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Wyo launches meth prevention program

By RIANE MENARDI
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The Wyoming Meth Project announced the launch of a statewide prevention campaign at a press conference Monday in Casper.

"This saturation campaign will provide opportunities to talk to youth," said Bill McDowell, Meth Project advisory board chairman. "It calls upon parents, community leaders and local governments to reduce the plague upon the state."

The project is a branch of the national Meth Project and is aimed at significantly reducing first-time methamphetamine use among Wyoming youth and creating discussion about the drug.

It employs graphic television, radio and print advertisements depicting real stories of people affected by meth. The ads have received more than 40 industry awards, and the project was cited by the White House as one of the most effective prevention campaigns in history in 2006.

"Teens need things that are graphically charged and not authority-based to cut through the clutter and make an impact" said Chris Rose, executive director of the national Meth Project.

The project uses the core message, "Not Even Once," to specifically stigmatize the use of meth, not the users. In upcoming months, the campaign will reach an average of 77 percent of Wyoming teens 4.1 times per week with TV commercials, radio spots and billboards.

Casper Police Chief Tom Pagel said that this project provides a resource that has been missing in Wyoming. Drug courts are cracking down on drug use while the new substance abuse treatment facility at Central Wyoming Counseling Center provides treatment. He said that a prevention campaign completes the circle.

"We need to make a difference, and this is a good start," he said.

The Meth Project was first implemented in Montana in 2005, when the state was ranked fifth in the country for meth abuse. Within two years it dropped to 39th, with adult meth use down by 72 percent and teen use down 45 percent.

Wyoming is the fifth state to implement the project. It is currently ranked first in the country for meth use among adults age 18-25, and second for meth use by teens 12-17. Since 2005, Wyoming has jumped from No. 13 to No. 1 in the country for meth use by those 12 and older.

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By the numbers

Methamphetamine is the primary drug threat in Wyoming, according to the U.S. Department of

Justice and the Wyoming Meth Project:

- * Wyoming ranks second in the United States for meth use by teens age 12-17.
- * Wyoming ranks first in the U.S. for meth use by adults ages 18-25.
- * Wyoming ranks first in the U.S. for meth use by people 12 and older. In 2005, Wyoming ranked 13th.
- * The percentage of drug offenders convicted of meth-related crimes in Wyoming district courts increase from 68 percent in 2005 to 94 percent in 2007.

For more information

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On the Web

For more info on the Wyoming Meth Project visit www.wyomingmethproject.org.