100 Turn Out for Meth-Free Kodiak Forum

Friday, 29 January 2010

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Diana Gish/KMXT

Around 100 people gathered at Kodiak High School last night for a parent and community forum about meth. Others joined the event via live video conferencing. According to substance abuse counselors, the illegal drug is considered to be even more addictive than cocaine and heroine and its presence in the community is raising some alarms.

The forum was the result of a cooperative effort between local agencies. Providence hospital, KANA, the Suunaq tribe, Native Village of Afognak, the Kodiak Women's Resource and Crisis Center, the school district, and local law enforcement were some of the groups participating and presenting at the forum.

One of the most powerful presentations was by a woman named "Chrissy" who shared her story as a former meth addict. Her poignant story of addiction and recovery kept the audience's attention as she recounted the story of her life from a violently abused young girl to meth addict and drug runner.

-- (Meth Forum 1 "I have held ... has just begun.")

Several presentations were made including the clinical and medical effects of meth use and how meth use leads to domestic violence. Providence substance abuse counselor Gary Marler talked about what attracts people to take meth. He said that during initial use of the drug, the user has a greater sense of confidence and strength and the feeling of being indestructible.

-- (Meth Forum 2 "It decreases feelings ... I liked that feeling."

Marler and other presenters emphasized that those chemically-induced feelings are always very temporary, leaving the user with only the overwhelming desire to take more of the drug. From there, problems escalate: neglect of self and others, including children, psychotic episodes, hallucinations, violence, crime, extreme tooth decay, brain damage and death.

Mention was also made about the physical dangers posed to communities by the manufacturing of meth. The illegal drug is concocted by ingredients that can be obtained over-the-counter. Cooking those ingredients at high temperatures is very hazardous and often causes explosions and fires. The process of making meth also results in large amounts of toxic by-products which are then dumped on the ground poured down sinks, or flushed down toilets.

Attendees also heard perspectives on the problem of meth from local law enforcement and from the drug-free school program.

A panel discussion followed the forum presentations. One of the suggestions brought up by attendees was petitioning for more training of local law enforcement to deal with the problem of meth.