



G.A.I.N.

GANG ACTIVITY INFORMATION NETWORK



Volume 4, Issue 4

April 2008

United States
Department
Of Justice



U.S. Attorney's
Office

Northern District of
Indiana

5400 Federal Plaza
Suite 1500
Hammond, IN 46320
219.937.5500

David Capp
Acting U.S. Attorney

Inside This Issue

Headline News	Page 1
Local News	Page 2
Regional News	Page 5
National News	Page 9
Hybrid Gangs	Page 16
Officer Safety – Plastic Knuckles	Page 18



This collection of open source information is offered for informational purposes only. It is not, and should not be, construed as official evaluated intelligence. Points of view or opinions are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice or the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Indiana.

POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS

Gang Activity Not Limited to Big Cities

Article published by the Times-Union Newspaper on April 2, 2008

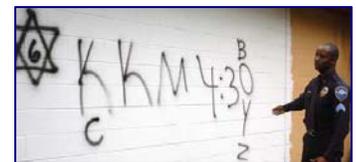
Warsaw, IN | Fort Wayne Police have linked two of the city's six recent murders to gang activity. Though not a rampant problem, gangs are a part of Warsaw and Kosciusko County. Typically associated with metropolitan areas like Chicago, Los Angeles and New York, gangs have developed a presence in suburban and rural areas not only in the United States but worldwide. Warsaw and the surrounding area have felt the effects of gang activity. From petty crimes to felonies, gangs are a part of the community.

"It's a real problem everywhere," said Don Starkey, who is both a master level mental health counselor at the Bowen Center and a member of the Kosciusko County Gang Task Force. Starkey, Warsaw Police Department's Mike Cox, Indiana State Police's Lori Lemler and Kosciusko County Boys and Girls Club Executive Director Cindy Knepper comprise the task force, which began in the mid-1990s.

According to Starkey, gangs' main focus is drug trafficking, and gangs from bigger cities have set up shop in places like Warsaw to expand their customer base and aid in trafficking. The Vice Lords, Gangster Disciples and Latin Kings are gangs from Chicago that have tried to make their presence known in the area. Gangs like Surenos 13 and Notenos 14 are gangs from California that have been spotted in the area.

One way the gangs mark their territory is by graffiti, or "tagging." By tagging an area, the gang might want to make their presence known or it may be a way of letting people know where they are selling drugs. Starkey noted the Warsaw Police Department does a good job of taking graffiti down as soon as it comes up.

Cox referred to a time in November where there were a series of graffiti marks in the Boggs Industrial Park area one night and near Whispering Pines and Levi Lee Road the next night. WPD was able to take the graffiti down in short order. But dealing with gangs is a constant battle.



Cox said the amount of gang activity has gone up and down over the years. "It's gone up and down like a yo-yo," said Cox. "In the mid to late '90s, they were really growing. Then 9/11 happened and it was like there was a moratorium on gang problems."

Cox said by taking down graffiti and letting gang members know the police are aware of them, it keeps gang violence and crimes caused by gangs down. "It's not illegal to be in a gang," said Cox. "But we let them know that if they're in a gang and they break the law, we'll be there."

The makeup of gangs isn't restricted to an ethnic group or decided by somebody's socio-economic status. "It involves kids who come from single-parent homes to entitled kids. It crosses racial lines," said Starkey. Starkey also pointed out that many gangs are more liberal in who they'll take in when moving to suburban and rural areas.

In a three-pronged attack using counseling, diversion and law enforcement, the task force is working to limit the problem of gangs. Starkey said he has dealt with many kids who suffer from a type of post-traumatic stress disorder following their ordeals in gangs. "A lot of kids I've dealt with, their conscience kicks in at some point," said Starkey.

Starkey said a big way gangs sell themselves to kids is by offering a sense of family. While gangs preach family, some of the ways they initiate new members borders on barbaric. Starkey said many times new gang members will have to "walk the line," where they walk a straight line while being beaten by veteran gang members. "Picking up pennies" involves a new gang member having to pick up a number of pennies from the ground while they are being beaten.

For many women wanting affiliation in gangs, they must perform sex acts on gang members. Starkey said many times young girls wanting to join gangs must be "diced in." That involves the girl rolling a die and whatever number it lands on, the girl must have sex with that number of gang members.

Source: The Times-Union



Attacks on Elderly Became 'More Violent,' Police Say

Article published by the Chicago Sun Times

03/22/2008 Lake County, IN | Four strong-arm robbery suspects who targeted the elderly on the South Side, in the south suburbs and in northwest Indiana had become "progressively more violent" before their arrests, according to police. "Several of the victims had to go to the hospital," said Chicago Police Sgt. Sean Martin, a supervisor on a task force of Illinois and Indiana law enforcement officials. "These were very violent people."

Held in custody in Lake County, Ind., are alleged ringleader Joseph Walker, 24; Maurice Reed, 25; Brandon Green, 21, and Landon Shaw, 19, all of Gary, Ind. All but Reed are known to be members of the Gangster Disciples street gang, Martin said.



The suspects allegedly followed senior citizens from grocery stores to their homes. The robbers would jump from a car, knock the victims to the ground and steal their cash, credit cards and groceries, Martin said. Victims were sometimes threatened with a gun. A man and his wife were pistol-whipped. The suspects did not limit themselves to the elderly -- one victim was a young mother with her child, police said. The mother was beaten.

After a robbery, the suspects would return to Gary to use the credit cards as quickly as possible before the cards were deactivated, Martin said.

Martin said police "caught a break" last Saturday after a robbery at 103rd and Avenue N in Chicago. Chicago Police pursued a maroon SUV carrying two of the suspects to a Hammond, Ind., gas station.

Though the suspects saw the police and fled the gas station, police said they were able to get the license plate number and use it to find all four suspects, who were arrested by Gary police over the next few days.

The suspects face 23 counts in Lake County, Ind. Chicago, Burnham, Calumet City, Lansing and Dolton also have pending arrest warrants, Martin said. "Hopefully they'll never see the light of day again," Martin said.

Source: The Chicago Sun Times

E.C. Man Gets 30 Years for Killing Two

Article published by the Times

03/21/2008 Hammond, IN | Jesse Ramirez bowed his head Thursday as he listened to the grandmother of one of the men he killed sob in Lake Criminal Court. "I cursed God for two years," Lee Griffith said, her voice trembling. "You didn't tell me when my child left that night that someone was going to kill him. ...I can still hear the phone ringing to tell me Quinton (Griffith) is dead." Family members of both Ramirez and the victims cried silently as Griffith's grandmother spoke.

Ramirez, 28, of Lake County, pleaded guilty Thursday to two counts of voluntary manslaughter for the shooting deaths of Jose "Joey" Escobedo Jr., 28, and Griffith, 20, on Sept. 6, 2002 outside the former Brothers Two tavern in Hammond.

Under the plea agreement, Ramirez, who has lived at various Lake County addresses, faces a 30-year prison sentence. He will receive 772 days credit for time already served in jail. Judge Salvador Vasquez said 30 years in prison for two killings was a "difficult pill to swallow" but agreed to accept the plea agreement.

Deputy Lake County Prosecutor Robert Persin said the agreement's terms were based on evidence, the credibility of witnesses in the case, and witnesses' ability to remember the events of six years ago. Ramirez, at the time of the slayings an alleged Gangster Disciple gang member, originally faced two counts of murder and up to 130 years in prison for the shootings.

The victims' families were infuriated by Ramirez's sentence, complaining the prison term was too light. "You took a piece of my heart when you took my kid," victim Jose Escobedo's mother, Isabel Escobedo, sobbed. She shook a glossy photo of her son at Ramirez. "I wish the worst for you for the rest of your life." Ramirez begged the victims' families to have mercy on him. "I'm no longer a gang-banger," he read from a wrinkled yellow paper. "I'm a God-fearing man now."

Source: The Times



Teen Shoots Himself to Prove Gang Ties

Article published by the Tribune Star

03/24/2008 Brownsburg, IN | A Brownsburg teen allegedly shot himself four times to prove to friends and an ex-girlfriend that he had gang ties. Zachary Booso, 19, was arrested early Sunday morning for filing a false police report after telling authorities that he was attacked and shot by an Indianapolis man. Booso later recanted and admitted that the gun shot wounds were self-inflicted and from a single shot air BB gun that he had purchased earlier in the evening.



Booso initially told police that he went to meet a friend when he was flagged down by a 6-foot, 175-pound male wearing a gray sweatshirt and blue jeans. Booso told investigators that the man pulled a homemade weapon and demanded his wallet before shooting him in his right cheek, both shoulders, and his right thigh.

Booso was taken to Wishard Hospital in Indianapolis where investigators continued to probe him about the incident. Suspicions arose surrounding Booso's story when he told investigators that the shooter was 5 to 10 feet away, but then later claimed that the shot to his cheek had first entered his mouth. According to a police report, Booso told police that he must have had his mouth open when the shot was fired. When questioned further, police say Booso admitted that he had inflicted the wounds on himself before throwing the BB gun into a retention pond.

Booso explained that his friends did not believe his claims to have gang affiliations and that the staged assault was intended to convince them otherwise. Investigators contacted Booso's mother, Carla Evans, who allegedly told police that her son had a history of prescription drug abuse. Ironically, he had become addicted to painkillers last December after shooting himself with a pellet gun to avoid returning to duty in the U.S. Navy. Booso was arraigned and later released on bond Monday.

Source: The Terre Haute Tribune Star

Gangs or Childish Cliques?

Article published by the Chesterton Tribune

03/25/2008 Chesterton, IN | In November 2007 Duneland was inconvenienced by a rash of graffiti vandalism in which taggers armed with spray-paint cans made their marks on signs, walls, vehicles, and businesses. The spree ended abruptly when two juveniles were apprehended after being observed spray-painting a camper in Porter. Then, in early December, in what was probably an unrelated incident, vandals damaged a dozen buses owned by Fairhaven Independent Baptist Church in Westchester Township, spray-painting them, both inside and out, with a mixed bag of slogans, symbols, and vulgarities. Last year's sprees do raise a question, though: is there in fact criminal gang activity in Chesterton or Duneland?

...Cpl. Randy Komisarck, the Chesterton Police Department's school resource officer based at Chesterton Middle School, confirms Nelson's assessment. He works with the community's youth every day and to his mind Duneland is not, right now, an especially fertile environment for either gang activity or recruitment. "We have a good school system," Komisarck says. "The economy's more stable. Parents are more active in their kids' lives. They have family units. They don't need to look to a gang for a family unit."

One or two troubling cases have come to Komisarck's attention, however. On one occasion a student "decided he was going to start up his own little gang." First he contacted a member of a Chicago-based gang through the latter's MySpace page, then he began recruiting "school kids." There were 14 of them, Komisarck says, and they were into spray-painting. "That's all they did. They never did drugs or burglaries. Just spray-painting. A lot of them didn't even know what they were spray-painting." (In fact they were spray-painting the inverted symbol of another Chicago-based gang, the sort of dis that could have gotten them hurt on the South Side.)

"The student did it because he was curious," Komisarck says. Anyway, Komisarck heard about the group, spoke to the students and their parents, and effectively put the kibosh on the whole thing. "It was a gang in name only," he says. "It didn't even fit the criminal statute of a gang." On another occasion, Komisarck says, a student adopted the fashion stylings of a Michigan City-based gang: a pants leg rolled up, a sleeve rolled up.

Full Story: http://www.chestertontribune.com/PoliceFireEmergency/3253%20gangs_or_childish_cliques_vandal.htm



Elkhart Takes on Graffiti Problem

Article published by WNDU

03/04/2008 Elkhart, IN | The mayor of Elkhart says the city looks worse than it ever has. He's talking about graffiti showing up all across town, and now the city is taking on the issue. The city just invested \$12,000 in a new "soda blaster" that can clean-up graffiti in colder temperatures.



They've fallen behind on cleaning over the winter and say at the same time the graffiti is becoming a more common problem and an eyesore to homeowners and businesses. "One time it happened in the middle of the day, there was someone driving by who called us and said someone was painting our building," said Terry Martin, with Ed's Appliance in Elkhart. Ed's Appliance has had more than its share of graffiti problems over the years.

The business got hit again last week, and painting over it only does so much good. "If you try to cover it up unless you paint it real good, you know there was graffiti there because it doesn't match the paint," Martin said. In fact, it soon won't be their problem anymore. "We're actually going to be moving, because we consider this neighborhood not safe enough anymore so we're going to be moving our business out of here, and the graffiti is one of the things that helped us decide to move," Martin said.

Police say some of it may be gang activity. Officers will now carry a waiver form for graffiti clean-up, that will expedite the process in getting the eyesores removed. "They tag it, we clean it, they tag it, we clean it, hopefully they'll stop, because if they're trying to get their message out there as gang members, it's not going to be out there long enough for anyone to see it," said Lieutenant Ed Windbigler with the Elkhart City Police. The mayor says they get more phone calls about graffiti in his office than any other issue.

Full Story: <http://www.wndu.com/home/headlines/16234092.html>

Rhyme Against Crime Rap Contest Kicks Off

Article published by WISH TV 8

03/25/2008 Marion County, IN | A federal initiative to fight gun and gang violence in Marion County kicked off on Tuesday. The 2008 Rhyme Against Crime rap contest allows middle school and high school students in Marion County to compete for scholarships and the opportunity to perform at the Indiana Black Expo summer celebration. Another winner receives professionally produced CD's of their music. And, another wins a professionally produced music video.

Last year's winner called it a great opportunity. DeCory Crowder said, "It encourages people to let them know you don't have to have to pick up a gun. That's the main message. And to tell them you can be a part of something and make a change." Students have six

weeks to turn in their lyrics, which must contain anti-gun and anti-gang violence messages. Ten finalists will get to record their raps, perform at the Black Expo, and get a \$750 scholarship. The songs must contain anti-gun and anti-gang messages.

Source: WISH TV 8



Regional 

One Student Killed in Brawl Outside High School

Article published by the Chicago Tribune

03/07/2008 Chicago, IL | Each morning and afternoon, a dozen or so Chicago police officers and school officials watch over the crowds of students at Crane Tech High School, hoping their presence might keep the peace. They know the gang wars in this West Side neighborhood often come to the doorstep, and even pass through the doors, of the school.

Still, on Friday, the violence roared right up the concrete steps of the school, where a gang-related melee left Ruben Ivy, 18, shot dead and a second student beaten with a golf club shortly after classes let out for the day. Witnesses described dozens of students involved in the incident. Police said Friday evening they knew who the shooter was, based on interviews with witnesses and video surveillance, and were looking for him.



Just what sparked the violence wasn't clear Friday night. Some students said there had been a fight at the school earlier in the day; others said it was part of ongoing gang feuds. Police also said there was talk about the fight being over a hat, but family members and friends disputed that.

What was clear was a decades-old battle in the school and in the neighborhood to stave off gang violence did not prevent the taking of another student's life. Ivy's death marks the 18th Chicago Public Schools student killed since school started in September.

Crane, which has a student population of 1,400, is one of a number of schools identified as trouble spots for gang activity, police and school officials said. It sits among subsidized housing and newer housing developments with price tags starting at \$250,000. Cheryl Bolden, chairman of Crane's local school council, said the trouble stems from older gang members who come from a nearby housing complex. They stand outside the school after dismissal and harass and try to recruit students, she said.

Source: The Chicago Tribune

Two Shootings of Kids, Gang Violence Worry Students

Article published by the Chicago Tribune

03/27/2008 Chicago, IL | Classmates of a 15-year-old student shot and wounded Tuesday night on the Southeast Side said they are scared to be out in their neighborhood, where many of the buildings are adorned with gang symbols and where gang violence seems commonplace. Some students of Global Visions Academy are even afraid to walk to school, especially after Eric Reed was shot just blocks from campus, at 2710 East 89th Street.

"[There] was a just a big gang fight yesterday," senior Jasmine Lofton, 18, said after school Wednesday. "It's really about to be something when it gets hot."



Reed was the second Chicago Public School student in the South Chicago neighborhood to be shot in less than a week. Adamnesha Harris, 12, was wounded in the back Thursday in the 8800 block of South Houston Avenue, the unintended victim of a gang rivalry, police said. Reed, a freshman at Global Visions, was shot twice in the chest and once in the foot shortly after 9 p.m. Tuesday in the 8800 block of South Exchange Avenue. He was standing with at least two other teens when someone came out from a gangway and opened fire, authorities said. The teen was in serious condition Wednesday at Comer Children's Hospital and was expected to survive, police said. Police said the area where both shootings occurred is known for gang conflict.

Source: The Chicago Tribune



Reputed Gang Member Fatally Shot in Cicero, Rival Members Retaliate Outside Hospital

Article published by the Chicago Sun Times

03/27/2008 Cicero, IL | A 25-year-old reputed gang member was fatally shot while walking in an alleyway in southwest suburban Cicero Friday evening. Hours later, rival gang members retaliated and shot a man outside Mount Sinai Hospital, where fellow gang members had gathered to hold a vigil.

Hugo Haro of the 1800 block of South 60th Court in Cicero was pronounced at Mount Sinai Hospital at 11:16 p.m., according to the Cook County Medical Examiner's office. Haro, a known gang member, was walking in a gangway when he was ambushed. An unknown person shot five rounds of shots and hit Haro four times, according to Cicero town spokesman Dan Proft. Haro was taken to Mount Sinai Hospital where he later died, Proft said.

After his pronouncement, several of Haro's fellow gang members gathered at Mount Sinai Hospital to hold a memorial. Rival gang members arrived just outside the hospital and opened fire into the crowd, striking a man, Proft said. The man was affiliated with Haro's gang.

A gang fight outside Mount Sinai Hospital, at South California Avenue and West 15th Place, ended with a Hispanic male being shot about 12:05 a.m., according to police News Affairs Officer David Banks.

The man was taken into Mount Sinai and remains in critical condition Saturday morning, Proft said. Police are looking for a white Chevrolet Suburban with blue stripes on the side, which the shooter fled in after the shooting, Banks said. Cicero Police and Harrison Area detectives are investigating.

Source: Chicago Sun Times

Hispanic Violence Can Only Grow

Article published by the Commercial Appeal

03/23/2008 Memphis, TN | His analysis is ominous. "Mark my words," says one local law enforcement investigator. "We're behind schedule. The Hispanic gangs are spreading. "Is it going to get worse? Yes, it will."

While this investigator says that there are only a few hundred "active" Hispanic gang members in Memphis now, the climate is right for these numbers to grow. "It's wide open," he says, adding that all the gangs are at least peripherally involved in the drug trade and all are capable of "ruthless" violence.



One example: In October 2006, a Melquiades Gutierrez, who supplied at least 10 drug dealers with pure methamphetamines, or "ice," from his homes in Horn Lake and Southaven, was sentenced to concurrent 30-year prison terms. Although Gutierrez denied membership in the Mexican Mafia and other Hispanic gangs, according to testimony from Sgt. Scott Evans of the Horn Lake Police Department, Gutierrez had tattoos similar to those common among Mexican Mafia members. Evans also testified that "witnesses are scared to testify against" Gutierrez.

The largest concentration of Hispanic gangs in Memphis is in Hickory Hill. Among the documented Hispanic gangs here: Surenos 13, Pelones, MS-13 (or Mara Salvatrucha), Latin Kings, EME (the Mexican Mafia), and KAL (Krazy Ass Latinos). The latter is a local start-up gang, but the others have roots that reach to Mexico and/or South America, and to American cities such as Chicago, Los Angeles and New York.

Going back more than a decade, Memphis law enforcement noticed a pattern of criminals preying on Hispanics -- many of whom do not have U.S. citizenship and thus do not have bank accounts and work and live on a cash basis. Last October, a Shelby County grand jury indicted 17 members of a street gang known as The Taliban -- a branch of the Vice Lords -- on 72 felony charges; the gang primarily targeted Hispanic victims.

This local law enforcement investigator, who requires anonymity to safeguard ongoing operations, says that in the late 1990s frequent robberies of Hispanics prompted the Latin Kings to send several members here from Chicago and New York. The gang members, he says, provided protection but also charged for this service.

Now, more than a decade later, Hispanic gang graffiti can be seen throughout Hickory Hill and Nutbush and the investigator says Hispanic gangs are active in at least three Memphis high schools: Raleigh-Egypt, Kingsbury and Ridgeway. There is also evidence that the gangs are expanding their reach: "SUR 13" was spray-painted in bright blue on a home's wooden fence next to Harding Academy in Cordova and on the side of a car wash in Bartlett.

"They're just letting people know, 'Don't mess with us because we're here,'" the investigator says.

Source: The Commercial Appeal



MPD, FBI Indict 24 Gang Members

Article published by WTMJ 4 News

04/03/2008 Milwaukee, WI | Two dozen gang members face charges after a big roundup. The feds have indicted 24 members of the Vice Lords street gang. Authorities say they are one of the most violent and dangerous gangs in the city. Authorities say people living near 1st and Keefe should feel safer because the Vice Lords have been taken down. Twenty-four members were indicted for drug trafficking and money laundering.

This is the second time in two years the feds have cracked down on the Vice Lords. Officials say the gang runs a dangerous crack cocaine ring and controls a 32 block area near 1st and Keefe. They also say the gang members are responsible for a lot of the gun violence in that neighborhood. The FBI worked closely with Milwaukee police to bust up the street gang. The US attorney says the cases will be tried in federal court because the gang members will face stiffer penalties there. "I get a little frustrated when people ask what we are doing about violent gangs. This is what we are doing," US Attorney Steven Biskupic said. So far this year, the feds have indicted 100 gang members. Ninety-eight of them are in custody.

Source: WTMJ 4 News

Gang Activity Spawns Prevention Efforts

Article published by Dayton Daily News

03/05/2008 Dayton, OH | Miami Valley Hospital said Tuesday, March 4, that it is launching a broad-based violence prevention effort whose participants will include law enforcement, education and social service agencies.

One target will be street gang activity, the subject of a Dayton Daily News series published Feb. 17 and 18 that found that law enforcement agencies have connected assaults, drug trafficking, shootings and homicides to more than a dozen local street gangs.



Sean Hamilton, manager of the hospital's Injury Prevention Center, said as many as 20 representatives will meet Thursday, March 6, at the hospital. Those representatives are coming from the Dayton Police Department, the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office, Dayton Public Schools, Sinclair Community College, the NAACP, Dayton Urban League and Montgomery County Juvenile Court, among others.

"It's a strategy session and a way to start a dialogue," Hamilton said. "We hope the agencies that are coming will have a better understanding of violence in their own backyard and what can be done to be part of the solution. We are focusing on violence and gun violence and all the activity that surrounds it."

The hospital's trauma registry shows that gun violence is a significant reason for admissions among youth. Black males, Hamilton said, are a "huge piece of that."

The initiative could include a media campaign, education through a pilot school program and an intervention program in partnership with the county Juvenile Court system, Hamilton said. Parts of the program could carry on for years, Hamilton said, noting that a program between the hospital and the courts that targets teens and motor vehicle crashes is five years old.

Source: Dayton Daily News



Kentucky Police Use Radio to Reach Out to Latino Community

Article published by WLKY

03/12/2008 Louisville, KY | Louisville Metro Police are taking their message to the airwaves to bridge the gap with the Latino community. A new radio show is allowing police to communicate with thousands of Spanish-speaking residents. On La Caliente Radio's new show, Spanish and English speaking listeners are on equal ground. "We're giving you safety tips, offering resources to the community, to the Latino community, and anyone can listen to it because it's bilingual," said Metro Police Officer Minerva Virola.

Each week a different member of LMPD appears on the show. This week featured gang coordinator Detective Juan Garrett, who told the listening audience what a gang is, how to recognize gang activity and what to do if you suspect there is a gang in your neighborhood. A translator then repeats the message.

Virola organizes the show each week. She said they've featured officers from a number of units, including robbery, homicide and Crimes Against Children. She said the kidnapping and killing of 4-year-old Ivan Aguilar-Cano brought to light how important it is for the Latino community to communicate with police.

Tino Corona, the station's president, said communication is one of the reasons the show came into existence. "There's a lot of Latinos, especially a lot of people, a lot of immigrants, that really don't have an understanding of the local law enforcement," he said. Corona said a lot has changed since the show premiered.

"At the beginning, people were not calling in, but now, we noticed people actually have a lot of questions and they feel more free to actually pick up the phone and call," he said. And with more questions come more answers, and hopefully the ultimate goal -- progress. "They're not the enemy and they're here to help and that's the No. 1 thing they need to understand," Corona said.

Source: WLKY.com

Cops: \$100,000 in Stolen Artwork Seized from Gang Members

Article published by the Chicago Tribune

03/25/2008 Chicago, IL | An investigation into gun trafficking by Chicago-area gang members led police to an unexpected treasure on the Far South Side Monday night: a van containing eight abstract paintings valued by their owner at \$100,000. Members of the Calumet Area gang team learned of the stolen artwork, which was taken during a burglary at a storage facility in Lincolnwood earlier this month, while questioning a gang member from Cicero who was arrested last week for trying to sell guns to gang members on Chicago's South Side, police said.

The artwork was found in a van outside the home of Tirmell Williams, one of the burglary suspects, in the 11500 block of South Stewart Ave. in the West Pullman neighborhood, said Sgt. Robert Belczak of the gang team. The eight paintings, identified only by generic names such as "orange abstract" and "blue abstract" in the police report, were valued at approximately \$100,000 according to their owner, said Lt. George Devereux of Calumet Area Gang Operations. They had been missing since a burglary March 8 at a storage facility in the 3800 block of West Devon Ave. in north suburban Lincolnwood. The owner of the paintings has not been identified by authorities.

Williams, 31, and Joseph Saleski, 18, of the 4900 block of West Roosevelt Road, Cicero, were each charged with two counts of felony burglary last week, said Cook County state's attorney's office spokesman Andy Conklin. They are being held in Cook County Jail in lieu of a \$100,000 bail and will next appear in court on April 4. Belczak said his team learned of the artwork's whereabouts through an informant about 8 p.m. Monday. The artwork was recovered by police at 11 p.m. and brought to Calumet Area headquarters. The paintings were turned over to the Lincolnwood Police Department on Tuesday morning, Devereux said.



Last week, the gang team received information that Saleski, a suspected Cicero gang member, was trying to sell guns to other gang members in neighborhoods on Chicago's Far South Side, Belczak said. Police executed a search warrant at his Cicero residence and confiscated three handguns, three rifles and a sawed-off shotgun. Police also arrested another man living in the building, Javier Mendoza, 27, who was charged for having one of the guns in his possession, Belczak said. In connection with the gun investigation, Saleski was charged with felony unlawful use of a weapon and two misdemeanors: gun possession without a firearm owner's identification card and possession of ammunition without a firearm owner's identification card. Some of the guns also were stolen from storage lockers in the Lincolnwood storage facility, police said. The investigation continues, Devereux said, and police may be looking for additional suspects.

Source: Chicago Tribune



National

Ruthless Asian Gangs Blaze Trail of Violence

Article published by the Press Democrat

03/15/2008 Santa Rosa, CA | Vutha and Terry Au seemed like ordinary young men, working on their cars, helping neighbors with chores or mowing the lawn outside their family's spacious west Santa Rosa home. "The boys were always respectful. There was never any drama at the home," said a neighbor of the Au family, who until recently lived across the street from Live Oak Park near Fulton Road.

It came as a shock when Vutha Au, 24, was kidnapped March 2, allegedly by members of an Asian gang, and driven to a secluded beach near Jenner, where he was shot nine times and left dead. Authorities believe he was killed so that he couldn't testify on behalf of his brother, 22-year-old Terry Au, who has alleged he also was kidnapped and tortured by the same gang - the Asian Boyz - when he decided to stop running drugs for them.



The brothers' story offers a revealing look into Asian gangs, which have operated below the radar in Sonoma County, generating far fewer headlines and concern than their Latino counterparts. Vutha Au's alleged execution raises that profile. Even those who have become numb to gang

violence were shocked by such viciousness, which law enforcement officials say is a hallmark of Asian gangs entrenched in communities nationwide. "These guys are ruthless. They're killers. They're not to be taken lightly," Long Beach Police Det. Joe Pirooz said.

Long Beach is considered the birthplace of California's Asian gangs, which rose out of that city's large southeast Asian population in the early 1980s and spread across the state. The state Department of Justice now estimates there are 500 Asian gangs in California.

In Sonoma County, the number of Asian gang members is thought to be in the low hundreds, as contrasted with Latino gangs, which are believed to have about 1,500 members. But Asian gangs, whose members are mostly Vietnamese, Cambodian, Chinese, Laotian, Hmong and Mien youth from refugee families, have helped bring a harder edge to the county's gang culture.

Full Story:

http://64.233.167.104/search?q=cache:apOi31kN4MsJ:www.pressdemocrat.com/EarlyEdition/article_view.cfm%3FrecordID%3D8867%26publishdate%3D03/15/2008+Ruthless+blaze+trail+of&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=1&gl=us



Criminal Gangs Influence Locals

Article published by the Morning News

03/29/2008 Benton County, AR | Case 1: On a damp, chilly Friday night, a black teenager met two pretty blonde sisters outside a nightclub. The girls invited him to a party given by their neighbors, young El Salvadorian men. The black boy was cheerful, wearing a white beanie hat. At the party he played cards, listened to music, drank beer and called the men "homeboys."



The next morning, the boy's body was discovered in a driveway; he was robbed and had a bullet wound in his forehead. The men were giving the boy a ride home but then forced him from the car and killed him - and admitted they target blacks, the sisters told police.

Case 2: A white man was getting a ride home from work on a Saturday afternoon from a black co-worker. They pulled out in front of a car carrying three Mexicans, who became angry, drove ahead of them and deliberately slowed. At a stoplight, the back window of the Mexicans' car rolled down a few inches, a gun emerged and several shots were fired, killing the white man.

The Mexican men said they were shooting so the other men would respect Hispanics, or "La Raza," a witness said.

Defendants in both cases have ties to gangs in California, police and prosecutors believe - and, with that influence, gang-related crime this area is becoming more violent. The criminal gang element is migrating from larger cities to smaller, quieter areas like Northwest Arkansas, experts say, and a popular hip-hop, gangster culture could make youth vulnerable to their influences.

Perhaps Derrick Jefferson, the 17-year-old black boy whose death was first described, is an example. Jefferson lived in Centerton and had some brushes with the law during his teenage years. He took a fake gun to Bentonville High School in 2006, causing police to execute a search warrant on his mother's home. He was arrested in April 2006 for a minor in possession of alcohol charge.

Jefferson's MySpace page boasted pictures of him making gang gestures, probably promoting the nationwide Westside and Folk Nation groups, Springdale police said, but they don't believe he was a serious gang member.

Hispanic gangs formed in California prisons as a form of protection against other inmates and guards, and south California inmates became enemies with north, according to the research of California gang expert Al Valdez. Rivalries spread to the streets, with gang members identifying with either red or blue, the letter "M," the 13th letter of the alphabet - or the letter "N," the 14th. A prospective member sometimes had to commit a crime to earn membership, and going to prison was a status symbol, researchers say. Insults, no matter how small, were answered - and gangs refused to cooperate with police.

Source: <http://www.nwaonline.net/articles/2008/03/29/news/033008bzroadragegng.txt>

Even Small Towns Aren't Too Small for Gangs

Article published by the Seattle Times

04/02/2008 Seattle, WA | A voice quietly greets two teenage girls who show up late to Sultan Middle School on a recent Saturday night: "Do you have anything on you?" The two adamantly shake their heads no, so Angie Freedman lets them inside. Anyone from the ages of 11 to 18 can drop in at Safe Stop — provided they play by the rules, said program coordinator Freedman. Drugs and alcohol are obvious no-nos; gang colors and hand signs won't fly, either.

The goal of the program, run weekly by the Volunteers of America, is to keep youngsters — from the tough kids to the jocks — off the streets and out of trouble. Between 40 and 80 youths come each week from Sultan and nearby communities. Freedman doubts she's changing kids' lives by offering a place to shoot hoops, eat chips and hang out for three hours a week, but she hopes she can alter the course of a Saturday evening.



Countywide, law enforcement says gang activity is increasing. In Sultan, officials say the small, former logging town east of Monroe is seeing more youths emulating gang members by wearing colors and symbols linked to gangs and spray-painting graffiti tags. "There is gang-related activity in almost every community in the county. No area is necessarily immune from that," said Everett police Detective Kevin Fairchild, who specializes in gang issues and vice crimes. Traditional signs of gangs — graffiti, property damage and small thefts — have escalated, though it is difficult to know how much of it is directly related to gangs, he said.

While the bulk of activity is in Everett and its surrounding areas, there are more than a dozen active gangs operating elsewhere around the county, said Fairchild. Washington state law defines a "gang" as a group of three or more people that has identifiable leadership and regularly conspires and acts for criminal purposes.

Gov. Christine Gregoire on Monday signed legislation designed to deal with the rising gang presence across the state. The measure will provide grants to communities to help deal with gang activity, including some graffiti. It also will create a database to help law enforcement track gang members and activity and adds to the jail time for a gang-related crime.

Rick Hawkins, a sheriff's deputy filling in as Sultan's interim police chief, said he is aware of two groups that identify themselves as gangs in Sultan. "They're not at the level of those in other areas of the county," he said, noting "wannabe" gangsters are the most pervasive at this point. "Are some involved in criminal activity? I believe so." Many of the teens who attend Safe Stop claim gang activity is happening in their schools and behind empty buildings — several talk matter-of-factly about gang fights and recruitment.

Full Story: http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/snohomishcountynews/2004319966_gangs02n.html



Gangs go from Streets to Internet with Recruitment, Activities

Article published by St. Petersburg Times

03/26/2008 Hillsborough County, FL | Gangs are building up their ranks in eastern Hillsborough County and using the Internet to recruit members, a school and sheriff's officials told parents Tuesday. Sheriff's Detective Mark Wilder works for the gang task force unit that started four years ago and had been increasingly busy. "There's enough incidences in this part of Hillsborough County to have a full-time unit now," Wilder told a group of parents at a forum on gangs and bullying at Randall Middle School in Lithia.

The county has 117 active gangs and 3,000 gang members, according to Wilder. While activity in the Lithia and Bloomingdale areas isn't substantial — there are three identified gangs — seven gang incidents have been reported in recent months, according to Wilder.

"Actually, the busiest area for gangs right now is the Internet," he said. "They do their recruiting, plan their crimes and post their activities for kids to see." Nowadays, that's how a lot of gangs learn how to be gangs."

Source: *St. Petersburg Times*

Gang Problem is a Global Concern

Article published by the Daily Breeze

03/03/2008 Universal City, CA | With street gangs using global networks to carry out extortion, drug trafficking and murder, top federal and local law enforcement officials said Monday they are strengthening ties across borders, sharing information and even officers.

Using an annual three-day summit in Universal City on transnational gangs as the backdrop, the Los Angeles Police and Los Angeles County Sheriff's departments signed an agreement to launch an officer exchange program with El Salvador, saying they and federal officials are increasingly turning to their foreign counterparts to hunt down Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13), 18th Street and other street gangs.

L.A. gangs have ravaged Central American communities, as thousands of immigrants have returned to their homeland over the past two decades and spread a culture of violence. "No single nation can fight gangs alone," said John Pistole, an FBI deputy director. "They are far-reaching criminal enterprises that often transcend state and international borders to accomplish their needs."

The one-time, 30-day exchange program will provide four Salvadoran officers and police from each local agency the chance to swap tactics, files and investigative techniques. But officials say the program is one of several, including the summit, that have helped them track gang members operating transnationally, most often in Mexico and Central America.

In December 2004, the FBI launched an MS-13 National Gang Task Force focused on dismantling the 10,000-member gang formed in the 1980s by Salvadoran immigrants trying to protect themselves on Los Angeles streets. They say the program has helped them solve crimes in Miami, Los Angeles and San Salvador. The FBI and Salvadoran officials last year opened an anti-gang center in El Salvador.

Salvador Hernandez, FBI assistant director in Los Angeles, said information from the center was used in November to arrest more than a dozen MS-13 gang members and associates as well as gang leader Oscar Chacon, who was busted for selling methamphetamine.

An estimated 10 percent to 15 percent of L.A.'s 40,000 gang members have international ties, said LAPD Cmdr. David Doan. And though they are only a fraction of the gangs, their crimes are especially disturbing. Over the years, Doan said, he has watched the problem grow as Los Angeles gang members extort residents by using their counterparts in El Salvador to carry out beatings of their family members. "To deal with global crime we have to have a global response," LAPD Chief William Bratton said.

Last year's declining gang violence has been eclipsed over the past two weeks with several high-profile cases, including a shoot-out between Avenues gang members in northeast Los Angeles and the wounding of eight people at a South L.A. bus stop, allegedly by a gang member from Gardena. Bratton noted that mounting an international response could help combat a gang problem that "is pernicious and has the ability to flare up very quickly."

Source: The Daily Breeze



13 Gang Members Indicted on Sale of PCP

Article published by the Los Angeles Times

03/27/2008 Los Angeles, CA | Federal prosecutors Wednesday announced two grand jury indictments against 13 members of the Grape Street Crips, a street gang suspected of manufacturing and distributing large quantities of the drug PCP throughout Southern California. The first indictment was handed down Friday and accuses Grape Street "shot-caller" Alphonso Eugene Foster and his associates of producing the drug at a lab in the remote desert community of Landers for distribution in Watts and other locations throughout the country, authorities said.

When they were arrested, the operators were in the middle of a "PCP cook" that could have produced 54 kilos of PCP, with a street value of more than \$1 million, according to the indictment. The drug, which is available relatively cheaply and provides a quick high, remains hugely popular on the street, authorities said.

The charges were announced at the Los Angeles Police Department's 77th Street Division station at a news conference attended by U.S. Atty. Gen. Michael Mukasey, U.S. Atty. Thomas O'Brien, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, City Atty. Rocky Delgadillo and Police Chief William J. Bratton. Mukasey said the FBI would be forming a task force that would combine resources with local law enforcement officials to target violent crime and gang activity, which he called one of his "top priorities as attorney general."

The indictments cap a six-month investigation that federal authorities said traced the gang's efforts to obtain "precursor chemicals" for PCP and manufacture the drug. Foster and Kim Walker allegedly controlled a clandestine lab in Landers as well as S&W Graffiti Removal in San Bernardino, which was used as a front to obtain and store the chemicals, according to the indictment. Authorities also alleged that a Watts home was used as a "stash house" and distribution center.

Source: Los Angeles Times



Officials: Database on Gangs Overdue

Article published by the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

03/23/2008 Centerton, AR | When trying to solve a gang-related crime, Rogers and Springdale police can tap into information on hundreds of suspected local gang members or their associates. Smaller police departments in Northwest Arkansas, however, don't have such databases — photos, tattoos and addresses linked to gangs such as Sureno, MS-13, Nortenos, Brown Pride and Aryan Brotherhood.

The closest thing to a regional gang clearinghouse is the Arkansas Crime Information Center. While the center shows felony convictions nationwide, it lists only 21 gang members in Arkansas. In Rogers, police have more than 200 in their gang database. "If my city gets hit with graffiti by someone called 'Snoop Dog,' I can't call up ACIC and say, 'Is there a Snoop Dog in your system?'" Centerton Police Chief Lance Johnson said. "With ACIC, you need a name, a date of birth or a driver's license number, something to start with," he said. "A lot of times, we don't have that kind of information at the front end."

In Centerton, a fast-growing bedroom community west of Bentonville, the Latin Kings gang painted graffiti in January, and no one has been arrested for it. Johnson wants a plan to create a Northwest Arkansas gang-intelligence network. Such a database would let law enforcement officers add information as they get it. They would check whether a suspect — who only may be known by a nickname, a tattoo or who he runs with — is on the radar of another department. "If another department arrests a gang member, and it turns out he lives in Centerton, I might not ever know until one of us picks up the phone and calls the other," Johnson said.

Twelve agencies in Northwest Arkansas, meeting under the federal Project Safe Neighborhoods' Anti-Gang Initiative talked about starting a gang-intelligence database last year, but logistics and cost concerns put the plan on hold. Bob Balfe, U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Arkansas, said for a regional database to work, every agency would need to use the same criteria for entering information, and someone would have to maintain the system. "On top of that, there's a big funding issue with equipment and manpower," Balfe said. "As stretched as many of the departments are just trying to get officers on the streets, it's just not a top priority right now."

Although there's no central database, the agencies from Washington, Benton and Sebastian counties meet every seven weeks or so and share gang intelligence and leads on cases. "Gang members don't respect county lines, and that's especially relevant in Northwest Arkansas where it's not one large metropolitan area, but in fact a region with more than one county," Balfe said. "Everyone involved here knows how important it is that we all continue to communicate and collaborate on this issue," he said.

In considering a regional database, the agencies looked at CalGang, the California Department of Justice's gang database. "It's an electronic gang file built on a network that allows sharing between departments," McBride said. "It may sound sophisticated, but a gang file is a gang file. If you know your suspect drives a red Chevy, you enter that in, and you get a list of gang members who drive red Chevys." McBride, who is retired from the Los Angeles County sheriff's office, said police can work to control and reduce gangs by banding together for training. "Gang members in today's world are very mobile, moving from one town to the next," McBride said. "To stay on top of it, police need to form a task force and start training their officers to recognize gangs. Put on statewide training, and roll it across the state."

Full Story: <http://www.nwanews.com/adg/News/220566/>



YouTube Posting Leads to Arrests in an Assault

Article published by the New York Times

03/09/2008 Ossining, NY | The Ossining police relied on a vital piece of evidence in their decision late last month to charge four high school students with first-degree gang assault: video images of the crime that were posted on YouTube by one of the teenagers after he used the camera on his cell phone to record the attack, the police said. The incident shows the potential legal consequences of an increasingly common phenomenon of using the virtual world to recount exploits, even when they veer into the realm of criminality. "I don't think these kids understand just what is at stake when they post something online, how this can ultimately be used against them," said Detective Lt. William Sullivan of the Ossining Police Department.

The YouTube posting, a little more than a minute long, depicted three Ossining High students attacking an 18-year-old youth in the Trinity Episcopal Church parking lot. It shows punching and kicking; at one point, a pocketknife brandished by the victim was used against him by one of the other youths, causing a superficial six-inch gash, Lieutenant Sullivan said. "It's all right there," he said.

Prosecutorial power is enhanced when evidence of a crime is so easily accessible, said Randolph M. McLaughlin, a Pace Law School professor. "If it hadn't been posted online, police would have had to go through traditional procedural steps to obtain access to that evidence, such as obtaining a subpoena, testifying before a grand jury," he said. "By making this available in such a public forum for everyone to see, it becomes a very efficient investigatory tool." It can also be a persuasive one to a jury. "It's hard to tell someone that what they are looking at with their own eyes is not plausible," Professor McLaughlin said.

The posting of the Ossining assault was pulled from YouTube after the police made their arrests, but investigators have retained a copy. According to Lieutenant Sullivan, their investigation includes whether the teenagers charged were part of a gang. "We are not ruling that out," he said.

Gang or youth violence is a serious problem in Westchester, said Jim Bostic, chairman of the City of Yonkers Violence and Gang Prevention Coalition. "You have no idea how many of these kids are involved in a gang without their parents knowing," he said. Mr. Bostic said he and other coalition members have witnessed increased use of the Internet by gang members, not only as a means of direct communication, but also as a way to post identifying signs that used to take the form of clothing or graffiti but are now represented in a much more subtle electronic form. "The whole language of how gangs communicate has changed," he said. "Law enforcement has tried to make the adjustments, but it is extremely difficult when you are dealing with nontraditional means."

Full Story:

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/09/nyregion/nyregionspecial2/09tubewe.html?_r=3&ref=nyregionspecial2&oref=slogin&oref=slogin&oref=slogin

Police Say Rosaries are Newest Gang Symbol

Article published by USA Today

03/16/2008 Albany, OR | Never did Jaime Salazar imagine that wearing a rosarylike crucifix to school would provoke a national stir. But when Salazar, 14, and his 16-year-old friend Marco Castro were suspended recently for refusing to remove the religious beads because they were "gang-related," it thrust the issue into the headlines and has triggered questions over the evolving role of rosaries in religion, fashion and street gangs.



In the latest cultural take on a symbol that has gone from Catholic altars to Britney Spears' bosom, the rosary is blurring the lines of liberty and safety on campus. Some call the rosary-gang connection a stretch and urge caution. But for educators and public safety officials charged with blocking fluid gang trends, rosaries have become one more marker to track suspicious activity.

"It's become part of the look," said Victor Castro, a detective and school resource officer who leads gang awareness training in Hillsboro, Ore. "They use it as a reminder of protection."

Changing gang trends leave educators to rely on advice from public safety officials and their own discretion, he said. In this case, a school resource officer informed the school to be on the lookout for rosaries. "We tell them to look at the whole package," said Ken Fandrem, a police officer assigned to the school. "Not just one article of clothing.

But David Fidanque, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon, said educators should proceed with caution. Their intentions may be valid, but they run the risk of violating students' rights, he said. "When it comes to restricting any form of expression, school officials have a pretty high bar to cross," he said. "They better have very specific evidence that's more than just a hunch."

Victor Castro, the detective who tracks gang activity, takes a more subtle approach with rosaries, striving to be sensitive about cultural and religious traditions. "I say, 'Do me a favor. Wear it inside your shirt close to your heart. There's a bad element out there that uses it in a different way.'"

Full Story: http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2008-03-16-rosaries-gangs_N.htm



Graffiti Bill Would Punish Parents, Too

Article published by the Arizona Republic

04/01/2008 Phoenix, AZ | Parents of children caught tagging bus stops, billboards and other property could soon be punished along with their kids under an anti-graffiti proposal cruising through the state Legislature. The Arizona House of Representatives on Monday unanimously backed a bill allowing Juvenile Court judges to order taggers and their parents to perform community service for a second or subsequent graffiti offense. Parents would be liable if they knew their child was planning to tag or was in the act of tagging property, and if they supplied their child with paint or other graffiti tools.

"Parents are out there buying spray-paint cans for kids, giving them the car to go out and do this at night, and letting them practice on their bedroom walls," said Rep. Chad Campbell, a Phoenix Democrat and the primary sponsor of the bill. "I would bet money that some parents think it is harmless activity, but they need to recognize that is not the case." Tagging devalues businesses, homes and other property, creates blight, and is a precursor to more serious crimes such as burglary and gang activity, Campbell said.

Don Keuth, president of the Phoenix Community Alliance, a business group focused on the revitalization of central Phoenix, said the city and its community partners had stepped up its efforts to combat graffiti in the past decade. The city's Neighborhood Services Department has distributed hundreds of thousands of dollars in rewards to citizens who report graffiti crimes. It has installed cameras in heavily tagged areas. And it has launched Graffiti Busters, a graffiti cleanup program. But in the past two years, the Valley has seen a surge in graffiti vandalism, mostly committed by young adults or gang members marking their territory.

Full Story: <http://www.azcentral.com/news/articles/2008/04/01/20080401graffiti0401.html>



'Hybrid Gangs' a Growing Concern

Article published by the Pantagraph

03/29/2008 Bloomington, IL | They have their own colors, symbols, nicknames and graffiti. They have no affiliation with gangs in Chicago or St. Louis. They are responsible for an uptick in random attacks and intimidation in the Twin Cities during the past year, everything from pellet gun assaults to shaking down other children for money. Police are calling the 100 or so youths in Bloomington-Normal "hybrid gangs." While they lack the formal leadership, codes of ethics or drug sales typical among established adult gangs, a hybrid gang still "looks and smells like a street gang to citizens," Bloomington Police Crime Analyst Jack McQueen said.

And a rivalry between the two largest groups could make for "a heated summer," youth counselor Greg Patton warned. "Two new gangs have crept into this community, and they're young and they're heavily recruiting," said Patton, youth program director for Bloomington's Western Avenue Community Center. "With the new organizations poppin', there could be some serious problems."



Began last year

Officers started seeing problems with the homegrown gangs in March 2007, McQueen said. A hybrid gang typically starts with a charismatic leader and a group of friends, he said. Other groups form, and fights erupt when a member has a conflict with someone else. People started spotting these youths, typically from 12 to 17 years old, sporting the same color clothing, standing in the way of traffic on side streets, stealing bicycles and iPods from other youths and shaking down kids for money, McQueen said. Some members of adult gangs also met with groups of the youths, gave them same-color shirts and mentored them on how to interact with the public, McQueen said. Four such men recently went to prison on unrelated charges, he said.

Department officials met with leaders of social service agencies and residents in neighborhoods where the groups loitered. They heard similar stories. People knew the homegrown gangs' names, and said their own children had been robbed or they personally had been blocked into their driveways by gang members who refused to let them out. And the violence worsened in the summer, McQueen said. "We had a fairly sustained string of street beatings, strong-armed robberies and assaults in various areas of Bloomington," McQueen said. The attackers yelled out their group names during some attacks, he said.

Juvenile calls up

Normal Police Officer Brian Williams said at least two of the hybrid gangs have established themselves in northwest Normal, particularly the 700 block of Orlando Avenue. Youths from Bloomington and Normal take buses to that area, where some members live, he said. "What we're seeing is an increase in residential burglaries, definitely an increase in graffiti," Williams said. "Lots of fights are happening, typically with people in the same age group." Patton said there have been fights at every house party in the last six months.



Bloomington's juvenile arrests went up 13 percent, from 183 in 2006 to 208 in 2007, according to department statistics. During the same time period, adult arrests dropped about one-quarter, from 2,048 to 1,554. Calls to Bloomington police with complaints about juveniles also skyrocketed, from 342 in 2006 to 1,309 in 2007. Bloomington Police Sgt. Clay Wheeler said he is concerned about "senseless batteries," in which random people were attacked for no real reason.

Look-alike guns

With the increased violence, officers also found more teens carrying look-alike handguns, primarily pellet guns, McQueen said. By August and September, "They started randomly assaulting people with these pellet guns, not just each other," he said. Calls about the weapons increased from one or two weekly to two or three nightly for the 3 to 11 p.m. shift, McQueen said.

Bloomington Police Lt. Pete Avery said last summer a 12- or 14-year-old was pointing what looked like a Smith

& Wesson 9 millimeter handgun at random people in the 700 block of West Market Street. He dropped the pellet gun behind a fence before officers caught up with and handcuffed him. Everybody on the barrel side of the gun thought it was real, Avery said.

Carl Fever, a crime analyst for BPD, said the look-alikes are often stolen or given as gifts. And Wheeler said parents of teens who own the pellet guns should think twice before allowing their children access to them. “You pull a fake gun out, somebody might come back with a real gun,” Wheeler said. Wheeler said the greatest fear that most officers have is that a child will be injured because of a toy.

Cliques

Wheeler said the gangs have been particularly problematic in the Olde Towne neighborhood on Bloomington’s near-west side. Patton said Normal’s Orlando Avenue is probably the “hottest” area, but hangouts such as Bloomington’s Friendship Park and parking lots along Market Street will be busy this summer. Wheeler said some of the teenagers likely are involved just to pass the time, and others want to hang out with friends, show they are tough and seem important.

Travis Burns, another Western Avenue counselor, described the groups more as cliques than gangs. As they grew, harassment motivated others to join, Patton said. “You’re either going to be a part of it, or you’re going to be a victim of it,” Patton said.

A few small groups that formed last year did nothing more serious than write small amounts of graffiti, McQueen said. But one got the attention of the larger hybrids, drawing them into fights, he said. “And we told them ‘bad idea,’” McQueen said. “You now look and smell and taste like prey to these other groups.” But Patton said the new groups so far have avoided crossing the long-standing adult street gangs. “They’re not crossing those lines to fool with those gangs because they’ll squash that in a second,” Patton said.

Combating violence

And the activity also has stayed out of the classrooms. Bloomington High School Principal Tim Moore said he has heard about two groups fighting outside of school, but there have not been more fights inside BHS in the last year. But some students told faculty and staff they still plan to settle disagreements off-campus. “Is our school safe? Absolutely,” Moore said. “Are we proactive in preventing gangs and violence? Absolutely.”



Assistant State’s Attorney Aaron Hornsby, a juvenile court prosecutor, said he is aware of the new gang activity. But unlike what officers have said, he hasn’t seen a related increase in the number of violent crime reports. Hornsby has noticed more youths admitting gang membership, as well as an increase in burglary charges, particularly among groups of youths checking for unlocked car and home doors.

Patton said at-risk teens need something positive to do — particularly paid work. Mike Harrison, another youth counselor and a District 87 school board member, said that just hearing someone say, “Man, just think about it” could have prevented some attacks.

Wheeler said Bloomington officers will break up large gatherings and bring juveniles back to their parents, and officers can flood areas to make it uncomfortable for people committing crimes. Williams added that Normal officers have increased patrols and visibility in areas frequented by hybrid gang members and are working on rounding up those causing problems.

McQueen said this is not the first time the communities have dealt with the issues, and he is confident they will keep things in check. “The sky is not falling,” he said.

Source: The Pantagraph

Plastic Knuckles a Growing Concern

Article published WKYC, Video posted on BluTube

02/29/2008 Akron, OH | An Akron man is peddling plastic knuckles which are just as strong as brass knuckles but can't set off metal detectors in schools, government buildings and airports. Investigator Tom Meyer spoke with school and city leaders and all of them voiced concern about the damage the weapon can cause. Channel 3 News purchased a pair of plastic knuckles, also known as "knuckledusters", and demonstrated their force on watermelons, milk cartons, and other objects.



Cuyahoga County Sheriff Gerald McFaul and his chief inspector, Doug Burkhart, saw a video demonstration and called the item dangerous, even lethal. Burkhart wants the weapon outlawed, saying "we can't have people coming into secure facilities armed with these."

Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson responded by saying "somebody is always trying to beat the system," and he vowed to have his law enforcement staff investigate to see if the city should try to make them illegal.

Channel 3 News went undercover and found the knuckles could easily slip past metal detectors everywhere. Cleveland Public Schools recently spent \$4 million on new metal detectors but we proved they can't detect the plastic knuckles. Schools CEO Eugene Sanders said he would be very supportive of any effort that would ban the item in schools.

The man who is selling the weapon won't say exactly how many he's sold, but claims he's sold many. He said that he's not liable for any harm they might cause and that they're intended for self-defense.

At Cleveland's Hopkins International Airport, a Channel 3 News producer was able to carry the knuckles past security without a problem. Interestingly, brass knuckles are on TSA's list of restricted items, but the equally dangerous glass knuckles are not on the list. TSA officials said if they found the knuckles on a passenger, they would most likely confiscate the item.

Please visit the following link for a closer look at plastic knuckles →
<http://blutube.policeone.com/Clip.aspx?key=23EAF938C51D7071>

From the Editors



Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter. We are always trying to improve the quality and effectiveness of our newsletters and information.

If you have any comments, suggestions or articles that can be used in the "G.A.I.N." Newsletter, please send them to:

L.E.C.C. Program
C/O U.S. Attorney's Office
5400 Federal Plaza, Suite 1500
Hammond, IN 46320
Phone: (219) 937-5666
Fax: (219) 937-5537
E-mail: ryan.holmes@usdoj.gov
Or
Jesse.rodgers@sbcglobal.net

