

Meth: Busted, Now What?

by Erick J. Aune

Community Intervention

When it comes time to seek help, there may not be the resources necessary. The testimony and discussion that have occurred during the past month have provided this sense that meth taps into an emotional culture and ties a pretty tight knot. Unwinding the knot may be incomprehensible, but cutting it and or never allowing it to slip into place appear to be the closest analogy regarding the stories you have provided us.

If there were energy to create the potential for a program or process that balances the recognition of the knot slipping or the ability to cut it off, what would that look like? We have been told about individual counseling, narcotic anonymous, rehabilitation centers, family, and friends and of course getting "busted" and leaving it up to the penal system to force the recovery, but is that enough?

In Montezuma and Dolores counties, a program called Youth4Change, administered by the School/Community Youth Coalition (SCYC), is working hard so as not to allow for the rope to close around the neck at a critical age. The mission of the School/Community Youth Coalition is to reduce substance abuse and violence in Montezuma and Dolores Counties, especially in youth ages 12-21 years old. In addition, the community connection provides a piece to the puzzle which is the connection between adults and youth seeking a more comprehensive approach to dealing with the problem.

The SCYC came together to prevent substance abuse and violence targeting 12 to 21 year olds, but also pulling together leaders in community seeking to reduce the drug problem in the entire community. They identified the most critical risk and resiliency factors in the community, met monthly and continue to pull together for community program development. An example is the Transitional Mentoring Program, or "Link Crew," provides 9th graders from the middle school with an 11th or 12th grade student mentor. This program is evaluated by comparative analysis of attendance and grades.

If you believe there may be the willingness or energy to develop a Community Intervention Initiative in Aztec, give the TALON a call or e-mail.

Resource:

<http://www.youth4change.com/profs.htm>

Community Intervention Resource for Professionals: We have posted a full-text version of the *Adolescent Alcohol and Drug Misuse in Rural Areas: A Community Intervention Handbook*, by Donna Sue Spear M.A., L.P.C. This is a practical handbook that summarizes risk and resiliency research on individual, family and community levels.

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP): A resource to developing such initiatives which provides national leadership, coordination, and

Personal perspective:

For a long time I worried that I would lose my sister because of her abusive husband. She was smart and got out of that relationship. She had her children, she was buying a cute little house, she was happy. I hadn't seen my sister calm and happy for quite some time and I was elated for her and then she did crack.

I had always been able to talk to my sister - she was my best friend - but a new person, a bad person, started emerging and I couldn't talk to her; I didn't know this person. I couldn't get through to her. For seven years I watched her do crack and go downhill. She lost her home. She lost her kids. She lost her pride. She lost her brain. She wandered the streets with a duffel bag of clothes and crashed wherever someone would let her - usually someone with crack. She was in and out of jail. I've seen her try to kick it for five years with no success. Her health has deteriorated to such a point that getting rid of crack now would be a small improvement. And to this day she'll look me in the eye and, fully believing herself, tell me, "It's not that bad. I don't do much crack. I'm okay."

I was afraid I'd lose my sister to physical abuse. Instead, I've lost her to the zombie creating drug, crack. She's still alive, but she's not in reality and I've already prepared myself for that final call.

She's very gone. This all started in little old Aztec.

Anonymous, Aztec

Did you know...?

Neighborhoods and Communities: Hundreds of children are neglected every year after living with parents who are meth "cooks." More than 20% of the meth labs seized last year had children present.

resources to prevent and respond to juvenile delinquency and victimization. OJJDP supports states and communities in their efforts to develop and implement effective and coordinated prevention and intervention programs. The Title V Community Prevention Grants Program is a Federal grants program to fund collaborative, community-based delinquency prevention efforts.

Videos & DVDs

The following videos, produced by the Crime and Violence Prevention Center are available by writing to: California Attorney General's Office, Crime and Violence Prevention Center, P.O. Box 942255, Sacramento, CA 94244-2550

• Drugs and Youth ... The Challenge

Developed for parents and educators, this informative video/DVD features interviews with students, teachers, parents and drug abuse experts who provide valuable information about the reasons young people turn to drugs and what kinds of drugs are most commonly used. Hosted by Martin Sheen, the star of NBC's West Wing. (28 minutes)

• Effective Anti-Drug Coalitions...Elements for Success

Effective Anti-Drug Coalitions provides valuable information on what a partnership on coalition needs to be effective. (22 minutes)

• Hidden Dangers ... METH Labs

This training video is for people working in a community setting. *Hidden Dangers* helps utility workers, probation officers, code enforcement officers, service personnel, social workers and other professionals recognize signs that a meth lab may be near and what they can do to help protect themselves and others. A resource and information guide is also available. (18 minutes)

• Meth ... The Great Deceiver

This dramatic and moving video gives firsthand accounts of the damage methamphetamine (also known as crack, speed, crystal, ice) has on young lives. The stories told by the youths themselves in the video offer a fast-paced introduction to the destructive nature of methamphetamine. A guide for teachers and discussion leaders is available. (15 minutes)

• Where Meth Goes ... Violence and Destruction Follow!

Where Meth Goes explores the "Methamphetamine Crisis" and its cost to society. The facts and true stories in this video dramatically illustrate the compelling need for individual and community action to combat this devastating problem. An activity guide for leaders is also available. (15 minutes)

Response:

Thanks for including information about our programs in your last issue of the Talon. And a special thank you for including the Harm Reduction Program.

I know there are many people who do not approve of the Harm Reduction Program, which was signed into law by Governor Johnson and remains a part of HIV Prevention contracts through the State Department of Health. Since the program was started about six years ago, we have had no new cases of Hep C or HIV among the active participants of the program.

Contrary to what many people think, not all meth users are out there committing crimes and harassing the community. In most cases our participants have full or part time jobs. Our clients, as a whole, are very polite, respectful and pleased with the program.

For more information, call Dona at 325-8022.

Meth warning signs:

How do you know if someone is using methamphetamine? It may not be easy to tell, but there are signs that may mean someone is using meth:

- Insomnia
- Decreased appetite and possible weight loss
- Increased agitation and physical activity, excited speech
- Compulsive actions, such as cleaning and grooming or sorting and disassembling objects
- Intense paranoia, and possible hallucinations or delusions
- Episodes of sudden, violent behavior
- Presence of inhaling paraphernalia, such as razor blades, mirrors, and straws
- Presence of injecting paraphernalia, such as syringes, heated spoons, or surgical tubing

NIDA: Community Alert Drug Bulletin and Info Facts

The topic is "Methamphetamines in our Community."

The forum is "TALON Community-Input." Please join the discussion in whatever capacity this issue has affected you - personally, your family or friends, or your profession. The floor is yours... 334-1039.

Personal perspective:

My name is Tina and I have been an addict for 13 years.

I was at one time, a weekend warrior. I smoked pot, drank occasionally and used cocaine here and there. Then I was introduced to methamphetamine. At first it made me feel on top of the world. My house was immaculate and I was always going, going. I would stay up for a week and eat nothing during that time.

My weight plummeted to 95 pounds. I was a skeleton of the person I once was. Overnight, it seemed, meth had taken control of my life and it was not going to let go. It was, and still is, much more powerful than I am.

I went from getting things done to getting things started to doing nothing but getting high. My house was a wreck, my life was a wreck, I was a wreck.

Once a straight A student in college, I was now someone who dropped out every semester for about 7 years, until I finally gave in. I just gave up any and all the hopes and dreams I had ever had. They interfered with my drug use. I accepted my fate as a drug addict. I was eventually arrested and spent a lot of time behind bars. I was facing 22 years and even that did nothing to deter my addiction. My drug use took up 110% of my time. It affected everyone I came into contact with, but I refused to see it.

For three years I was away from my husband, yet he stood by me. He was my rock. The only good thing in my life. But even he could only watch as I destroyed myself.

I wanted a different life, but did not want to give up drugs to get it. I was blessed with a wonderful parole officer who believed in me and sent me to treatment. I went to Yucca Lodge in Ft. Bayard, NM. I did not go in with the idea of stopping drugs. I was just taking a break. Something happened there. They got through to me as no one ever could. I was shown a new way to live. I was filled with hope again.

I knew I had to change things I never thought I could. I had to stop hanging around with people who used, even my best friend of 20 years. It was actually easier than I thought it would be because since I had no drugs to offer people, they quit coming around.

Life is beautiful now.

I am able to hold my head up and look people in the eye when I talk to them. I never knew I could be so happy. I take life one day at a time.

Meth took many things from me; goals, dreams, morals, values, freedom, damaging my relationships... it took me. I am getting all of that back though, and so much more.

If I knew what road lay ahead before I used meth, honestly, I would not have believed it. I would have thought, "It won't happen to me!" Guess what? I have yet to meet someone it has not happened to.

If you have never tried meth, please don't. I promise you, you will not be the exception to the rule. If you are using, there is help. There are hundreds of thousands of people who have been there and understand.

Thank you TALON, for addressing this epidemic and giving me a forum in which to share my story.

Tina, Recovering Addict, Aztec

Resource

Yucca Lodge, Ft. Bayard, NM, 1-800-454-3465

Input Wanted

If you feel there is a need for more resources to help with the drug problem in our area, send a letter or call your elected officials and tell them so. If you would like to be part of a community meeting to address this, give us a call at TALON.

Are you a caregiver or guardian for children of meth addicts? Do you have issues you would like to get help with or see addressed? Give us a call, 334-1039.

Did you know...?

Meth is made in America as well as internationally. Unlike heroin, cocaine, or Ecstasy, it is produced here within our borders. We can't blame other countries for this problem.

DEA, Fast Facts