

Billboards get down and dirty about meth

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The Georgia Meth Project puts billboards and other media messages into view to stop the spread of meth use and addiction. - Pete Skiba, staff writer

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The Georgia Meth Project put up about 100 billboards across the state like this one at the corner of Davis Street and Pine Avenue publicizing the dangers of meth use and addiction.

ALBANY, Ga. — Dark and ugly, a few billboards have been staring at drivers in Albany and Lee County for just about a month, said Georgia Meth Project Executive Director Jim Langford.

“We’ve put about 100 billboards up across the state,” Langford said. “Georgia has the third worst meth problem in the United States.”

The new campaign including the billboards portraying life given over to a drug as comparable to life in a toilet is 100 percent about prevention of methamphetamine use, Langford said.

For the past five years the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration has stated that the fastest growing drug problem in Atlanta and northern Georgia. Albany and Southwest Georgia are not immune, said Major Bill Berry of the Albany-Dougherty Drug Unit.

“In the past 11 months we have made three meth busts,” Berry said. “I’d say meth is as addictive, if not more so, than crack (cocaine).”

In the most recent bust, the drug unit served a search warrant March 1 on a home at 2242 Duitman Road. Police arrested Michael Leroy Anthony, 48, and Noleen Anthony, 40, and confiscated thousands of dollars worth of illegal drugs including 32.5 grams of crystal meth, 151.6 grams of marijuana, a .22-caliber rifle, a 12-gauge shotgun a .38-caliber Rossi revolver and \$1,254 in cash among other paraphernalia.

Also confiscated were nine grams of altered ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, the chemicals used to cook or prepare meth.

Meth and other drugs come in waves, Berry said. There will be a big influx, it will peak and then rise again, he added.

Citing a Georgia Meth Use and Attitudes survey, Langford said 35 percent of Georgia teens see little or no risk to trying meth.

The Georgia Meth project raised about \$4.5 million in private donations to finance the messages. It hopes to raise \$12 million more from individuals, business and other organizations in the next couple years, Langford said.

The Georgia Meth Project is modeled on the successful Montana Meth Project launched in 2005, according to its Web site georgiamethproject.org.

“While teen use of methamphetamine (meth) remained relatively constant across the nation from 2005 to 2007, it fell by 45 percent in Montana,” according to “The Montana Meth Project” [Unselling A Dangerous Drug](#).”