

May 18, 2007

Student-produced TV commercials highlight Meth Summit III

By Terry Dillman Of the News-Times

"No meth. Not here."

Lincoln County's vigilant campaign against the manufacture, distribution, and abuse of methamphetamine will get another boost Saturday, May 19 at the Newport Performing Arts Center, site of Lincoln County Meth Summit III: Premiere Night. Assistant County Counsel Rob Bovett, who has played a pivotal role in the county's response to what most call an epidemic of meth use nationwide, said the summit will feature the world premiere of television commercials and other projects written, produced, and directed by students at Eddyville Charter School, Siletz Valley School, and Lincoln City's Career Tech.

Bovett guides the Lincoln County Methamphetamine Initiative, established in 2001 to "develop a full range of prevention, enforcement, and treatment services" in the county. Lincoln County has led the way in a state that has assumed a leading role in the effort to stem the meth tide.

In 2004, Oregon became one of only two states to effectively control pseudoephedrine - a main ingredient for manufacturing meth commonly found in cold and allergy medications - and reduce local toxic meth labs by 80 percent. Other states followed Oregon's lead, and the effort to dry up the supply of pseudoephedrine for meth traffickers officially went nationwide in 2006.

Bovett said the government-led crackdown on the key ingredients used to cook up meth - assisted by a cooperative pharmaceutical industry - is working.

Authorities have reported a significant drop in the purity of meth seized by drug enforcement agencies since late 2005. Average meth purity in Oregon dropped from 71 percent in 2005 to just above 40 percent during the first six months of 2006. Street prices have soared, and meth lab seizures have dwindled locally, statewide, and nationwide.

Federal grants have allowed county officials to, among other things, establish the Drug Endangered Children Program.

Using a multi-agency approach, DEC protects and assists children whose lives, health, and safety are jeopardized by meth labs, meth dealing, or meth addiction in their homes. The program coordinates efforts by law enforcement agencies, child protective services, prosecutors, and health professionals. "The idea is to break the cycle of addiction," said Bovett, noting that the program "is critical to providing better treatment and other services" for children removed from toxic drug environments, especially homes in which meth labs and addiction "have seriously impaired a child's health, safety, and quality of life."

Another critical participant is the Lincoln Interagency Narcotics Team (LINT). The meth initiative provides training, equipment, and administrative support to this cooperative venture featuring

representatives from city police departments, the sheriff's office, and other law enforcement agencies.

An additional enforcement piece known as the Drug Court program began in October 2006.

The initiative's underlying concept is getting the word out, which the Methamphetamine Awareness Project (MAP) provides in a unique, enduring fashion. Modeled, in part, on successful similar projects sponsored by the Oregon Partnership at Sheridan and Newburg high schools, MAP consists of the purchase of state-of-the-art, broadcast-quality computer and video production equipment, along with consulting services to support student-produced meth awareness videos. In 2005, students at Taft Middle School and Newport, Toledo, and Waldport high schools produced 12 television commercials and two documentaries. Five of those commercials aired on Oregon TV stations, including one featured on ABC's "World News Tonight." Student productions have also gone to other states and Canada (to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police) as examples of what youths can accomplish and contribute to vital social issues from their unique perspectives.

Through their "life or meth" messages, Bovett said they proved they can help win the war on drugs with thought-provoking words and images.

In 2005, MAP students introduced and presented their productions at Lincoln County Meth Summit II, the follow-up to the highly successful Lincoln County Meth Summit in 2004. Last year, student production crews focused on tsunami awareness, but the thoughts and images in this year's media messages - ready for unveiling at this year's summit - return to meth.

In addition to the television public service announcements, this summit will feature a "Helping Hands Stop Drugs" banner image created by Siletz Valley School students as part of the "No Meth, Not Here" campaign.

Bovett said the image "has been printed on banners, posters, yard signs, brochures, and more."

Andy Blubaugh of Andy Blubaugh Films and the NW Film Center will present the MAP PSAs, along with MAP teachers Bob Pearson (Eddyville Charter School), Joe Scott (Siletz Valley School), and Mary Jane Munger and Mark Peery (Career Tech). Coordinators Delina John and DeAnna Pearl will lead the presentation of the results from the Siletz sign project.

Janet Wicklund, co-chair of community efforts Demonstrating the Ability to Rebuild and Restore (CEDARR), Alan Evans, executive director of Thugz Off Drugz, Kelly Collins, Oregon State Police station commander and LINT supervisor, and Alison Craig from Congresswoman Darlene Hooley's office will offer brief updates on what has happened in their respective areas since Meth Summit II in 2005. Bovett and Liz Mulder, Enforcement of Underage Drinking Laws (EUDL) coordinator will conclude by providing their perspectives on what lies ahead, looking beyond 2007.

Lincoln County Meth Summit III is scheduled from 1 to 3 p.m. in the Newport Performing Arts Center at 777 W. Olive Street. Everyone is welcome to attend this free event, with seating available on a first-come, first-served basis.

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