of Idaho teens strongly disapprove of taking the drug even once or twice.

“Young people throughout the state have heard the messages of this campaign and now understand how dangerous Meth is,” she said.

In addition, marching is fun, and shows school spirit is strong against the nemesis of drug use, Kathe Murphy of Lake Pend Oreille High, said.

“It’s really cool, the kids get out, and get excited about it,” she said.