

Crime Stoppers Tip: Gang activity

When gangs are active in a community, there are often a number of telltale signs that indicates this activity. Some of these signs are easy to spot while others are more elusive.

Gang graffiti will typically be visible on buildings, signs, billboards, etc. in neighborhoods where gangs are active. Different gangs use different symbols and words. Some of the more common are:

Five point crown – commonly used by the Hispanic gang Latin Kings

Black hand – La Eme, Mexican Mafia, primarily a prison gang

The color blue – Crips gang

The color red – Bloods gang

Other common gang symbols are shamrocks, dice, pitchforks, clown faces (typically one happy and one sad), swastikas, and the Hispanic words sureño (southerner) and norteño (northerner).

All graffiti should be reported to law enforcement. Single symbols, words or phrases by themselves might not mean much, but put together with other graffiti in the area, law enforcement can learn a lot from studying graffiti.

Gangs use graffiti to mark their turf or to challenge or disrespect rival gangs. A gang disrespects another gang by crossing their graffiti out replacing it with their own.

If you discover graffiti on your property, please notify law enforcement immediately. Do not paint over the graffiti before local law enforcement has had a chance to inspect the graffiti.

Some common gang names are Crips, Bloods, Latin Kings, People Nation, Folk Nation, MS-13. Often a gang's name is connected to the street where they are active. Such as 18th Street Bloods, for example.

Gangs often start out fairly innocent, but violence and serious crime frequently follows quickly. Innocent bystanders, neighbors, children and parents are often injured or killed by gang violence. Gangs are serious business. It is easier for law enforcement to counter gangs if they are discovered before they can spread and get rooted in the area. Contact law enforcement if you suspect gang activity is occurring in your neighborhood.

Some signs that might indicate that your child might be involved with gangs are:

- Suddenly having a lot of money with no viable explanation
- Suddenly having a lot of new clothes, computer games, expensive toys
- Suddenly starting wearing a lot of the same color, blue, red, purple, gold

etc.

- A sudden change in language used and behavior. Starting talking about friends as dogs, camarada, chola/cholo, peoples, cousins, kinfolks, locs.

Please note that these signs do NOT mean somebody is a member of or involved with a gang. They are possible indicators. Don't jump to conclusions or make judgments prematurely.

Gangs are not new to the United States. According to some researchers they date back to 11th century India where the word Thug was used to describe

a simple criminal roaming the countryside. In the United States, criminal street gangs have been around at least since the 1920's. Modern gangs got their real start in California in 1969 when Crips was founded. Today, there are upwards of 150,000-gang members in Los Angeles alone, and Crips and Bloods are in more than 100 American cities.

Saline County Law Enforcement telephone numbers are as follows.

- Saline County Sheriff 402-821-2111
- Crete Police Department 402-826-4311
- Wilber Police Department 402-821-2201
- Friend Police Department 402-947-5531

More resources

The Federal Bureau of Investigations launched a violent gang task force in 1992. The web site of this unit can be found at: http://www.fbi.gov/hq/cid/ngic/violent_gangs.htm.

A Gang Toolkit for parents, teachers and others can be found at: <http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/default.asp?item=1309>.

(This article is brought to you by Saline County Crime Stoppers. Working with law enforcement for safer communities and citizens throughout Saline County. Contact Crime Stoppers at 1-800-345-3361. Thanks to this newspaper for helping us spread the word.)