

**Casper Police Department
Central Casper Weed and Seed Program**

Summary:

October 10, 2003, was a defining point of time for Casper, WY. That day a drug investigation and search warrant resulted in the discovery of a clandestine methamphetamine lab across the street from Jefferson Elementary School. Safety concerns for the students required the evacuation of the school. Criticism of the evacuation revealed a serious lack of knowledge in the community regarding the dangers associated with methamphetamine.

Following the school evacuation, Casper Police Chief Tom Pagel gathered approximately 40 community leaders together to develop a community approach to reverse the acceptance and growth that methamphetamine had established in the community. That gathering led to a community collaboration between government officials, private businesses, non-profit organizations, charitable foundations, and community members who sought a solution to the existing methamphetamine scourge.

These early collaborative efforts lead to the following initiatives:

- 2005 Community Facilitation Initiative (CFI)
- 2006 Casper Citizens Work Group
- Casper Area Meth Initiative
- Central Casper Weed and Seed Program

The Central Casper Weed and Seed Program was developed in 2007 to take the lead in combating methamphetamine in the community, which meant incorporating several components of earlier efforts into the strategies of the Weed and Seed Program. This also meant addressing the methamphetamine crisis with more than just a law enforcement approach, the efforts would include, treatment, prevention, education, and community improvement in some of the deepest impacted areas in the city.

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The central part of Casper accounted for nearly 21% of the city's population, yet crime data for 2006 revealed that 61% of the drug arrests made within the city occurred in that part of the community. When reported crime figures for homicide, robbery, burglary, aggravated assault, and weapons offenses were included in the calculation, we found 60% of those crimes and arrests made occurred in the central part of town.

With the implementation of Problem Oriented Policing and Community Oriented Policing Techniques, an all out assault was launch on central Casper. After four (4) years of efforts, through a collaborative strategy lead by the Casper Police Department's Weed and Seed Program, those same crime figures showed a significant decrease. Those earlier listed violent crimes including drug arrest fell to 46% for 2010.

Description

A. Scanning:

The presence of methamphetamine in Casper and Wyoming had been increasing since the mid 1990's. The days of methamphetamine surfacing occasionally had changed to methamphetamine being more common than cocaine or any other controlled substance with the exception of marijuana. The Central Casper Weed and Seed Program was developed in 2007 to lead the efforts in reducing the presence and availability of methamphetamine in the community. Casper had seen the methamphetamine scourge increase to never before seen levels and, the impacts on the community were devastating. Social Services were stretched beyond capacity, Criminal Courts were overwhelmed by drug cases, local schools struggled to provide effective education to children impacted by

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methamphetamine use in their homes, and neighborhoods infected by the presence of methamphetamine saw their conditions deteriorate. Casper Police Chief Tom Pagel lead a group of community leaders who wanted to reverse the increasing presence methamphetamine had established, and reduce the impacts the drug left on the community. It was widely accepted Casper "could not arrest its way out of the problem", successful change would require efforts from multiple community partners.

In 2006, a comprehensive community study of Casper conducted by Diane Galloway and Steve Miller was completed and published. The study was paid for by the Tate Foundation, in support of the community collaboration to address the methamphetamine crisis, identified numerous impacts the drug was leaving on the community, from law enforcement to social services, health, education, criminal and family courts, businesses, neighborhoods, and the general quality of life in the community.

B. Analysis:

In developing a strategic plan for the community to combat the methamphetamine scourge, research was conducted by the Casper Police Department's (CPD) Weed and Seed Program. That included incorporating earlier research compiled by the CFI and Casper Area Meth Initiative into the new effort, including the comprehensive community study regarding methamphetamine in Casper.

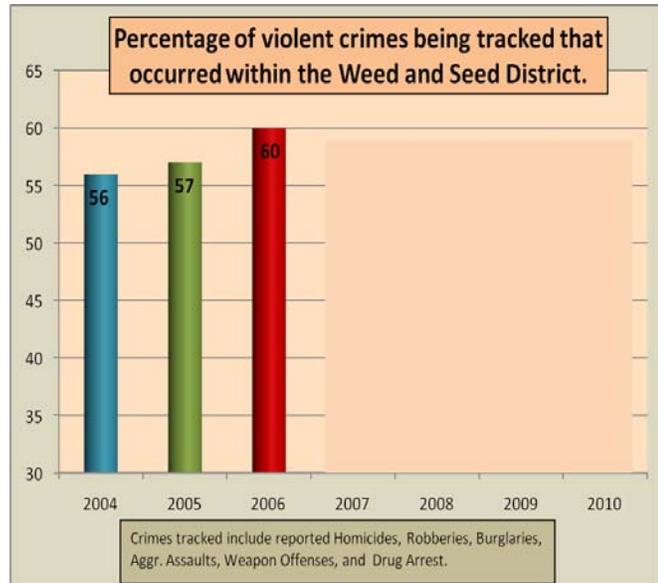
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To start with, the Weed and Seed Program examined statistics for the city and discovered that the central area of Casper accounted for approximately 21% of the population of the city, with nearly 70% of those residents qualifying as low to moderate income. That same area accounted for 61% of the city's drug arrests in 2006, and more than 57% of the homicides,

robberies, burglaries, aggravated assaults, and weapon offenses.

Even more concerning was the consistent increase that had been taking place between 2004 and 2006. The Natrona County District

Attorney's Office, whose jurisdiction includes Casper,



reported 77% of the felony level drug cases they prosecuted in 2005 involved methamphetamine. This data helped develop the boundaries for the Central Casper Weed and Seed Program, allowing for a intense focus on a specific area in the community. As directed by earlier community efforts, the focus of the Weed and Seed Program had to be diverse and not one dimensional by law enforcement. Change meant more than arresting people, it had to embrace treatment, prevention, education, and opposition to the drug's presence in the community.

Casper's methamphetamine scourge was a tremendous social problem facing our community. The Wyoming Department of Family Services reported for 2006, 191 children in Natrona County were taken into protective custody and placed into foster care

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homes, 60% of the children placed involved methamphetamine. The cost to the State of Wyoming is \$624 a month for each child in foster care. A majority of the children were under the age of 10.

In 2005, a review of the 108 open pre-natal care cases by the Casper-Natrona County Health Department revealed that 20% of the pregnant women self-reported using methamphetamine within six (6) months of giving birth. For the first six months of 2005, the Casper-Natrona County Health Department reported that twenty-six (26) infants were born that either tested positive for methamphetamine, or the mother was a known user of methamphetamine.

In 2004, the Wyoming Department of Health, Substance Abuse Division, commissioned a study by DATACORP of available treatment services. In the study, 4,381 adults and 579 adolescents in Natrona County were identified as in need of substance abuse treatment for drugs or alcohol. Of them, 1,759 were men, ages 18-34, and 883 women, ages 18-34, needed treatment but were not receiving it.

Central Wyoming Counseling Center, located in Casper just outside of the Weed and Seed District, provided data that revealed, of the adults who receive Addiction Severity Index (ASI), one third of them require a residential level of treatment care. Also of the adults assessed in 2005, twenty six percent (26%) reportedly abused methamphetamine. ASI's conducted on felony offenders indicated methamphetamine users had used for an average of 3 years. As of December 2006, Central Wyoming Counseling reported a 60 to 90 day waiting period for anyone seeking residential treatment. They further reported limited bed space, 24 beds within their facilities for

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long term residential treatment. Similar waiting periods existed at other facilities around the state.

The community study conducted by Galloway and Miller, identified available services and programs, as well as gaps in services to properly face the impacts methamphetamine was having our community. Some of the Needs and Gaps identified by the study included:

- Additional law enforcement
- Increasing police visibility and involvement in the community.
- Reduce drug and criminal activity.
- Improve resident's perception of their neighborhoods by reducing violent crimes.
- Promote resident's role in reducing crime in their neighborhoods.
- Increase Crime Prevention Programs
- Increase Long Term Residential Treatment availability.
- Coordinate court order community service requirements for youth.
- Increase high school graduation rates.
- Promote positive parenting.
- Promote and Support Safe Havens in the community.
- Support adult parenting skill development programs.
- Increase Code Enforcement Officer positions.
- Increase enforcement of city codes.
- Facilitate neighborhood clean-up projects.
- Support home restoration projects in the Weed and Seed District.

The Central Casper Weed and Seed Program embraced the “Broken Window” philosophy as a core component of its strategies. It also supported the philosophy that by reducing or eliminating drug presence and activity, other related violent crimes would also reduce in number. The manner in which that would occur would be by implementing the Weed and Seed strategies consisting of 4 components, Law Enforcement; Community Policing; Prevention/Intervention/Education/Treatment; and Neighborhood Restoration.

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C. Response:

In 2007, the Central Casper Weed and Seed Program received federal recognition and funding as an official DOJ Weed and Seed Community. The four strategies to support the program were established and the collaborative efforts began. Funding for the program was provided through the federal weed and seed grant, as well as the City of Casper. Each of the four Weed and Seed components had their own strategies, which supported the overall strategy of the Weed and Seed Program. Within each component were several programs or projects that supported their efforts.

Law Enforcement Strategy: *The Casper Police Department will participate with state, federal and other local law enforcement efforts to address controlled substance and violent crime issues in Central Casper. A special emphasis will be placed on reducing the presence of drugs in the community through these collaborative efforts. Directed patrol activities will be used to confront targeted criminal activity in the weed and seed district.*

To support this strategy, the Casper Police Department launched a new patrol unit that was dedicated to the Weed and Seed Program. This new unit, Problem Oriented Response Team (PORT), consisted of 2 patrol officers, supported by additional officers for special assignments, and a sergeant at times. They focused on aggressive enforcement of those individuals who were having a negative impact on the neighborhoods, while at the same time, they built rapport and trust with the residents. The majority of the efforts were designed to include Problem Oriented Policing concepts. Solutions to problems were paramount, responding to the same problems over and over

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again, wasn't a solution to the problem. The intent was to find approaches that would stop the problems from occurring. Several program were either operating or initiated to support these efforts, those include:

- Casper Police PORT
- DCI Central Enforcement Team
- Natrona County Drug Court Program
- Natrona County Diversion Program
- Weed and Seed Community Service Youth Program

Community Policing Strategy: *The Casper Police Department will strive to establish a partnership with Casper residents in an effort to build rapport and trust in law enforcement. Casper Police will educate the public on their role in effective policing practices, including crime prevention. They will encourage residents to participate in beautification projects, neighborhood watch groups and citizen safety programs. The Community Policing component will be a significant bridge between law enforcement and the other components, along with the community.*

Much of the support for this strategy was focused on Community Policing practices, but not solely. Problem Oriented Policing techniques were often utilized when working with the residents to identify problems and solutions. However, in the early phases of the efforts, the priority was to establish rapport and trust with the residents as they were asked to become more engaged in the process.

The Casper Police Department and the Weed and Seed Program coordinated a yearly Meth and Substance Abuse Conference for attendees whose professional practices involve or are impacted by substance abuse. Yearly attendance for the conference has

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been between 300 and 500 professionals. The Casper Police Department and the Weed and Seed Program also partnered with the local minor league baseball team, the Casper Ghost, in creating the “Good Ticket Program”. Under this program, the Casper Ghost provides the Casper Police 2,000 general admission tickets for the officers to distribute to community youth as a reward for good behavior and decisions made. Many of these projects help to accomplish those goals:

- Crime Prevention Officer
- DARE Officer
- PORT
- Annual Meth and Substance Abuse Conference
- Community Service Youth Program
- School Response Officers
- Weed and Seed Good Ticket Program

Prevention, Intervention and Treatment Strategy: *Promote a positive community environment with emphasis on healthy family values, a drug free workplace, with a special focus on collaborative programs designed to encourage youth to graduate high school with a lifestyle free of substance use. Instill the desire and understanding of the value in being a healthy and productive member of Casper’s community. Provide a continuum of substance abuse treatment programs, in a professional environment, and ensure appropriate treatment services are available to all individuals, including newborn children.*

From the early stages of this endeavor, one of the most critical needs identified was the need for long term residential treatment capabilities. In order to successfully reduce the presence of methamphetamine in the community, treatment was vital. Recognizing that critical need, and holding to the belief that nobody was going to do it for them, Casper as a community stepped forward and raised the 8.5 million dollars

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necessary to build a long term residential treatment facility at the Central Wyoming Counseling Center (CWCC). More than 5 million dollars of that amount was raised from private foundations and individuals in the community. In September of 2008, the 85 bed treatment facility opened and began operations as part of CWCC. Listed below are some of the programs that operated in support of this strategy:

- CWCC Treatment Facility
- Nurse Family Partnership
- Weed and Seed Late Night Youth Project
- Insight II Prevention Classes
- DARE Officer
- Drug Free Workplace Drug Testing Program

Neighborhood Restoration Linkages: *Improve the overall appearance and physical condition of the neighborhoods, with an emphasis on neighborhood clean-up programs, downtown beautification development, and aggressive code enforcement. Efforts will focus on demolition and/or restoration of dilapidated properties, removal of abandoned vehicles and immediate removal of graffiti. Overall improvement in the quality of life will be the goal of all renewal programs.*

In tackling the neighborhood restoration effort, one of the most glaring problems identified was the lack of city personnel to provide sufficient code enforcement. To resolve that problem, the City of Casper hired an additional Code Enforcement Officer and dedicated them to the Weed and Seed District. Between 2007 and 2010, more than 5,000 property inspection and re-inspections were conducted. Also during that same period of time, more than 2 million pounds of junk and trash had been removed from the district as part of a variety of cleanup projects and initiatives.

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One of the shining stars in this strategy is the World Changers Program. World Changers is a faith-based organization sponsored by the North American Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention. The youth who travel to Casper as part of the World Changer Program, volunteer their time and labor to replace/repair roofs, windows, doors, repaint houses, clean yards, construct ramps for accessibility, and fix fences. This work is done in 4.5 days. When they leave, the worst looking house in the neighborhood is now the best looking house. The City of Casper provides materials for exterior rehabilitation, selects homeowners, and supervises the construction activities. Between 2007 and 2010, World Changers provided rehabilitation to 36 residences in the Weed and Seed District. Programs and activities that support this strategy include:

- Weed and Seed Code Enforcement Officer
- World Changers
- Neighborhood Clean-up Projects
- Old Yellowstone District Project
- Community Service Youth Program
- Graffiti Abatement Program

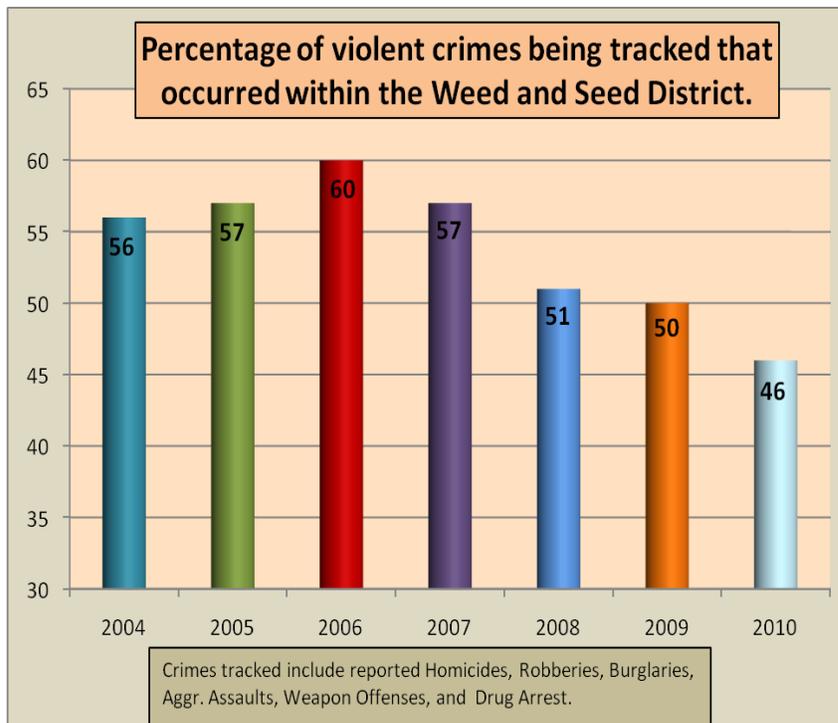
D. Assessment:

As stated at the onset of this program, the desired outcomes would not be achieved by law enforcement alone, nor could law enforcement “arrest their way out of the problem”. A collaborative approach was necessary and data driven evaluations would be the most accurate form of measurement. As part of the federal funding for the Weed and Seed Program, regular evaluations by an outside, independent evaluator was required, DATACORP was contracted for those services. Additionally, regular data

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evaluations were conducted by the Weed and Seed Program Coordinator, to ensure programs were functioning as intended and goals were being met. In order to evaluate the program's success, we focused on the primary goals of this program, to reduce drug activity in the central Casper region, which in turn will reduce violent crimes in the same area. All of the components and strategies implemented under the Weed and Seed Program were in support of those goals.

As identified at the beginning of the efforts, drug arrest in the central part of Casper were significantly higher than the rest of the community. Violent felony level crimes were also proportionately higher. In 2006, 61% of the drug arrest made in the City of Casper, occurred in the Weed and Seed District, by 2010, that figure had fallen to 46%. Equally impressive was the data for report violent felony crimes that were tracked as part of the program's data collection. In 2006, reported violent felony crimes,



Homicide, Burglary, Robbery, Aggravated Assault, and Weapons, as well as drug arrest, were at a staggering 60% of the total for the city. In 2010, that percentage had been reduced to 46%!

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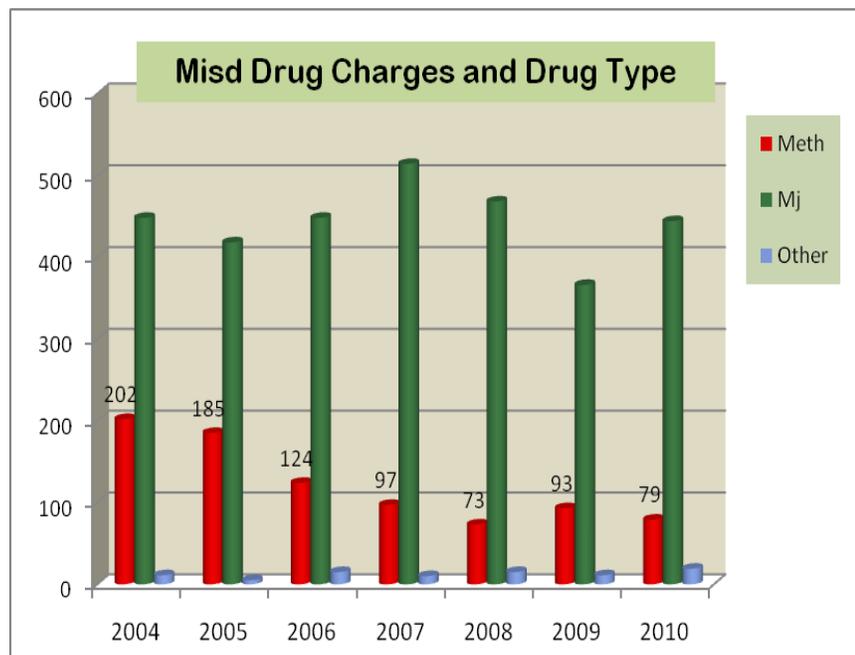
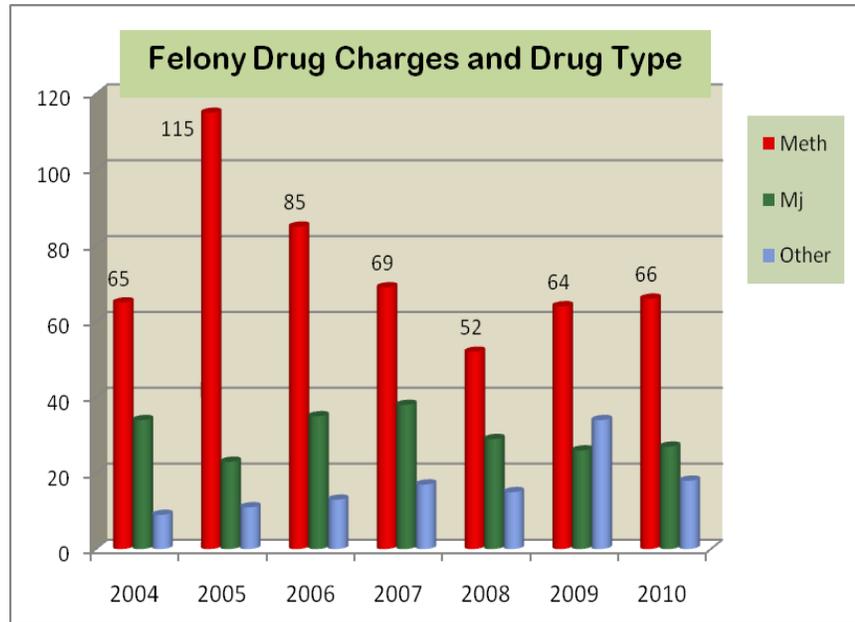
Not forgetting that methamphetamine was the spark that ignited this effort, we have seen that felony level methamphetamine cases prosecuted by the Natrona County District Attorney's Office is down 22% in 2010 from 2006. Although there has been a recent increase of cases since 2008, but part of that is attributed to more cases being prosecuted at the state level than

were previously prosecuted in federal court.

Misdemeanor cases experienced a 36% decrease from 2006 to 2010, but maintained relatively flat over the

past 3 years and did not experience the same increase as felony level cases.

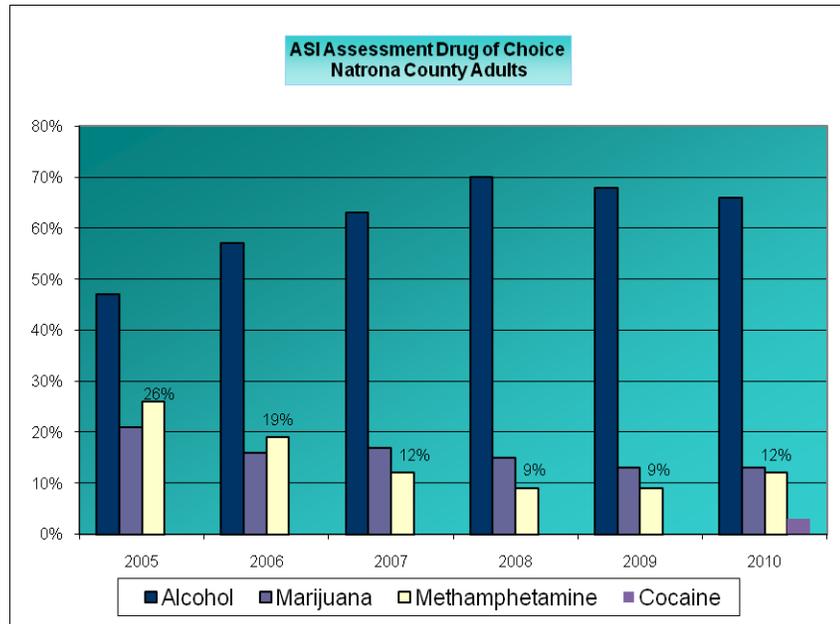
While the data reveals a slight up and down from year to year, it demonstrates a decrease over the past 4 years.



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Drug of choice data provided by CWCC was also vital to evaluating if the efforts of the Weed and Seed Program had any impacts on drug use, specifically methamphetamine. CWCC compiled assessment data from all of the reporting treatment providers in Natrona County. Data from those ASI assessments showed methamphetamine as the primary or only drug of choice in 19% of the assessments completed in 2006.

Those same figures for 2010 showed a decrease to 12%, slightly higher than the 9% experience the two years prior.



Understanding that the total elimination of methamphetamine and other illicit drugs is not in our foreseeable future, we feel a great success was accomplished when we were able to reverse the scourge methamphetamine was placing on our community. In addition to impacting the acceptance and availability of methamphetamine, the Central Casper Weed and Seed Program has helped reduce criminal activity in the core of the community. It has also established itself as one of the Police Department's most successful programs. In the 2010 program evaluation report by DATACORP, the Central Casper Weed and Seed Program was declared one of the most successful programs of its

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kind that they had evaluated anywhere in the country. In 2007, the Wyoming Association of Municipalities presented it the Community Innovation Award. Although the federal funding for the program will end in September of 2011, the City of Casper has committed to continuation funding for the program, and considers it as one of the community's primary programs for improving the quality of life for its residents.

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