

OPINION/EDITORIAL

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Taking on the scourge of meth

Meth is as intractable a problem as any our community faces, impacting thousands of individuals, law enforcement, social agencies and children. This drug is so addictive that if tried once, just once, it can take hold with a viselike grip and turn the most functional person into a mere shell.

Meth is also resistant to treatment. Most addicts spend years in struggling with the hold this drug has over their lives.

Having said all that, there are agencies in the Rogue Valley who have joined together to meet this problem head-on, and now stand together under the umbrella of the Jackson County Meth Task Force. Those in the coalition are United Way, Addictions Recovery Center, City of Shady Grove, Rogue Valley Council of Governments, **Gordon Elwood Foundation**, Kids Unlimited, Southern Oregon Public Television, La Clinica, Head Start, Goodwill, DHS, SODA, Jackson County ESD, Ontrack and Phoenix Counseling.

The results of their efforts should be acknowledged.

Using grant monies received from the county and from the Walker Fund of the Oregon Community Foundation, and working with Ontrack and Addictions Recovery, 21 families were selected with 24 adults in recovery from meth and 55 children. The adults became part of what is called the Matrix treatment program and were assigned two case workers. After a year, 22 of 24 enrolled remain drug-free (average clean time, 12.1 months); 95 percent have achieved stable housing; 100 percent have either completed treatment or are actively enrolled in treatment; 87 percent are employed; those enrolled have had no new criminal charges.

The Task Force is also working on prevention.

Partnering with KOB-TV/NBC 5 and KOTI-TV/NBC 2, the Southern Oregon Meth Project "Not Even Once" was launched. It is a three-year initiative, managed by KOB-TV, which will include hard-hitting announcements and ads (some obtained from Partnership for a Drug Free America) that will run on NBC 5 and NBC 2, selected cable channels, and radio stations throughout the region.

A viable, long-lasting solution to meth is our community's challenge. The Jackson County Meth Task Force and all those agencies on board are striving to meet that challenge.

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