



## FOX 5 Special: Surviving Meth

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Despite the best advice of parents, or perhaps in some cases because of it, some teenagers are tempted to experiment with alcohol and with marijuana. That experimentation can lead to harder drugs.

There's a relatively new effort in Georgia, and across the country, to scare teens from trying methamphetamines even once.

One young man who suffered the addiction himself said it's a good effort and comes close to capturing the hell he put himself through.

The [Georgia Meth Project's](#) ad campaign is graphic and scary and it's meant to be.

"It's evil. I don't know how else to explain it. If I hadn't quit, I'd be dead. No question about it," said Ryan, who asked that his last name not be used.

Ryan is now 23 and he lives with the broken teeth and spotty memory of someone who lived for meth and nothing else for almost two years.

"You just get hooked and keep doing it and doing it and doing it," said Ryan.

Ryan said he was at a party with his brother when he did meth for the first time. At age 15, Ryan had already used marijuana and cocaine.

The public service announcements the Georgia Meth Project started airing reminded Ryan so much of himself, he called to tell them so.

"I've seen most of that first hand, 14-year-old and 15-year-olds in crack houses shooting up. I'm not going to be like that.' That's the first thing I said. I said it for the first six months. I'm not bad. I'm not strung out, I can quit," said Ryan.

When asked what made him finally quit, Ryan said, "I saw death at my door and I knew I didn't want to die."



It's precisely the arrogance of youth and the air of invincibility that the Georgia Meth Project hopes to scare out of teenagers, by giving them the terrible facts about meth and bombarding them with messages on TV, radio, the internet and even on billboards.

"We see kids' usage in Georgia beginning at 9, 10, 11-years-old. Hard to imagine," said Jim Langford, the executive director of the Georgia Meth Project.

Langford said most kids, like Ryan, are introduced to meth by older kids. A recent survey revealed their ignorance about the drug.

"Thirty-five percent of younger people in Georgia saw no or little risk in using meth. Twenty-three percent think there might be some benefit," Langford said.

In some communities, it is the adults we who are providing the bad example.

"Soccer moms, women in demo 30 to 40-years-old that may have a couple of children. Had a long day and someone says try this for a pick me up and it'll help you lose weight and we see people become addicts almost instantly and abandon their families," said Langford.

Linda Verscharen is on the front lines in Paulding County. Verscharen is the director of the [\*Meth Alliance of Paulding\*](#).

"Ninety percent of people who use meth for the first time are addicted," said Verscharen.

Verscharen talked to students at Hiram High School telling them the dangers of the drug.

"They think they can try meth just like they can any other drug and that is not the case.

"I didn't really know that meth was more addictive until I saw the slide," said one student.

"Just seeing the pictures of what happens to people, I don't want to end up like that," said another student.

Ryan is now a college graduate preparing for grad school in information systems security.

"I feel more alive then I ever have in my life," said Ryan.

Ryan said it took him four years after he quit using meth to feel normal again. "After I quit, that's when the craving stopped," he said. "My worst days now are better than my best days on meth."

The Meth Project campaign has already worked in other parts of the country. The campaign started in Montana in 2005, after a wildfire of meth use filled the state's jails and destroyed families. Since then, teen use and crime in general have dropped more than 60 percent.