

Inside City Hall

Beyond the headlines

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Special Edition: **Combined Forces Tackle City's Gangs** Update on Suppression, Intervention, Prevention Strategies

Why A Special Edition on Gangs?

The escalation of gang violence in Visalia has many in our community concerned about what this means for the city. Much has been reported, but still many are unaware of the efforts by Visalia police in the areas of gang suppression, intervention and prevention. That's the reason for this special Edition of "Inside City Hall."

Certainly, suppression efforts have been stepped up. The work of multi-agency collaborations through the Tulare County Gang Task Force, MAGNET (Multi-Agency Gang Enforcement Team) and the Visalia Police Department have had a positive impact on gang suppression.

Efforts in intervention and prevention have also been stepped up. It's this three-pronged approach—suppression, intervention, and prevention, that provides a sustained, long-term effort to combat gangs.

Visalia Police Create New Bureau with New Focus on Gangs

Summer was marred by a spike in gang violence which spurred increased suppression efforts by Visalia police.

Gang detail results from July through September 2 show a disturbing trend. They revealed 179 arrests (99 for felonies and 7 homicide arrests), 11 firearms were seized, and 70 probation/parole searches were conducted at residences of known gang members.

"Gang sweeps are effective in the short-term," said Police Chief Bob Carden. "A sustained, long-term effort will require more directed and focused means."

Strategies to combat gangs include: Creation of a Special Enforcement Bureau made up of the Gang Suppression Unit, the Narcotics Unit and a GREAT (Gang Resistance Education and Training) Officer; and a redeployment of available resources to increase efficiency.

Chief Carden said this restructuring



Visalia Gang Numbers

Gang related arrests: 336

Total active gangs: 12

Total gang members: 930

Female members: 38

Male members: 892

Recovered firearms: 29

***These numbers were compiled
just for the period of January to
July, 2007.***

ture allows for enhanced inter-departmental communication, flexibility in deployment, increased sharing of resources, directed and focused suppression efforts, all housed in one facility. **More Inside: Fourth-graders learn about gangs; Probation/Police Team; and gang intervention resources.**

Gang Intervention Resource Guide Law Enforcement

Visalia Police Department: Lt. Jason Salazar, Special Operations at 713-4102; PAL Program at 713-4081; Explorers Program at 713-4262; Gang Awareness Program at 713-4721; and Youth Services Unit at 713-4721.

Tulare County District Attorney's Gang Unit: Todd Zocchi at 733-6411.

Tulare County Sheriff's Gang Intervention Program: Captain Dahl A. Cleek at 733-6233.

Tulare County Probation: Janet Honadle at 733-6207.

Community Programs

Boys & Girls Club of Tulare County: Galen Quenzer at 625-4422.

Proteus: Visalia Service Center at 627-0100; or Juan Guerrero, Wittman Village Community Center at 737-9873.

Visalia Parks and Recreation: Jeannie Greenwood at 713-4042; and Juan Mendoza at Manuel Hernandez Community Center at 713-4374.

Visalia YMCA Gang Prevention Program: Janice Bardone at 627-0700, Ext. 118.

School-Based Programs

Visalia Unified School District: Lucinda Mejdell-Awbrey, Director of Student Services, 730-7580; Gang Prevention Education, 730-7854; Youth Services Officers, 730-7579.

Tulare County Office of Education: Gang Prevention - Joe Aguilar at 805-8875; Gang Intervention Program-Mel Borbolla at 799-5731.

Brochures on Gang Intervention Programs are available in English and Spanish through the Tulare County Office of Education. Contact Superintendent Jim Vidak at 733-6172.

Grade-School Prevention Program

Fourth-graders Get Gang History Lesson

Fourth-graders got a history lesson in gang culture from Visalia Police Gang Prevention Officer Rob Zieg. It was part of his week-long program, providing one-hour presentations to second through sixth-graders.

He visits 25 schools over the course of the year, and varies the message according to the grade level. This group learned how gangs got started (a fight over a pair of tennis shoes), the signs (what N, S, 13, and 14 mean), and colors of gangs. "We talk about what kids are wearing to school and how you can get in trouble wearing certain things to school." In addition, Zieg provides parents instruction on how to keep their kids safe and away from gangs. The author of, "Gang Awareness

101: What Every Parent Should Know", has his list of top seven tips for parents. They are: Keep them busy; know what they're doing and where they are; know your children's friends and get to know their parents; know what your children listen to, watch and play; know what they're doing on the computer and on-line; be alert for any change in attitude; and get involved in your kids' lives. "You can never start too young," he said, even as young as helping second-graders learn the importance of making good choices. Zieg said the most significant aspect of this type of outreach can be seen in the letters children write him after each presentation. "I have stacks and stacks of them, all telling me they're staying clear of gangs."

Probation, Police Team Up in Intervention

Combining the resources to fight gangs has brought the Tulare County Probation Department and the Visalia Police Department together to target known gang members.

The Visalia City Council recently approved funding to share the cost of assigning a County Probation Officer to work with the Gang Unit in targeting known gang members.

"This increases our enforcement options through the resources of Probation," Visalia Police Chief Bob Carden told members of the Visalia City Council and Visalia Unified School District School Board at a recent joint meeting. "This partnership gives us the ability to conduct frequent Probation searches on known gang members and better monitor activity of those gang members currently on probation."



Gang Injunction Protects Community Safe Zones

Local law enforcement are considering the use of gang injunctions as the latest tool in its war on gangs. "It's not a panacea for the problem," said Chief Bob Carden. "It's a tool, which when properly utilized, can be effective."

An injunction is a court order barring known members of certain gangs from congregating in "safe zones" of the city. Safe zones are identified as primary locations of targeted gang criminal activity which have impacted the residents' quality of life. Gang members who violate the injunction could be subject to arrest and prosecution.

Carden said both the city and the county are working on plans for a court injunction. A commitment has been obtained by the Tulare County Sheriff's Office to provide bed space to assist in the enforcement of the gang injunction.