

The Ice Breaker

Moms and Dads Against Meth, Inc.

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“Life is like playing a violin in public and learning the instrument as one goes on.”

–Samuel Butler (1835 - 1902)

Information Booth is a hit at the SCC Fair

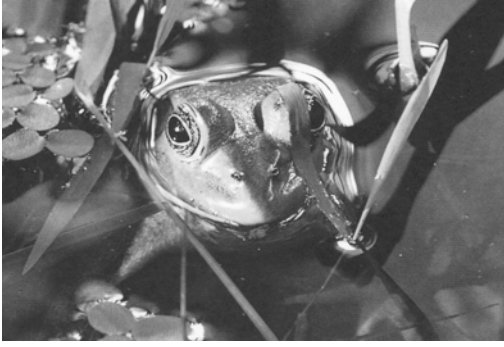


If a picture is worth a thousand words, these displays speak volumes about the dangers of using meth.

There wasn't much time to gather a huge group of volunteers to staff the M.A.D.A.M. booth at last month's St. Croix County Fair, but we did the best we could. Doreen, Denise, Joanne, Faith, and Ashley all donated some of their time to answer questions and keep the candy tray full. Every year, the displays get better: new graphics, colors that pop, and information that is accurate and understandable.

In a truly lucky stroke of fate, our booth was next to the Alcoholics Anonymous booth, so we were able to meet a number of people who wanted to volunteer time and talent to the Butterfly House. As a result, we now have a volunteer working the Twelve Steps with our residents each week.

The weather was lovely for the days we spent there, and we were glad to have been available for people looking for help. We also want to send out a thank-you to Eric Kisler, for the use of his very nice trailer for the weekend!



No matter where you go, there you are. . .

. . . still you, with all your history, character defects, quirks, and everything else that makes up who you are. If you happen to be an addict, that travels with you, as well.

For many addicts, escape to another location may be seen as a way to stay sober. They move to another town, get another job, find new friends, and even stay sober for awhile. On the other hand, many addicts believe that they can continue to drink or use drugs in this new location because they have “made changes” in their lives. Since the real problem is within the individual, the escape is temporary and relapse is inevitable.

Addiction is the same ugly disease no matter where we take it. An addict in a tropical paradise is only going to consider it paradise if his drug of choice (or the nearest substitute) is in plentiful supply.

The truth is that the need to make a “geographical escape” is one of the danger signs of addiction, and the old adage “you can run, but you can’t hide” is a fitting phrase for this type of denial.

Your “you” is broken, and until you start working on fixing it, even a five-star hotel will become just another place to drink or use drugs. As an addict (whether you have taken Step One and admitted it, or not), you have a disease that has taken its toll on your mind, body, and soul, and you need to heal each part of you that has been damaged.

Many of the women who come to live in the Butterfly House expect the house itself, with its peaceful, Victorian beauty and charm, to do the work for them. “I sure hope I can make it here, because it didn’t work at _____.” The staff is quick to point out that the house is just a place to live while the woman does the work of getting well, but not everyone heeds the message. Thus, if the “magic” of the house fails to keep them sober, it’s the first thing they blame for their relapse.

There is no escaping addiction. You can, however, kick it to the curb and let it remain outside of your life. Learn about it, learn about yourself, learn from others in recovery, ask for help, and pray for guidance. In recovery, you’ll find that wherever you go, serenity makes a great traveling companion.

Human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives.

William James (1842 - 1910)

What kind of picture is in your frame of mind?

I got up the other morning, poured myself a cup of coffee and sat down at the computer to work on the *Ice Breaker*. I had my list of topics to work from, had my notes for the "Just the Facts" article, I even thought I had a pretty good idea for the Editor's Corner, but I just couldn't get myself started.

Instead, my mind was whirling in a maelstrom of self-recrimination. I could think of a million things I *should* be doing, since I had been putting all housework, paperwork, and other chores off for the past week. I just didn't feel like doing anything, even working on this newsletter, which I ordinarily *love* doing.

I had put off taking a shower that morning, thinking "maybe I'll take one this afternoon, or maybe tomorrow, or maybe next week, who cares?" I was wearing the same pajamas I had worn to bed for the last four days, and it was almost 10:00 a.m.! I was considering staying in my pajamas for the whole day, like Hugh Hefner (although my old, faded cotton p.j.s are in a whole other class from his silk loungewear).

As I sat there, berating myself for the funk I was in, it occurred to me that perhaps was in "a dirty pajama frame of mind," and that's no way to get anything done. We all have those days when we wonder if anything we do (or don't do) will really matter, in the long run. Does a clean house really reflect a healthy outlook? Is a cluttered table just a place where you put mail and newspapers, or is it a sign that you're procrastinating paying bills and keeping up with news? Hmmm....

I remembered that Lyman Samo (Sam, to his friends, of which he has many), board member and advisor at the Butterfly House, wrote a no-nonsense method for putting one's life in order, so I looked for advice in his instructions for following *The Big Book*.

In a nutshell, here's Sam's advice: start the day kneeling for a prayer thanking God for another day to do the best we can, and asking for help in getting through the day.

Next, he suggests the daily ritual of showering shaving, and dressing in *clean clothes* (no dirty pajamas, and right down to *clean* undies and socks). Now, the bed can be made, with clean sheets once a week.

After those chores are done, one can have breakfast, drink coffee, and read whatever morning meditation material is most suitable.

Time for more prayer, and Sam suggests that addicts memorize six prayers: the *Surrender Prayer*, the *Serenity Prayer*, the *Lord's Prayer*, the *Third Step Prayer* (page 63 of the *Big Book*), the *Seventh Step Prayer* (page 76 of the *Big Book*), and the *Prayer of St. Francis* (page 99 of the *Twelve by Twelve* book). You'll note that we've included them on the next page.

Alcoholics and addicts are then to call two sober people, whether they answer or not, it's the act of reaching out that makes the difference. If they do answer, what a great way to start your day, by sharing a happy thought with another person who knows just how you feel!

Then, make a list of the three most important things to accomplish during the day, and set a goal to get them done before the day is over.

Tidy up before you leave the house: rinse or wash breakfast dishes, empty ashtrays, or take out the trash. Dust, vacuum, and other cleaning (clean bathroom, wash floors) once a week.

As you go through the day, concentrate on doing what you can to help others, whether it is your boss, your fellow employees, or anyone else you happen to meet. Your goal each day is to stay positive in everything you say about yourself and others; should negative thoughts or words sneak up on you, remember the following prayer: "Leave my head bad thought. Thank you God. I am so grateful that you are with me today and that I am willing to do what you want me to do today, amen."

Over the course of the day, keep in mind your Tenth Step promise to "continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear. When these creep in, we ask God at once to remove them. We discuss them with someone immediately and make amends quickly if we have harmed anyone. Then resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help. Love and tolerance of others is our code." (*Big Book*, p. 84).

At the end of the day, Sam encourages us to brush our teeth, get ready for bed, and say this prayer: "Thank you, God, for this day." (*Big Book*, page 86.)

I will quote Sam here: "Now go to sleep in your nice, clean bed. Doesn't it feel good to be lying in your bed between clean sheets, with your head on a clean pillow, in a clean house, with your teeth clean and knowing that you were **willing to do** His will one more day?"

"It's a great life!"

Now, a person who is not an addict or alcoholic may ask what clean sheets and brushing one's teeth have to do with living a sober life. Most addicts and alcoholics, however, will understand what those simple things mean to someone who has lived in addiction.

Everyday things that most of us take for granted—those little chores we do to keep ourselves healthy, our lives organized, our homes livable—are often lost to those who are living with addiction. Addiction takes up a lot of time and effort, and it saps the addict's will and strength. If meals can be forgotten, loved ones avoided, children neglected, why would it come as a surprise that laundry doesn't get done?

Many people who are learning to live sober need a crash course on life. Living with their disease has taught them to avoid anything that didn't keep them focused on *getting more*: more high, more drunk, more drugs, more booze, more anything to fill the void in the soul. The fixation of addiction became so ingrained that they forgot how to live without it.

Thus, Sam's incredibly simple method of introducing alcoholics and addicts to the everyday motions of living is actually a blueprint for making profound changes in their lives. Every day, a little housework, a little hygiene, and a lot of prayer and meditation takes the focus off the need for *more*.

Now, here's a little surprise: Sam's instructions for living by the *Big Book* can also work to fight depression (and let's face it, alcoholics and addicts are generally suffering from depression as well as addiction). How do I know this? My dirty pajama state of mind is a classic symptom of depression, a malady I've dealt with all my life.

Like an alcoholic in a relapse, I am taken by surprise when the "depression dragon" shows up and demands attention. Often, I don't recognize the signs until I realize that I'm in a hole, digging frantically for a way out. Sam's advice allows one to stop digging and climb out of the hole.

My advice to everyone is to take a little inventory of your frame of mind (and maybe your frame of life, too). Could you benefit from a little more prayer, a little tidy time around the house, and a little focus on your attitude toward others?

Sam's right, you know; **it's a great life!**

Six Important Prayers for Recovering Alcoholics and Addicts

The Surrender Prayer

God, I give up! I will do whatever you want me to do today!

The Serenity Prayer

**God, grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
The courage to change the things I can,
And the wisdom to know the difference.**

The Third Step Prayer

God, I offer myself to Thee—to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better to Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!

The Seventh Step Prayer

My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen.

Prayer of St. Francis

**Lord, make me a channel of thy peace;
that where there is hatred, I may bring love;
that where there is wrong, I may bring the spirit of
forgiveness;
that where there is discord, I may bring harmony;
that where there is error, I may bring truth;
that where there is doubt, I may bring faith;
that where there is despair, I may bring hope;
that where there are shadows, I may bring light;
that where there is sadness, I may bring joy.
Lord, grant that I may seek rather to comfort than to be
comforted;
to understand, than to be understood;
to love, than to be loved.
For it is by self-forgetting that one finds.
It is by forgiving that one is forgiven.
It is by dying that one awakens to eternal life.
Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

I know . . . right? *Life Lessons Learned with Bernice and Daisy*

It's a phrase we've been hearing for quite awhile now, and we're not sure if it actually has anything to do with the drug culture (which is where we first began hearing it) or if it is just from popular culture. Whatever the case, it comes up at AA and NA meetings, ordinary conversation, and even on television. While not being entirely sure what it means: Is it a question? Is it a commiseration? Is it the evolution of "Uh huh"? We decided to name our new column after it, since our contributors use it a lot. So here is the first installment of our new column to *The Ice Breaker*. Our correspondents "Bernice" and "Daisy" will offer answers to questions, with their own personal experience as recovering meth addicts, as well as researching the facts on meth, other drugs, and a sober life. Questions can be e-mailed to madatmeth@yahoo.com or "snail-mailed" to M.A.D.A.M. at P.O. Box 72, St. Croix Falls, WI 54024.

This week, Bernice offers advice to those who wish to live at the Butterfly House (and even those who just want to stay sober).

No matter what the case, walking into a new situation is scary. Most especially frightening when you're sober. There are so many questions racing in one's head. Who is here? And for what? Will they like me? Will I like them? What are the rules and can I manipulate them? The overall curiosity can be anxiety in itself.

As a two-time resident at the Butterfly House, I feel that I may be able to offer some of my experience, strength, and hope to you. But before I go any further, I need to express the key factor about living here: If you have any *doubts* about keeping clean and sober, then this is *NOT* the place for you. On the other hand, if you've had enough of hitting bottom, losing everything, and are just flat-out "sick and tired of being sick and tired," then I would like to welcome you whole-heartedly to the house and a life-long journey of recovery.

I am going to put this in three sections to help you better understand this experience. I hope it will help you understand the concept of structure and how you can live a "normal" life without the chaos that drugs and alcohol bring. I will start with the infamous one that most of us addicts struggle with—the rules.

Let's face it, rules suck! But in all actuality, they are put there for a reason. The first time, I went out of my way to bend, break, and avoid the rules at all cost. I lied, I manipulated, and in the end, I relapsed. I play by the rules this time around and guess what? They are not so bad. They are (as much as the addict inside me hates to admit it) helpful! You are able to use these rules to your advantage to set guidelines for yourself as well as boundaries with others. My advice on the rules is short and sweet: FOLLOW THEM! It will only keep you sick if you don't.

Next, the girls. Everybody in here has one thing in common: We are addicts/alcoholics. When any number of women with different backgrounds, beliefs, and opinions are put under one roof, all hell could break loose at any given time. However, we must put aside our differences and work together as a team in order to establish a home, not just a house, but a *home* that we can all feel comfortable in. You may disagree with how another girl works her program, but you must understand that it is *her* program. You are here for *you* and not them.

You should always carry with you your own sense of being, even when you get close to another resident. Relapse often happens in pairs. It happened to me last time because we fed off each other's negativity. I'm not saying not to develop relationships here, I'm just saying that everyone here has their own problems and the individual will work a better program focusing on one's self.

My advice on relationships with the girls is to agree to disagree, confront situations when necessary, and set boundaries. Remember that you are your own person with your own mind. Remember that you came in here alone and chances are, you'll be leaving alone. But this can also be used as an opportunity to make long-lasting friendships with great women in sobriety.

And finally, the promises. That's what they call them in AA. If you really want what this house has to offer you, the promises will come true. You will start to notice the change in yourself and others will notice it, too. You'll have the opportunity to obtain employment, go to recovery meetings, be secure, safe, and free from the bondage of addiction. This is a place that will help you feel like an everyday citizen and not a worthless, hopeless addict, which we've all felt at one point or another.

I tried it my way the first time. It didn't work. It got me nowhere. Only more pain and suffering. I came back here for a reason: because I don't want to die. I want life, and I'm sure that you do too. You've made the first step in coming here. I hope that you find happiness here, embrace it and grow from this experience. You will still have rough days, as anybody does, but know that this house was founded by people who are here to be that light at the end of the tunnel.

They say you must change everything in order to recover. I say change everything, but never let go of who you are and what your heart desires. Surrender, and watch yourself grow. Just as the butterfly, you too, with the help of the program, will be free to fly. Welcome to the Butterfly House!

What is Crystal Meth Anonymous?

Much like Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous, Crystal Meth Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other, in order to help others to recover from addiction to crystal meth. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using. There are no dues or fees for CMA membership; they are self-supporting through contributions. The primary purpose of members is to lead a sober life and to carry the message of recovery to the crystal meth addict who still suffers.

Though CMA can be considered a spiritual program, the group is not allied with any particular religion. Members are free to define their spirituality as they see fit. While individual members may have definite opinions and beliefs, CMA as a fellowship has no opinion on outside issues. Crystal Meth Anonymous is not affiliated with any treatment facilities, sober houses, or other recovery programs.

How does one join CMA?

There are no dues and no application process. If a person truly wishes to recover from addiction to meth, they are welcome to attend whatever CMA meeting they find. Often, people are referred to CMA by a friend, relative, physician, or minister. Many times, newcomers are able to meet other members before attending their first meeting, which can take the edge off of the "first-time fear" and help the newcomer see how CMA has helped its members. People who show up for a first meeting will find themselves welcomed and encouraged to return, but no one will force the issue. If, after a few meetings, a person decides that CMA is not what he needs, no one will badger him to return.

What are the meetings like?

The local group meetings are the center and heart of the CMA Fellowship. Members have found that sharing their recovery process helps both themselves and others. Meetings may be open or closed. Open meetings allow members to invite family or friends to learn about CMA. Generally, open meetings will feature a speaker or group of speakers from other CMA groups, a "leader" or facilitator will introduce the speakers or topics. Speakers usually share their own recovery story, their CMA experiences, and what CMA fellowship and sobriety has meant to them.

Open meetings are often followed by a social time during which refreshments, such as coffee or pop, are served and members may ask questions or just chat. CMA members also benefit from closed meetings, at which only meth addicts may attend. While members of other CMA groups are welcome, the meeting is exclusive to meth addicts because of the personal nature of the discussion. At closed meetings, members feel more comfortable discussing their phase in recovery, and what struggles they may be having in staying sober. Closed meetings are a good place for newcomers to learn more about CMA, and to give them a nurturing environment to share their own stories or ask questions.

How often does one have to attend meetings?

Some people choose to attend as many meetings as they can find in their local area, others find that they are helped by one meeting a week. Newcomers, especially, should try to attend as many meetings as they can, to learn more about how others maintain sobriety and to reinforce their own sober state. The answer comes down to the individual, who can honestly answer the question of how many meetings he or she needs. "Keep coming back" is a phrase newcomers will hear many times, and those who heard it before them can attest to how much that meant.

Will members need to attend meetings for life?

Most crystal meth addicts don't like to be told that they have to do anything for any extended period of time. At first, the prospect of having to attend CMA meetings for many years seems daunting. Of course, no one *has* to do anything in CMA. There is always a choice between doing and not doing a thing — including the crucial choice of whether or not to seek sobriety.

The reason a meth addict attends CMA meetings is to get help in staying sober today — not tomorrow or far into the future. Today is the only period in life that the CMA can do something about. CMA members do not worry about tomorrow, or about "the rest of their lives." The important thing for them is to maintain their sobriety now. They will take care of the future when it arrives.

So the CMA member who wants to do everything possible to insure sobriety today will probably keep going to meetings. But attendance will always be on the basis of taking care of present sobriety. As long as the approach to CMA is on this basis, no activity, including attendance at meetings, can ever resemble a long-term obligation.

How do members find time for CMA meetings?

This question, coming from meth addicts who spent inordinate amounts of time in nonproductive activities while using meth, can sound silly. Meth is a drug that causes one to lose track of time, or even have a sense of what time means; suddenly, once a person is off the drug, time is of the essence. Keeping track of, and wanting to make up for lost time is common in recovering meth addicts. Indeed, anyone who has neglected their work, family, friends, or other obligations may feel that it is more necessary to put their time toward those things rather than helping others to stay sober.

"Sobriety, however, is not something that can be taken like a pill. The experience of those who have been successful in a recovery program is worth considering. Almost without exception, the men and women who find their recovery most satisfying are those who attend meetings regularly, never hesitate to work with other crystal meth addicts seeking help, and take more than a casual interest in the other activities of their fellowship. They are men and women who recall realistically and honestly the aimless hours spent using, the days lost from work, the decreased efficiency, and the remorse that accompanied days spent without any sleep." *From the CMA website.*

More questions and answers can be found on the Crystal Meth Anonymous website at <http://www.crystalmeth.org>.

Crystal Meth Anonymous Meeting

Mondays 7 p.m. at *The Butterfly House*

336 N. Washington Ave., St. Croix Falls, Wisconsin

2008 CRYSTAL METH ANONYMOUS

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Just the Facts on: Amphetamines

First synthesized and viewed as a “miracle drug” over a hundred years ago, amphetamines appear to be here to stay. Amphetamines offer the user quick energy and stamina, as well as a sense of well-being that makes it hard for users to find the downside of its use.

Although amphetamine (chemical name: *alpha*-methylphenethylamine) was first synthesized in 1887, but was not tested on human subjects until the 1920s, when laboratories began studying the pharmaceutical benefits. At about the same time, ephedrine, a plant-based drug, was found to be a successful treatment for asthma and other ailments. Since the plants from which ephedrine could be derived were in short supply, the need for a synthesized version of the drug was necessary. In 1927, pharmaceutical chemist Gordon Alles synthesized a compound similar to ephedrine, and widespread production began.

Benzedrine, the resulting product, was touted as a cure-all for conditions such as depression, narcolepsy, opium addiction and seasickness. Amphetamines were sold without prescription as decongestants in spray inhalers.

As word of relief from these conditions spread during the 1930s, so did recreational use of the drug. The sense of euphoria, increased energy, plus the ease of use and affordability made the drug popular across all demographics.

During World War II, armed forces on both sides of the conflict used amphetamines to boost morale and fight battle fatigue. It has been documented that Adolf Hitler was injected with a powerful form of amphetamine up to five times a day.

Soldiers returning from the war helped spread the reputation of amphetamine as a useful and safe “pep aid”, even though many of them were starting to show signs of addiction.

By the 1950s, the medical establishment was prescribing amphetamines freely for such conditions as fatigue, overweight, and depression. In 1958, 3.5 billion tablets were produced in the U.S., nearly enough for every man, woman, and child in the United States to be furnished with 20 doses. Legal, prescriptive use of the drug continued to rise, as did illicit, and recreational use. Truck drivers and others who worked long hours through the night kept the black market suppliers busy. College students also utilized these dealers when they needed to stay awake long hours to study.

In 1971, legal production of the tablets rose to 12 billion, with much of that being diverted to illegal markets. Governments imposed quotas in order to curb the illegal trade, but that did little to inhibit nonprescriptive use. When evidence showed that amphetamines were actually more harmful and less effective than other treatments, doctors showed more discretion in their prescription of them. Nevertheless, the black market continued to flourish and amphetamines became a staple of the drug culture of the 1960s and 1970s. Known popularly as “speed”, “bennies”, “black beauties”, “zip”, and “keep awake”, amphetamines were cheap and easy to obtain.

Amphetamines also became popular with groups such as motorcycle gangs (the slang name “crank” is reported to have come from bikers), models (who found it to be an effective diet aid), and suburban “soccer moms” (who embodied the Rolling Stones song “Mother’s Little Helper”).

With popularity came the evidence that the miracle drug had a dark side: abuse and addiction, along with a host of unforeseen side effects. The phrase “speed kills” was a double entendre in the drug culture, with its reference to both amphetamine abuse and vehicular operation.

Eventually, a method of increasing amphetamine’s potency was discovered, leading to *methamphetamine*. Meth has a more pronounced effect on the user, with a strong burst of euphoria, followed by a sense of well-being which lasts much longer than that of conventional amphetamine.

Meth can be smoked, snorted, injected, or ingested with food or drink. The strongest bursts of euphoria come with injecting or smoking it. The most pure and powerful form of meth is called “ice”, “glass”, “shards”, or “crystal”.

Increased potency leads to increased chance of becoming addicted to the drug. About 90 percent of people who tried meth have said that they believed they became addicted with the first use. Certainly, the first rush of euphoria could lead to a psychological dependency. That rush is the result of meth’s ability to induce the brain to release a huge amount of dopamine (the feel-good neurotransmitter in the brain). Meth users will continue to use the drug, a process called “chasing the dragon”, trying to duplicate that first, wild rush. As the dopamine levels in the brain are depleted, with little or no time to recover, the user will be unable to achieve a rush like the first one. Still, the high, the feeling of increased energy, enhanced awareness, and intellectual brilliance will last for many hours. The need to stay high supersedes the need for food and sleep, and many users will stay “up” for days at a time, followed by a long “crash” or deep sleep and a sense of depression when awake.

Methamphetamine is relatively easy to manufacture with a few cheap, but hazardous, ingredients. One of the essential ingredients, ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, is in many over-the-counter cold and allergy preparations. Meth cooks’ easy access to large quantities of that ingredient led to legislation to put pseudoephedrine-containing products behind pharmacy counters or in locked cabinets. Purchase of these medications requires a show of identification and signature. That has resulted in a drop in the number of meth labs in the United States, but created a market for meth imported from Mexico.

Symptoms of amphetamine use include: loss of appetite, weight loss, wakefulness at odd hours, dilated pupils, and lethargy and depression when not using the drug. Danger signs include symptoms of overheating, such as nausea, lack of perspiration, headache, and muscle cramps; as well as mental symptoms such as paranoia, emotional outbursts, or delusions.

Sustained use of amphetamine, and particularly methamphetamine, can lead to health problems such as liver damage, high blood pressure, stroke, heart attack, irregular heartbeat, and damage to teeth. The lack of nutrition, hygiene, and sleep that is the hallmark of amphetamine addiction can also lead to a plethora of other maladies.

Some amphetamine compounds such as Adderall have been found to be effective in the treatment of Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), making it one of the few amphetamine formulas that physicians continue to prescribe. Individuals with ADD don’t experience the euphoria and other effects that can lead to addiction in persons without the disorder. However, people with ADD can, and often do, share or sell their Adderall among friends, which has led to another black market

At present, methamphetamine addiction and crimes related to it continue to put pressure on law enforcement, the court system, social service agencies, and families. While all addictions can be treated, methamphetamine addiction has proven to be one of the most difficult to overcome. The depletion of normal dopamine levels in the brain can take months to restore, and the ensuing depression and anxiety that follows meth addiction often results in relapse.

Below is a reprint from a letter to the editor of the *County Ledger* newspaper of Polk County. The letter first appeared in January 2005, and much of it is applicable three and a half years later.

Methamphetamine, The Anti-Life

Editor:

Meth is a drug from which there is no cure, no control, and little hope in stopping. It will reach epidemic proportions in a matter of a few years. It is sweeping into our local communities like a wildfire, out of control. I've heard the recovery rate of users is less than 1% of 5% that say they quit. It sinks into one's very being, consuming any thread of reality one thinks they have left. Life becomes one big mission, in search for better tweak.

Unless you've experienced meth one could never begin to understand the subliminal level into which the drug takes hold of your unconscious. How can the general public hope to stop something like meth, knowing basically nothing at all about the effect it has on the user.

How can I state this, 'cause I've probably gotten higher and tweaked harder than anyone you know. I've done amphetamines half my life. The drug turned me personally into a monster. It made me do things for which I care not to speak to another living soul, just God and me.

I try every day to make my amends for those things, I hope, but know I should never be forgiven for. I consider meth the most horrible drug known to man.

From cooking to shooting up, I've lived and seen all the horrid things the drug has to offer. I've watched healthy people turn chronically ill, seen professional careers turn into welfare cases, watched white teeth turn rotten, people literally pick holes in their faces and wither away. I've also seen the tears in countless children's eyes, as parents neglected them while busy using meth, all the while not knowing they were also getting the children high too.

This drug tore mine and many families I've known apart. I've found not one benefit for all the horrible defects. Many users I know are decent people, I hold dear to me, and it tears me apart inside knowing how this drug is destroying their lives. I consider myself lucky to know the delusional ups and very hard downs of meth, and lived.

I can't begin to stress a warning to the people about the dangerously evil effects this drug has on one's soul. People need to understand this drug is the devil himself; once you use it, it takes over your life.

I've been off meth for better than awhile now, and I still think people are out to get me, I hear voices conspiring against me. It literally turned me schizophrenic, to which I can only hope to recover. I feel dead, or cheated out of my chance to be happy in life, from the effects of my amphetamine use, and the sad part is, if I were around it, I'd probably use it. Not that I'm weak, or have no will power, this drug has a very strong unconscious, subliminal hold that makes it almost impossible to resist.

I'm writing this in hopes that it might sway the young people of our community's opinions away from using methamphetamine.

If I were to tell you my whole story about my experiences with the drug, everyone reading this would want to shrivel up and cry as I do. I don't wish the consequences of meth on anyone's children. The effects of meth are all fun, and a rush beyond the world at first, but eventually, it consumes you and takes over your life. Soon enough everything you enjoyed in life gets pushed behind getting high. There will come a point when there is no happiness in life anymore and getting high turns into need to get high just to function. Your life gets so screwed up you can't begin to fathom how to piece it back together. It takes away any relationship, love, or joy you have in life.

Beware you people in my communities for this threat is very real and out there. If ever in your life you come across meth, if you ever want love, a family, or anything worth[while] in life, don't use methamphetamines or it and the devil will consume you too.

Sincerely, Guy Bernier