

Students mend gap in meth education

By Erin Minor
Statesman Staff Reporter

When UMD grad students noticed a gap in drug education, they took matters into their own hands and produced a DVD on meth use in the Midwest.

Methamphetamine, commonly called meth, is a growing problem in the Midwest.

UMD students James Beauregard, Jill Beauregard, Casey Wagner and Mike Cihak decided to create more awareness. Their educational DVD, "Meth in the Heartland: A Community's Response," has attracted national attention.

In 2004, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration estimated the number of meth labs seized was nearly 10,000, according to their website. The U.S. Department of Justice website states that an estimated 120 of those were in Minnesota.

"One thing that occurs when we turn on the television and watch a program or documentary based elsewhere, is we tend to say 'Oh that is in California or in Arizona, that doesn't happen here in Minnesota,'" said Cihak.

The documentary brings home the reality of this issue. Not only addicts are affected by meth use; midwest victims of meth crimes, police officers, politicians and education officials are also interviewed.

"We felt it was important to bring this information to the public in order to increase their participation in helping to solve this growing problem," James Beauregard said.

Along with the help of the University of Minnesota Morris, the Morris Police Department and many others, James and Jill Beauregard, Wagner and Cihak produced the 45 minute DVD.

In the documentary, past users tell how they became addicted. Victims of meth

crimes share stories of how they are affected. Politicians and police officers share how meth impacts communities and what is being done to combat it.

The documentary outlines ways of helping meth addicts and communities with meth problems. Drug awareness programs in schools and churches are some groups that are active in finding solutions.

People interested in watching the documentary are encouraged to visit the website. There, they can download it and also fill out two surveys to help judge the effectiveness of the project. There are also facts on meth, signs of use, its effects and links for parents.

It was through the website, local new stories and cable showings that health agencies and corporations heard about "Meth in the Heartland: A Community's Response."

In September, representatives from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), who had provided a grant for the project, previewed the documentary.

"They had high praise for the production," James Beauregard said.

HUD plans on linking the documentary website to their own about community revitalization.

They're also planning on airing locally "Meth in the Heartland: A Community's Response" throughout Minnesota, Cihak said. Copies are available for \$8 on the website where it can also be downloaded.

Jim Beauregard can be contacted at the Morris Police Department 320-589-1155 or by e-mail at mpd@co.stevens.mn.us.

The website can be found at /www.ci.morris.mn.us/pd/meth/copcproject.shtm

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