



COMMUNITY POLICING in Snohomish County

January/February 2007

Volume 11 Issue 1



Inside This Issue

Gangs– Introduction page 1

Gangs– What Makes a Youth Gang page 2

Gangs– Some Gangs in Snohomish County page 3

Graffiti– A Primer page 4

Gangs– What Parents Can Do to Keep Their Child Out page 5

Gangs– For More Information page 6

Gangs– Introduction

Snohomish has not been considered to have a significant problem with street gangs. With the establishment of the Crime Analysis and Intelligence Unit in 2006, the Snohomish County Sheriff's Office realized that organized criminal gangs have been committing a significant portion of crime in the county.

Street gangs are involved with burglary, theft, ID theft/fraud, prostitution, assaults, drive-by-shootings, rape and murder. They also can be involved with drug trafficking.

Being a member of a gang is not in violation of state law. The gang's participation in crime gains the attention of law enforcement agencies.

Snohomish County has had experience with gangs in the 1990's. At that time police, social workers and volunteers worked together to try to solve the gang problem. Part of that effort included The Neutral Zone, a place where at risk youth could go for recreation, studying and counseling, staying away from drugs, alcohol, and criminal activity.

Children who have a strong need to feel like they belong to someone are prime targets for local gang recruiting. Softening up the youthful targets is the gang related music, music videos, and movies, giving children the idea that the gang way of life is desirable and acceptable.

Also, gang activity has been migrating from the central cities to the suburbs.

National studies show that teens who are actively involved with or associated with gangs are more likely to engage in crime, including property and violent crime.

Teens who are more likely to become involved in gangs have had prior and/or early delinquency (especially violence or drug/alcohol use), poor family management and strained parent-child relationships. They have low school attachment and achievement. They also associate with other teens who engage in delinquency or crime, and live in neighborhoods where large numbers of teens are in trouble and where drugs and guns are readily available.

To solve the gang problem will take a multi-pronged approach that includes suppression, intervention and prevention. Suppression can be handled by the police. Intervention can be handled by social service agencies both public and private. Prevention is best handled by service organizations and families.

Police cannot solve the problem on their own. Their focus is on "enforcing the law." But to discourage teens from joining gangs will take effort from the community too.



Gangs– Misconceptions

Gang members come from the poor part of town where lawlessness reigns, education is low and unemployment is high (often called “The Hood”).

Not so. While 50% of gang members, nationwide, may live below the poverty level, lack a high school education and are unemployed, 50% come from working class, middle class and upper class families.

Hollywood typically portrays gang members as only African American or Hispanic.

Not quite true. 78% of gang members are African American or Hispanic. But, at least 22% of gang members are white, Asian or another ethnic group.

As a result, police cannot assume that gang members are only African American or Hispanic. This is especially true in the northwest because we have a higher percentage of whites than of other minorities. In fact, one local gang, normally associated with blacks, is made up of all whites.

Gangs– What Makes a Youth Gang

Under state law (RCW 15.18.030), “Gang” means a group that:

1. Consists of three or more persons;
2. Has identifiable leadership or an identifiable name, sign or symbol; and
3. On an ongoing basis, regularly conspires and acts in concert mainly for criminal purposes.

Social scientists who have studied gangs have observed four community conditions that encourage their growth:

1. Families and schools have failed in their standard role of supervising children. This means that adult supervision is absent. Gangs often fulfill the need for belonging.
2. Children have a great deal of free time with no supervised activities to take up their time.
3. Gang members do not foresee the potential of good job prospects so the gang fulfills the member’s need for a “career”.
4. Gang members have a place to congregate, usually in a well defined neighborhood.

Usually, youth gangs, are not considered to be “organized crime” like the Mafia, drug cartels, or biker gangs. In Snohomish County, some youth gangs have shown strong leadership

and good organization. Others tend to be loosely organized and have transient leaders and members. How well organized local gangs are all depends on the experience and leadership skills of the members.

Youth gangs are often involved in selling drugs in order to make money. But, their involvement is at the street level of distribution not in manufacturing or bringing drugs into the region. Northwest youth gangs are often involved with methamphetamine, marijuana, cocaine, and crack cocaine.

Joining and leaving a youth gang tends to be informal. Two major motivations for youth to join a gang are social– to be with friends or relatives– and protection– they assume that the gang will provide protection. Most youth are not long term members in the gang lifestyle and only last about a year or less. Leaving a gang is relatively easy. For the smaller percentage that stays on longer, leaving becomes more difficult especially if the gang is more highly organized.

While gangs are a serious contributor to crime in the community, youth gangs are not as organized or disciplined as their older more hardened compatriots that the youth often try to emulate. The informal nature of most youth gangs do provide an opportunity to intervene to bring them out of the gang lifestyle.



Gangs— Some Gangs in Snohomish County

At least 20 separate gangs operate in and around Snohomish County schools. Initial investigation revealed 60 or more associates involved with these gangs. Below are brief descriptions of 8 Snohomish County gangs:

Name: Surenos/Sur 13

Origin: Southern California (Bakersfield and south)

Symbols: 13 and 3 dots

Rag color: blue.

Wear Duke University, Dallas Cowboys or LA Dodgers uniforms

Associated gang(s): EME and MS

Enemy gang(s): Nortenos

Financial support: drug trafficking

Area: South Everett to Lynnwood

Name: Nortenos

Origin: Fulsom Prison near Fresno

Symbols: 14 or 4 dots

Rag color: red. Wear Chicago "Bulls" and SF 49ers uniforms.

Enemy gang(s): Sur 13 and MS

Financial support: drug trade

Area: South Everett to Mt. Vernon

Note: Star or eagle emblems are earned through assault or murder.

Name: Crips

Origin: Los Angeles

Rag color: blue. Prefer LA sports

teams, Burger King and British Knights clothing.



Financial support: Drug sales; violent take over robberies; warehouse burglaries

Note: 7 self professed West Covina Crips operate in the county. Recently, deputies made contact with 3 self professed 74 Hoover Crips.

Name: Bloods

Origin: Compton California

Rag color: red, worn as red bandana on the west coast.

Enemy gang(s): Crips



Area: Blood graffiti found in Bothell and Lynnwood in July 2006.

Note: Known to be very violent and to prefer assault rifles. Have a strong following in South Seattle.

Name: Black Gangster Disciples (BGD)

Origin: South Chicago

Symbols: 6 pointed star, pitchfork or heart with wings.

Rag color: Wear Oakland Raiders jerseys or white, grey or black bandanas.

Consequences of Gang Membership

Social scientists who study gangs point out that the longer that an individual maintains gang membership the more the gang isolates the individual from normal society.

This isolation shows itself as difficulties in handling common lifetime events that show themselves in dropping out of school, early parenthood, and difficulty in keeping a job.

As opportunities close the gang member continues down the criminal path into adulthood.

Despite the expectation that a gang would provide protection from harm, gang membership increases the likelihood that an individual will be harmed. Some studies show that the chance of being injured in a gang doubles or triples than and for an individual who is not a gang member.

(Continued on page 4)

Graffiti– A Primer

Graffiti is used by gangs to mark territories, brag about exploits, advertise drugs, warn off rivals and to recruit new members. While graffiti can have gang purposes, over 75% of graffiti is produced by taggers who have no other purpose than to show off their drawing expertise.

Graffiti is vandalism and costs local government, business and property owners thousands of dollars yearly to remove. Graffiti often spreads fear due to its association with gangs.

The best response to graffiti is to remove it within 24 to 48 hours after it is created. The faster the removal the less chance of its return.

If you see graffiti on public property report it to 911 or to Snohomish County Code Enforcement (425) 388-3111.

If your property has graffiti take a picture of it to aid the Sheriff's Office to investigate it, report it to 911 and remove it promptly.

Gangs– Some Gangs in Snohomish County cont.

(Continued from page 3)

Financial support: Large scale drug trafficking, murder and white collar crime.

Name: Gangster Disciples

Origin: South Chicago. An offshoot of the BGDs

Symbols: 6 pointed stars and B.O.S.

Note: Members may be Hispanic or white.

Name: Black Man Incorporated (BMI)

Origin: First known reference in June 2006.

Associated gang(s): Possibly Gangster Disciples.

Financial support: Possibly narcotics and car theft.

Area: Possibly South Everett and South King County.

Note: Associated with the murder of Dennis Riojas; with an Assault 1; possibly suspected in the daylight rape of a 16 year old female.

Name: Insane Clown Posse (ICP)

Symbol: Running man/ woman.

Associated gang(s): Offshoot of goth movement.

Note: Deeply involved in the drug culture. Known for assaults with hatchets and machetes.



Graffiti– Some Gang Examples



Seattle Piru Killer



Sur 13



Gangs— What Parents Can Do To Keep Their Child Out

Having a child exposed to gang activity could result in arrest for criminal activity, assault injuries or even death. This section talks about things that you can do to prevent your child from becoming involved with gangs.

Some early warning signs that your child is becoming involved in a gang includes:

- Your child becomes difficult to communicate with. He becomes argumentative when you talk about his activities and friends.
- You notice a change in dress and appearance. He wants to wear only specific colors, oversized clothing, bandanas, baseball caps, etc. Look for gang logos on the inside of coats and hats. He may also use tattoos to identify himself.
- He changes friends and you never meet his new friends.
- Your child may not spend much time at home and he doesn't want to attend family activities.
- You see a lack of interest or a complete withdrawal from school activities, sports programs, hobbies, etc.
- School attendance and performance declines.
- You may notice alcohol and /or drug use.
- Your child gets into trouble with the law. Theft, truancy, running away, graffiti, vandalism, violence and possession of weapons are common problems associated with gang activity.
- He may use nicknames or refer to

his friends by nicknames.

Remember, that teens who join gangs often have little or adult supervision, lots of free time on their hands, associate with peers who engage in criminal activity and/or are involved with drugs or alcohol, and do not have strong ties to school.

Adult involvement can work wonders to keeping your child away from gangs.

To keep your child out of gangs:

- Be a good role model. You must set the standards for acceptable behavior. Kids who are exposed to dishonesty, drug/alcohol abuse, and a lack of respect for people, property, and authority are more likely to exhibit similar behavior.
- Build positive self-esteem. Kids who have the proper self image don't rely on gangs for recognition or status.
- Discuss the dangers of gangs.
- Take an active interest in your children's activities. Get them involved in organized after school sports or activities.
- Monitor and control their behavior. Be firm but fair when it comes to discipline and enforcing the rules.

The Neutral Zone— Keeping Kids Out of Gangs

The Neutral Zone provides at risk teens with a place where they can have safety from drugs, alcohol and crime. They have access to free food, games such as basketball, movies on DVD's.

Each Friday and Saturday night, 40 to 50 teens from Snohomish and King counties hang out at Scriber Lake High School. There are rules that they obey and they are patted down to protect against weapons or drugs. Teens who are disruptive are not allowed in. The idea is that kids who might be exposed to criminal elements have a refuge from those influences.

The Neutral Zone is held at Scriber Lake High School, 20525 52nd Ave W, Lynnwood, WA on Friday's and Saturdays, 8pm to 11pm.

If you have questions, or you would like to volunteer to help, call The Neutral Zone Director, Rose Sloan at (206) 794-4879.



COMMUNITY POLICING in Snohomish County

Snohomish County Sheriff
M/S 606 - 3000 Rockefeller Ave.
Everett, WA 98201

Inside This Issue

Gangs– Introduction	page 1
Gangs– <i>What Makes a Youth Gang</i>	page 2
Gangs– <i>Some Gangs in Snohomish County</i>	page 3
Graffiti– <i>A Primer</i>	page 4
Gangs– <i>What Parents Can Do To Keep Their Child Out</i>	page 5
Gangs– <i>For More Information</i>	page 6

Rick Bart, Sheriff
Snohomish County
3000 Rockefeller Ave.
M/S 606
Fourth Floor County
Courthouse
Everett, WA 98201
(425) 388-3393

www1.co.snohomish.wa.us/Departments/Sheriff/

Steve Moller– Editor



1-800-
CRIME-13

Tip Lines:

- Phone:
425-388-3845
- Sheriff's Website:
www.co.snohomish.wa.us/SheriffRpts/AnonymousTips/default.htm

Gangs– For More Information

For more information on youth gangs you can go to the following web sites:

Institute for Intergovernmental Research, National Youth Gang Center-

<http://www.iir.com/nygc/>

National Gang Center-

<http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/>

National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center-

<http://www.safeyouth.org>

Graffiti Hurts-

<http://www.graffitihurts.org/>

National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations web site-

<http://www.nagia.org/>

National Alliance of Gang Investigators Associations, 2005 National Gang Threat Assessment-

http://www.nagia.org/PDFs/2005_national_gang_threat_assessment.pdf