



Montrose on board with anti-meth campaign

By Katharhynn Heidelberg

Daily Press Senior Writer

Saturday, May 9, 2009 4:09 AM MDT

MONTROSE — An in-your-face media campaign is only part of the Colorado Meth Project's push to reduce first-time methamphetamine use statewide.

The project is also helping Western Slope anti-meth organizations to work together more efficiently, Montrose treatment provider Nic Taylor said.

"It's very timely because we have these other efforts. The Colorado Meth Project is given as a perfect, crescendo-ing introduction."

Taylor sits on the state meth task force as a representative for treatment specialists. He is also the clinical director for MethFree Delta County, and owns Taylor Behavioral Health in Montrose. He is on the CMP's advisory council.

Taylor said local efforts to combat meth included a federal grant for the expansion of Delta's drug court to include recovery and support services. The Montrose County Meth Coalition and the Mesa County Meth Task Force also are in the fight.

Taylor said efforts are underway to organize a Western Slope coalition, to get all three working in concert, plus to bring in Gunnison County.

"We're duplicating efforts when we don't really need to," he said. "The CMP is facilitating that (coalition) happening."

The Colorado Meth Project was launched Thursday. Its media campaign is modeled after the Montana Meth Project.

"When we look at the results of other states, the meth project has certainly contributed" to a decline in first-time use, CMP's executive director Kent MacLennan said Thursday.

Other reasons for the decline include ramped up law-enforcement efforts and tougher restrictions on meth's precursor ingredients.

"All these things have come together. You really see a lot of positive change," he said.

The television ads are graphic — but they're supposed to be. MacLennan and Taylor disagree such ads desensitize the target audience of teens and young adults.

“The way the commercials and media campaign are put together is with extensive research with the target audience,” MacLennan said.

The campaign used research and focus groups that included the target audience, and their feedback showed CMP what to emphasize.

“They don’t want it sugar-coated. These stories are raising the awareness and starting the dialogue within their own communities and families, we hope,” he said.

“The more it gets talked about, the more effective it will be.”

Taylor said the ads, though disturbing, show the true perceptions and memories of active and former meth users. “It’s an accurate representation. I’ve been very critical of scare tactics, because they seem to have sacrificed accuracy to be compelling.”

He acknowledged the ads are offensive. “But that’s because it’s an offensive target. For people who need to hear the message, it strikes an accurate chord in them.”

Taylor said the best part of the campaign is the radio ads that feature local former addicts sharing their experiences. Hearing people from the area admit to meth use will strengthen the message conveyed in the television ads, he said.

The project is not a cure-all, MacLennan said. “Nobody’s drawn a line in the sand to say: This is where the victory line is. We certainly have more we can do.”

A regional launch event for the CMP will be held from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 12 at Mesa County Partners in Grand Junction. Members of the Montrose and Delta meth-fighting organizations will attend, and Colorado Attorney General John Suthers is slated to speak.

Meth Stats

- Colorado is eighth in the nation for meth use
- Costs to the state's law enforcement and social service programs due to meth: \$1.4 billion per year

The media campaign

- Saturation ads intended to reach 70 to 90 percent of teens three to five times weekly
- Ongoing, multi-year effort

Program results from Montana

- Montana launched a similar campaign in 2005; at the time, it ranked fifth in the nation for meth abuse. By 2008, Montana ranked 39th.

- Adult meth use decrease: 72 percent

- Teen meth use decrease: 45 percent

- Meth-related crime decrease: 62 percent

States with a meth-project campaign

- Colorado, Montana, Arizona, Idaho, Illinois, Wyoming; more states expected in 2009

Source: Colorado Meth Project