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**Meth in the Heartland: A Community Response**

*Summary: Educating the public and dispelling myths about the drug methamphetamine has been a recent project on which the University of Minnesota, Morris and City of Morris have collaborated.*

(October 27, 2006)-Educating the public and dispelling myths about the drug methamphetamine has been a recent project on which the University of Minnesota, Morris and City of Morris have collaborated. Jill Beauregard '93, Jim Beauregard '88, Mike Cihak and Casey Wagner '02 all worked together to produce a DVD documentary, "Meth in the Heartland a Community Response," as part of their online master's program project offered through the University of Minnesota, Duluth in 2006.

In recent years, the use of methamphetamines has become a rising issue throughout the country, especially in rural Minnesota. Through this collaborative effort, members of the Morris community developed this project to educate not only citizens of Morris, but citizens of communities everywhere. The University Of Minnesota, Duluth was offering a master's program in which Jim Beauregard, Jill Beauregard, Cihak and Wagner were enrolled. The four decided to produce the DVD on methamphetamines as their thesis project.

Morris Chief of Police Jim Beauregard said, "It just made sense to do our project on this... it is such a prevalent problem, so why not address it with others from the community?"

Mike Cihak, assistant director of marketing communication and design at UMM, agreed with Beauregard "We can't expect law enforcement to take care of this problem alone. The community as a whole has to take care of it. It's growing and we all need to be educated on this problem. We all need to combat this."

The DVD was scripted, recorded and edited by all four, but most of the editing and shooting was done by Wagner, a former staff member in UMM's Computing Services, and Cihak. "I think making this DVD was so important because there are so many myths and rumors about methamphetamines that there is a huge need to dispel them," said Wagner. "This video is great because facts and statistics change so rapidly, but this video is based more on general information about this problem. What I think is most appealing is that it is directed at such a broad and general audience."

Meth is a drug that has no preference—users can be young, old, or even whole families. Side effects can include a loss of ability to sleep, loss of interest in food, weight loss, fidgeting, and withdrawal from family and friends as the drug takes over and becomes the most important thing in the user's life. Some consequences associated with meth use include hallucinations, paranoia, mood disturbances, severe anorexia and repetitive motor activity (taken from the City of Morris Police Department online).

Jill Beauregard appreciates the video because, "It ends with a hopeful message. There is hope that communities can survive and conquer the problem. We can make it—people can recover." Jill is a financial aid officer at UMM. "UMD stresses doing something community-oriented and this project was in collaboration with UMM," said Jill. "Working with the University of Minnesota, Morris through the Center for Small Towns has just been phenomenal,"

commented Chief Beauregard. We were able to participate in the COPC project, a federal granting program from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, which emphasizes community revitalization. In addition we worked closely with the Stevens County Methamphetamines Task Force.”

Chief Beauregard will be giving presentations in and around the Morris area concerning methamphetamine and its effects on the community. A recent presentation to the Department of HUD officials from Washington, D.C., brought great praise for the collaborative work.

The DVD was shown on Pioneer Public TV in September and generated a great deal of positive feedback. Lakeland Public Television, Bemidji, will air the program this fall. Other Minnesota public TV stations have also shown interest in broadcasting the documentary. The video can be viewed online at [Meth](#) using QuickTime, or by ordering a DVD from the Morris City Police Department at (320) 589-1155 or UMM’s Media Services at (320) 589-6150.

Lakeland Public Television has announced that it will air the documentary at 7 p.m. Friday, Dec. 29, and again at 5 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 30. (Satellite subscribers in Minnesota receive Lakeland Public Television on Direct TV channel 22 and on Dish Network Channel 8583.

PHOTO: Mike Cihak working on the COPC billboard.

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