

# Standard Journal

## Disturbing Idaho Meth Project ads working

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Shocking, scary and very disturbing.

These are words which are normally associated with horror movies, but are an apt description for the preventative television, radio and print advertisements used by the Idaho Meth Project.

"The ads are a tool that thrusts meth use into your face and makes it impossible to look away," said Cindy Smith-Putnam a southeastern Idaho volunteer coordinator for the Idaho Meth Project.

The Idaho Meth Project Web site quotes Idaho Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter as saying, "You're going to see disturbing and even shocking images of what meth does to people. These public service spots don't sugar-coat it, because it's just that ugly. And Idahoans need to see and hear the truth about this drug."

Based on the successful "Not Even Once" campaign by the Montana Meth Project, the television and radio ads have now been airing in Idaho for months. But unlike your average public service announcement, these advertisements run during prime-time hours.

And the ads are having an effect. Throughout the state, Idahoans are learning about meth use and how it can be spotted and prevented.

In November, the Idaho Meth Project volunteer program was up to 600 participants, less than a year after the program was launched in Idaho. So far, the volunteer program has contributed more than 5,500 hours to a prevention program aimed at preventing first time meth use through public awareness.

More than 300 preventative presentations have already been given to local schools, service organizations and community groups, and the program has hosted 18 fundraising events, including music festivals and fashion shows.

Locally the Idaho Meth Project has held a number of fundraising and awareness events.

On Oct. 27, Lady Antebellum, a new county group, performed at an Idaho Meth Project fundraiser at the Colonial Theater in Idaho Falls. About \$140,000 was raised to help continue the ad campaign.

Awareness events such as the Free Family Forums have also been held in Idaho Falls sponsored by local hospitals.

According to Smith-Putnam, these events have touched the lives of more than 1,200 southeast Idahoans.

"We were blown away by the response to these forums," said Smith-Putnam. "We are so proud of southeastern Idaho. The area has really stepped up and got involved. The ads might make people aware of the issues, but it's common, ordinary folks working arm in arm that will ultimately fix the problem."

The Idaho Meth Project is affiliated with the National Meth Project in Palo Alto, Calif., and is based around the model developed by the Montana Meth Project.

The beneficial results of the Montana Meth Project have been huge.

Two years after the launch of the Montana Meth Project, adult methamphetamine use dropped by 70 percent in that state. In 2005, Montana ranked fifth in the nation for worst meth abuse -- in 2007, it ranked 39th, according to the Idaho Meth Project Web site.

Idaho drug statistics indicate that meth use is also significant in Idaho.

Fifty-two percent of Idaho inmates directly attribute meth use to their incarceration, and 80 percent of child placements by Idaho Health and Welfare are directly related to drug abuse, with methamphetamine being the most prevalent.

According to statistical studies featured on the Idaho Meth Project Web site, it costs Idaho tax payers \$66 million annually to house adult male inmates who admit to having a meth problem.

But based upon the results of the Montana Meth Project, Idaho Meth Project officials are hopeful of similar results in Idaho.

"When we first opened our doors, we knew we were taking on a huge problem. Meth addiction tears communities apart, but Idahoans are ready to take their towns and cities back," said Megan Ronk, executive director of the Idaho Meth Project. "Every single day I'm encouraged and thrilled to see people from every corner of the state joining together in the fight against meth. We are incredibly grateful for the energy and commitment of all our volunteers who have embraced this important work. They keep us going."

For more information about the Idaho Meth Project, visit the Web site [www.idahomethproject.org](http://www.idahomethproject.org).

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