



Ada County sheriff: Idaho should broaden drug-abuse prevention focus

In remarks to the City Club, Gary Raney said society's view of drugs must change.

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Correction: Sheriff Raney does not think Idaho Meth Project ads imply that doing meth once will addict a person, and he supports the project. An earlier version was incorrect.

Ada County Sheriff Gary Raney said Wednesday that Idaho needs to broaden its drug-use prevention efforts, taking it beyond focused campaigns on specific drugs, such as methamphetamine.

"We have to look at changing the way society views drugs," Raney told a lunch crowd of about 200 at the City Club of Boise Thursday.

Raney, who was elected sheriff in 2005, said illicit drug use affects everyone in the Treasure Valley, even those who never smoke, shoot-up or ingest mind-altering drugs.

Drug abuse is an underlying factor in 85 percent of all crimes, and it contributes to increased rates of child abuse and domestic violence, while it cuts worker productivity and burdens the taxpayer-funded justice system, Raney said.

He said the illicit drug trade is, in many ways, a free-market business like any other, requiring raw materials, manufacturing or production, wholesale/retail, distribution and return-on-investment.

"Just like the businesses that you run," Raney said. "The difference is, I hope, you don't murder your competitors. You also don't poison your community."

Still, there's a strong demand for illicit drugs in the United States, despite the negative impacts. The U.S. is just 6 percent of the world's population, Raney said. "We are 60 percent of the world's illicit drug users," he said.

Mexico imports pseudoephedrine from China and exports meth to the U.S. Afghanistan grows poppies and exports heroin to the world.

Meth is still the "drug of choice," in the Treasure Valley, Raney said, though cocaine is a close second.

Raney said early intervention is key to preventing drug abuse because younger kids who try illicit drugs tend to use the drugs longer and are more likely to get addicted.

He supports the youth-focused prevention campaign run by the Idaho Meth Project, and would like to see it expanded to become the Idaho Substance Abuse Project.

He criticized a common message that the one-time use of meth will result in instant addiction.

"That's not true," Raney said. "We have to be honest with kids. They're not dumb."

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