

NORTH IDAHO COLLEGE SENTINEL

Forum sheds light on area Meth problem

January 25, 2010

By: Keith Sande

The Idaho Meth Project held a free family forum at North Idaho College's Boswell Hall Schuler Performing Arts Center Wednesday, Jan. 20. The main theme was education: what Methamphetamine looks like, why it is so addictive, Meth's side effects and information to help parents start family conversations about Meth.

The presentation began with a brief introduction from Megan Ronk, Executive Director of the Idaho Meth Project. Ronk introduced a preview of four new Idaho Meth Project television ads, continuing the "Meth: Not Even Once" ad campaign. The ads depict the ramifications of Meth use through stirring dramatizations, such as a son taking money from his mother's purse and striking her when she attempts to stop him.

The forum continued with Wayne Longo, Chief, Coeur d'Alene Police Department, gave an in-depth presentation about Methamphetamine. Topics included what Meth is made of, signs of potential Meth use, myths about Meth, a brief history of Meth in the area, street names for the drug, side effects from use, the stages of Meth use, pictures of "Meth mouth" (the rotting of teeth due to Meth use) and "Meth mites" (sores Meth users develop on their skin) and tips for parents trying to start conversations with their children about Methamphetamine.

Even with the valiant efforts of local law enforcement and programs like the Idaho Meth Project, Methamphetamine production and use still remain serious problems in Idaho.

"Idaho is among the top 10 states for Meth trafficking" said Longo.

Other staggering statistics were available in literature produced and provided by the Idaho Meth Project booth. According to one pamphlet, 63 percent of Idaho felony drug court participants indicate that Meth is their drug of choice and \$66 million is spent annually by the state of Idaho on housing inmates who admit to having a Meth problem.

The forum continued with a video presentation about how Methamphetamine effects brain function. The video was a CGI representation of neuron communication and how Meth impacts that communication.

After the video, Brian Lux, a former Meth addict and Idaho Meth Project volunteer, told the story of his addiction and how Meth impacted his life. According to Lux, it took everything from him, including his family. Lux shared his experience as a starting user, a dealer, a prisoner for seven years and now a college student.

"I'm doing now what I should have been doing out of high school," said Lux.

Lux spoke about taking a friend, also a Meth user, to the hospital for a migraine. When no problem was found they left the hospital. Later, Lux's friend died from a brain aneurism. Lux emphasized how much this drug takes control of people and drives them to irrational behavior, describing an incident he witnessed in which a man was stabbed through the heart with a screwdriver and died over Meth.

The forum ended with a Q & A panel with panelists Chief Wayne Longo, Brian Lux, Megan Ronk and Dr. Eric Heidenreich of Kootenai Behavior Health Center answering questions the audience wrote on note cards which were presented by the panel moderator Amy Bartoo, Idaho Meth Project District 1 Volunteer Co-Chair. The panel didn't get to all questions due to time constraints.

For more information about the Idaho Meth Project visit IdahoMethproject.org.