



Meth Project releases 3rd wave of ads, praises success of past year

By Dustin Hurst
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The Idaho Meth Project announced the release of new ads today

Administrators from the Idaho Meth Project (IMP), accompanied by First Lady Lori Otter and a host of volunteers, announced Tuesday the campaign is releasing a third wave of advertisements in its effort to battle meth use in Idaho. Officials also used the announcement to tout the successes for the first year of the program.

Megan Ronk, executive director for IMP, spoke to members of the media, campaign sponsors and volunteers, and elected officials in the auditorium of the Statehouse about the positive effect the campaign is having on teens and young adults across the state. Ronk cited the recently completed Idaho Meth Use and Attitudes Survey 2009, and compared it those of the of a baseline survey taken in 2007, before the campaign began. Some 2,641 teens from 47 schools and 428 young adults participated in the survey conducted in late November and December 2009.

Based on the evidence contained in the report, Ronk declared the campaign's efforts a success for the year. "It is very clear the campaign is a major driver in the shifting attitude of Idaho's teens," said Ronk.

Some of the numbers Ronk shared with those in attendance:

- Six in ten teens and seven in ten young adults have told their friends not to use meth (up 5 points for teens; up 10 points for young adults)
- 63 percent of teens report having discussed meth use with their parents in the past year (up 7 points)
- 68 percent of teens see great risk in suffering tooth decay as a result of meth use (up 20 points)
- 66 percent of teen see great risk of dying from meth use (up 16 points)

First Lady Lori Otter introduced the new wave of ads to the crowd and said the campaign will continue with the "shock and awe" approach to the effort. For the older ads, waves 1 and 2, Otter said, the message focused solely on the effect the drug had on the actual user. The new ads will focus on the impact on the damage caused by meth users upon their families and friends.

One of the most shocking ads featured a young man's voice in the background talking about his relationship with his mother. The voice says he loves his mother and praises her for always being there for him. As the voice plays, a young man is seen digging through his mom's purse looking for money. The boy's mother comes to stop the boy and he promptly hits her to the ground. He steals the money and shakes his pleading mother off of his pant leg before leaving the house.

Noticing the apparent apprehension of the crowd after viewing the ads on the large auditorium screens, Otter remarked, "pretty powerful, aren't they?"

Of the ads, Otter said they are "hard hitting, dramatic, and something we need to capture the attention of Idaho's young people and break through the clutter of media they face on a daily basis." She reported that in 2009, IMP has, in an effort to reach what Otter called "saturation level effect," run over 37,000 television ads and 43,000 radio ads, which complemented the 606 billboards the project put up throughout the state. More than 400 community and school outreach events were also performed by members of the campaign. Otter reported between 70 and 90 percent of Idaho teens and young adults are reached 3-5 times per week by IMP ads or billboards.

The project is funded by donations and as well state tax dollars. The state of Idaho contributed approximately \$1.5 million to IMP for fiscal year 2010. The Legislature will consider giving an additional \$500,000 to the project for 2011.

Estimates put the costs of meth use in the United States at \$23.4 billion annually. Closer to home, Idahoans spend approximately \$66 million each year housing inmates who admit to having a meth problem. An estimated 32 percent of inmates in public treatment facilities are there due to meth use.