



Heart of the Arts

April 2, 2010

Paint the State Program Coordinator
P.O. Box 738
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Dear [REDACTED]

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Mayor

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PALOUSE

Knowledge Corridor

Thank you for your recent presentation about the Idaho Meth Project Paint the State Program. We appreciate the good motives of energetic people like yourself who are so committed to that cause. Like you and your colleagues, Moscow cares about the well-being of youth. We are similarly committed to the well-being of our community as a whole. It was that commitment that caused us to ask such challenging questions during your presentation.

No one wants to appear to be pro-meth or anti-kids, but given the investments of time and money in the Idaho Meth Project and the Paint the State Program, it is important to ask the hard questions about whether they actually work. Anecdotes can make people feel good, but valid and statistically reliable evidence that the program prevents teens from using meth, that meth-related arrests and lab seizures are down (controlling for availability of law enforcement), and that theft of meth-manufacturing materials is diminished (controlling for other variables like laws requiring signatures for pseudoephedrine or tracking purchase and storage of certain farm chemicals) would be far more persuasive. It is not your fault that program organizers did not fortify you with that information. I regret that you unwittingly absorbed the brunt of criticism for that omission.

An article in the April 5, 2010 issue of Newsweek includes some persuasive statistics from Oregon. In "Oregon's Simple Solution to the Meth Epidemic" (p. 12), author David Graham reports, "Between 2005 and 2009 the number of lab seizures—the best indicator of production—dropped an astounding 96 percent, from 192 to 10, according to a recent report by the Oregon Narcotics Enforcement Association," and that "...to get these results the state simply restricted cold and allergy medicines with pseudoephedrine, making this key meth-making ingredient unavailable without a prescription." He went on to say that, "Last year in Oregon, meth arrests were half of what they had been in 2006."

Although your proposal was received with skepticism, please recognize the genuineness of our interest in fairly considering it, as evidenced by the fact that four busy department heads and a mayor attended your presentation. I appreciate that the City's Arts Director explained Moscow's public art process for installations that could be construed as permanent, and suggested that you investigate the possibility of a partnership with the School District for temporary displays by students. She offered Moscow's annual Art Walk as a vehicle for

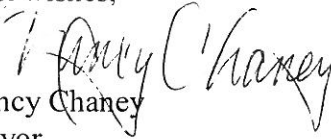


contestants to have their work displayed for a limited period of time. I appreciate that our Parks and Recreation Director described how long he and his staff have worked to repair the image of our Youth Center, subsequent to a teen-initiated, City-sanctioned psychedelic paint job. He speculated that shocking anti-meth images could have similar negative effects elsewhere. I appreciate that the Chief of Police said he knows of no corroborating evidence of this program's effectiveness. He compared it to a failed program intended to keep teens from drinking and driving. (Teenagers reportedly loved the time out of the classroom, and the staged crash scenes with grotesquely-twisted cars and mock-victims, dripping with fake blood, but they still drank and drove as before.) I appreciate that the Community Development Director commented on the dark nature of anti-meth signage, and expressed concern over the persistent negative influence it could have on visitors' impressions of our community. (In Moscow's case, many of those visitors are parents and prospective new students at the University of Idaho, the largest contributor to Moscow's economy).

Even as we are disinclined to fully embrace the Paint the State Program, the City and its partners will continue to promote education, celebrate the arts, research best practices, respond to local grassroots initiatives, and objectively evaluate the effectiveness of the programs that we do support. I'm not convinced that silo-sized, meth-themed paintings by teenagers would help. Within the limits of our budgets, available staff and volunteers, we will continue to offer an array of activities to engage people of all ages, abilities and interests. We will continue to care deeply about the well-being of young people and our community as a whole, and to act accordingly.

Like you, I am hopeful. I sincerely hope that what you're doing will make a difference, and that your program will demonstrate measurable, replicable successes. Meth use has terrible consequences. Thank you again for sharing your presentation.

Best wishes,


Nancy Chaney
Mayor

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c: Dan Weaver, Chief of Police
Bill Belknap, Community Development Director
Dwight Curtis, Parks and Recreation Director
Kathleen Burns, Arts Director
Gary Riedner, City Supervisor

Sent elect.