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Section: homepage

Menacing Meth

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The Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs Control and the Chickasaw Lighthorse Police sponsored a workshop Thursday at the Carter County Health Department to educate participants about local drug-prevention resources and treatment options for methamphetamine abusers.

The session was part of a statewide campaign to raise awareness about the devastating impact meth has on families and individuals throughout the state.

Meth is a highly addictive central nervous system stimulant that can be injected, snorted, smoked or ingested orally. Meth users feel a short, intense "rush" when the drug is ingested. It has a high potential for abuse and addiction.

The state campaign, **Crystal Darkness** Oklahoma, began with a 30-minute television documentary that aired in January in conjunction with local watch parties. The health department hosted a town hall meeting later in the month to discuss how the community should address the problem locally.

Ardmore Area Prevention Resource Center Director Gwynn Busby said surveys indicate that many young people in Carter County begin using drugs and alcohol at a young age. Early drinking is associated with other negative behaviors.

"Kids who drink before age 15 are five time more likely to have drug and alcohol problems," she said. "Kids who drink are five times more likely to have sex."

Her agency sponsors a number of community-based prevention programs to help youngsters make good decisions.

"Our goal is to change the social norms and behaviors that tell our youth that alcohol, tobacco and drugs are wonderful," she said.

Laura Atchley, executive and clinical director of Arbuckle Life Solutions, said her agency provides out-patient counseling and refers people to other types of treatment as appropriate.

"Recovery is an ongoing process," she said. "Folks coming off meth often find themselves in chronic depression. That can be a huge trigger to use again."

She said individuals who go to residential treatment centers still face challenges, even if they are drug-free. After-care programs and self-help recovery groups play an important role in helping addicts adjust to life without meth.

"Sometimes it takes multiple treatments to get someone sober," she said.

Patricia Dewbry said she knows first hand that drug treatment works, no matter how difficult the process.

"So much of what happens with drug abuse has to do with mental illness or a family environment that is not healthy," she said. "I have been sober for 20 years. It took five years of meetings and treatment facilities before I chose life without drugs and realized I could be happy."

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