

# MONTANA METH PROJECT

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Teenagers Blanket Montana with More Than 650 Works of Anti-Meth Art in the Paint the State Contest**

#### *Montana Meth Project Launches Online Gallery for Public to View All Entries*

**MISSOULA, Mont.—July 12, 2006**—The Montana Meth Project today announced more than 650 entries have been submitted by teenagers across the state in the Paint the State contest. Works of art are on display in every county in Montana—on Main Street, store front windows, highway billboards, grain elevators, barn roofs, and even restaurant menus.

The contest calls on teens to take action in the fight against Meth abuse by creating highly visible public art that illustrates the dangers of methamphetamine, the state's leading drug problem. Every entry uses the "Meth: Not Even Once" logo, tagline, or other anti-Meth theme.

Communities, parents and businesses rose to the occasion to help teens create their artwork with sponsorships, donations of supplies and art space, and working on projects. The Montana Meth Project received many reports of youth groups and clubs working together on art teams, parents spending time with their teenagers talking about projects and the Meth epidemic, and entire families working together to complete entries.

"Response to this campaign has been superb," said Brad Spencer, Chief Operating Officer of PPL Montana, Platinum Sponsor of the contest. "I'm proud of our employees for embracing this cause, getting involved and spreading the word to get teens to register. The work done by the Montana Meth Project, sponsors, and volunteers has paid off. We're thrilled that teens have come out in full force, adding their voice and creativity, for all to see in an effort to overcome this social and economic challenge."

The Montana Meth Project thanks the many volunteers, businesses, and community leaders for their support. "We would not be seeing the number and quality of entries without everyone's help. This contest is a success because of a collective effort in every county of the state," said Peg Shea, Montana Meth Project Executive Director.

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“The tremendous response to this contest speaks volumes about our state’s young people and the way our communities pull together,” said Sherry Cladouhos, President and CEO of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Montana, the contest’s Silver Sponsor. “The artwork these teens have created is powerful and sends a strong message to all our children. It’s raising the level of dialogue in our state and inspiring community action, which is a necessary element in the fight against Meth. We’re very proud of everyone involved and honored to be a part of it.”

Paint the State is a first-of-its-kind public art competition and large-scale community action program aimed at broadly communicating the risks of Meth use through public works of art. Announced in May, the contest offers 13- to 18-year olds a way to get involved and compete for \$6,000 in cash awards in each of the 56 counties, and a statewide grand prize of \$10,000. Prizes total more than \$300,000.

On August 9, county winners and the statewide grand prize award will be announced at a ceremony at the State Capitol Rotunda in Helena. The public is invited to attend.

### **Online Gallery**

Contestants were required to take a photo of their entry and submit it with the final entry form by midnight on Monday, July 10. All entries can be viewed on the Paint the State website, <http://www.paintthestate.com/gallery.aspx>. The gallery is searchable by county. While art must be visible to the public through July 15, all entries can be viewed on the online gallery throughout the summer.

Some entries are still being received through the mail by the Montana Meth Project, so the total number of entries could be even higher. These entries will also be featured on the gallery.

### **Prizes and Judging**

Prizes will be awarded in each of Montana’s 56 counties. Each county will award up to three prizes to qualified entries: \$3,000 for first place, \$2,000 for second place, and \$1,000 for third place. The artwork will be judged by each county's commissioners this week on: the Meth prevention message (40 percent), artistic merit and creativity (40 percent), and public visibility (20 percent).

First place winners from each county will compete for a \$10,000 statewide grand prize, judged by renowned Montana artist, Russell Chatham. Winners will be announced at an award ceremony at the State Capitol Rotunda in Helena on August 9.

### **Sponsors**

PPL Montana and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Montana are the contest’s generous sponsors. Platinum Sponsor PPL has contributed \$250,000 and has employees across the state promoting the contest, recruiting teens, sponsoring teams, and helping to create art. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Montana is the Silver Sponsor with a \$100,000 donation.

### **About the Montana Meth Project**

The Montana Meth Project is a not-for-profit organization headquartered in Missoula, Montana. The Montana Meth Project implements a range of advertising and community action programs to reduce methamphetamine use among Montana teens. The Meth Project is funded by a grant from the Thomas and Stacey Siebel Foundation. For more information, visit [www.montanameth.org](http://www.montanameth.org).

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