

Print Page

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 4, 2009 :: Last modified: Wednesday, January 7, 2009 7:19 PM MST

Wyo Meth Project uses graphic images to show horrors of meth

By ALLISON RUPP
Star-Tribune staff writer

An idea hatched from a discussion in Susie and Mick McMurry's living room has already seen some success.

Davilyn Roesler, a registered nurse at the Cathedral Home for Children in Laramie, said the students she teaches have been impacted greatly and reacted strongly to The Wyoming Meth Project television commercials.

"Wow, you're not kidding. Meth is deadly," one of her students told her.

"I thought I could try anything once," another student said. "I didn't know it was so addictive."

After attending the annual conference on methamphetamine last year, the McMurrys wanted to do something more to help the state's meth problem, said Jean Davies, executive director of the Wyoming Meth Project.

The McMurrys invited Davies, Tom Siebel, founder of the Montana Meth Project, and others to their home to discuss what to do.

The Wyoming Meth Project was born and officially launched in June 2008. Wyoming became the fifth state to create a program based on the Meth Project model and others have followed.

The Meth Project is a large-scale program aimed at reducing the use of meth among teenagers and young adults, Davies said Wednesday during the Sixth Annual Methamphetamine and Substance Abuse Conference Wednesday at the Parkway Plaza Hotel. It uses extensive television, radio and billboard ad campaigns to drive home a message that trying meth once is one time too many.

"Telling kids not to do it, isn't going to work," Davies said. "We have to show them."

One billboard shows two teenage girls and says, "My friends and I share everything. Now we share hepatitis and HIV."

When she asked the audience how many people had seen one of the Wyoming Meth Project's billboards, everyone in the room raised their hands.

Before releasing the ads, the Wyoming Meth Project asked a national firm to conduct a survey of Wyoming young people.



Audience members of the "Drug Identification, Awareness and Trends" presentation fill the balcony of the Parkway Plaza during the Methamphetamine conference Wednesday afternoon in Casper. (Tim Kupsick, Star-Tribune)

About 23 percent of Wyoming teens and young adults said they saw little or no harm in trying meth and more than half of teens said obtaining meth was easy, Davies said.

She said the project will conduct another survey this spring to determine any impacts the campaign might have already had. Montana saw a 45 percent decrease in meth use among teens.

Nationwide the project has come under criticism for being "too graphic" or "a scare tactic."

An independent review of the Montana organization in the December issue of Prevention Science said the project should not be state funded because of multiple negative effects.

Currently, the Wyoming Meth Project is a nonprofit organization that receives its funding from places such as the McMurry Foundation and the Daniels Fund. Davies hopes to partner with the state in the future.

"I didn't find it [the independent review] credible," Davies said. "We're pretty confident in what we do."

Whatever the data says, Roesler said the commercials are powerful tools.

In the next session of her 12-week drug prevention class, Roesler said she will use the commercials even more because of the impact they had on her students.

"They have a choice," Roesler said, "and this is making their choice pretty clear."

Casper Star-Tribune Publisher Nathan Bekke is on the board of directors for the Wyoming Meth Project.

Contact health reporter Allison Rupp at (307) 266-0534 or allison.rupp@trib.com.