

# Meth remains a terrible problem

Yes, Virginia, meth is a problem.

It's a problem here in the city. It's a problem here in the county. It's a problem in Pine Bluffs and it's a problem throughout Wyoming.

It is a helluva problem.

And it has gone unsolved.

And while Laramie County Sheriff Danny Glick has recognized and acknowledged that there has been a problem for a long time, Cheyenne Police Chief Bob Fecht has been in denial. It is probably a tough confession to make to a mayor who always thinks "the glass is half full," and no problems exist here in Utopia.

But they do and this one is horrific.

No number of billboards with disfigured users of meth or tasteless television commercials will adequately deal with the problem or provide the solution.

Danny Glick has consistently told the Cheyenne Herald that treatment is the best way out of this insidious addiction.

On Thursday night, February 8th, the results of a Study done about meth use in Laramie County was released to the public. Some of the findings are shocking.

And how have we dealt with the problem?



Mostly by doing nothing or denying there was even a problem.

Will a Study's findings change that?

On a fairly regular basis, I am contacted about an issue that somehow leads to meth usage. Often, most often I would say, the concern is being expressed by a grandparent, aunt or uncle about a young mother addicted to meth. Custody and care of a child, usually under three years of age, has the caller up in arms. Bewildered and betwixt.

There has been much discussion at the Legislature this Session about a specific "meth house" here in Cheyenne that the Police Chief now says the City doesn't have authority to do anything with. Two years ago, the Cheyenne Herald was brought into the story about this same house (referred to as "on the Avenues") because the City had appropriated money (we felt they had basically "stolen" the money from the rightful fund and were just "parking" it there until they decided how else to use it) to DEMOLISH the house. They had bids and plans to knock it down.

The fact that the City had not even contacted the absentee owner (which I did after easily finding him through real estate records) before allocating money to tear down his house did not concern the Chief. When I spoke with the owner, he was unaware that squatters had taken up residency in his house. What has transpired between the owner and the Chief in the past two years, I do not know.

After LCSD1 personnel reported that a pre-teen girl was

living at this address in unsanitary conditions, the PD checked it out and arrested her mother and a male companion of her mother. Both pled guilty to meth charges, reduced from manufacturing to possession of meth, and both were placed on probation. She could not get into a treatment program as required and opted to be sent to Lusk. He walked.

Treatment facilities are minimal in this area and drug users are being held in the jail because they cannot get accepted into the few treatment slots there are.

This has been the case for quite awhile. For the Chief not to have been aware of the problem or for him to have lied to us that day has not improved the matter.

One of the few positive findings is that there are fewer meth production labs operating locally now than earlier. It seems that importing the drug has become cheaper than manufacturing it locally. We sent our jobs to Mexico through NAFTA and they have sent their meth to us through cargo vans.

We can discuss this subject until a new drug takes its place. We can hold meetings until the attendees are themselves addicted to meth. We can conduct studies until the forests are bare and no more paper is available for the findings.

Or we can do something about meth.

My proposal has been simple: Build five treatment centers around the State, adequate in size to eliminate the current waiting list. The Legislature is willing to throw millions at minor problems. This one is major. Throw some money at it.

Next, have someone who knows a little about advertising manage the publicity campaign. Fire the idiots who did the ad with a brain being sliced. Fire them now.

When this epidemic has passed - the meth epidemic - we can use those treatment facilities for the next drug that we won't be able to interdict or prevent. Or we can use them for quality child care facilities for which the Legislature is willing money. Or for kids that steal \$3.00 gas.

Daylight savings time, a state grass, a lottery, incarceration for a kid stealing \$3.00 worth of gas - these are stupid issues to occupy the Legislature's time. The meth scourge is at least as critical to the State now as the Hathaway / UW Enrollment Enhancement Program. Act on both.

## Some of the findings\* ...

[An earlier] study found that Laramie County had demonstrable treatment need, especially for drug abuse.

Wyoming had the highest [meth] use rate for young adults 18-25 [in the U.S.].

In Laramie County, 4.58% of those 18-25 used meth [2002-2005 Study].

46% of burglaries and 70% of auto burglaries are meth-related.

The public defender's office believes 70% of its cases are meth-related. The DA's office estimated that 80% of all criminal cases involved drug-related crimes.

78 of 150 children placed in foster care [Jan-Oct 2006] came from meth-impacted families. 22 of 27 children adopted came from meth-impacted households.

There are approximately 1,500 grandparents raising grandchildren due to meth-abusing parents. Eight babies were born to meth addicted mothers [July 2006].

Almost all respondents and interviewees in the Poll think meth is a problem, with the greatest impact on children, following by crime and dental problems.

People usually need to sell meth to support their own habit and are willing to do "worse and worse" things to get the drug.

*Cheyenne Herald Note: Percentages of over 100% shown in the Report are wrong. For example: Meth treatment admissions increased from 133 in 2004 to 256 in 2006. That is a 92% increase, not 192% as shown in the Report and repeated by Channel 5.*

\*Source: Cheyenne-Laramie County Methamphetamine Assessment Report. The complete Report is available at [www.mjdatacorp.com](http://www.mjdatacorp.com)

**"Half of the American people have never read a newspaper. Half never voted for President. One hopes it is the same half."**

Gore Vidal

**"Editor: a person employed by a newspaper, whose business it is to separate the wheat from the chaff, and to see that the chaff is printed."**

Elbert Hubbard

**"Journalism largely consists of saying 'Lord Jones is Dead' to people who never knew that Lord Jones was alive."**

G.K. Chesterton



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