



Working Together Toward  
Safe Communities  
Free From Substance Abuse

# THE INFORMANT



**Meth Watch Member e-Letter**  
Publisher: Lacey Jones October 2009

Greater Spokane Substance Abuse Council's  
(GSSAC) Prevention Center  
Spokane County Meth Action Team (MAT)



## March Against Meth

The March Against Meth was an unprecedented event in which more than 2,300 teens led the call for continued funding for the Montana Meth Project. It was the largest teen demonstration in Montana's history, and culminated in the delivery of petitions signed by more than 55,000 Montana residents requesting financial support for the Project from the State Legislature. The petitions were accepted on the steps of the state capitol by Speaker of the House Bob Bergren and state Senate President Robert Story. U.S. Senator Max Baucus, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, and Montana Attorney General Steve Bullock were also in attendance.

"Today's event happened thanks to the incredible leadership of young people from all across Montana," said Mike Gulledge, chairman of the Montana Meth Project. "They worked for more than six months to collect signatures and plan today's activities. Their dedication is unprecedented. I want to thank them, and everyone who participated in the March Against Meth, for such a remarkable show of support."

The March Against Meth began with a rally at Helena High School, where Helena Mayor James Smith proclaimed the day "March Against Meth Day" in the state capitol. The group then marched to the capitol steps, escorted overhead by the Homeland Security's Blackhawk helicopter, accompanied by recovering Meth addicts, local Native American tribes, teachers, parents and volunteers of all ages. Event sponsors included First Interstate Bank, Martel Construction, Rio Tinto Energy and State Fund. At a press conference following the March, Senator Baucus cited recent reports on the economic burden methamphetamine use places on the U.S. and on Montana as evidence of the need for a continued focus on prevention.

"Meth use costs the United States more than \$23 billion each year, and it costs the state of Montana \$200 million," said Senator Baucus. "These are dollars we cannot afford to spend and lives we cannot afford to waste. The Meth Project's prevention program works, which is why I have called on the federal government to devote additional funds to support the Project and I will continue to provide leadership to rid our state and nation of this destructive drug."

The March Against Meth event coincided with the release last week of a new report by the Montana Attorney General's office that found that methamphetamine use costs the state more than \$200 million every year in crimes and criminal justice costs; Meth treatment; Meth-related child endangerment; health services used in the treatment of medical conditions attributed to Meth use; and lost productivity due to absenteeism, unemployment and premature death. Those costs are down from a peak of \$300 million in 2005, when the Montana Meth Project launched. In the same period, teen meth use declined by 45%, and adult use declined by more than 70%.

"We cannot afford to pay the price of methamphetamine use any longer," said Montana Attorney General Steve Bullock citing the report. "It's important that we reach out to the next generation and continue to educate our kids about the devastating consequences of Meth." ([www.MontanaMeth.org](http://www.MontanaMeth.org))

# Overdose Deaths Involving Prescription Opioids

Number and percentage of deaths attributed to overdoses of prescription opioid drugs, by specific drug involved—Washington, 2004-2007

<b>Drug</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
METHADONE	1,068	64.0
OXYCODONE	382	22.9
HYDROCODONE	232	13.9
FENTANYL	76	4.6
PROPOXYPHENE	61	3.7
HYDROMORPHONE	60	3.6
CODEINE	53	3.2
MORPHINE	40	2.4
MEPERIDINE	11	0.7
SUFENTANIL	1	0.1

Percentages are based on 1,668 deaths. Percentages add to more than 100% because some deaths involved more than one opioid drug.

In 1998 there were only 531,000 prescriptions written for methadone as a pain killer, but by 2006, that number had increased to 4.1 million.

# Hope for Recovery



It ruins lives, clogs the courts systems and has kept narcotics officials busy for the past decade. Methamphetamine is considered to be one of the most dangerous drugs on the streets.

Terri Stevenson has one of those infectious laughs. It's the kind that fills a room and makes you feel like you've been best friends for years even if you've only known her for a few minutes. But for over 20 years, Terri's laugh was muted by a very dark and dangerous addiction to methamphetamine.

"The meth took everything from me, everything. All my feelings, everything it just made me numb," says Terri. The scars on her arms are constant reminders of a time when getting high was the only thing that mattered.

"You start out doing it with your friends and it was fun," she adds. Terri began using meth when she was 22 and didn't stop until she was 45. "Half the time I was thinking God why don't you just take me off the face of this earth, because why am I here," Terri says about her addiction.

Like over a million other Americans addicted to meth the drug would slowly send her life into a tailspin. "When you're high it takes your soul, it takes every emotion out of you," Stevenson confesses.

Old license photos show a woman you'd barely recognize as Terri, that infectious laugh is no where to be found, at one point she weighed just one hundred and ten pounds. And with no money to support her expensive habit, she was often times homeless - sometimes eating pigeons or rats. When she was working, getting high was the only thing she could think about. "I was sneaking off in the bathrooms to get high saying I had to go off and do this or do that it just got to be where I needed it," Terri says about the years she was on meth.

It was a problem that first started popping up in the 1990's across the country in rural communities like Dodge Center where Terri lives the incredibly addictive drug took off. "The meth took everything from me," she confesses. But that was the old Terri, a lost, scared and lonely woman who found it impossible to break free of her meth addiction all of that changed though when she was arrested and sent to the Dodge County Drug court.

"Terri is a perfect example that good people can change, they can overcome all the problem that life has dealt to them, all the betrayals that life has dealt to them," says Gary ReMine, Assistant District Attorney in Dodge County. Instead of simply sending users off to prison Drug Court gives people a chance to recover and start over.

Terri says there's no doubt that the program saved her life. She now works a full time job at Erdmans in Kasson and has been clean for 3 years. "Being able to get up in the morning and doing it this way instead of dealing drugs, it means a lot more," the 48-year-old says.

So If you stop for a moment and look at the woman who's standing behind the counter today...it's difficult to remember the type of life that she once led. Of her life now, Terri says, "Everyone has bad days, but now instead of turning to drugs, I turn to my co-workers or my sponsor."

And perhaps through all this you're wondering what Terri thinks of the difficult hand she's been dealt, for that, she has a very simple answer. "I think that's why I'm on this earth, is that God had this in store for me to help others. That's why I think I'm here," Terri concludes.