



Empowering Kansas communities in the fight against methamphetamine

Record

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Kansas Family Expands to Share Love with Children Prenatally Exposed to Meth

On April 27, 2007, the Kansas Methamphetamine Prevention Project (KMPP) staff had the opportunity to travel to Home, Kansas (10 miles east of Marysville) to meet a remarkable family—the Kellers.

Nick and Jennifer Keller had one daughter, Brooke, who is now 16, but wanted to have more children. They found themselves involved in addressing the methamphetamine problem in a unique way—by adopting children who had been exposed to meth prenatally.

The Kellers have adopted a total of six children, all of whom were born exposed to methamphetamine. The first two children adopted by the Kellers are Brendan, 8, and Victoria, 6. Myah, 2, was placed with the Kellers as a foster child.

Eight months later, they received a call about Caty (now 1½). Three weeks after that, they got a call about Wyatt (also 1½), who is a full sibling to their two



The Keller family of Home, KS has adopted six children who were prenatally exposed to methamphetamine. Jennifer Keller (left) and her husband, Nick (right) pose with Caty, Myah and Wyatt (left to right).

oldest adopted children.

In January, the Kellers adopted their seventh child, a newborn named Jett. The Kellers chose to adopt Jett because he was the full sibling of their 2 year old, Myah. Jennifer, who was adopted as a child, felt an

“emptiness by not being raised with her siblings” and wanted to avoid that situation with her own children if possible.

Although Nick and Jennifer have noticed some developmental delays and delays of fine motor

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PARTNER AGENCIES

Kansas Regional Prevention Centers

Shawnee Regional Prevention and Recovery Services

K-State Research and Extension

Kansas Bureau of Investigation

Kansas Department of Health and Environment

Midwest HIDTA

Kansas Social and Rehabilitation Services—Addiction & Prevention Services and Children & Family Policy Division

Kansas National Guard

Safe Streets

Kansas Family Partnership

Kansas Farm Bureau

Sedgwick County District Attorney’s Office

United States Attorney’s Office-Wichita

Community Systems Group

University of Kansas

Kansas Regional Prevention Center System

Regional Prevention Centers provide drug and alcohol prevention education and technical assistance to communities across the state of Kansas.

South Central	Newton, KS	316-283-6743
Wichita/Sedgwick	Wichita	316-262-2421
Flint Hills	Emporia	620-343-2211
Flint Hills	El Dorado	316-321-6628
Southeast KS	Girard	620-724-6281
North Central KS	Salina	785-825-6224
Northwest	Hays	785-625-5521
Northwest	Colby	785-460-8177
Southwest Kansas	Garden City	620-276-9624
East Central	Lawrence	785-841-4138
Johnson/Miami/Leavenworth	Olathe	913-715-7880
Wyandotte County	Kansas City	913-288-7685
Northeast KS	Manhattan	785-587-4372
Shawnee County	Topeka	785-266-8666

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www.ksmethpreventionproject.org
Follow the “Resources” link to find this and other newsletters.

Drug Paraphernalia Bill Signed by the Governor

On May 9, 2007 Governor Kathleen Sebelius signed a law aimed at significantly reducing the amount of paraphernalia that is being sold in communities across Kansas. The new law strengthens and clarifies the existing statute, making it illegal for stores to offer for sale items that are “primarily intended or designed for use to consume or ingest illegal drugs”.

Originally HB 2359, the drug paraphernalia section was combined in a comprehensive piece of legislation, called HB 2062.

In April 2006, a Drug Paraphernalia Task Force was formed in Shawnee County to address access to drug paraphernalia throughout Kansas. The task force represents 13 agencies which include the Topeka Police Department, Shawnee County Sheriff’s Office, Kansas Bureau of Investigation, Westar, Kansas Methamphetamine Prevention Project, Kwik Shops, Alcohol Beverage Control, Shawnee County Drug Court, Topeka City Attorney’s Office, Safe Streets, Petroleum Marketers and Convenience Store Association, Prevention and Recovery Services and Kansas Family Partnership. The Task Force utilized an active grassroots movement to bring attention to the issue.

At the time of the Task Force’s formation, many types of paraphernalia were widely available in gas stations, convenience stores, tobacco stores and “head shops” throughout Kansas. Types of paraphernalia included flavored “blunt” wraps, bong, digital scales and glass pipes used to smoke methamphetamine or

crack cocaine.

Of 41 counties responding to a law enforcement survey conducted in December 2006, over 50% reported the availability of glass pipes and 43% reported the availability of blunt wraps.

Additionally, 9 counties (Bourbon, Douglas, Franklin, Lyon, McPherson, Reno, Saline, Sedgwick, and Shawnee) reported that their community had “head shops”, a shop



Glass tubes with artificial flowers inside are examples of forms of drug paraphernalia that is illegal to sell under new legislation signed by Governor Sebelius.

specializing in drug paraphernalia and other items appealing to the drug subculture.

Paraphernalia was available at convenience stores in the following counties, as verified by local law enforcement and/or the Kansas Department of Agriculture: Allen, Bourbon, Brown, Cowley, Douglas, Ellis, Finney, Franklin, Johnson, Kearny, Labette, Linn, Lyon, McPherson, Miami, Osage, Reno, Rice, Saline, Sedgwick, Shawnee, Trego, Woodson, and Wyandotte.

Members of the Task Force were alarmed by the many different interpretations of the existing paraphernalia statutes by

law enforcement officers and attorneys. It was apparent that there was a lack of clarity among prosecutors and law enforcement officers across the state about what constitutes paraphernalia. One commonly debated point was whether an item must contain drug residue to be considered paraphernalia.

This discrepancy in interpretations led to the Task Force’s effort to introduce legislation that would clarify the existing statute. Kyle Smith, Deputy Director of the Kansas Bureau of Investigation, introduced the bill during the 2007 legislative session and played a key role in its passage.

Congratulations to the Drug Paraphernalia Task Force for their successful efforts! The new law addresses the problem of availability of drug paraphernalia in many Kansas communities, including availability of items to youth. This law will greatly support parents and communities in helping our youth live healthy and drug free lives.

The legislation signed by Governor Sebelius also strengthened the Matt Samuels Chemical Control Act in relation to individuals who attempt to purchase more than the maximum quantity of cold and allergy tablets containing pseudoephedrine.

These changes tighten the laws fighting methamphetamine manufacture and make it illegal for a potential methamphetamine manufacturer to purchase over the maximum quantity of cold and allergy tablets containing pseudoephedrine. Under the exiting statute only the pharmacist, not the purchaser, is penalized for allowing the excess sale.

“Strawberry Meth”: How Real Is the Threat in Kansas?

Meth that is pink in color, commonly referred to as “Strawberry Meth” or “Strawberry Quick” by the media, has been receiving significant amounts of national attention in recent months.

Many media stories, Internet accounts and information bulletins about pink meth are circulating in communities. These accounts often include information that pink meth is combined with Pop Rocks candy or Strawberry Nesquik drink mix to mask the chemical taste of the drug and make it more attractive to children.

The first reported seizure of strawberry meth was in Nevada in January 2007. Since that time pink meth has been seized in many states including California, Missouri and Texas. There have

been no confirmed reports of “strawberry meth” being seized in Kansas. Many media reports indicate that the pink meth is strawberry flavored. However, no law enforcement testing laboratory has officially confirmed the presence of flavorings in the colored meth.

Media accounts include reports that flavors such as grape and chocolate are being produced, and that flavored meth has been packaged in candy wrappers to entice children. Other accounts suggest that meth may be flavored or colored by meth manufacturers as a branding technique, or as an attempt to conceal the drug from law enforcement.

With so many stories circulating, it can be difficult to determine the accurate risks

versus potential media hype. Because “strawberry meth” has been seized in Kansas and no reliable sources have confirmed meth dealers are deliberately targeting children, caution should be used in sharing the information so as not to create hysteria.

So what can concerned parents and community members do? Remind children and teenagers never to ingest candy or other items given to them by acquaintances or strangers. Talk with your child about the dangers of meth and other drugs and reiterate a clear family position on drug usage. Urge your child to tell you, another adult or law enforcement if they see meth or other drugs at school or other locations in your community.

Advocacy Plays Key Role in Saving Fulfillment Center

Thanks to the advocacy of many local Kansas communities, the Midwest HIDTA (High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area) has announced that the Fulfillment Center will remain open through the end of 2008.

In December 2006 KMPP staff received notice that the Fulfillment Center was scheduled to close at the end of 2007. The Fulfillment Center provides thousands of meth prevention resources at no cost to communities throughout Kansas and the other HIDTA states.

KMPP relies on Fulfillment Center resources to provide Kansas communities with high quality meth education materials. Since 2003 KMPP has utilized Fulfillment Center resources to complete over 225 technical assistance requests from communities

around the state. The closure of the Fulfillment Center would have been a great loss to the Kansas prevention community.

In early January KMPP distributed an action alert requesting community support on this issue. Many community members responded by writing letters advocating for continued funding for the Fulfillment Center. KMPP staff members were thrilled with the level of support demonstrated.

The advocacy made an impact and in February 2007 KMPP received notice that the Fulfillment Center would stay open. With sustained funding the Midwest HIDTA Fulfillment Center can continue to provide meth education resources at no cost throughout the Midwest.



Save the Date!

2007 National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children Conference

October 10-12, 2007

Hyatt Regency Crown Center, Kansas City, Missouri

Drug Endangered Children Find Loving Home

Continued from page 1

skills in the children, they have yet to observe any major complications with the children related to meth usage during pregnancy.

With such a significant expansion of their family in such a short time period, the Kellers' home was bursting at the seams. Currently, the Kellers' house is only 1000 square feet. They are in the process of expanding their home, doing all of the work themselves.

Jennifer contacted KMPP shortly after she received a call from Jett and Myah's biological mother. The mother was 6 months pregnant, using methamphetamine, and living in a rural community in Northeast Kansas. Attempts to intervene and provide resources were unsuccessful and the mother continued to use meth throughout her pregnancy.

The Kellers would like to see legislation that would protect the child in this type of situation. Currently, Kansas law does not recognize the baby as a child until birth, which has frustrated many law enforcement officers and social service providers, as well as the Kellers. New legislation could have the potential for creating a legal basis for intervening with a pregnant woman who is using substances.

The three biological mothers of the Kellers' adopted children have 17 children altogether, none of whom are in their custody. The environments in which the mothers lived were "heartbreaking and

sad", according to the Kellers.

The Kellers have worked to maintain a relationship with the biological mothers of their adopted children, although they do have strict guidelines. They have also experienced some barriers in having their children maintain an open relationship with their biological parents (e.g. lack of transportation). The Kellers hope for the biological mothers to achieve abstinence and maintain recovery. If this occurs, Jennifer would like for them to join her in telling their stories to various audiences across the state.

The Kellers "feel blessed to have the children in their lives". They are truly a great example of a loving family that drug endangered children, or children waiting to be adopted in general, need. Through the work of the Kansas Alliance for Drug Endangered Children, our staff members have

Did You Know?

- *It is estimated that 4,350 Kansas children are born exposed to substances every year. (Ira Chasnoff, M.D., Children's Research Triangle)*
- *Approximately 60,767 Kansas children live in environments where alcohol and other drugs are abused. (Office of Applied Studies, 2003; 2007 Census)*
- *According to a 2007 report from the Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, children of substance-abusing parents are:*
 - *2.7 times more likely to be physically or sexually abused,*
 - *4.2 times more likely to be neglected,*
 - *Significantly more likely to be abused by parents' associates.*
- *Child maltreatment is the leading cause of trauma-related death for children under five, 66% of which occurs at the hands of parents under the influence of drugs or alcohol.*

become aware of a crisis—a lack of foster homes in the state of Kansas. For example, when two children were removed from a drug environment in Topeka, it took over 36 hours to find a placement anywhere in the state of Kansas. It is our hope that the Keller family can serve as an inspiration to provide more resources to drug endangered children.

The Keller family was the subject of a feature story on WIBW Channel 13 in Topeka. Click on the link below to view the Keller family story: www.wibw.com/home/headlines/7506497.html.

What Can You Do To Help Children in Need?

Communities throughout Kansas are in desperate need of families to provide emergency foster care, foster care placements and adoption.

- For more information about adoption, contact Jessi at Kansas Children's Service League at 1-877-530-5275 ext 1353
- For information about foster care, contact KVC at 785- 271-1200

If you aren't able to open your home to a child, consider becoming involved with Drug Endangered Children efforts in your community. For more information contact Cristi Cain at 785-266-8666 or ccain@parstopeka.com