



PROJECT REPORT FOR

Apopka United Against Gangs

"NOT on my street, NOT in my Neighborhood, NOT in Apopka"



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Executive Summary

Criminal gangs steal and destroy property, sell drugs to our children and commit acts of violence and brutality that threaten the safety and security of our citizens. The number of gangs and gang members has been growing steadily in Florida for years. (McCullom, 2008)

The City of Apopka and northwest Orange County is not immune to this threat, and in fact has active gangs operating in our community and recruiting our children as young as 10 years old into their membership.

In response to this growing threat, representatives from faith based communities, government agencies, law enforcement, social service agencies, schools and community volunteers and activists, began working in collaboration to form Apopka United Against Gangs in May, 2008.

Gangs are an international, national, and local phenomenon, but the best approach to reducing their influence is at the local level. (Dr. Michael Carlie, Copyright, 2002 Michael K. Carlie)

The project objective is to develop a long-term strategic program of prevention, intervention and suppression designed specifically for the designated areas of northwest Orange County and the City of Apopka, based on the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Comprehensive Gang Model.

In his book, "Into the Abyss", Dr. Michael Carlie talks about how suppression alone will not reduce gangs in a community. The initiative must be targeted, comprehensive and collaborative to be successful.

"Gangs are not the problem. The problem is whatever it is that is causing gangs to form. When *gangs* are identified as the problem, most communities resort to arresting gang members and assume gang activity will then be reduced. Communities across the country have learned this approach doesn't work. In fact, it may backfire.

Arresting gang members is like anointing them. It showers them with respect from other gang members, almost as much as does serving time in prison. And while in prison, there is much gang members learn and there will be other gang members with whom they will associate. Upon being released into the community (and over 95% of all incarcerated men and women are eventually released), they may become more of a danger to the community than they were before they were arrested (i.e., they are angrier, nearly unemployable as ex-convicts, new gang alliances may have been fostered in prison, they have increased status on the street as ex-cons).

The point I am trying to make is that using suppression against gang members (i.e., arrest, conviction, incarceration) as the *only* tool for reducing gang activity and youth violence will probably fail." (Dr. Michael Carlie, Copyright, 2002 Michael K. Carlie)



Meet Our Team

A project of this magnitude requires a strong team of hard working, dedicated individuals making a difference in their community. It also requires a collective effort by a diverse group of civic, faith based and government agencies that can make decisions that will impact project outcomes. Below is a list of the project team members (last names have been omitted to protect identities):

Name

Kathy, Linda, Doug, Hezekiah, Richard, Travis, Lou, Bryan, Grace, Daniel, Richard, Stephanie, Rusty, Edward, Lori

Information and History of Gangs

Before we can begin to develop an effective strategy to reduce gangs in Apopka and Northwest Orange County, it is important that we understand several key indicators about gangs including:

- Society's perception of gangs
- Definition of a gang
- Who they are
- Where they are
- Where they are coming from
- Why are they here
- The depth of the gang problem
- The psychology of why youth join gangs

Information released by the National Gang Crime Research Center tells us that gangs have become a major social problem in communities nationwide. Gang violence, particularly assaults, drive-by shootings, homicides and brutal home invasion robberies account for one of the largest, single, personal threats to public safety. Gang members do crimes against people who are unable to defend them self, they work in the darkness, from speeding cars or sneaking up on someone. The fear and personal tragedy inflicted by street gangs has touched millions of Americans whose children have been seduced by the glamour and availability of dangerous drugs and substances. (Walker, 2008)

Definition of a Gang

When most of us think about gangs, we think of the "Crips," "Bloods," "Latin Kings" or the "Black Gangster Disciples" and we usually think of cities like Los Angeles, New York or Chicago. But today's gangs are highly mobile, and not just a big city problem. They travel from state to state, the roots of the growing gang phenomenon can be found in modern society's urbanization as well as in the breakdown of the family. Housing projects, ghettos, overcrowding, unemployment, poverty, welfare, substance abuse, crime, child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, ethnic and cultural differences, have all had an impact on juvenile street gangs and violence. In some neighborhoods and families, gang membership is multi-generational, even expected. (Walker, 2008)



A gang is "A group of persons working to unlawful or antisocial ends; *especially*: a band of antisocial adolescents." (Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 1993, p.479)

The United States Federal Bureau of Investigation defines a gang as "A criminal enterprise having an organizational structure, acting as a continuing criminal conspiracy, which employs violence and any other criminal activity to sustain the enterprise." (Federal Bureau of Investigation, Kids Crime Prevention Page, www.fbi.gov, 2002)

Before we can begin to address the gang problem within our community, it is imperative that we, as a collaborative, define what a gang is. We have developed the following definition:

"A youth gang is a tight-knit alliance of two or more individuals that share an on-going relationship with one another. They are bound together for a common cause and support one another individually or collectively, in the recurring commission of delinquent and/or criminal acts." (Dr. Michael Carlie, Copyright, 2002 Michael K. Carlie) (York, 2008)

A Growing Problem (Dr. Michael Carlie, Copyright, 2002 Michael K. Carlie)

The strength of criminal gangs in Florida is their ability to attract a continual stream of young recruits to their ranks. Denied that strength, gangs will dry up, lose their capacity to generate replacements and finally cease their criminal activity. (McCullom, 2008)

Howell reported that "Youth gang membership ... varies by locality. Surveys of urban youth samples indicate that from 14% to 30% of adolescents join gangs at some point." (Howell, 1998, [page](#).) This is far higher than the often touted "one per-centers" that some criminal justice practitioners talk about. They refer to gang members as the "one per centers" in that they believe they represent only one percent of a typical community's population or its minority/ethnic populations.

The newest data is from a report titled "Highlights of the 2007 National Youth Gang Survey," written by Arlen Egley, Jr. PhD., and Christina E. O'Donnell, M.S. and published in April of 2009. The following are the major findings of that report.

Based on 2007 survey results, an estimated 3,550 jurisdictions served by city (population of 2,500 or more) and county law enforcement agencies experienced gang problems in 2007. These results are comparable to those from the 2002 NYGC (National Youth Gang Center) surveys and provide preliminary evidence that the overall number of jurisdictions experiencing gang problems is seeing a steady resurgence since a marked decline from the mid 1990's to the early 2000's.

It is also estimated that approximately 788,000 gang members and 27,000 gangs were active in the United States in 2007. The estimated number of gang members between 2002 and 2007 increased 25 percent and the estimated number of jurisdictions experiencing gang problems also increased 25 percent. This difference is largely a result of the increase in reported gang problems by smaller cities and rural counties that have



also reported comparatively fewer gang members over survey years. In rural counties, the number of gang-problem jurisdictions increased by nearly one-quarter, and the overall number of gangs and gang members increased by 64 percent and 36 percent, respectively, between 2002 and 2007.

Larger cities and suburban counties remain the primary location of gangs and gang members, accounting for more than 60 percent of gangs and 80 percent gang members in 2007. ([OJJDP Fact Sheet](#), April 2009, [page](#), color added for emphasis)

Who Are They? (Dr. Michael Carlie, Copyright, 2002 Michael K. Carlie)

The last national survey which collected data on the age of gang members was conducted in 1998. Based upon the findings of that survey we know that "Fifty percent of gang members in 1999 were ages 18 to 24, an increase from 46 percent in 1998 and 37 percent in 1996 (see Figure 4 below). The proportion of gang members ages 15 to 17 decreased to 26 percent from a high of 34 percent in 1996." ([Egley](#), 2000, page 1). The number of youth gang members under the age of 18 decreased from 50 percent in 1996 to 38 percent in 2006.

Overall, the proportion of known gang members 18 years of age and over (people who are defined as "adults" in most jurisdictions) increased from 50% in 1996 to 62% in 2006.

"This represents a significant shift in the age of gang members." (National Youth Gang Center (2009). National Youth Gang Survey Analysis. Retrieved [date] from <http://www.iir.com/nygc/nygsa/>) **Future** surveys will reveal if this trend is continuing.

While twenty or thirty years ago a gang member may have been able to leave a gang in their teens or early twenties and enter legitimate employment that transition is not as easily made today.

The reason for this, in part, may be attributed to the inability of adolescent gang members to find employment sufficient to take them out of the gang life. As high school graduation rates decrease and the lowest level of competency required by the business sector increases, gang members are cast into a limbo in which they are displaced from employment well beyond their youth. The alternative for some is to remain in the gang.

Other explanations for the aging of gang members include the ability of some to maintain a sufficient livelihood from their gang-related or other criminal activities and for others to live at subsistence levels from welfare, alms, someone else's earnings, or other sources of income.

As to the 11% of gang members who were under 15 years of age in 1998 we may note that "Offenders under age 15 represent the leading edge of the juvenile crime problem, and their numbers have been growing." ([Butts and Snyder](#), 1997, p. 1) In addition,



"Offenders age 12 or younger were involved in 9% of all juvenile arrests." ([Butts and Snyder](#), 1997, p. 2)

In a question new to the 1999 survey, respondents were asked to identify gang members by social class. Fifty percent of gang members were reported as underclass, followed by working class (35 percent), middle class (12 percent), and upper middle class (3 percent). ([Egley](#), 2000, page 1)

Poverty has become so ingrained in American society that a relatively new class has emerged over the past several decades. It is referred to as the "underclass" and consists of people who have lived in poverty for generations. It is the class below the lower-class and the one from which, according to Egley's research, one-half of gang members emerge.

That 15% of gang members may be from the middle- and upper-middle class is supported by my observations in the field and suggests probation/parole and police officers are correct when they say "Gang members can be found in all neighborhoods, rich or poor." We should note, however, Egley does not categorize any gang members as being upper-class. There may be gang members who come from wealthy families, but they were not represented in the data Egley collected.

Where are they coming from? (Dr. Michael Carlie, Copyright, 2002 Michael K. Carlie)

The inability of people from different nations or races to accommodate each another in the same city or neighborhood sometimes leads to conflict. This is evident in gang neighborhoods where rental properties and transient populations abound. There is little stability in those neighborhoods and they are socially disorganized.

When I began my research on gangs I thought most gang members in the United States were African-Americans. That's what the mass media seemed to portray. But the reality of the streets was quite different. "The 1998 National Youth Gang Survey revealed that Hispanics were the predominant racial/ethnic group among all gang members nationwide. Hispanics accounted for 46 percent of all gang members, followed by African Americans (34 percent), Caucasians (12 percent), Asians (6 percent), and other races (2 percent)." ([1998 National Youth Gang Survey](#), 2000, [page](#)) By 1999 those proportions had changed only slightly to be 47% Hispanic, 31% African-American, 13% Caucasian, and 7% Asian. ([Egley](#), 2000, p.1)

Report Note: The 2007 National Youth Gang Survey revealed that Hispanics continue to be the predominant racial/ethnic group among all gang members nationwide. Hispanics accounted for 44 percent of all gang members, followed by African Americans (35 percent), Caucasians (9 percent) and all other races (8 percent). (National Youth Gang Center (2009). National Youth Gang Survey Analysis. Retrieved [date] from <http://www.iir.com/nygc/nygsa/>)

If anything became clear to me over the past three years it was that the most recently arrived minority, unless supremely well suited to compete in American society (as are



many of the Asians as exemplified by their emphasis on education and entrepreneurial skills), will likely find a portion of its youth disenfranchised ... and they may turn to gangs as a means of rebelling, finding a place for themselves, or for earning an income, among other things. This is referred to in the literature as the "immigration gang tradition" (Miller, 2001, p. 43).

Myth: Because they are from the same “race” they all get along (Dr. Michael Carlie, Copyright, 2002 Michael K. Carlie)

Depending upon their roots, these populations may or may not associate with one another peaceably. Within the category of "Hispanic," for example, are Cubans, Mexicans, Puerto Rican, Ecuadorians, Dominicans, Colombians, Panamanians, and others.

The situation is the same concerning African-Americans. Depending upon which African nation an individual comes from, his or her relations with others of African descent may vary. Antagonisms sometimes exist between West Indian blacks ("Afro-Caribbean's," as they are sometimes called, who come from such places as Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Trinidad, Barbados, and Haiti) and blacks from the African continent (i.e., Ghana, Somalia, Kenya, Senegal, and Nigeria, as well as between ethnically divergent tribes within those nations). Conflicts also arise between continental Africans.

Conflict and distrust within the Asian community also exists and may be observed at the gang level between Asians who are natives of the Philippines, Korea, Japan, Taiwan, China, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, and other Asian nations. Conflicts between all of these ethnicities (Hispanic, African, and Asian) are sometimes ancient in origin and often fueled by current world events.

One can see, therefore, ideological, political, cultural, and personal conflicts between gang youth from different nations, regardless of whether they are all Hispanic, African-American, or Asian. Their relationships with each other may sometimes be characterized as distrustful, disrespectful, and violent. The point here is that knowledge of the diversity which exists within larger ethnic categories helps us understand some gang behaviors and may guide efforts to reduce the most harmful of them.

A Closer Look at Gangs in Apopka

SUR 13 (Sur 13 (Sureños): Prison Gang Profile, 2006)

While most members of the Sur 13 are of Latin descent, the gang may accept members from various other ethnic backgrounds. Above all, however, respect and loyalty are highly valued. According to a recent article by the *Modesto Bee*, the Sureños constitution includes phrases such as, "Thou shalt earn respect" and "Kill a Norteño, win a prize."

As a street gang in the United States, the Sur 13 (Surenos) exists in every major city and all states from Florida to California and internationally as far away as Brisbane, Australia and throughout Canada. They are located in several cities throughout Florida, including Apopka.



Although some might identify themselves as being a Sureno gang member, the original meaning of the term denotes an umbrella of gangs who fall under the control of the Mexican Mafia. Sureno sets may have conflict with each other Sureno gangs on the streets, yet in prison they will bond together for protection under the leadership of the Mexican Mafia.

Sureno gang members often identify themselves with the number '13' to represent the thirteenth letter of the alphabet, the letter 'M'. This is used to pay homage to the Mexican Mafia. Surenos will use the symbols Sur, XIII, X3, 13, and 3-dots in their graffiti and tattoos. In many parts of the country they will identify themselves with the color blue. Mexican Mafia members may have Sureno identifiers as they were probably a Sureno gang member before being recruited into the Mexican Mafia. Other Mexican Mafia symbols include a black hand, the letters "MM" or the term La Eme.

It is important to reinforce that the Mexican Mafia and Surenos are two separate identities. Some have described the Mexican Mafia as being the father of Surenos. The majority of Sureno gang members have no direct contact with Mexican Mafia members, yet the Mexican Mafia is able exercise control and influence over Sureno gangs located in Southern California and a few scattered cities throughout the nation, without the knowledge of the majority of the street gangs' members. (Lewis, 1997)



The picture is of Surenos graffiti. The Spanish word "sur" means "south," and, as used here, is a symbol of a southern California Hispanic gang. The "13" is a reference to the thirteenth letter in the alphabet - M. The M in Spanish is "la eme," which, in gang terminology, refers to the Mexican Mafia. Picture courtesy of Jon Wade, with permission.

Latin Kings (Lewis, 1997)

The Almighty Latin King Nation first emerged in Chicago during the 1940s when several young Puerto Rican males organized into a club. Their goal was to help each other overcome the problems of racism and prejudice that newly arriving Puerto Rican immigrants were experiencing.

Their slogan was to rise above the racism and to form an organization of "Kings" to better serve themselves and their communities. As time progressed, the group took a



criminal path as its members became involved in violent crimes including murders, drug sales and robberies.

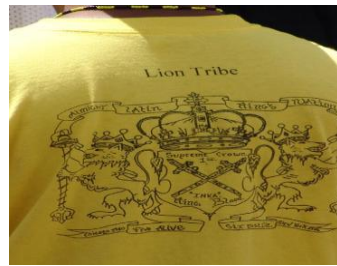
The Latin Kings are Chicago's largest gang and have been involved in numerous violent acts. Although the original members were of Puerto Rican decent, most members are now Mexican-American. They now allow members of all races to join, yet they are mostly composed of Spanish, Caribbean, Latvian, Italian, Portuguese, Mexican or South American members.

In terms of identification, the Latin Kings tend to use 5-pointed crowns. To the older member, the 5-points represent love, respect, sacrifice, honor and obedience. Their graffiti may have a picture of a crown accompanied by the initials "LK" and often will have some sort of inflammatory symbolism aimed at an opposing gang. A lion or a lion wearing a crown with a variety of inscriptions may also be seen. Members identify with the colors yellow or gold.

The Chicago Police Department estimates they have over 25,000 Latin King Members residing within their city alone. The gang also has organized chapters in numerous states across the country. These gang sets are referred as to as "Chapters" among members with each reporting to a leader. The head of the entire criminal organization is known as the Inca.

Some of the characteristics that sets the Latin Kings apart from other gangs is they consider themselves to be a community-based organization. They preach Hispanic pride and some King chapters even have formed their own religion called Kingdism. During these meetings members may recite the Latin King pledge, prayer and continually pledge to be prepared to rise to the call for their King or Inca. These meetings are often used by members to discuss retaliating against other gangs, drug disciplined for breaking gang rules.

When compared to most street gangs, the Latin Kings are generally more structured and organized. The gangs rules are strictly enforce and some members celebrate January 6th as "King's Holy Day" and the first week in March as "King's Week." (Lewis, 1997)





Bloods (Walker, Gangs OR Us, 2009)

Background: The Bloods street gang originated at the Centennial High School from the Piru Gang, which took its name from Piru Street in Compton, California. The bloods formed to protect members from the Crips, and soon after, other street gangs, with the same motive, started using the names Piru and Bloods to signify their alignment with the main gang. Although the Bloods street gangs, or sets, are a smaller group than the Crips, they are potentially dangerous, particularly when present in any numbers.

The Bloods present a significant threat to correctional administrators not only due to their predatory and violent behavior, but more importantly due to their intense rivalry with the Crips. As do the Crips, the Bloods have a strong fascination with assault-type weapons.

Membership: California Bloods sets are typically from South-Central Los Angeles; they have similar attitudes about group loyalty and violence. Like the Crips, the Bloods love to be in the limelight. They are especially arrogant, and believe that acting naïve about them conveys weakness. Bloods members will seize every opportunity to lie and portray the image that they respect only those who are “bigger and badder”.

The Bloods (and the Crips as well) say, as a group, that “snitching” or becoming an informant is forbidden. However, once removed from their group, they are usually easier to deal with, possibly due to their belief that they are shrewd businessmen.

The Bloods also have their own system of “Flashing” or hand signals used to identify membership in a particular gang or set.

Identifying Information: Traditionally, the Bloods street gangs have always worn red colors, using red bandannas or red rags; similar graffiti and graphic styles, emphasizing disrespect for Crips and Crips symbols. Recently, a new trend appears to have arisen. Bloods in some eastern states have reportedly been known to wear brown, tan and rust or burnt orange colors to represent “dried” blood. They have also been known to wear pink a variation of the color red.

Allies: Any gang who considers the Crips an enemy.

Enemies: Crips





Crips (Walker, Gangs OR Us, 2009)

Background: The Crips, a fierce rival of the Bloods gang, are an extremely violent street gang which originated in Los Angeles, California in the late 1960's. The original Crips were a Black gang first reported on the campus of Washington High School in South-Central Los Angeles. During the early 1970's the gang grew and branched out to other parts of Los Angeles County. These new subsidiary street gangs were known as sets and they used the term "Crips" in their individual gang name – i.e. Harbor City Crips, Compton Ave. Crips.

Membership: Most Crip street gang members are between the ages of 12-24 years. The average age is 17-18. Most members are Black but Whites and Hispanics are known to be members of Crips sets in various parts of the United States. Crip members rarely carry identification and in addition to their street moniker (nick name) use an alias. Gang initiation is usually done in various ways: an armed robbery an assault or murder, drive by shooting, or a beat-in where other members physically beat up the prospective member. This frequently called a "jump-in" and is designed to show courage and gang loyalty.

Identification: Crips identify with the color blue and usually wear a blue bandanna as an identify item, called the flag.

Crips refer to one another as "Cuzz" and use the letter "C" to replace the letter "B" in their conversations and writings. They have an intricate communications system which involves not only graffiti on walls-which marks their territorial boundaries-but also use of

hand signals (flashing), displaying their colors and wearing selected athletic clothing. The initials BK represent their status as "Blood Killers". Crips seldom wear tattoos. Their graffiti represents past or future gang activity.

Allies: Any gang who considers the Bloods as an enemy.

Enemies: Bloods

Source: USDOJ/FBOP





Other known gangs:

- APK (Apopka Police Killers)
- Goon Boys
- Plymouth Boys
- 10th Street Boys
- 18th Street Boys
- Taylor Street Boys
- MS 14
- BC Boys

These are local gangs that, according to the Apopka Police Department, are not well organized. After an exhaustive search, no information could be found on the internet about these gangs.

While the general public may hold a stereotype of gangs as being like those in California (i.e., Bloods and Crips), the fact is that the nature of the gang phenomenon varies from one community or neighborhood to another. To effectively address a neighborhood's gang problem it must be studied so that its exact nature is well understood.

The Psychology of Joining a Gang (York, 2008)

Why do Youth Join Gangs?

There are many factors that attribute to youth joining gangs; the factors of race, location, and life circumstances, just to name a few. Gangs have been a part of our society since the nineteenth century and are becoming more widespread as time prevails. I searched and searched to pin point the appeal of gangs to youth and the psychology that came with it; one word that stood out the most was love. As a result of my research and personal experience in and around gangs love is a determining factor in youth gang membership. Not just the lack of love, but the application of love from parents or guardians. Gangs fill the void of youth who miss out on love within their own home. I believe love is the key to solving the problem and all other factors underlay the issue of love. Other factors are: the need for physical safety and protection, family tradition, media influence, and the society's weight to conform youth. There are other factors that can be examined as well but I will just focus on the ones described. The root of these problems begins in our homes and I will try my best to effectively communicate these issues that face our societies and our world.

Gangs Take the Place of Family

One of the main reasons youth join gangs is the failure of love applied by the parents or a parent. Since most gangs develop in an inner-city setting many homes are fatherless, rarely motherless. Statistics show the significant impact fatherless homes have on our youth.



- 63% of youth suicides are from fatherless homes (Source: U.S. D.H.H.S., Bureau of the Census)
- 90% of all homeless and runaway children are from fatherless homes
- 85% of all children that exhibit behavioral disorders come from fatherless homes (Source: Center for Disease Control)
- 80% of rapists motivated with displaced anger come from fatherless homes (Source: Criminal Justice & Behavior, Vol 14, p. 403-26, 1978.)
- 71% of all high school dropouts come from fatherless homes (Source: National Principals Association Report on the State of High Schools.)
- 75% of all adolescent patients in chemical abuse centers come from fatherless homes (Source: Rainbows for all God`s Children.)
- 70% of juveniles in state-operated institutions come from fatherless homes (Source: U.S. Dept. of Justice, Special Report, Sept 1988)
- 85% of all youths sitting in prisons grew up in a fatherless home (Source: Fulton Co. Georgia jail populations, Texas Dept. of Corrections 1992)

As a result of fatherless homes, mothers are forced to work harder to provide for children. As mothers spend more time working, less time is spent at home interacting with youth. This allows youth to have large amounts of time for non-productive activities. Among these activities are pornography, sex, crime, and gang involvement. According to a survey completed by helpinggangyouth.com, 90% of young men join gangs opposed to 10% females. These young men seek to find a sense of manhood by joining gangs, usually with young men from the same family settings. These young men form bonds which substitute the place of family and the love they do not receive at home. A bond forged by hurt, disappointment, loneliness, struggle and pain. Older gang members become role models, fathers to these abandon youth.

For attention and unity youth exchange their wills to the control of the gang; committing acts of violence and crime just to be accepted. As time progresses members lose their sense of individuality and adapt a “ride or die” mentality. This mentality of anger and hurt is fueled by a lack of love at home or past disappointments. It causes the youth to put their trust wholly in their gang, even if it means losing their life in the process. When members reach this point in their minds they feel there is no other way out of life then dying in your hood. Their only purpose is to advance the agenda of the gang and hopefully gain a higher rank in the gang.



Physical Protection and Safety

Secondly, youth join gangs for protection and physical safety against other gangs and thugs. As we know gangs thrive in crime infested and poverty stricken areas, although they are not limited to these areas. As crime increases youth feel that they have no choice but to join a gang for their own well being. Although the individual may not prefer to be in a gang, their circumstances give no other way out. I recall personally never wanting to join a gang but as violence increased and my hope of safety diminished I second guessed my decision. I began to adapt a mindset that said, "If I can't beat them, I might as well join them." It may sound ironic but youth join the very gangs they are afraid of to avoid confrontation with those gangs and its members. In this situation it is better to be with them than to be against them.

So, if you do not join you face the fear of getting jumped everyday or eventually killed. Another aspect of joining a gang for safety and protection is the privilege to walk in different territories, without being harmed. Smaller cliques or clubs are less likely to bother you for fear of retaliation of your gang. When members who were initially reluctant to join feel this sense of protection, pride, and respect because of their association, they no longer question their membership.

Family Tradition

Family tradition also plays a significant role in youth joining gangs. Many youth feel an obligation to join a gang because a family member has belonged to the same gang. Many of our major gangs in America are multigenerational, gangs that are passed down from fathers to sons. In my own experience I recognize most multigenerational gangs are passed down from young fathers. These young fathers dress their children in gang apparel before they can comprehend the word gang. These fathers are usually between the ages of 17-26, and have been in gangs a majority of their lives. Many family-based gangs are established to protect their communities from intruders and not necessarily to evoke crime in neighborhoods.

Media Influence

Mass media has a large influence on the minds of youth in our society and how it can make gangs seem more appealing to youth. Lack of parental supervision over what children watch attributes to youth joining gangs. This is true, particularly with the media's influence through pop culture and music, especially in poverty stricken areas. This influence produces a very twisted mentality in youth of what success is and how it can be obtained. Music videos displaying nice cars, homes, beautiful women, and jewelry attract the attention of under privileged youth. These artists that display the videos sometimes also promote the gang life, causing it to be more appealing to youth. These young men and women can relate to these artists because they seem to promote the struggle of growing up in poverty, living without a father, and struggling to make it. These artists then become role models of success to youth, creating a deceptive psychology of how to gain Prosperity.



This psychology makes heartache and struggle seem cool even though it is painful. Youth therefore adapt the mindset that “if my struggle, heartaches, and pain will gain me success in the future my investment now will pay off”. This thinking is a very twisted perception of business men and women as well as investors in the world. So acts of violence, theft, selling drugs, and gang-banging don’t sound as bad because they pay off eventually. This psychology seems ridiculous but it is a very real and an impacting illusion that has tricked many youth into gang association and crime.

Societies Weight to Conform

“Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members. The virtue in most requests is conformity. Self-reliance is its aversion. It loves not realities and creators, but names and customs.”

-Ralph Waldo Emerson (American poet, Lecturer, and Essayist)

This quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson truly pinpoints the rationality of youth who join gangs. I imagine society as a raging sea and a young man or women stuck in the middle with the shore almost out of sight. There is a constant battle to stay above the water while the current of conformity pulls you to drown. This is the struggle of youth in gang populated areas, there is a fight to be an individual and not part of a gang. When you have swam against the current of conformity for so long, it is much easier to give in and become what everyone labels you as anyway. That is, a troubled youth with no sense of direction, destined for the corner, prison, or the grave. Youth who once had a sense of purpose often succumb to these thundering repetitive lies of society. These lies that, “no one cares, your all alone, just conform, and be the statistic you were created to be.” These lies are then exchanged for truth to the execution of individuality and the conformity to society’s destiny. Under society’s agenda hope of success is replaced by hurt, fear and anger. This is an anger of accepting the fact that your head will never rise above the waters of conformity. An anger, that your part of a percentage now, and that your path has already been laid for you so just, “live for your hood and die for your hood,” because you won’t make it out. This psychology fuels the individual to rebel against authority and anyone who opposes them. Youth with this mental disposition find peers of like-mind and form bonds, bond that last to the death and create gangs. Consciences’ and morals are replaced by names and gang signs and identities and wills are replaced by colored bandanas and clothing. This lack of love, hurt, and conformity despises reality and creators as Emerson quoted, but clings to names and colors.

Solution

With the five factors addressed in this letter, it is wise to step back and analyze possible solutions. As I stated in the beginning of this letter love is the key factor and a proper application of love will work better than any medicine or therapy we can provide these youth. Gangs are a wound to our societies and should not be covered merely with a band aid approach to just prevent bleeding and expansion. It should be cared for thoroughly, to complete a total healing and prevention of reoccurring. This care requires faith- based organizations that are willing and able to work with youth as long as it takes. This care



requires community based committees to fund field trips and offer a safe environment for youth to interact. This care requires the time, talents and resources of the community as a whole. It requires parents, teachers, counselors, and individuals of every profession in the community who are willing to help. With this approach there is a guarantee of success and a decrease of gang activity in our neighborhoods.

Social and Economic Impact of Gangs on our Community

Personal Cost to Join a Gang

Joining a gang is quite costly to the individual. In a study of the economics of drug-selling within a well organized gang, active gang members over a four-year period had roughly a 25% chance of dying. If the gang member managed to cheat death, he or she would still likely experience two nonfatal injuries and be arrested almost six times. In return for their risky activities, the gang member earns far less than what the “job duties” entail. (McCullom, 2008)

Many who join a gang fail to achieve a high school diploma, substantially reducing life-long earnings potential. As a result, the low-level gang member earns only a third of those with a high school diploma. Even worse, low-level gang members make half the amount of those earning a legitimate wage without a high school diploma. (McCullom, 2008)

Economic Cost of Gang Membership

According to the Attorney General’s report regarding a gang reduction strategy, “The cost to Florida for gang-related crime is staggering. The operating costs to manage the facilities incarcerating the over 4,400 identified gang members in prison exceed \$130 million. Identified gang members on state probation, costs the criminal justice system another \$2 million per year. All together, convicted gang members cost Florida’s taxpayers more than \$132 million a year. (McCullom, 2008)

These statistics should create shock and concern for every taxpayer in Florida. Law enforcement alone devotes a significant amount of resources to monitoring, arresting and prosecuting gang members. Even though gangs may not reside in your neighborhood, you are paying the price for their activities in our community.

Economic Impact of Gangs (Laurendeau, 2009)

By James C. Howell (Excerpts – from OJJDP NYGC (National Youth Gang Center) Bulletin #2 – August 2006)

An informed estimate of the economic cost of gang crimes cannot be made because gang crimes are not routinely and systematically recorded in most law enforcement agencies. Hence, the proportion of all crimes attributable to gangs is unknown. In addition, the medical and financial consequences of gang violence, per se, are often overlooked. The total volume of crime is estimated to cost Americans \$655 billion each year (Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, 2004), and gangs are responsible for a substantial proportion of this. Gangs in the United States have long had a significant economic crime impact (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 1997; Valdez, 2000a). A study of admissions to a Los Angeles



hospital trauma center found that the costs of 272 gang-related gunshot victims totaled nearly \$5 million (emergency room, surgical procedures, intensive care, and surgical ward stay), which equated to \$5,550 per patient per day (Song, Naude, Gilmore et al., 1996). More than a decade ago, the total medical cost of gang violence in Los Angeles County alone was estimated to exceed \$1 billion annually (Hutson, Anglin, and Mallon, 1992). Nationwide, the complete costs of gun violence indicate a value of approximately \$1 million per assault-related gunshot injury (Cook and Ludwig, 2006). A single adolescent criminal career of about ten years can cost taxpayers between \$1.7 and \$2.3 million (Cohen, 1998).

Some gangs have become entrepreneurial organizations. Although it is rare, some gangs, such as the Black Gangster Disciples Nation, have evolved into formal adult criminal organizations (McCormick, 1996; Spergel, 1995). This gang is reputed to manage an extensive drug operation, perhaps involving tens of thousands of members in a number of states (McCormick, 1996). Its corporate hierarchy (see McCormick, 1996, p. 57) consists of a chairman of the board, two boards of directors (one for prisons, another for the streets), governors (who control drug trafficking within geographical areas), regents (who supply the drugs and oversee several drug-selling locations within the governors' realm), area coordinators (who collect revenues from drug-selling spots), enforcers (who beat or kill members who cheat the gang or disobey other rules), and shorties (youngsters who staff drug-selling spots and execute drug deals).

Conclusion

This bulletin has examined the impact of youth gangs on communities in more populous cities—those with populations greater than 50,000. Some youth gangs are not actively involved in criminal acts—particularly not violent crimes. However, as one moves from small towns and rural areas to large cities, and particularly to our nation's largest cities, far more gang crime is seen. The economic impact of gangs is also far greater in these areas, with a far greater deleterious impact on communities in cities of 100,000 or more population. The very largest cities—with populations of 250,000 and above—report on average more than 30 gangs, more gang members, and far more gang-related homicides than less-populated cities.

The disproportionate impact of gang members' criminal activity on our communities is evident in several ways. First, gang members account for more than their share of crimes. Second, youths commit more crimes during the period of active involvement in a gang than during periods before joining and after leaving a gang. Third, gang members commit more serious crimes than other groups. Fourth, the criminal involvement of youths who remain in a gang for more than a year is long-lasting.

Overall, the impact of youth gangs on communities is felt in many ways. Intimidation of other youths, adults, witnesses, and business owners is not uncommon. Once the enormous numbers of homicides in Chicago and Los Angeles are factored in, more than one-fourth of all the homicides across the country are considered gang-related. Gang immigration may be a factor of greater importance than gang migration, in terms of the



impact of outsiders on local gangs. The MS-13 gang may be an example of this, although its numbers are likely exaggerated in the broadcast media. On the other hand, gangs in schools are likely underestimated. In general, law enforcement agencies tend to underreport gang incidents (Meeker, Parsons, and Vila, 2002), and their estimates of the number of gangs and gang members are likely to overlook substantial numbers of students. Last, gangs tend to propel youths into a life of crime, punctuated by arrests, convictions, and periods of incarceration. The costs to society are enormous. Each assault-related gunshot injury costs the public approximately \$1 million. A single adolescent criminal career of about ten years can cost taxpayers between \$1.7 and \$2.3 million.

Regardless of population size, any community that senses that it is experiencing a youth gang problem needs to undertake a thorough, objective, and comprehensive assessment. This is the important first step before considering a response. The National Youth Gang Center has developed an assessment protocol that any community can use to assess its gang problem. This assessment guides the development of a comprehensive, community-wide plan of gang prevention, intervention, and suppression (National Youth Gang Center, 2002a).

The Comprehensive Gang Prevention, Intervention, and Suppression Model (Spergel, 1995) is a flexible framework that guides communities in developing and organizing such a continuum of programs and strategies. Resource materials that assist communities in developing an action plan to implement the Comprehensive Gang Model are also

available (National Youth Gang Center, 2002b). Information on promising and effective gang programs and strategies that address specific risk factors among various age groups is also available at the NYGC Web site in the Gang Strategic Planning Tool (<http://www.iir.com/nygc/tool/>).

James C. Howell is a Senior Research Associate with the National Youth Gang Center™, which is operated for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention by the Institute for Intergovernmental Research®. To read the entire bulletin – go to: http://www.iir.com/nygc/publications/NYGCbulletin_0806.pdf

Social Implications of Gangs

Why do certain neighborhoods have gangs? (Dr. Michael Carlie, Copyright, 2002 Michael K. Carlie)

I think what we are seeing is that the social institutions in some neighborhoods are healthier than those in other neighborhoods. What I learned was that gangs are seldom found in neighborhoods where the social institutions with which we are concerned exist and are in good working order. If the family, schools, faith community, social services, health care and business communities, justice system, and local government are strong, gang activity is at a minimum. On the other hand, in neighborhoods or very small communities where these social institutions were absent or weak, there was a greater



likelihood of finding gang activity. Look at your own community, is that what's happening?

Field Note: I've heard a lot of people say "We just have a few gang members in town," as if that means there isn't a problem. That's like saying "We just have a few termites in the house" and not doing anything about the termites. Left alone, they destroy the house. (Dr. Michael Carlie, Copyright, 2002 Michael K. Carlie)

As I moved from community to community, I found gang members most often lived in neighborhoods characterized by:

- ✚ **substandard schools (no matter how hard the teachers work);**
- ✚ **few faith institutions (several had moved to where congregants with money moved);**
- ✚ **a dilapidated business district where liquor stores and adult video shops now dominate as other businesses move to where the money is or simply close up shop due to vandalism, thefts, and a dwindling customer base;**
- ✚ **struggling social- and health-related services; and**
- ✚ **Little local government involvement (the neighborhoods are neglected and have become disenfranchised).**

There's an important message in all of this - we should focus our attention and efforts on the neighborhoods described above and provide whatever assistance is needed in order to strengthen their weakened social institutions. (Dr. Michael Carlie, Copyright, 2002 Michael K. Carlie)

Why we chose the Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Comprehensive Gang Model (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2002)

In 1987, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) began supporting a research and development project to design a comprehensive approach to reduce and prevent youth gang violence. The initial phase of this project was directed by Dr. Irving Spergel at the University of Chicago.

The OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model calls for five core strategies to be delivered through an integrated approach from a team of community agencies and organizations. The five strategies are: (1) community mobilization; (2) social intervention, including street outreach; (3) provision of opportunities; (4) suppression; and (5) organizational change.



It is this combination of strategies that ensures both short-and long-term reduction in gang crime and violence, and that the most cost-effective approach, prevention, can have an effect on those most at risk of gang involvement.

The Assessment Report

The distinction between a neighborhood and a community is critical when thinking about gangs. If a community has limited resources for dealing with gangs and gang members, why spread precious resources across the entire community when the situation that needs correcting lies mostly in one or two (or however many) neighborhoods? The people in those neighborhoods are in desperate need of help. (Dr. Michael Carlie, Copyright, 2002 Michael K. Carlie)

Research has consistently shown that gang problems differ among and within communities. Unless communities explore and clearly understand the nature and scope of their gang problem based on multiple sources of information, they cannot begin to respond effectively or efficiently. (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2002)

We know that gangs exist in Apopka and Northwest Orange County. However, making conjectures about who, what, where, and why they are here will lead us to inconclusive or inaccurate assumptions that will result in ineffective solutions.

Therefore, it is vital that a comprehensive analysis be conducted before we begin to implement our strategies that will meet our objectives. The assessment report will include the following information:

1. Law Enforcement Gang Data
2. Gang-Involved Youth
3. Student and School-Level Data
4. Community Perceptions of Gang Crime
5. Current Activities and Resources

According to the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model, “a properly conducted assessment of the gang problem will:

1. Identify the most serious and prevalent gang-related problems.
2. Determine potential factor contributing to gang problems.
3. Identify target group(s) for prevention, intervention, and suppression efforts.
4. Shape community mobilization efforts and identify community members who should be involved.
5. Identify various organizational or systems issues that must be addressed in order to have a long-term effect on the problem.
6. Identify current efforts to address gangs and gang-involved youth. (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2002)



Our Assessment Team

Using the criteria established by the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model, the Assessment Team has primary responsibility for collecting and analyzing data and preparing the Assessment Report for the Steering Committee. (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2002)

The Assessment Team will be using the following data collection tools:

1. Self Administered Survey
2. Personal Interviews
3. Focus Groups

They will be collecting data from the following groups/individuals:

1. Middle School and High School students
2. Teachers and School Administrators
3. Law Enforcement Agencies
4. Former/Current Gang Members
5. Families of Gang Members
6. Social Service Agencies
7. Business Leaders
8. Community members
9. Community activists
10. Government officials

Their data will be collected in and for the following geographic area:

1. North – Kelly Park Road
2. South – Clarcona Ocoee Road
3. East – Wekiva Springs Road
4. West – Lake County Line

These boundaries will encompass approximately 60 square miles and a population of approximately 100,000 people. The City of Apopka is included within these boundaries.

Gang activity will NOT be present in this entire region. Some of the known areas for gang activity are Kelly Park Road, Martin Street and Maine Street, (next to Apopka High School) South Apopka, Thompson Road, US 441 (Chalet North Mobile Home Park), Sheeler Oaks Subdivision and activity at Wekiva High School. A discussion with city and county law enforcement agencies will provide more defined geographical areas.

The OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model focuses primarily on youth gang members less than 22 years of age, based on the OJJDP's authorizing legislation. Motorcycle gangs, prison gangs, ideological gangs, and hate groups comprised primarily of adults are excluded from the definition. (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2002)



The Assessment Team will be meeting periodically with the Steering Committee to provide updates on the status of their assessment and to review the goals of the Steering Committee.

Project Objectives

The Steering Committee has defined four principal project objectives:

1. Create an environment where gangs are not welcome in the City of Apopka or Northwest Orange County by fostering a mind-set within the community that this is OUR problem, and we need to address it as a WHOLE community through proactive, long term strategies that provide positive alternatives for youth that are at risk of joining a gang. This objective coincides with the OJJDP core strategy of Community Mobilization.
2. Develop long-term prevention and intervention programs and/or increase awareness about prevention and/or intervention programs available for youth that are considered to be the greatest risk of becoming a gang member. This objective coincides with the OJJDP core strategy of Opportunities Provision.
3. Increase awareness for parents and educators about the warning signs that a child maybe getting involved in (or is at risk of getting involved in) a gang and what they can do if these indicators are present at home or in the classroom. This objective coincides with the OJJDP core strategies of Social Intervention and Suppression.
4. Increase gang awareness in the business community, civic and faith-based organizations, and social service agencies and to local and state government representatives that can affect policy and procedural changes that can provide resources for gang prevention in the city of Apopka and northwest Orange County. This objective coincides with the OJJDP core strategy of Organizational Change and Development.

Project Strategies

The OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model calls for five core strategies to be implemented through an integrated approach. These strategies include:

1. **COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION** – Involvement of local citizens, including former gang youth, community groups and agencies, and the coordination of programs and staff functions within and across agencies. (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2002)
 - A. Apopka United Against Gangs is implementing this strategy using the following process to meet our principal objectives:
 - 1) Completion of comprehensive Assessment Report



- 2) Initiating an in-depth, community-wide, proactive gang awareness campaign using the following strategies:
 - a. Print media through published articles and press releases – Began in May, 2008
 - b. Electronic media including web site with blog postings. Web site address is www.ApopkaUAG.com - Completed
 - c. Emails distributed to community data base – Beginning in July, 2009
 - d. Public speaking engagements – Began in June, 2009
 - e. Radio and TV appearances – Began in June, 2009
- 3) Develop a gang awareness brochures that discusses the following:
(Completed)
 - a. What gangs are active in our community
 - b. Recognizing gang graffiti and what to do about it
 - c. Activating a Neighborhood Watch program
 - d. What youth are at risk of joining a gang
 - e. How citizens can get involved in intervention and suppression programs
 - f. Adopt-A-Road Program – On going project initiated in September, 2007

2. **OPPORTUNITIES PROVISION** – The development of a variety of specific education, training, and employment programs targeted at gang-involved youth (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2002)

A. Apopka United Against Gangs is implementing this strategy using the following process to meet our principal objectives:

- 1) Develop an in-depth power point presentation to present to local business leaders, government officials and chambers of commerce about the economic impact of gangs on our community and how it affects their “bottom line” - Completed
- 2) Work in collaboration with government officials, local businesses, chambers of commerce and non-profit organizations to develop job training programs, paid internships and mentoring programs for youth at risk of joining gangs
- 3) Work in collaboration with local high schools and colleges to accept job training programs and internships for college credits
- 4) Initiate a college scholarship program for gang involved youth who complete high school or earn a GED, maintain a certain GPA and have a specified school attendance record

3. **SOCIAL INTERVENTION** – Youth-serving agencies, schools, grass-roots groups, faith-based organizations, police and other criminal justice organizations “reaching out” and acting as links among gang-involved youth, their families, and the conventional world and needed services. (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2002)



4. **SUPPRESSION** – Formal and informal social control procedures, including close supervision or monitoring of gang youth by agencies of the criminal justice system and also by community-based agencies, schools, and grass-roots groups (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2002)
 - A. Apopka United Against Gangs is implementing these strategies using the following process to meet our principal objectives:
 - 1) Develop an extensive resource guide for parents to include the following:
 - I. Warning signs of gang involvement or interest
 - II. Social and faith-based programs available for youth at risk of joining a gang
 - III. Internet resources available for parents and families
 - IV. Detailed information on what parents can do if they think their child is involved or becoming involved in a gang
 - 2) Developing a series of public workshops that may include the following topics:
 - I. Juvenile Justice System and the prosecution of gang members
 - II. Introduction and analysis of gangs in our community – Began in May, 2009
 - III. Straight talk from former gang members – Began in May, 2009
 - IV. Effective strategies to reducing gangs in a community
 - 4) Establishing “Apopka United Against Gangs Youth Foundation” for youth between the ages of 12-24 at risk of joining a gang
 - 5) Creating and maintaining a data base of families of known gang members to stay in contact about resources available for intervention and suppression efforts
 - 6) Developing and maintaining a comprehensive database of resources
5. **ORGANIZATIONS CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT** – Development and implementation of policies and procedures that result in the most effective use of available and potential resources, within and across agencies, to better address the gang problem (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2002)
 - A. Apopka United Against Gangs is implementing this strategy using the following process to meet our principal objectives:
 - 1) Inventory existing programs available for gang awareness, suppression and intervention and reviewing their best practices – Began in June, 2009
 - 2) Present Assessment Report to the State Attorney General for inclusion in the Florida Gang Reduction Strategy
 - 3) Developing the Apopka United Against Gangs Youth Foundation for youth at risk of joining a gang between the ages of 12-24. This program may include collaboration between the following agencies, with their identified purpose:



- a. Apopka Ministerial Alliance – Donation of land/facility, non-denominational faith based counseling services for youth and families
- b. Local High Schools and Middle Schools – Tutoring services, GED classes, ESOL classes, trade or job skills training
- c. Businesses – Job training, paid internships, business instructors, sponsors for field trips, sports teams, etc.
- d. Local Government – Zoning approval, land donations, recreational programs, code enforcement, program recognition and commitment, possible funding
- e. State Government – Statewide program recognition, financial support through grants, inclusion in Florida Gang Reduction Strategy
- f. Youth Peers & Community Volunteers – Tutors, after-school volunteers, mentors, marketing to peers through PSA's, class instructors (i.e., cooking, writing, art, dance, woodworking, etc.)
- g. Former Gang Members – Mentors and seminar speakers
- h. Law Enforcement – Mentors, community policing, program advisors

Project Resources

A considerable amount of research from a vast amount of resources is necessary to develop a comprehensive program that will produce the desired goal of eradicating gangs from our community. In addition to the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model, the following is a list of resources currently being utilized:

Internet Resources – Much of the initial research for this project was conducted using the following internet sites:

1. <http://www.helpinggangyouth.com/ganghelpquicklist.html> - Information about gangs
2. <http://www.gangorus.com/definition.html> - Executive Summary/Gang Definitions
3. <http://www.gangorus.com/identifiers.html> - Information about gangs
4. http://www.streetgangstyle.com/gangs_parents_questions.php - Information for parents about gangs
5. <http://www.helpinggangyouth.com/faqs.html> - Information about gangs
6. <http://www.helpinggangyouth.com/statistics.html> - Gang statistics
7. <http://www.fgia.com/Florida%20Legislation.htm> – Legislative policies
8. <http://www.csgv.ca/content.php?ID=54> – Gang resources
9. <http://www.csgv.ca/content.php?ID=89> – Gang prevention resources
10. <http://www.dc.state.fl.us/pub/gangs/index.html> - Gang resources for Florida
11. <http://www.iir.com/nygc/> - National Youth Gang Center Web Site
12. http://teenadvice.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ/Ya&sdn=teenadvice&cdn=people&tm=60&gps=304_312_1276_547&f=00&tt=14&bt=0&bts=0&zu=http%3A//tagv.org/faq.htm - Teen Resources and Web Site about Gangs



13. <http://www.sweenypolice.org/gangs.htm> - Good gang awareness information web site - Use this as a guide for developing report and our model. REALLY GOOD site!
14. <http://www.streetgangs.com/billboard/viewforum.php?f=109> – Gang discussion board
15. http://safestate.org/shop/files/GYV%20Gangs_Comm_Resp_ADA.pdf – Community Response to Gangs Paper by the State Attorney General in California
16. <http://www.faculty.missouristate.edu/M/MichaelCarlie/default.htm> - Very Comprehensive on-line book about gangs by Dr. Michael Carlie. Recommended reading!!
17. <http://channelviewviews.blogspot.com/2007/03/teacher-with-student-who-is-trying-to.html> - Channelview's View - A blog about an email from a teacher with a student trying to leave a gang
18. [http://myfloridalegal.com/webfiles.nsf/WF/KGRG-7FVPPNR/\\$file/GangReductionReportWEB.pdf](http://myfloridalegal.com/webfiles.nsf/WF/KGRG-7FVPPNR/$file/GangReductionReportWEB.pdf) - State of Florida Attorney General Report on Gang Reduction Strategy
19. <http://www.graffitihurts.org/> - Non-profit organization designed to educate about graffiti
20. http://www.insideprison.com/prison_gang_profile_SUR_13.asp - SUR 13 Gang Profile
21. <http://www.knowgangs.com/> - Web site with resources about gangs and profiles about different gangs
22. <http://www.gripe4rkids.org/graffiti.html> - Web site about gang graffiti
23. <http://www.uic.edu/orgs/kbc/latinkings/latindex.html> - Link to information about Latin Kings
24. www.streetgangstyle.com – Christian based web site written by former gang members
25. www.gangwar.com – The Coroner's Report – information and resources on gang intervention and prevention
26. <http://cityofmesa.org/POLICE/literature/aboutgangs.aspx> - Link on web site from City of Mesa, Arizona talking about gangs and warning signs for parents
27. www.helpinggangyouth.com – Gang Prevention and Intervention site by Arturo Hernandez. He has worked extensively with youth gangs
28. www.ngcrc.com – National Gang Crime Research Center – comprehensive site with lots of research on specific gangs
29. www.iir.com/nygc/ - Institute for Intergovernmental Research – National Youth Gang Center – good FAQ's page on this site and gang related news articles searchable by date
30. www.fgia.com – Florida Gang Investigators Association web site – Web site focused on gangs in Florida

Community Obstacles

As we continue to take an in-depth look at gangs in our community, it is imperative that we recognize some of the obstacles that we will face, and how these obstacles can be overcome.



Denial:

One of the most difficult issues to deal with in identifying gang members is denial. No one wants to announce to family, friends, or a community, “my son or daughter is in a gang,” or “we have a gang problem”. It is important to recognize that a family’s personal gang problem is related to the community in which that family lives. In small cities or rural areas, too often terms like “wanna be’s”, “misguided youth groups” or “street corner groups” are used to avoid recognizing a real gang problem. Terms like these only aid in the spread of denial. One of the first steps in addressing gang problems in our family, school or community is overcoming denial.

During his years of research, Dr. Michael Carlie heard many stories of denial. Following are just a few excerpts of what he heard.

Community A: A gang unit officer said "Because we depend so much on tourism, gangs are not discussed. They're not discussed in public, among the police, in the press or anywhere else." When he offered to come to the community's churches and talk about the gang situation, only his church invited him to speak. (Dr. Michael Carlie, Copyright, 2002 Michael K. Carlie)

Community B: When the gang squad leader started the department's gang unit he called other area police departments to learn what they were doing about gangs in their own communities. He told me "I was told 'If you have gangs, deny it.'" He believes "Denial is actually a product of politics. If a police department admits that there are gangs in the community, tourism, business, and development will be hurt. And we don't want to hurt tourism or business, now, do we?" His last remark was clearly sarcastic. (Dr. Michael Carlie, Copyright, 2002 Michael K. Carlie)

Community C: I asked the Chief of Police if there were any gangs in town. "No, we don't have gangs here," he replied. Later in the evening I asked two of his gang officers if they could tell me the names of the gangs that exist in their city. "Bloods, Crips, the Gangster Disciples, Folk, Lost Boys, Latin Kings, Mexican Mafia, and the School Yard Crips," said one of the officers. Then, out of the blue, another of the officers said "We're not so naive as to not know that we have a gang problem. It's just better for the city if we don't say that." (Dr. Michael Carlie, Copyright, 2002 Michael K. Carlie)

Overcoming denial begins with becoming informed about gang culture activity and membership in our community. For example, some gangs are not considered a threat to the community and so are not targeted by law enforcement or the community for prevention or intervention programs. In reality, these gangs are a potential serious threat because gangs frequently use violence to settle disputes-violence that eventually will affect the community. An honest community assessment identifies these types of gangs and potential future problems.



Lack of Interest

People have busy lives...work, family, extra-curricular activities, church; the list goes on and on. Often times, people will not be interested in becoming informed or getting involved in gang reduction programs because they believe “if it’s not happening in my neighborhood, it’s not happening to me and I don’t have time to worry about it”. This lack of interest leads individuals or entire neighborhoods into a false sense of security, so when a gang-related incident happens nearby, many residents are completely shocked, and perhaps then prompted into action.

Recently, Commissioner Kathy Till and members of the City of Apopka Youth Advisory Board attended a workshop on gangs. During a panel discussion, the Mayor of the city of Minneapolis, MN talked about he had been present at many crime scenes that were gang-related. He said that “the adults he spoke with about the incident were always shocked that the violence had occurred, never believing the offender would “do something like that”. However, when talking with the young people (students, young adults under the age of 24); they NEVER said the same thing. In fact, they were not at all surprised.” These comments highlight how a lack of interest can lead to an escalating gang problem if not addressed within the community.

Overcoming a lack of interest begins with increasing awareness of gangs through community outreach. However, this needs to be done without creating unwarranted fear and panic within the community or neighborhood. This can be accomplished through the following strategies:

1. Increased media coverage of active gangs in the community
2. Increased media coverage of “success stories” of reformed gang members
3. Door-to-door distribution of community resource guide
4. Encouraging neighborhoods to start a Neighborhood Watch Program
5. Initiate a graffiti abatement or clean-up program.
6. Develop a public awareness campaign with steps on what families/communities can do to combat a gang problem

Lack of Communication and Collaboration

Government, law enforcement, social service agencies, faith based programs, schools, neighborhoods, businesses and families must ALL work together to address a gang problem within the community. No one can accomplish the task alone!

All of the above resources have good intentions, and many have successful programs currently in place to address youth gangs. However, in many cases a lack of communication means that these programs are not well known to the youth that are most at risk of joining a gang. As a result they are slipping through the cracks and not receiving the help they need.

Overcoming a lack of communication and collaboration will require all resources to adopt the same goals, and realize by working together the chances for long-term success will be much greater as the community as a whole will benefit.



One strategy that should be considered is establishing a comprehensive data base and resource guide that outlines all programs and services available that are directly related to youth gangs in the city of Apopka and Northwest Orange County. This should be made available to the public via on-line, through a printed resource guide and through distribution by area businesses, churches and social service agencies.

Community Partners

Developing an effective, long-term strategic program will require the commitment of the entire community and collaboration of available programs that are target specific to at risk youth. The following list of community partners has been identified, and will be incorporated into a comprehensive community resource guide. **This list is NOT all inclusive** and should be updated as further research is conducted and more partners become available.

- **Faith Based Partners** – Prevention & Intervention – A faith institution - through its leaders and programs - supports and instills into its congregants the morals, values, and ethics for which the faith stands. They define that which is *right* and that which is *wrong* and, in that context, violence is discouraged. For this reason, a community's faith institutions can make a significant contribution to reducing gang activity and youth violence. While not all members of a community may belong to one or another of these institutions, those who do have much to accomplish in this regard. (Dr. Michael Carlie, Copyright, 2002 Michael K. Carlie)

A faith community (consisting of all faith institutions in the city or neighborhood) which is united and willing to work collaboratively can bring determination as well as spiritual, physical, and financial resources to an entire community's effort to reduce gang activity and youth violence. (Dr. Michael Carlie, Copyright, 2002 Michael K. Carlie)

In his book “Into the Abyss”, Dr. Carlie offers the following suggestions for faith based partners to help prevent or reduce youth gang violence: (Dr. Michael Carlie, Copyright, 2002 Michael K. Carlie)

1. Building personal assets among youth
2. Providing facilities for youth programs
3. Establishing a secure group home for at-risk youth
4. Partnering through *The Faith Community Network*
5. Offer ministry in detention
6. Provide counseling and education on abuse, anger management
7. Reducing gun violence
8. Creating a violence-free zone
9. Neighborhood clean-up and beautification projects
10. Adopt-an-agency



For a complete list of Dr. Carlie's suggestions for faith based partners, and more details about the programs listed above, please go to:

http://www.faculty.missouristate.edu/M/MichaelCarlie/SOLUTIONS/INSTITUTIONS/what_your_local_faith_community_.htm

- **School Partners** – A school is a miniature community reflecting the culture of the neighborhood or community in which it is found. Nearly everything that happens in a community - including violence - happens in its schools. For many reasons, schools are uniquely positioned to assist in efforts to reduce youth violence. There are many steps which can be taken to reduce the presence of gangs in schools and to decrease their level of criminal activity. (Dr. Michael Carlie, Copyright, 2002 Michael K. Carlie)

During his many years of research, Dr. Carlie “discovered that truancy rates, as well as dropout rates, have reached disturbingly high levels in some inner-city neighborhoods. What I witnessed were neighborhood schools experiencing dropout rates as high as 25-40%. There is a high correlation between the location of those schools and the location of gangs and gang activity in a neighborhood.” (Dr. Michael Carlie, Copyright, 2002 Michael K. Carlie)

In his book “Into the Abyss”, Dr. Carlie offers the following suggestions for school partners to help prevent or reduce youth gang violence:

1. Truancy Prevention and Reduction
2. Parental notification
3. Initiate a school wide homework support program
4. The *Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies* program
5. Teaching students about gangs
6. Provide gang information resources
7. Encourage school clubs to Adopt-an-Agency that promotes non-violence among youth
8. Develop a gang task force

For a complete list of Dr. Carlie's suggestions for schools and for more details about the programs listed above, please go to:

<http://www.faculty.missouristate.edu/M/MichaelCarlie/SOLUTIONS/INSTITUTIONS/schools2.htm>

- **Government Partners** – Federal, state, county, and municipal (city) government agencies have a significant role to play in providing and supporting strategies for reducing and/or preventing gang activity and youth violence. (Dr. Michael Carlie, Copyright, 2002 Michael K. Carlie)

In his book “Into the Abyss”, Dr. Carlie offers the following suggestions for government partners to help prevent or reduce youth gang violence:

1. Collaborating Government Services
2. Gathering and Disseminating information



3. Providing programs and space for them
4. Assisting in grant writing and funding efforts
5. Creating or modifying gang-and-violence-related legislation

For an in-depth look at each of these strategies for government, please go to:
http://www.faculty.missouristate.edu/M/MichaelCarlie/SOLUTIONS/INSTITUTIONS/what_your_local_government_could.htm

- **Law Enforcement Partners** - When it comes to gangs, police are first responders - they are often the first justice system practitioners to encounter gang members. They encounter them as a result of a call for service from someone or because they see them while on patrol. Short of questioning, detaining (juveniles), arresting (adults), interrogating, or testifying against gang members, what do police do with or for them? As it ends up, they do a number of things. (Dr. Michael Carlie, Copyright, 2002 Michael K. Carlie)

In his book “Into the Abyss”, Dr. Carlie offers an in-depth look at various law enforcement programs that are successful in their efforts to reduce youth gang violence:

1. Acknowledge the presence of gangs within the community
2. Provide the community with meaningful gang-related statistics
3. Making it a policy within operation guidelines to reduce gang activity and youth violence
4. Issuing notification letters to parents of youths who came to the attention of the police. The letters suggested the child was associating with known or suspected gang members, seemed to be getting involved in a gang, or was actively involved in gang activity.
5. Using a multi-agency law enforcement approach
6. Working in collaboration with other justice agencies and the community
7. Implementing a *Community Walk* program
8. Arrest and incarceration of the most violent gang members

For further information on these and many other law enforcement programs, please go to:

http://www.faculty.missouristate.edu/M/MichaelCarlie/SOLUTIONS/INSTITUTIONS/law_enforcement.htm

- **Business and Industry** – The business community consists of both private businesses and the various organizations to which some business owners and employees belong (i.e., the local Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, and Kiwanis). Local businesses hold one of the numbers to the combination which unlocks and nourishes a community's future. The other social institutions hold the other numbers to the combination. Without a proper upbringing (family and faith), sufficient knowledge (schools), and a job (the business sector), a child has little hope of succeeding. Businesses play a vital role in providing an incentive to work, job training, job opportunities, and advancement for everyone in the community. (Dr. Michael Carlie, Copyright, 2002 Michael K. Carlie)



The primary obligation and purpose of any business is to make a profit for its owners, shareholders (if any), and employees. Businesses must also give back to the community - to help strengthen and improve it. By doing so, they are assured of their future existence, continued profits, and enhance their image in the eyes of the public they serve. In this sense, **businesses are a community partner and responsible for participating in efforts to address community issues.** (Dr.

Michael Carlie, Copyright, 2002 Michael K. Carlie)

In his book, “Into the Abyss”, Dr. Carlie offers the following suggestions on how businesses can serve as a community partner in reducing youth gang violence:

1. Adopting a course (such as Economics) in a local school
2. Bringing students/teachers into the workplace
3. Involving student interns
4. Providing job training
5. Working with and/or sponsoring agencies that help at-risk youth
6. Honoring local youth for achievements
7. Sponsoring the development of a community-wide youth trust
8. Offering scholarships to deserving youth

For a closer look at these and other suggestions on how businesses can help prevent youth gang violence, please go to:

http://www.faculty.missouristate.edu/M/MichaelCarlie/SOLUTIONS/INSTITUTIONS/what_your_local_business.htm

Media Partners - The responsibility for informing America about gang activity and youth violence falls upon the mass media as the most efficient, affordable, and likely distributor of information currently available. Paralyzing listeners, readers, and viewers with horror stories about gang initiations, gang fights, and gangland murders won't reduce their occurrence. It may sell newspapers, but it doesn't solve problems. A responsible press and responsible broadcast journalism

are powerful tools for bringing about change in a community by providing accurate and useful information and by acting as a catalyst for those changes. (Dr. Michael Carlie, Copyright, 2002 Michael K. Carlie)

In his book “Into the Abyss”, Dr. Carlie offers the following suggestions for media partners to play an important role in reducing youth gang violence:

1. Providing trend data
2. Providing comparative data and other comparative information
3. Feature real life stories about gang members or reformed gang members
4. Creating a “Spotlight on Youth Agencies and Services”
5. Creating a focus group of youth in the community and sharing the findings
6. Declaring an annual “Week of the Child”

For an in-depth look at the above suggestions, as well as many others for media partners, please go to:



http://www.faculty.missouristate.edu/M/MichaelCarlie/SOLUTIONS/INSTITUTIONS/what_your_local_media_could_do.htm

Key Milestones

To measure the success of Apopka United Against Gangs, it is imperative to establish a goal to reach key milestones during the project initiative. Following is a list of milestones. It is important to note that this list is NOT all inclusive and should be reviewed frequently for modification:

1. Completion of Power Point Presentation - Completed
2. Establishment of project Assessment Team - Completed
3. Completion and analysis of Assessment Report
4. Completion of Community Resource Guide
5. Development of program strategies
6. Community wide adoption and implementation of program strategies
7. Adoption of program into the Florida Gang Reduction Strategy established by the State Attorney General
8. Project funding applied for and received
9. Implementation of each of the five key strategies and success measurements for each
10. Periodic reviews of gang data to determine project success

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