

January 14, 2009

Shining A Light On Meth

Jennifer Lindsey

The Daily Ardmoreite

As Crystal Darkness filled screens across the state, Ardmoreites filled the Ardmore Convention Center to watch together.

Crystal Darkness is a half-hour-long documentary on the effects of crystal methamphetamine in Oklahoma. Based on the sign-in sheets, Judy Cavner of the Carter County Health Department and chair of the Ardmore Crystal Darkness Committee estimated that 400 people were in attendance. Some people had to stand or watch on the extra televisions in the hallway.

The documentary featured people at all levels of the fight against meth, from law enforcement officials to recovering addicts.

After the documentary, a panel made up of local law enforcement, judicial representatives and substance abuse professionals answered audience questions.

The panelists stressed the severity of the meth problem, which fills state prisons and ruins families.

"Entire prisons would shut down in the state of Oklahoma without drug (offenses)," said Teresa Johnson, a senior case manager at the Healdton Community Work Center.

There was also testimony given by inmates from the work center. Eugene Jackson was addicted to meth and sentenced to 109 years for selling drugs.

"I've missed funerals, my siblings growing up. Is it worth it?" he asked.

People asked about what community members could do to help with the meth problem.

A town hall meeting is scheduled for 7 p.m. on Jan. 22, where community members can discuss solutions to the meth issue.

Also, the **Turning Point** committee, which meets at the public library on the second Thursday of each month, is a public meeting that address community issues, such as meth.

"It takes a village to fight this addiction," interim Drug Court director J.L. Self said.

A general drug addiction summit was held by the Health Department in March and was attended by 300 people.

"The increase interest shows that the community is getting involved and aggressive," Cavner said.

Katherine Smith was released from the Mabel Basset Correctional Center on Thursday and spoke to the crowd.

"I don't want to see nothing like this again," Smith said. Smith and her husband run the Meth to Mercy program, where they speak to local churches and have an informational Web site.

"This was a big step in the right direction. It creates awareness," Associate District Judge Craig Ladd said after the event.

Jennifer Lindsey, 221-6526

jennifer.lindsey@ardmoreite.com