

Meth project seeks volunteers

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POCATELLO -- Gina Heideman said establishing a consistent volunteer group for the Idaho Meth Project in the Pocatello area has been difficult, but she is hopeful that Monday's open house will generate a more stable core group.

"This is definitely one of the smaller volunteer corps," said Heideman, community relations manager for the Idaho Meth Project in Boise. "There has been a lot of turnover in leadership here."

The Idaho Meth Project was started in January 2008 with the goal of educating Idaho teenagers and young adults about the pitfalls of trying methamphetamine.

Its slogan -- Meth: Not Even Once -- is a testimony to the dangerous nature of the drug's addictive grip and the reality that trying it just once can lead to a lifetime of addiction.

The nonprofit entity, best known for its graphic billboards depicting the consequences of meth usage, is not a state agency.

Heideman, along with local district chairs, hosted an open house Monday with the hopes of attracting those who have interest in the project without the pressure of signing up.

"The open house is something we just started recently," Heideman said. "We did one in Coeur d'Alene and this one. "It's something where we can get more information out to people without the pressure."

Heideman began the evening giving the 15 or so interested individuals in attendance an idea of some of the tasks that might be asked of Idaho Meth Project volunteers, including helping with fundraising, staffing booths at events, and participating at public engagements such as speaking at local schools.

She also made it clear that the project was not about rehabilitating current users, but rather it's a vehicle for sending a message to the next generation. She said its primary goal is to educate young adults and teenagers to prevent them from ever trying meth.

After the meeting, those interested in volunteering were given a copy of the Idaho Meth Project's volunteer policy and told that if they were still interested after reading the policy, they could join on the project's Web site at www.idahomethproject.org.

Joe Lew, District Six co-chairman for the Idaho Meth Project, said his primary hope from Monday's meeting is to get people involved.

"Just getting volunteers in general," he said. "It seems like we get a lot of people who say they want to help, but then they don't show up."