

Meth and Montana

by Caitlin Marie Pitcher



The instant it hits your body your adrenaline starts to kick in. You feel alive. Nothing can bring you down. You're happy, energized and relieved. The feeling of pure energy rushes through your veins like a bullet flying trajectory through the air. Nothing can stop you. The feeling is incredible. You want this to stay forever. You want to stay awake forever. Sleeping is not an option. You stay awake. The only option is to stay awake and ride the best roller coaster of your life. Then you hit a wall and you start to fall down. You lose that sensation. You don't have any left. You would do almost anything to get more, to feel again. Anger kicks in. You find a way. Hurting, cheating, lying, you find a way. You do it again and feel again. It's not the same. You still need more. You need more meth.

This situation unfortunately is the case for so many youths across the nation. The new fad of meth is spreading like an infectious disease affecting vulnerable young people of today. Most users only know the positive outcome it has on them, such as energy and feelings of happiness. What they don't know is the negative side effects. Meth is classified as an extremely addictive stimulant that affects the brain's pleasure center. It causes the brain to release increased levels of dopamine, which enhances mood, stimulates brain cells, and regulates feelings of pleasure. In most cases, long term use of the drug shuts off the body's natural ability to release dopamine. This causes the user to have troubles finding pleasure in anything besides the destruc-

tive drug. Long term use of this drug can include harmful reactions such as weight loss, loss of muscle tone, and tooth decay. The lack of knowledge about this drug has caused turmoil throughout the nation.

I have seen the horrible side effects of meth first hand. My boyfriend was addicted to meth before I met him. His story is a tragic one and has only been shared with his close friends and family. From the beginning, he drew the short stick in life. He was born to a seventeen-year-old drug addict and given up for adoption. He was happy with his adoptive parents until they divorced when he was only ten. He then moved to Polson, Montana, where he was introduced to the worst thing he would ever encounter in his life.

He held his first meeting with the drug with a couple of his friends in the bathroom of the Subway restaurant when he was just sixteen. He had no knowledge of the drug except what he had heard from the occasional rumor. He didn't know the outcome it would have on his life. So he took his first breath of the dangerous chemical through a broken light bulb. It all went downhill from there. He started using meth every chance he got. All of the money he ever obtained went towards his faithful sin of drug abuse. He couldn't live without it. He started doing things that did not fit his character. He is a respectful, loving person and the meth turned him into a monster. He started to steal and lie to his friends and family just so he could stay faithful to the drug. It was ultimately ruining his life.

This went on for a good three years until his eyes awakened to his reality. He saw his life going down the drain and knew he had to do something. He moved to Kalispell with nothing but the clothes on his back and went on the difficult path to getting his life back. It's been almost three years since he has quit and the evidence of his drug abuse is still visible. He wakes up in the middle of the night in hot sweats because of his dreams of doing the drug again. His appetite is just now coming back and he has a lack of motivation in everyday life. The most visible side effect that I notice, however, is his lack of happiness. The meth has taken away his natural ability to feel enjoyment. This

is the side effect that hurts him the most. I only hope spreading knowledge about this new drug fad will prevent others from trying the drug and becoming addicted.

Fortunately, a positive new program called the Montana Meth Project was created. Thomas S. Siebal created the program in 2005 when he saw that Montana was in the top ten states for the use of Methamphetamine. His ultimate goal was to lessen the use of the drug. He and his foundation are arming potential users with the information and facts about meth so they can make a better informed decision. They reach out all over Montana with high impact public messages about the reality of meth use. They use public T.V. commercials, billboards, magazine ads, and radio broadcasts to expose their message.

Before the Montana Meth Project was created, Montana was ranked number 5 in the United States for meth abuse. Fifty percent of incarcerations were for meth and fifty percent of foster care admissions were meth related. Now, in 2009, Montana ranks number 39 in the nation for meth abuse. Teen meth use has decreased by forty-five percent, adult use by seventy-two percent, and there was a sixty-two percent decrease in meth related crimes. This outcome is astonishing and overwhelming. We had a serious problem that the foundation critically improved. I'm positive that when they first created this program they never knew the impact they would ultimately make.

I see my boyfriend get a step closer to full recovery everyday. He has never touched the drug again and I am so proud of him for what he has done. Millions across the nation are struggling to do what he did. Some have success and some don't. Thankfully, programs like the Montana Meth Project are there to inspire and help drug users along the way. The project has helped so many people make a better decision in life. The people they have saved from the dangerous addiction will forever be thankful. Its efforts and achievement will not be forgotten.

The editor's and staff of Alert wish to congratulate Caitlan on winning our scholarship and to encourage her to pursue her academic goals. We would also like to encourage future seniors to participate in our essay contest. Sincerely, Alert Magazine