

Hawaii Tribune Herald

Local News

Radio, TV ads target meth use

Teenagers are welcome to attend a volunteer meeting on Thursday

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The TV public service announcements are intentionally stark, even shocking.

A fresh-faced teen says, "I'm going to try meth just once." Then, the viewer sees what the speaker's life is to become -- addiction, stealing, prostitution, arrest, physical and psychological deterioration -- usually in dimly-lit, seedy settings. The spots conclude with an intentionally crude black and white graphic proclaiming: "Meth. Not even once."

"I hope they work for us in Hawaii," said Cindy Adams, executive director of the Hawaii Meth Project, an organization dedicated to reducing first-time "ice" use by teens and young adults. "They've worked for us in the other states, so I'm hopeful," she said. "You know kids have said to us that these ads are like no other ads that they have ever seen. It's not like the egg in the frying pan ('this is your brain on drugs') or anything like that."

Adams said that the campaign's radio announcements, which feature local teens talking about their experiences as ice addicts hit even closer to home.

One of the speakers identifies herself as Jessica, 17, from Kailua-Kona, who said she started taking crystal methamphetamine when she was 13 and ended up selling her body for the drug.

"I just hurt myself by giving myself to the guys just for the drug, even if it wasn't a lot," she said in the 30-second spot. "I never thought I would do that. I always despised girls who were like that, but later on, I became one of them."

Adams said the group is holding a volunteer orientation Thursday from 6-7 p.m. in the Hilo High School library. There will also be a Kona meeting from 6-7 p.m. Sept. 8 at Kealakehe High School cafeteria. All interested individuals are invited to attend.

"It will be our very first volunteer orientation on the Big Island," Adams said. "We had our community meeting in July; we've had a number of people express interest in volunteering. That's phenomenal since it's how we do the bulk of our community outreach, through a volunteer network.

"We're asking that teens come out and volunteer, because this is meant for that audience, as well as people in general ... who are interested in our mission."

Adams said there will be training sessions to follow for those who want to be peer leaders and educators.

"There will be some subset of volunteers who will actually be interested in delivering our Hawaii Meth Project presentations, and we'll be doing 'train the trainers' sessions for those," she said. "Some of them will just want to do things like participate in bake sales or car washes or hand out our wristbands at the county fair. ... They're all welcome."

The results of the first Hawaii Meth Use and Attitudes Survey were released in June by the Hawaii Meth Project. Surveyed were 1,065 teens, 318 young adults and 400 parents of teens statewide, all randomly selected.

According to the data, one in five teens and one in three young adults say meth is readily available. One in 10 teens and one in five young adults say they have close friends who use the drug.



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[Meeting Information](#)

Nearly one in three teens believes there is little or no risk to trying meth. A substantial number of young people think meth use is beneficial -- 35 percent believe it can help you lose weight, 24 percent believe it provides energy, 21 percent think it can cause happiness, and 19 percent believe it helps alleviate boredom.

"Methamphetamine is one of the most destructive, highly-addictive substances known," said Dr. Bill Haning, an addiction expert at the University of Hawaii's John A. Burns School of Medicine. "It causes dramatic changes in the brain, irreversible physical damage, and a host of effects including depression, psychosis marked by extreme paranoia and hallucinations, and violent behavior.

"It's alarming to see that many of our young people see little risk in giving methamphetamine a try."

Said Adams: "I think if (teens) understood how addictive this drug was, they would not go down this path quite as often. It's so addictive, 85 to 95 percent of the people who use it once will use it again and kids do not know that. They think they can use it once and manage, and that's definitely not the case."

On the Internet: <http://www.hawaiimethproject.org>.

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