



# March calls attention to drug's dangers

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**SANDPOINT - Images of young people dying, strung out on drugs and committing deplorable acts flashed across the screen at the Panida Theater on Thursday.**

These scenes were not from one of the many art house films that the Panida often shows, but rather from commercials produced by the Idaho Meth Project and displayed as part of the third annual March Against Meth.

The event, sponsored locally by the Sandpoint Teen Council and produced by students from Lake Pend Oreille Alternative High School, brought more than 100 students and spectators to the Panida to hear testimony from former methamphetamine users, watch PowerPoint presentations on the dangers of the drug, and hear poetry from students.

Executive director of the Idaho Meth Project, Megan Ronk, thanked organizers and said the event has been an inspirational to state officials.

"Our goal is to raise the level of awareness about what this drug is and the havoc it can wreak on people's lives and communities," Ronk said.

As a former meth user, it was fitting that behavior scientist Dr. Gary Hopkins of Andrews University delivered the keynote address.

"I want to talk to you about the chaos, the riotous chaos that meth brings into your life," Hopkins said. Hopkins showed footage of an actual meth bust, using it to demonstrate the hopelessness and danger that goes along with using or selling the drug.

He also discussed the social repercussions of meth, like extreme weight loss, mental problems and lowered inhibitions, which he said can lead to risky sexual behavior.

Former LPOHS student Cece Cecil knows first-hand the horrors what meth addiction can do to a family.

With several family members addicted to the drug, she was put into foster care when she was 13-years-old. By the time she was 16, Cecil had dropped out of school and was a meth addict herself.

After a brief stint in jail and a stay at Kinderhaven, which is a group foster care facility, she was able to get clean and now dedicates her life to educating others about the dangers of meth use.

Cecil also played a PowerPoint presentation that showcased some of the many disheartening facts and figures related to meth use in Idaho.

According to the Idaho Meth Project, 52 percent of all Idaho inmates directly attribute meth use to their incarceration, while 63 percent of all felony drug court participants indicate that meth is their drug of choice. Idaho spends \$66 million annually to house adult male inmates who admit to having a meth problem.

The event ended with a march from just north of the Long Bridge through downtown Sandpoint, finishing at the LPOHS campus.