



## **Idaho Meth Project begins anti-meth art contests, thousands of dollars up for grabs for teens**

By Dustin Hurst  
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The Idaho Meth Project has \$3,000 to award to contest winners in each county

The Idaho Meth Project (IMP), the leading voice in the state's fight against methamphetamine, launched an art contest Monday that will allow teenagers and young adults to create anti-meth art projects for the chance to win thousands of dollars.

IMP is asking teens, ages 13-18, to create unique message to show the dangers of meth use. The group is following the lead of the Montana Meth Project, which held its own art contest in 2006 and gave away more than \$300,000 in prize money. Teens in Montana produced more than 650 pieces of art for the contests, including large billboards, paintings, three-dimensional displays, and messages painted on the sides of livestock.

Those who participate in the contest are not limited to paint and canvas to create their art; according to the rules set out by the group, any form of art may be used as long as the piece contains a firm and clear anti-meth message. Contestants will be judged on three standards: the meth prevention message, the visibility of the art and its artistic quality and creativity. Idaho teens are encouraged to display their entries into the competition in high-traffic areas, like those who posted their entries on the sides of buildings in Montana, in order to spread the overall message of the contest.

Each county has \$3,000 in prize money to award to the top three entries in area. A three-judge panel will give \$1,500 to the first-place finisher, \$1,000 to second-place entry, and third-place will receive \$500. Those works of art selected as first-place in each county will automatically be entered into a statewide contest, where the winner will receive \$5,000. The total prize money involved is less than what Montana used for their contest, with Idaho using \$137,000 for prize money.

According to Megan Ronk, spokesperson for IMP, tax dollars won't be given away as prize money. The state allocates a certain amount of money to the program each year for its operations. For the next fiscal year, which starts in July, IMP will receive \$500,000 from the Idaho Millennium Fund which is the state's earnings from the investment of money from the 1998 settlement with tobacco companies.

As for the amount decided to give away as prize money, Ronk said the total amount was what the group felt comfortable with. "We just felt like that was an acceptable level of prize money to get teens excited," said Ronk. She also said that Montana will be using the same cash prize allocation formula to award winners in its own contest this year, though she pointed out that the dollar amount used in that state will still be higher because Montana has more counties than Idaho. The money for prizes comes from the contest's sponsors,

Monsanto, Blue Cross of Idaho, and the Idaho Hospital Association. Ronk said IMP is looking for more sponsors, but is thrilled to have the three backers on board.

Ronk said the point of the contest is “to mobilize teens and engage them throughout the state,” and that IMP, through the art challenge, wants teens to take ownership of the message the organization is trying to spread. IMP will work with various groups and institutions, including art teachers, 4-H groups, local libraries, and boys and girls clubs, to find young artists to participate.

For more information on the contest rules and guidelines, visit <http://www.paintthestateidaho.org>.

All teens wishing to participate must register by June 18, and must upload a picture of their work of art by July 11. Additionally, all artwork must be on public display from July 12 through July 18. Winners will be announced by Gov. Butch Otter and First Lady Lori Otter at a ceremony at the Capitol in Boise on August 6.