



Idaho Press-Tribune

Forum highlights meth dangers

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Speakers for the Idaho Meth Project laid down some sobering facts about the scourge of methamphetamine in Idaho for more than at a Caldwell forum Wednesday night.

Recovering addict Shelley Mitchell shared her own story of struggle and the high price of meth addiction. Among several other presenters, Dana Schuck, a substance abuse educator, shared some of the experiences he has had while working with inmates and addicts through the years.

Using excerpts from their presentations, here are answers to a few questions about meth:

What causes drug abuse?

Many factors in a person's life can spur drug use. Stress, boredom, fear and peer pressure can all contribute.

"I hear kids say when I go to these schools, 'I'm not cooking meth, I'm just getting high with my friends.' I didn't start out cooking meth either, it just progressed there over years of abuse, and it wasn't very hard," Mitchell said.

What can it cost you?

Drug abuse can tear through a person's money, friendships, family and social life, as well as their physical and mental health, lifestyle and possessions.

The last thing many addicts will be willing to give up is the drug, Schuck said.

If you get started, "it will be a lifetime of struggles with yourself," Mitchell said.

Why is meth so addictive?

It enters the bloodstream and invades the pleasure center of the brain, among other things, causing dopamine to flood receptors and eventually exhaust the supply of the feel-good chemical. This can cause the need to use more and more to achieve the same high.

"It doesn't care who it hurts, it just longs to be the most important thing in your life," Mitchell said

If you're an addict what do you have to change to get better?

"Everything, you need to change everything in your life," Schuck said.

The first step is moving past denial and admitting that drug use is hurting your life, and hopefully seeking help.

"It almost took me dying to stop," Mitchell said.

What are some of the things used to make meth?

After a fire in the house where Mitchell and her husband were cooking meth in 2003, police investigators found camp stove fuel, lye and pseudoephedrine — staple meth ingredients — among the wreckage.