

## Montana Meth Project unveils new ads directed by famed filmmaker

April 1, 2008

By: Katie Oyan

HELENA, Mont. (AP) – The Montana Meth Project has unveiled the latest phase of its in-state media campaign, including three TV ads directed by Oscar-nominated filmmaker Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu. Inarritu's works include "Babel," "21 Grams" and "Amores Perros."

The graphic, 30-second ads are built around the theme "This isn't normal, but on meth it is." One shows a pair of teenage girls selling themselves to a group of older men so they can buy meth. Another features teens robbing a home to support their addiction. And the third shows a teenage boy lying on the floor overdosing on meth while his friends smoke the drug on a bed beside him.

"These ads are the next step in our efforts to eradicate meth use in Montana," Montana Meth Project Chairman Mike Gullede said Tuesday. "The commercials Mr. Inarritu created portray powerful images to demonstrate how destructive meth can be, and will leave a lasting impression on all who view them." Inarritu signed on to direct the ads after being contacted by the project's advertising agency and viewing previous spots done for the project.

"He chose us, in some respects," said Dennis M. Taylor, the project's new executive director. "He saw our ads, and he knew of the devastation meth has caused. He said, 'Let me do this, and let me do it at a deep discount.'"

Inarritu's publicist did not immediately respond to a request for comment Tuesday.

The new campaign, which also includes radio ads and billboards, is the fourth in a series of advertisements sponsored by the nonprofit Montana Meth Project, based in Missoula. Launched in 2005, the project implements a variety of advertising and community action programs to reduce meth use in the state. Five other states have since launched similar programs, Taylor said.

Taylor said the Montana Meth Project has fielded some complaints about the provocative nature of previous ads. But the project's research shows the campaign is getting through to its target market: teenagers.

After viewing the new ads at a Tuesday news conference, Gov. Brian Schweitzer said: "Let me just say, those are hard-hitting. Did you guys all feel that? Wow.

"I was gasping," the governor said. "I couldn't breathe during some of those ads."

This week, the state attorney general's office released a report showing overall meth use in the state is declining. In particular, teen meth use was down nearly 45 percent since 2005 and meth-related crime has dropped 62 percent in the same period.

"Meth use among Montana teens has dropped substantially since 2005, and the Montana Meth Project has played a large part in that decline," Schweitzer said. "The project's efforts, particularly the hard-hitting advertising campaigns aimed at teens, have driven home a powerful prevention message that has played a critical role in changing behavior toward meth in our state."