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COMA raises new message

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Organization's new anti-methamphetamine billboard tied to Not Even Once Week



Joel Browning, of Identity Graphics, hangs a new anti-methamphetamine poster Friday afternoon along West Victory Way. The billboard is owned by Communities Overcoming Methamphetamine Abuse, a local community organization, which partnered with the Colorado Meth Project on the new message, as well as a week of awareness events planned for the end of October



COMA, the Boys & Girls Clubs of Northwest Colorado, Grand Futures Prevention Coalition and the Colorado Meth Project plan to organize a series of events from Oct. 26 to 30 to raise awareness for meth addiction and its consequences on users.

The billboard itself depicts a jail bed with text that reads, "No one thinks they'll spend a romantic evening here. Meth will change that."

For a few years, commuters traveling into Craig from the west have seen the face of methamphetamine abuse displayed on a billboard beside what is now the Walmart SuperCenter.

Recently, though, Communities Overcoming Methamphetamine Abuse, the local organization behind that billboard, has taken down the twin mug shots of a blonde woman whose appearance was ravaged by drug use, and posted a new message in its place.

Regular television viewers may recognize what is there, as COMA partnered with the Colorado Meth Project to create its new sign, modeled after the Meth Project's ongoing series of TV ads that carry the tagline, "Not even once."

"We still hear a lot about the old billboard," COMA activities director Shirley Simpson said. "People come up to us and say, 'Oh, I had no idea.' We think this will be just as effective."

The new billboard is an extension of the TV campaign, wherein various people find themselves doing things they never thought they would do.

To those who have never personally dealt with a meth addiction, or known someone addicted to the drug, the ads can seem over the top, Simpson said.

Unfortunately, art imitates life in this case, she said.

"The billboards and commercials are mild in comparison to what I've seen," Simpson said. "It is a very wicked, horrible thing."

COMA also has partnered with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Northwest Colorado, Grand Futures Prevention Coalition and the Meth Project to organize Not Even Once Week in Moffat County, planned from Oct. 26 to 30.

Simpson said COMA officials think collaboration with other organizations is an important step to take against the ongoing local meth problem.

As far as use and abuse of the drug go, Simpson added that she doesn't know if anything in the past few years has curbed the drug's influence.

"It finds its way from one person to the next," she said. "I think for everyone that gets out, one or two get in."

Simpson added that she is unsure if there is much chance meth abuse will ever cease.

"I'd love to say, 'Yes we can,'" she said. "But I think that'd be too much to hope for. That's my personal feeling."

Among the various activities planned for Not Even Once Week, the Boys & Girls Club of Craig will host age-appropriate programming throughout the week and a community carnival event Oct. 29.

Dana Duran, Boys & Girls Clubs executive director, said meth is an issue that affects Moffat County on a broad scale.

"I don't see drug use within our kids," she said. "I think it is a problem with older people, our teenagers and our families. I think meth affects our entire community in that way."