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POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS

Orange County sheriff's worker accused of soliciting assault on jail inmate

The civilian employee, who allegedly has ties to a white supremacist gang, also is suspected of leaking confidential police records.

From the LA Times published September 26, 2008

SANTA ANA, CA | A civilian employee of the Orange County Sheriff's Department who allegedly has ties to a white supremacist gang has been indicted on charges of soliciting someone to commit a violent crime and providing confidential police records to unauthorized people, officials said Thursday.

Lissa Marie Domanic, 42, was working as an office specialist and 911 dispatcher when she allegedly asked someone to assault an Orange County jail inmate, said sheriff's spokesman Jim Amormino. She also allegedly used department computers to access confidential records that she forwarded to unauthorized people, Amormino said. A grand jury indicted Domanic on the felony charges earlier this week, and she is awaiting arraignment in Orange County Superior Court. Domanic, who has worked for the Sheriff's Department for about 19 months, has been placed on administrative leave pending a disciplinary review, Amormino said.



"We do a thorough background investigation, and nothing came up in her background," he said. "Sometimes people are able to conceal things they are involved in."

Sheriff's investigators began looking at Domanic in May after receiving a tip about her from another law enforcement agency, Amormino said. Among the things she is accused of doing is asking one inmate to assault another inmate and using department records to identify the housing location of the intended victim, Amormino said. The assault did not occur, he said.

Continued...

When sheriff's investigators arrested Domanic at her Yorba Linda home earlier this week, she allegedly was under the influence of a controlled substance and in possession of methamphetamine, Amormino said.



Man gets 30 years for role in girl's murder

From the South Bend Tribune published September 15, 2008

SOUTH BEND, IN| A St. Joseph County judge Monday morning sentenced a South Bend man to 30 years in prison, the maximum allowed under his plea agreement, for his role in the 2006 shooting death of a 16-year-old girl.

Judge Jerome Frese ordered Terry Waddell, 22, to serve the sentence after hearing tearful testimony from Yvonne Fountain, mother of victim JaVonda Tharbs. Fountain told the judge how JaVonda was the "motivator" in her family, how much her teachers at Washington High School liked her, and how excited she was to have recently been selected a Washington cheerleader.

"She would tell me all of the time, 'Mom, you're the best mom in the world,'" Fountain said. "I said, 'How do you know?' And she would say, 'Because I love you so much.'"



Waddell is one of five individuals, along with Larry Mitchell, Jason Reeves, Jermaine Reeves and Clover Smith, whom prosecutors have charged in JaVonda's murder. She was fatally shot while visiting her older sister's Beacon Heights apartment on April 26, 2006, Washington's prom night. As a sophomore, JaVonda was too young to attend prom, but she had been hoping to attend an after-prom party that night.

The defendants plotted the shooting in retaliation for the shooting three days earlier of Kay DeBerry, mother to Waddell and the Reeves brothers. Waddell had given the gun to Mitchell, who mistook JaVonda for a man they believed had shot DeBerry, who survived, prosecutors say. DeBerry's case remains unsolved. Her shooting was believed to have been one more in a string of retaliatory strikes in a long-running feud between rival gangs.

Before learning his sentence, Waddell was given the chance to speak. He turned to Fountain.

"I want to apologize," he said. "It might not mean anything ... I can't take back anything, but I am sorry. I am truly sorry." Fountain nodded her head slowly.

"I had already forgiven him," she told the judge, "but I hope one day he realizes the hatred he carries in him is going to mess him up for the rest of his life." Frese agreed.

"You have to get out of the life of handguns and revenge," Frese told Waddell, who has two prior felony handgun convictions. "These feuds are just craziness. Nobody ends up any better, it only gets worse. If any good can come of it, use whatever influence you have to convince people who will listen to you that this is the wrong road to go down, and that all of this madness should stop."

After the hearing, Fountain said she was pleased with the sentence. She said she is confident the feud has ended, if for no other reason than because most of the men involved are now in prison.

“The prosecutor’s office, they’re just doing a wonderful job,” she said. Chief Deputy Prosecutor Ken Cotter had asked for the plea agreement’s maximum of 30 years in prison, saying Waddell “does not have the respect for human life that I think is important for our society.”

Frese technically sentenced Waddell to 45 years in prison, but suspended 15 years. He ordered four years of probation following Waddell’s prison release, which would come in 15 years with good-time behavior credit. Should Waddell commit a new crime within four years of his release, he could be forced to return to prison for those 15 suspended years, Frese said.

A jury in December convicted Mitchell of murder. He received a 65-year prison term, and the Indiana Court of Appeals recently denied his appeal. Prosecutors in July filed conspiracy to commit murder charges against Waddell, Jason Reeves, 31, and Jermaine Reeves, 28. Clover Smith, 31, Jason Reeves’ girlfriend, is charged with assisting a criminal. A warrant remains outstanding for Jermaine Reeves’ arrest. Cotter asked anyone with information on his whereabouts to call Metro Homicide detectives James Taylor or Brian Young, 235-5009.



Pair of presenters say there are gangs in county

From Pilot News published September 10, 2008

PLYMOUTH, IN | “There are active gangs in Marshall County,” according to Mike Cox, officer with the Warsaw Police Department, and Don Starkey, counselor with Bowen Center. Cox and Starkey presented an informative slide show on the topic at Riverside Intermediate School Tuesday. Sessions were held in both English and Spanish.

Cox said, “The majority of gangs in Indiana are from alliances with other gangs to move drugs, weapons and property.” He said, “Gangs are all about drugs and money.” The presenters offered a number of suggestions to the parents and interested community residents who attended the meeting.

Starkey said, “Look for changes in behavior.” He then emphasized that parents and guardians need to know what is “normal” for their child.

Cox said, “As parents, we gotta be cautious and know what’s going on in the children’s world.” He added, “Gangs instill discipline, but sometimes as parents we don’t.” He said gangs often use beatings as a form of discipline and then follow up a beating with expression of “love” in order to control gang members and recruits.

Starkey said, “Gangs recruit from all groups including those from small towns and large towns, small schools and large schools, and from poor families and rich families.”

Both presenters said to watch what clothing choices are being made by children since different gangs require and identify with different colors. They also cautioned that gangs recruit by pulling kids away from their friends and families. Starkey advised monitoring what television shows and games are allowed.



He said, "You need to stop them from watching WWI, violent TV and movies, and rated video games. There is a Stanford study that confirms the connection between media violence and aggressive behavior. The more violence seen by kids, the less logical thinking they have."

Cox said another clue that a child may be being recruiting or in a gang is by their doodling. He showed several symbols that are associated with the various gangs. Cox said in Kosciusko County, the police have to be able to show that there are at least three of the nine different criteria that have been identified with gang behavior before they can label a person as a gang member. Cox said that locally, meaning Marshall County, police are seeing activity of gangs such as Sureno 13, LCP-Los Cholos Papos, Latin Kings, DWBs (Dirty White Boys), White Supremacists, Black Gangster Disciples and Insane Clown Posse.

Cox and Starkey said that the police should be notified immediately when any graffiti on buildings or homes is found. Cox said, "After pictures are taken, it's important to power wash or paint over the graffiti."



FBI targets 2 Aurora-linked gang members

From The Beacon News published September 26, 2008

CHICAGO, IL | Two Latin King fugitives with ties to Aurora were added to the Chicago Federal Bureau of Investigation's Most Wanted list Thursday.



Chavez (left) and Robert Ranjel (right)

Alvaro Chavez, 29, and Robert Ranjel, 35, both of Aurora, are wanted on drug charges related to a 2002 drug trafficking operation of the street gang. On July 23, 2002, federal arrest warrants were issued for several members of Aurora's chapter of the Latin Kings, as well as the cocaine suppliers linked to the gang's drug trafficking operation, according to the Chicago FBI. Ranjel and Chavez were charged with conspiracy to possess and distribute cocaine and possession with intent to distribute cocaine.

Ranjel is described as 5-foot-8 and 190 pounds. He has been known as "Droopy," "Dollars" and "Droop Dollars," according to the FBI. Ranjel has several tattoos, including a teardrop under his left eye, the word "Droopy" on the left side of his chest and a picture of a king on the left side of his back. His left hand is also scarred and deformed as a result of a gunshot wound. Chavez, whose aliases include Alvaro Chavez-Donon and Jamie Alvarez, is described as 5-foot-10, 180 pounds, with a tattoo of a female with the name "Chavez" on his right arm and a tattoo on his chest. Both are considered armed and dangerous.

The men were tied to a drug raid that charged 20 men with being part of a conspiracy to sell cocaine and crack cocaine. More than a dozen men were taken into custody, while Chavez and Ranjel remained at large, police said.

Anyone with information on Ranjel and Chavez should contact the Chicago FBI at (312) 421-6700.



Suspected Indy gang leader caught in Texas

From IndyStar.com published September 11, 2008

HOUSTON, TX | The FBI arrested a former Indianapolis man in Texas who was wanted since 2004 on accusations he led a street gang responsible for distributing cocaine and marijuana in Indiana.

Lashawn Antione Tanner, 34, was arrested Tuesday at a Houston apartment without incident, Special Agent Wendy A. Osborne said in a statement. Tanner is being held in a jail in Houston. Agents from Indianapolis received a tip that Tanner was at the apartment and contacted the FBI's Houston office, Osborne said.

Tanner, who previously lived in Indianapolis and West Lafayette, had been on the FBI's wanted list since his indictment in December 2004 along with 17 others on charges of conspiracy to distribute controlled substances. Tanner and his two brothers were leaders of the Renegades Street Gang, Osborne said. Gang members dealt cocaine and marijuana in Northwest Indiana from the 1990s to 2004, Osborne said.



ICE Gang Investigation Nets 49 Area Arrests

From the Sun-Times published October 1, 2008

CHICAGO, IL U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement announced the arrests of 1,759 gang members and immigration violators Wednesday, part of a four-month nationwide investigation across 28 states.

In the Chicago area, ICE agents made 49 arrests during a four-day period in July. Of the 49 arrested in the area, 47 were members or associates of the following gangs: Brown Pride, Imperial Gangsters, Insane Deuces, Latin Kings, Norteños-14, Sureños-13 and the 18th Street Gang.

The majority of those arrested -- 42 -- had criminal histories that included convictions and arrests for drunken driving, drug possession, aggravated battery, burglary, theft and domestic battery, according to a release from ICE. All except for one Guatemalan were Mexican nationals, nine of whom had been previously deported.

During the operation in July, Chicago ICE agents arrested Valentin Sierra-Martinez, 20, a Mexican national and confirmed Norteno-14 gang member, the release said. Sierra-Martinez, arrested July 14 in Elgin, was the 10,000th gang member or associate arrested by ICE in Operation Community Shield since 2005. He was in the United States illegally and has an extensive criminal background including convictions for residential burglary, domestic battery, possessing drug paraphernalia and knowingly damaging property. He remains in ICE custody pending removal to Mexico.

Operation Community Shield is aimed at disrupting and dismantling violent transnational street gangs.



"We will not tolerate violent gang activity in our communities, and will use all of our law enforcement tools to thwart criminal efforts of street gangs," Gary Hartwig, Special Agent in Charge of the ICE Office of Investigations in Chicago, said in the release.

"Through the efforts and cooperation with ICE, the Elgin Police Department has participated in the arrest and detention of local street gang members," Elgin Police chief Lisa Womack said. "We look forward to any opportunity to work with ICE to rid our streets of these individuals and make them safer for our residents."

Of the 1,759 individuals arrested during the surge, nearly 1,500 were gang members, associates or otherwise criminally charged, including more than 30 percent with violent criminal histories and 17 gang leaders, the release

said. The remaining individuals were encountered and arrested for immigration violations and have been placed into removal proceedings. ICE agents arrested 730 individuals on new criminal charges ranging from attempted murder, aggravated assault and drug and firearms violations to charges of re-entering the country after deportation.

Since 2005, ICE has arrested more than 11,100 members and associates from 890 gangs and seized 388 firearms. To date, 3,997 have been charged criminally, and 7,109 have been charged with immigration violations and processed for deportation.



Cops: Biker gang masquerades as Christian ministry

From the Associated Press published September 26, 2008

NEWPORT BEACH, CA | In more than 25 years at the helm of his biker-inspired Christian ministry, Phillip Aguilar has counseled Hells Angels, married Mongols and provided a place to crash for just about every hog-riding gangster and drug addict he's ever met. But police say after years of bringing God to outlaws, Aguilar's chopper-riding Christians may have morphed into just the kind of gang they claim to save people from.

Aguilar and four other members of the Set Free Soldiers pleaded not guilty at their arraignments Thursday on weapons and gang felonies after a bar brawl that ended with two Hells Angels stabbed. One member of Aguilar's group is charged with attempted murder. The case threatens to unravel Aguilar's counterculture Christian empire, a domain already well-known among bikers that's recently gained some traction in the mainstream. His church, which runs several Southern California rehab homes, recently inspired an A&E reality show pilot, has close ties to a Christian rap group and has an urban-influenced clothing line called Soldier Made. Some of those in the close-knit and largely under-the-radar Christian biker community, however, now wonder if Aguilar is converting sinners — or if they're converting him.



"I'm in seedy places, I'm in bad places, I meet with bad people and some of the outlaws, you bet. The key question is, are you participating or are you their minister?" said Tom Longbrake, a twice-ordained minister with Bikers for Christ who's often crossed paths with Set Free Soldiers at biker charities.

Aguilar, 61, who declined repeated interview requests, is free on bail. A preliminary hearing in the case was set for Dec. 4. An attorney for Aguilar's son, who was also arrested, said those charged were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. The Set Free Soldiers were attacked by the Hells Angels while they ate hamburgers and shot pool at Blackie's by the Sea after watching a member's son in a surfing contest, said

Lloyd Freberg, an attorney for Matthew Aguilar, 29. Phillip Aguilar's attorney, Doug Myers, added that he has seen nothing in the prosecution's case to support the gang charges.

"Supporters talk about how Phil has helped them when they're down and out and that's what he's done for 20-plus years," Myers said. "They've even helped minimize the gangs in the area."

But search warrant affidavits and police reports — portions of which are sealed — indicate the fight may have begun because the Hells Angels felt the Set Free Soldiers were on their turf. A Set Free pastor caught fleeing the fight with a bloody knife in his car told police the brawl began when a Hells Angels leader confronted Aguilar and told him his group was not authorized to take the Hells Angels' business.

The pastor, Glenn Schoeman, who also pleaded not guilty in Orange County Superior Court, told police he was terrified of retaliation now that Set Free members had drawn Hells Angels blood.

A pre-dawn raid at the Set Free compound of four suburban homes just miles from Disneyland yielded gang paraphernalia, thousands of rounds of ammunition and dozens of guns and knives, said Sgt. Evan Sailor of the Newport Beach police. Sailor said detectives also were alarmed by YouTube and MySpace videos that show members posing with guns and knives and riding their bikes with their faces covered with black handkerchiefs and, in one case, a skull mask.

"To me, it's indicative of more than just a Christian group. It's indicative of an outlaw motorcycle gang," Sailor said. "It's not like they're showing Bible study classes."

Yet Aguilar's son said the Set Free Soldiers are hardworking Christians who act and dress the way they do so their gospel resonates with hard-to-reach sinners: the drug addicts, the outlaw bikers and the prostitutes. The elder Aguilar's own checkered past, including a stint in state prison for child abuse and a former heroin addiction, gives him even more credibility with his ragtag flock. Many call him "Pastor Phil" or "The Chief" and don't seem to mind the sometimes iron-fisted control he exerts over those in his rehab homes.



Kevin Knuth, 29, showed up on Aguilar's doorstep in 2004 just out of jail, homeless and addicted to drugs. He's been there ever since, living in the rehab center or sleeping on Aguilar's couch and helping with errands, household chores and the clothing line for free.

"The only place I find any sort of sanity, the only place where I feel like I have any kind of family, is here with Pastor Phil," said Knuth, who now wears a silver cross necklace and is drug-free and off probation.



Southern California mom on trial in gang murder case

From The Mercury News published September 24, 2008

LONG BEACH, CA | A mother accused of driving her son and his fellow gang members to a deadly confrontation with a rival gang was described by prosecutors Wednesday as a woman seeking revenge against a gang that disrespected her, while the defense claimed she was a victim of circumstance.

Eva Daley, 31, is charged with murder for aiding and abetting the slaying of Jose "Bobby" Cano, 13, near a skate park on June 25, 2007. Prosecutors said in opening statements that she gave her son and six of his friends a ride in her sport-utility vehicle to the scene where Cano was stabbed to death.

She and co-defendant Herbierto Garcia, 17, were in court Wednesday for the start of their trial, both charged with first-degree murder and facing 25 years to life in prison if convicted. Garcia was charged as an adult in connection with Cano's stabbing.

Deputy District Attorney John Lonergan told jurors that Daley sought retribution for a perceived slight. On the night of the stabbing, several members of a gang called the "LTs," or Latino Thugs, showed up near Daley's home and started to argue with her then-14-year-old son, who police say is a member of a rival gang.

"Words were exchanged by the LTs... There was some disrespect," Lonergan said, noting that the situation escalated to the point where Latino Thug members threw road flares at Daley's house.

Later, Daley picked up several of her son's friends in her Chevy Tahoe and drove to the area near the skate park, where her passengers jumped from the SUV and chased down their rivals. Cano slipped and fell and was set upon by the group, which beat him as Garcia administered the deadly knife attack, Lonergan said.

Daley and Garcia have pleaded not guilty. Daley's attorney Javier Ramirez said she never knew any of the teens she was driving were carrying a weapon and suggested she may have been caught up by circumstance.

Of the six youths — ages 13 to 17 — charged in the case, five pleaded guilty to manslaughter and were sentenced to time in the California Department of Corrections' Division of Juvenile Justice, Lonergan said.



S.F. shooting victim linked to Norteño gang

A San Francisco man shot to death in Potrero Hill this week was believed to be a major figure in the Norteño street gang, authorities say, and was awaiting trial on local drug charges as well as federal weapons counts when he was killed.

From the San Francisco Chronicle published September 26, 2008

SAN FRANCISCO, CA | Armando Jose Rodriguez, 32, was shot Tuesday at 1:48 p.m. as he was visiting someone near a food truck on Illinois Street between 24th and 25th streets, an industrial area.

The gunman shot Rodriguez several times, then ran down the block to a white Ford Mustang driven by another suspect, investigators said. Police have made no arrests and have given only a vague description of the killer. Police sources said Rodriguez was a local leader in the Norteños and may have decided which of the gang's enemies would be targeted for violence. Police say they are gearing up in the Mission District and elsewhere for possible gang retaliatory attacks in response to his killing.

The Norteños, or northerners, are based in Northern California and have ties to the Nuestra Familia prison gang. Their main rivals, the Sureños, or southerners, were originally based in Southern California and grew out of another prison gang, the Mexican Mafia.

The Mission District, where the Norteños and Sureños are concentrated locally, has been the scene of eight homicides since the beginning of August. Police believe that several of those killings were the result of warfare among Latino gangs. After three men were fatally shot the evening of Sept. 4, police increased the number of beat officers on Mission Street and added car patrols to other parts of the neighborhood.



Rodriguez, known as "Chappo," was free on bond stemming from a drug case filed last year, court records show. San Francisco narcotics officers and federal agents raided a home on Revere Street in May 2007, found a marijuana-growing operation and arrested Rodriguez and three other men. Rodriguez's attorney in the case, John Runfola, had no comment Thursday about his client's slaying.

Around the time of the San Francisco raid, authorities searched a home in Vacaville where Rodriguez was living with his wife. Offices allegedly found a gun there, prompting federal prosecutors to file charges against him.

Rodriguez could have been sentenced to 10 years in prison under federal law had he been found guilty of being a felon in possession of a firearm. He had a felony accessory conviction stemming from a 2001 bar fight and stabbing on Cortland Avenue, police said. That case was originally charged as an attempted murder, but was

resolved with the lesser charge. Rodriguez also had a conviction for being a felon in possession of ammunition, records show. That felony charge grew out of the May 2007 raids in San Francisco and Vacaville.

Members of Rodriguez's family have declined to talk about his killing. His defense lawyer in the federal case, Randy Montesano, said Rodriguez had jobs and was married, with children, and was never accused in court of being associated with any gang. Montesano called the federal weapons case against Rodriguez "marginal," saying his client did not have the long felony rap sheet typical of people charged under the weapons possession law. He called Rodriguez a "stand-up guy" who was "very respectful, polite, courteous."

"It's unbelievable," Montesano said of Rodriguez's killing. "I don't know whether he got caught up in something."



Graffiti: the work of vandals or gangs?

From the Winona Post published September 28, 2008

WINONA, MN Taggers armed with spray cans have left their mark in many of the alleys and industrial areas of Winona, creating what simply appears to amount to a public nuisance for building owners and local law enforcement.

To the untrained eye, one graffiti tag looks much like the next, all vandalism, but separated only by the amount of time the tagger put into the work. But in actuality, these signs and symbols painted around town are separated by something more sinister, with some containing cryptic messages indecipherable to the average person, but unmistakable to rival gangs.

Far from the hardened streets of Chicago or Los Angeles, it may be hard to envision a gang undercurrent in Winona, a picturesque community of 27,000. But research shows that this is increasingly exactly the kind of place gangs are reaching out to, setting up connections or sending up members and funneling in drugs that sell for five times the going street price in Chicago. Winona



Certified gang expert Paul Hestekind points out the details of Latin Counts graffiti found in Winona

Police Chief Frank Pomeroy said his force has long known that Gangster Disciples from Chicago work diligently to set up a drug trade in Winona. The presence of colleges and the apparent absence of other gangs makes communities like Winona fertile ground for such business, Pomeroy said. For years, every time police arrest a suspected Gangster Disciple for selling drugs and send him to jail, a new face appears and the cat and mouse game continues. But walking the alleys of Winona, gang expert Paul Hestekind found in the tangle of indecipherable graffiti that it is more than just Gangster Disciples marking turf in town. Hestekind is a Wisconsin Department of Corrections certified instructor and expert witness on gangs, and one of the people who helped the DOC develop its original certification program.

Some of the gang tags he identified in Winona alleys may be the work of local youth enamored with but unconnected to established gangs from larger communities, he said. Some of the gang tags are too elaborate or

obscure to be anything but the work of gang members transplanted to the area. Both, he said, are a concern, whether gangsters are shooting each other in the streets of Winona today or not.

The so-called local “gangster wannabes,” youth unaffiliated with a greater gang organization who are merely emulating them, can be more dangerous and problematic than outsiders, said Hestekind, because they have something to prove. “If it walks like a duck and talks like a duck, it’s a duck,” he said. “There’s no such thing as a wannabe. If you wanna be a gangster, you are. Whether the Chicago-based gangs recognize them as a sept (subdivision) or not doesn’t matter, because they think they are gangsters.” To show their affiliation, they will wear gang colors, tag the name around town and get into fights with youth who claim different gang affiliations.

The problem, Hestekind said, is that the fights with rivals sometimes escalate over time to deadly levels no matter how harmless the altercations seem in the beginning. “They might just be fist fighting today, but next time somebody might bring a knife to that fight, and the time after that somebody might bring a gun to punish the person who brought the knife,” he said.

Except for internal struggles over drug debts, said Winona narcotics officer Tony Gagnon, gangsters coming into Winona from the outside aren’t known for violence as they are in larger cities. “They say you don’t need that in Winona to protect your turf,” Gagnon said. An exception is violence that occurs behind closed doors, as was the case when a girl was raped with a jagged beer can by known members of an Asian gang in town several years ago, Police Chief Frank Pomeroy said.



Gang member transplants who come here to sell drugs will tag areas of town to mark their territory, sending a sign to other gangs to keep away. But they often won’t obviously display other gang indicators on their person because the laws are stiffer should they get caught.

Called gang enhancement laws, criminal penalties are added for any crime committed in the name of a gang or to advance a gang. It used to be, Gagnon said, that Gangster Disciples would admit their affiliation when they were arrested. Old-timers got tattoos that also made them easily identifiable to police, Gagnon said, but today’s gangsters never make such admissions or bear such symbols because it will add to the time they spend in prison. But from the graffiti, Hestekind

could identify the markings of more than a half-dozen recognized gangs around Winona, some more prevalent than others.

It is unlikely, Hestekind said, that Winona has any real Insane Clown Posse gang members, even though he found a single identifying tag for the group in an alley downtown. That is a good thing, he said, as the ICP is the gang responsible for a series of random machete attacks recently around the country. It is almost unquestionable; however, that there are Latin Counts in Winona, something that Hestekind said is cause for concern.

Formed in Chicago in the mid-1960s, the Latin Counts are considered one of the smallest yet most violent gangs in the Midwest. There are only an estimated 400 to 600 members according to intelligence, which makes the gang virtually unheard of to unaffiliated youths in towns like Winona. Even so, there is a wall-sized Latin Counts coat of arms painted in an alley on the East End of Winona, along with accompanying Latin Counts tags in that neighborhood as well as downtown. Aside from illegal graffiti and the fact that the Chicago Latin Counts are known for a brisk drugs and weapons business, especially concerning is the relationship that the Latin Counts have with rival gangs also tagging in Winona, Hestekind said. For example, buildings near the waterfront on Walnut Street show Latin Count Insignia, but also tagging that tells of the Latin Counts’ hatred for Gangster

Disciples. To any passerby, the symbol is cryptic, but the backwards G and D along with a K and an upside down pitchfork literally translates into “Gangster Disciple Killers,” said Hestekind. In another alley, the names of the Latin Counts and Latin Kings, which is a very large Chicago gang, are both spray painted, though someone has sprayed over the name of the Latin Kings as a sign of disrespect.

It’s important to note, Hestekind said, that in Chicago the Latin Counts and the Latin Kings are at war with each other right now. Throughout downtown, Hestekind identified the marks of L.K as a recognized tag for the Latin Kings, making it likely that there is also a Latin King affiliation in Winona. Should that Chicago war ever find its way here, Winona could be facing a problem, he said. Down by the waterfront, a rather whimsical fish painting of a pink and black fish eating has the markings of gang work as well, hidden in the symbols of the colors. A large pink and black fish is depicted eating smaller gold and black fish, with the name Loki tagged underneath. What average waterfront visitors don’t know, however, is that pink and black are the colors of the Imperial Gangsters, and the colors black and gold represent the Latin Kings. Symbolically, Hestekind said, the Imperial Gangsters are killing the Latin Kings in the art. Loki, he added, is the Norse god of evil mischief.

Hestekind also identified graffiti from “MOB,” also known as the Hmong Oriental Boys, the Crips and Sureno 13 (also known as SUR13), all gangs with memberships in the many thousands across the country, though to what extent they exist in Winona is unknown. Tags bearing the name “Winopunx” found throughout alleys represent a locally identified group that police officials say follow an anarchist ideology but are generally considered harmless.

The primary difference between gang graffiti and plain old tagger art, Hestekind said, is that you can read gang graffiti clearly. “When you can read the initials or name it’s usually gang graffiti, because they are doing it to make it clear that is their territory,” he said. On the other hand, elaborate designs in which individual letters can’t be discerned are often just marks of vandalism by people with an ego and a spray can.

See the full story at:

http://www.winonapost.com/stock/functions/VDG_Pub/detail.php?choice=27020&home_page=1&archives=

From the Editors



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