



Reducing

Gang

Membership
Through Prevention

A report to the citizens of the region between Burbank and Dayton, from the Snake River to Milton-Freewater
Summer 2011

2010–2011

Community Council Study Committee



The 2010–2011 Study Committee met for 27 weeks (from Nov. 1, 2010, to May 25, 2011). The management team developed the curriculum that included 56 speakers. During the course of the study, 115 people participated.

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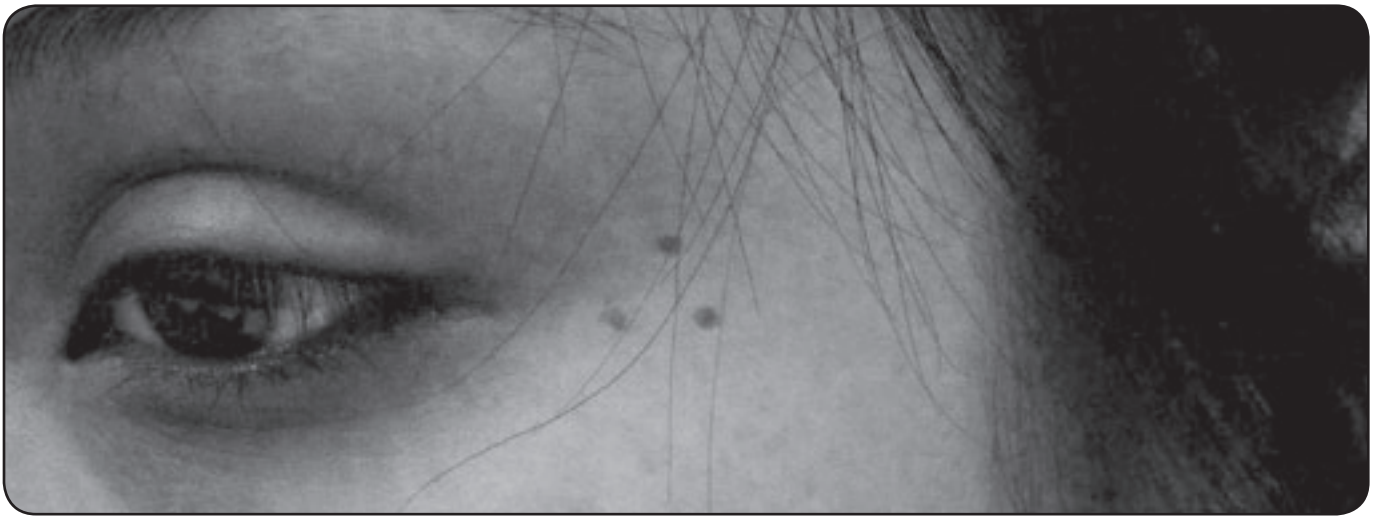


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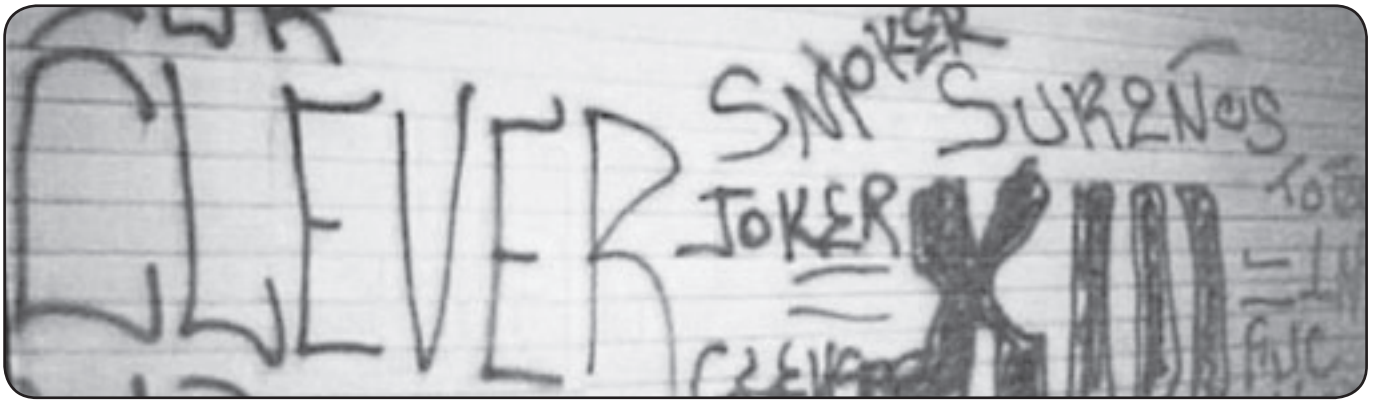
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This summary provides an overview of the study. You are encouraged to read the report in its entirety to understand the breadth of the topic and the links between each stage of the study process—from findings to conclusions to recommendations.

Gang activity is increasing in the region between Burbank and Dayton, from the Snake River to Milton-Freewater. Individual and family lives are being disrupted, and the regional community is affected by property damage; degradation of safety, learning environment and community image; and increased costs for police and emergency services. Resources for intervention and suppression are limited.

Locally, gang presence was first recognized in the late 1980s. Police agencies currently track 300 to 500 individuals in the Milton-Freewater and Walla Walla area. The actual number of gang members in the area is hard to determine—some are members, some are affiliates and some are just friends. For the purpose of this study, the Study Committee adopted the following legal

definition of gang: “any ongoing organization, association or group of three or more persons, whether formal or informal, having a common name or common identifying sign or symbol, having as one of its primary activities the commission of criminal acts, and whose members or associates individually or collectively engage in or have engaged in a pattern of criminal street gang activity” (RCW 9.94A.030).

Certain environmental factors can increase the likelihood of a person’s joining a gang, but gang members are drawn from all walks of life and all ethnic backgrounds. Gangs are recruiting children and youth to membership at early ages, and multi-generational membership is prevalent in this region.

The purpose of this study was to determine how prevention efforts may reduce gang membership and the effects of gang activity in the region.

During 27 weekly meetings, the Study Committee gained broad perspective from 56 resource speakers:

- ▶ Walla Walla Police Department’s gang officers provided an overview of the local gangs and their activities.
- ▶ Current and former gang members and their families provided firsthand

insights about circumstances that influence the decision to become involved with gangs and the difficulty of escaping once affiliated with that culture.

- ▶ A sociologist explained individual, peer group, school, family and community factors that may influence a young person’s decision to join a gang.
- ▶ Representatives from local businesses, city governments, schools, law enforcement agencies, the justice department, corrections and community organizations offered their perspectives on the regional repercussions of gang activity.
- ▶ A community activist and several organizations discussed resources for counteracting the need for gangs by strengthening and supporting individuals, families and neighborhoods.

From these presentations and supplemental resources, the Study Committee learned that the reasons for gang membership are complex and concluded that preventing gang membership requires a multifaceted approach. Prevention efforts will require coordinated use of community resources and broad community participation.

Highlights

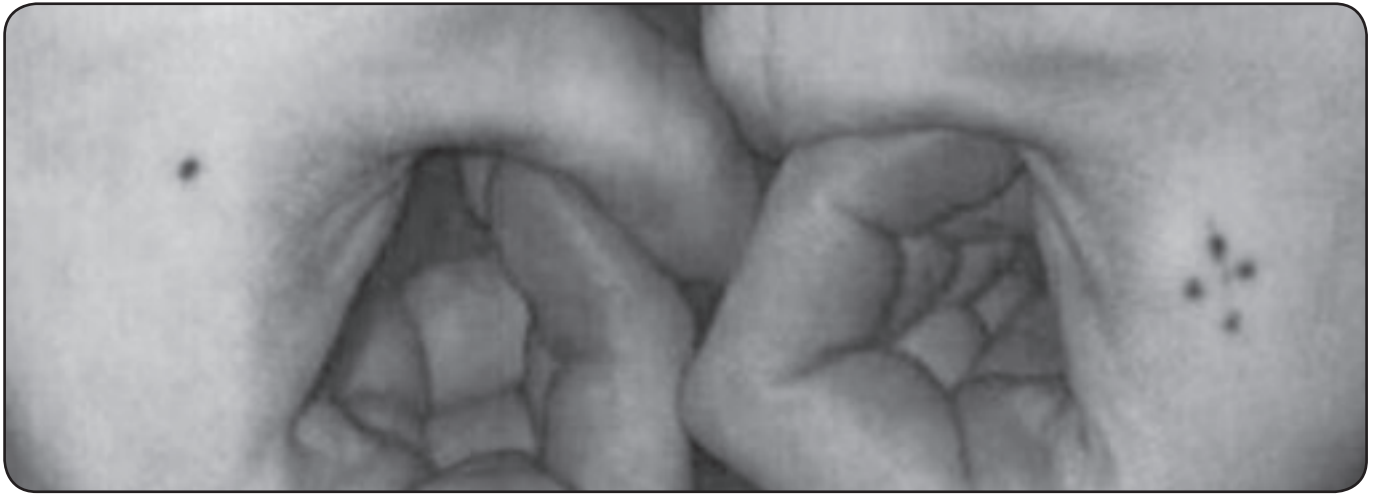
The Study Committee spent 17 weeks gathering information about the topics and 10 additional weeks developing (by consensus) conclusions and recommendations. As the committee moved from summarizing the findings (what they learned) to conclusions and then recommendations, they ensured that there were direct connections between each.

CONCLUSIONS

- 1 More community awareness of gang-related issues and the procedures and limitations of law enforcement, justice, and corrections is necessary in order to increase community support for prevention efforts.
- 2 Numerous resources are available in the community, and how they work together is very important. Because there are still many gang members, there is a need for further improvement.
- 3 Strength of family, neighborhood, education and economic status are critical factors influencing gang membership. Having positive, mature role models reduces the risk that a young person will join a gang.
- 4 Prevention should start as early in a child's life as possible. It is "dollar wise" to intervene as early as possible.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 A bicultural, civic committee composed of representatives from existing community organizations and agencies involved with youth should be formed to focus specifically on gang prevention. It should educate the community about gangs to increase public awareness and public safety and to encourage public participation with prevention. This committee should continue the efforts established by the Reducing Gang Membership Through Prevention Implementation Task Force.
- 2 A partnership of individuals, community organizations and, where appropriate, local government should collaborate to:
 - ▶ Assist neighborhoods at high risk of gang activity to organize prevention activities, such as:
 - ✓ Educating residents about the connection between graffiti and activities that can lead to gang action.
 - ✓ Organizing a support group for parents of gang members and youth at risk of gang involvement to share ideas and to increase family resources for prevention. Community agencies should be asked to facilitate this process.
 - ✓ Establishing neighborhood organizations to continue education about the harm that comes from joining gangs.
 - ▶ Encourage independence and resilience in the children, youth and families in neighborhoods at greatest risk of gang involvement by:
 - ✓ Promoting volunteerism in youth outreach and mentoring.
 - ✓ Supporting the efforts of the Children's Resiliency Initiative to communicate to families the key characteristics of resiliency.
 - ✓ Encouraging the extension of child and youth programs and adult life skills training into neighborhoods.
 - ✓ Providing training for neighborhood conflict coaches and mediators who can work to de-escalate tensions within a neighborhood.



FINDINGS



ang activity is increasing in the region between Burbank and Dayton, from the Snake River to Milton-Freewater.

Many of the region's incidents of violence, vandalism and graffiti, drug trafficking, substance abuse, theft, and arms dealing are gang-related. Gangs are recruiting children and youths to membership at early ages. Schools report truancy issues with children who are gang members and/or who are children of gang members. Resources for intervention and suppression are limited. The purpose of this study was to determine how prevention efforts may reduce gang membership and the effects of gang activity in the region.

These findings represent information received by the Study Committee and the Study Committee's consensus as to the reasonable validity of the information received. They are derived from published materials, from facts reported by resource people and from a consensus of the committee's understanding of the opinions of the resource people.

History

Gang presence was first recognized locally in the late 1980s when two brothers from southern California moved to this area and started the 18th Street Gang.

In the early 1990s, the Walla Walla County justice system was in denial about gang activity. Use of the word "gang" was not allowed in court until a gang-related shooting at a Walla Walla convenience store spurred local law enforcement to focus attention on gang presence in the region. The terms "gangster," "gang banger" and "gang member" are now commonly used in the justice system. The most common term used by gang members is "gang banger."

When the 18th Street Gang in Walla Walla and Florencia 13 in Milton-Freewater were the only two local gangs, there was rivalry. With new gangs forming and coming into the area, turf—space and drug dealing territory—has become an issue. Recruitment, membership numbers, gang-related incidents and violent crimes have increased.

"Positive role models mean the world. What I'm doing now is being that support to someone who does not have it—being a friend, listening, giving a little guidance, helping them to understand that current actions affect later options...."

—Former gang member

For two decades, the level of graffiti and gang-related violence has remained the same. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, gang activity was primarily narcotics sales. An emphasis on suppression caused open gang activity to decrease.

A recent escalation in activity may be attributed to several things: the release from prison of leaders from the 1990s; the glorification of the gangster lifestyle by television, advertising, movies, video games and music; and the general increase in population—more people with more money means more gangsters.

Local gangs

West Side 18th Street* (a.k.a. Wicked Gangsters, W/S 18, EST, XVIII, XV3, Dieciocho, o'est'E, Wicked). Southern California gangs recognize the local 18th Street Gang. Wicked was the moniker of one of the two brothers who started the local gang. Both brothers have been serving time in the Washington State Penitentiary for convictions related to gang activities. One will be released in 2011; the other has been sentenced to life in prison.

North Side 18th Street* (a.k.a. PQs, Pequeños). This recently developed clique is friendly with the West Side 18th Street Gang and is very confrontational, especially to the police.

South Side Florencia 13 (a.k.a. Los Malos, F13, X3, XIII, Treces, 3CE, Sureños, Sur 13). This Milton-Freewater-based group is heavily involved with methamphetamine sales.

Playboy Sureños is a violent gang based in Yakima with a small presence locally. Most Columbia High School students who are affiliated with a gang are members of the Sureños.

Eastgate Posse (a.k.a. EGP, Eastgate, EGP crew) started as a protection group but later began initiating activity.

247 Crips. This nontraditional gang has a variety of ethnicities and a few female affiliates. Members are generally good students but like the idea of gangs. They align themselves with South Side Florencia 13 and rival the 18th Street Gang. They are involved with marijuana sales and burglaries. They are also involved in mixed martial arts fighting.

Labor Camp Soldiers (a.k.a. LBC) formed at the Farm Labor Homes for protection from the 18th Street Gang. It was not the group's intention to be a gang, but gang-like activity ensued.

Deuce Dub Deuce G (Walla Walla Ghetto Gangsters) is a very new gang.

*West Side 18th Street and North Side 18th Street refer to areas in Los Angeles where the gang originated.



Overview

Gang activity is cyclical. Quiet times coincide with a leader's conviction and resulting prison sentence. As new leadership develops, gang-related violence increases. The actual number of gangsters in the area is hard to determine. Some are members, some are affiliates and some are just friends. Police agencies track 300 to 500 individuals in the Milton-Freewater and Walla Walla area.

Certain environmental factors can increase the risk of young people joining a gang, but gang members

are drawn from all walks of life and all ethnic backgrounds. In this region, most gang members are of Hispanic descent, but traditionally African-American gangs such as Crips, locally the 247 Crips, have Caucasian and Hispanic members. Traditionally Hispanic gangs, such as 18th Street and Florencia 13, do not have Caucasian or African-American members.

In the early- to mid-1990s, there was a strictly female gang in Walla Walla, the Lady Wicked. That gang no longer exists, but a small number of girls have been jumped into

gangs and female gang membership is increasing. Their manner of initiation into a gang often differs from that of males. Most commonly, women are not members, but date men who are members and end up hiding weapons and providing alibis. They are treated and viewed as property by their gang member boyfriends. Dating members of different gangs shows disrespect and causes problems between the gangs. Women between the ages of 18 and 25 have been in local courts for methamphetamine manufacture and delivery, assault (primarily stabbing

instead of shooting), welfare fraud, and prostitution.

Gang activity is widespread in Walla Walla County but, because of proactive measures initiated by local law enforcement in the 1990s, including formation of a four-person gang unit and the training of that unit in suppression measures, it is not as prevalent as that in the Tri-Cities, Yakima or Tacoma.

Tagging (graffiti) is the most visible indicator of gang activity. Gang business includes drug and arms trade, burglary, vehicle prowls and thefts, assault, sexual assault, and witness intimidation.

Gangs can be both the source of addiction (victims of crime and violence self-medicate with alcohol and drugs) and the source of drugs needed by those who become addicted.

Drug activity is the most prevalent business. Sales of marijuana, methamphet-

amines, and alcohol are a major source of income. Most gang members have no regular source of income and depend upon their criminal activities to obtain what they want and need.

Identifying gang members

Each gang has a unique way of communicating their gang membership—through clothing, tattoos, hand signs and colors.

Traditionally the attire of the gang members has been bulky or baggy clothing (possibly to conceal drugs or weapons), colored bandanas, colored belts, and the numbers 18 or 13 on jersey-style shirts. Sagging pants are popular among the 18th Street and Florencia 13 members and affiliates. Other identifiers (though non-gang members and affiliates



“If nobody cares, then nothing matters.”

—Community activist

may wear these objects as well) are black “cholo” sunglasses, belts hanging down and rosary necklaces.

Clothing is not always an indicator that someone is a gangster, but certain tattoos are. Generally, the right to bear a tattoo is earned—it is a privilege to wear a gang’s identifier. Usually located on the neck and forearms, they may be dots, Roman numerals, or lipstick kiss tattoos (what appears to be the letter “B” is “13”). An area code tattoo identifies the gang’s location. In prison, gang identifiers are commonly termed “ink” since pen ink is used to create tattoos.

Members use sign language to communicate. Symbols on personal items or gang identifiers coded into license plate numbers may also indicate affiliation.

It is becoming more difficult to know who is and who is not a gang member. To create a lower profile,

Why they join gangs

Nationally, young people report they join gangs for the following reasons, listed in descending order of importance:

- 1 For protection—they want or need protection from other gang members: “I need someone to watch my back.”
- 2 For fun.
- 3 For respect and a sense of identity. In the gang mentality, fear is the same as respect.
- 4 For money.
- 5 Because a friend was in a gang.
- 6 Family members (especially siblings and cousins, but sometimes parents or grandparents) are involved in gangs.

5th
FAMILY

some gang members are now wearing “prep” style clothing, such as khaki slacks and polo shirts.

Reasons for joining

Individual, peer group, school, family and community factors may influence a young person’s decision to join a gang.

Individual factors:

- ▶ Basic needs and goals, such as identity, esteem, companionship, status or protection.
- ▶ Attitudes, such as defiance or aggressiveness.
- ▶ Behaviors, such as drinking, delinquency, drug use, promiscuity or “locura” (see glossary on page 25).
- ▶ Negative experiences during formative years.

According to sociologists, because each individual reflects these factors differently, focusing on individuals in order to prevent gang membership may be less effective than addressing situations or the environment in which the individuals function.

Peer group factors are a major part of the socialization of individuals into a larger culture (e.g. peers, family, community and nation).

Peers have a disproportionate impact on decision-making. There is always tension between prosocial and antisocial behaviors for youth, and there has been a gradual upsurge in the latter. A young person may be enticed by peers with the idea of a gang or be pushed into a gang with threats.

School factors. School is potentially the only environment in which some individuals have exposure to prosocial behaviors. It can also be a place that reinforces an individual’s awareness of being different or of being singled out. That affects individuals’ feeling about the importance

of school. Inadequate support for student success results from lack of interconnection between the school system and the family system.

Family factors. Role models within the family may be negative. Gangs can be multi-generational, which increases the likelihood that family members will also join. Many families struggle with issues that weaken the family, such as physical or sexual abuse, drug abuse, and divorce.

Community and larger social factors. Communities often have neighborhoods with resource sets that pull individuals toward gangs. If an individual grows up exposed to gangs and opportunities for criminal

activity, antisocial values are likely to result.

Prosocial individuals and organizations can be positive role models. Examples in Walla Walla include ministers, police officers and Community Center for Youth.

One of the main predictors of prosocial behavior is employment.

Sociologists have tried to determine which factors or which combinations of factors lead to gang membership. All of the risk factors are important and have a cumulative effect, but the most important risk factors for gang involvement seem to be lack of viable economic opportunities, education, family socialization



José’s story

Sometimes gang participation takes place despite family efforts to prevent it—peer pressure is strong. For example, José (who is not a gang member) has been very involved with his nephews. One nephew takes things in stride, is open to advice, and works in the community. The other has lower self-esteem. Looking for purpose, this nephew has been drawn in by the gang’s promise of

power. His uncle José knows that, despite making a bad choice by joining the gang, his nephew is still a good person and needs support.

José understands firsthand the importance of personal involvement with someone who cares, because when he was a high school student, a teacher took interest in him and steered him to positive activities. He mentors his nephews and others to help them make good choices.

and mentoring.

Glorified by popular culture, gangs seem to offer power, money and a place to belong (a family). This can be very tempting to a young person who lacks a sense of purpose or belonging, especially if his or her family is struggling.

Children are exposed to gangs with visuals such as bandanas, tattoos, how shoes and clothing are worn, and sometimes through family. Fifth graders, even if not interested in gangs, already know about them. The youngest local gang member was “jumped in” at 9 years old.

Corrections officers report that for prison inmates, the priorities for belonging are money, respect, power, authority, safety and protection.

The key to gangs’ success is intimidation—respect achieved through violence. Initiation, righting wrongs, personal gain and leaving the gang are often achieved through violence. Children who grow up in a gang environment are desensitized to—and see nothing wrong with—violence. It is considered a badge of honor to go to prison for the gang.

Once someone is in a gang, it is difficult to get out. Being “jumped out” is much more severe than being “jumped in.” Members remain in a gang because they fear being “stabbed out,” because they fear rival gangs, and because they cannot envision a different future. Many say they simply do not want to give up the money and respect that go with being in a gang.

According to those who spoke to the Study Committee, gang members feel fear everywhere. Even if they make changes in their lives, they may return to the gang for protection because rival gangs continue to treat them as members.

Age seems to be the best indicator

of when a gang member will decide to make choices to remove or distance himself or herself from the gang. The individual may have obtained a certain level of respect and therefore is no longer expected to actively commit crimes. Cultural customs may require the gang member to take care of his or her elders, making it acceptable to be less active in gang business.

Gangs’ impact on the region

Gang-related activities affect the community in many ways, including but not limited to property damage, personal safety, degradation of learning environment and community image, and cost of police and emergency services.

BUSINESS

Businesses must recoup the costs that result from theft and property damage or destruction. Owners feel violated, fearful and angry, and they often feel the urge to retaliate. In addition to taking care of their own enterprise, owners are frequently asked to contribute money for community solutions to gang violence.

Gang presence hurts a community’s ability to recruit professionals. Potential employees not only care about the job, but about the community in which they will live. Specialized businesses are already challenged to recruit talented professionals to this rural region. A primary selling point is the community’s image.

GOVERNMENT

Governmental entities invest substantial resources to protect their citizens and to maintain a positive image in order to attract and retain business and tourism.

To prevent gang violence from



Behind bars

When local Sureños street gang members go into the prison system, they affiliate only with Sureños. The Sureños’ equivalent of the Mexican Mafia, La EME, is one of the largest and most powerful gangs in the prison system, and the potential exists for local involvement.

Local members have ties to individuals incarcerated at the Washington State Penitentiary, as well as the other prisons in Washington and California. Older members who are serving prison sentences are highly respected by members and affiliates who are active.

affecting its reputation and potential, the City of Walla Walla dedicates about \$374,000 each year to preventing gang-related activity—one police officer per shift and 15 to 20 percent of code-enforcement time are dedicated to monitoring gang activity. The city also financially contributes to two community programs that have been working to reduce gang activity, Community Center for

5th
FAMILY

Fernando's story

Fernando was born in Los Angeles and raised in southern California. His father died when he was 7 or 8 years old. His mother did her best, but he needed a father figure. The gang filled that role, but instead of telling him to go to school and get good grades, he was told to hurt others and take care of the neighborhood (allow only gang-sanctioned activities).

Fernando's first arrest was when he was 10 years old. His early gang activities included graffiti and petty theft (stealing knives from stores and selling them to gang members at school). He moved on to smoking marijuana, handling guns, and committing burglaries with older gang members. He "did some county time," but his goal was to become a big-time gangster and go to state prison.

Fernando was a good student when no other gang members were around and when teachers took time to connect with him. He cited positive results from his interactions with a principal with military background who would not let him misbehave. He appreciated the recognition when a substitute teacher took the time to ask him about the creases in his pants and who creased them. (He meticulously did it himself.) A coach recognized his ability and personally transported him to track meets and practices, bought his shoes, and encouraged him to do his best. Fernando participated in the state championships. He remembers that time as "two years of bliss—the best time of my life."

But after finishing school, he spent 20 years in the penal system. He says his limited experience in society has kept him back. After spending so much time in prison where everything is provided, the concepts of paying rent and getting a job seem unmanageable.

He is still adjusting.

Fernando is now 41. At this point in his life, gangs do not offer much to him. No one can match his respect—no one in the local area has served 20 years in prison and the other gang members are much younger. His goal is to help others to take a different path than he did, to get out of gangs. Even if someone is already following the wrong path, prevention efforts can help turn him or her around. Some will not listen, but they still want the attention.

"You need to overlook what gang members have done," he says. "Support them. Help them change. Don't give up on them—don't give up on any of us! There is no one solution."

As he shared personal experiences, Fernando made a number of general observations:

- ▶ Young people are susceptible to what adults teach and follow the path adults show them.
- ▶ Gang members join for the sense of being somebody, of being part of something. When he was young, he likened a gang to a team or a family.
- ▶ Many gang members have parents who work long hours, and the young people have been left unsupervised. In Mexican families, the fathers are often absent. The gang fills those voids.
- ▶ Thinking of the gang as family is misguided. While in prison, he realized that when a member is incarcerated, his "homies" do not send letters—his biological family provides support.
- ▶ Gangs will back up a member even if they know he made a mistake.
- ▶ All gang members are taught to fight. Members of other gangs will always be looking for them for crimes committed against them.
- ▶ People are attracted to those who show them love and will do anything—even something they do not want to do—for that love.
- ▶ Young people are attracted to those who offer something that interests them (drugs, sex, etc.).

▶ Every action has repercussions. Adolescents do not think about how their actions affect others. He or she may know right from wrong, but may act without thinking—frequently taking the easy route to a solution. For instance, if aggravated while holding a gun, he or she may shoot. He or she will go to prison; the other person is dead; all the mothers cry; everybody loses.

When Fernando's cousin was young, he was involved with a "kill crew" and is now serving a life sentence for murder. Fernando is sad that the cousin "will never hold a woman, never get

"You need to overlook what gang members have done. Support them. Help them change. Don't give up on them. There is no one solution."

a license and drive a car, never have a child..."

▶ "Pride and loyalty blind us." Because he, his son and his brother were members of the gang, it has been a family tradition. His son is 16 and in prison. Fernando believes his own reputation is the cause of his son's actions—he wanted to be like his father. Fernando and his brother have not seen much of each other—when one was in prison, the other was out. His nephew wanted to join the gang. Fernando brought him into the gang, but is now helping him to follow another path—attending college.

▶ Gangs are in every town in America. When Fernando moved to Walla Walla at age 38, his gang was already a presence.

▶ A gang-banger who has not served time in state prison defines rivals as members of other gangs. Prison gangs define rivals as members of other races.

Youth (CCY) and Commitment to Community (C2C).

Ten years ago, the City of Milton-Freewater passed a levy that supported three additional police officers for community policing and implementation of the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) curriculum. Cost was approximately \$120,000 per officer. When the levy expired, the city could no longer afford the program. Reacting to the recent increase in gang activity, Milton-Freewater residents implemented neighborhood watch initiatives as strategies for intervention and violence suppression.

SCHOOLS

In addition to safety issues, gang activity creates a number of challenges for school districts. Gang members' lower academic achievement affects districts' Adequate Yearly Progress standings and compliance with the No Child Left Behind mandates. Media coverage of gang-related activity affects the schools' image.

Gangs also affect Walla Walla Public School District's budget. Gang-related expenses include covering graffiti; providing infrastructure for increased security, including surveillance cameras at most of the schools; funding half of the salaries for two full-time resource officers; and increasing program options to meet students' needs.

School district policies and

procedures minimize gang presence and problems in their student bodies. These include teacher training, parent involvement, establishing expectations and codes of discipline for students, involving parents, and providing activities.

The stress of living in a neighborhood that has gang presence can be reduced when youths participate in activities they enjoy. Milton-Freewater School District has found that offering foosball, air hockey and intramural sports encourages student engagement and provide opportunities for school staff to spend recreational time with students.

Roles of law enforcement and the justice system

LAW ENFORCEMENT

According to local police, the gangs in this region have been manageable compared to other Eastern Washington jurisdictions, but they are becoming more confrontational with law enforcement officers. Fear of the police seems to be lessening.

Law enforcement and school personnel recently formed a Walla Walla Area Gang Task Force. The task force includes members from Walla Walla, College Place and Milton-Freewater. It is anticipated that Waitsburg, Prescott and Burbank will soon participate. They meet regularly, share information

Fast facts

- ▶ Gangs have a code of silence. It is a sign of weakness to ask for help.
- ▶ Members are compelled to act out—no disrespect goes unanswered.
- ▶ Members would have nothing to do without rivalry.
- ▶ Gangs are cohesive. The gang supersedes family.
- ▶ Gangs fill parental roles.

about gang members, and communicate with Tri-Cities agencies.

Each law enforcement jurisdiction in the region has officers to address gang activities. Officers make home visits, monitor hot spots (places where young people congregate and gangs go to recruit), report parole violations, and make field contacts. Local gang and drug units, both working at capacity, collaborate on investigations. Since each is a small agency, they often provide backup when numbers are needed.

Police are the enforcers of the law. Addressing specialized issues such as gangs is difficult for small law enforcement agencies to include in daily work.

Gang-related activity in College Place has increased through the years (e.g. graffiti, drug activity and fights at local retail businesses). In response, officers aggressively patrol and break up large gatherings. College Place has been creative in providing for police coverage and

Sandra's story

Sandra said mistakes she made in her life have affected her sons. Her parents had some problems when she was young, and Sandra's way of dealing with them was to be out of the house. She met their father,

a gang member, when she was 15, and her first son was born the next year. She left the father (he was later deported) and raised the boys by herself. Drawn in by alcohol, she continued to party with the gang. She did her best to raise her children and wanted to steer them away from

gang activity. Though it was difficult to have her son leave home, she sent him to Jubilee Youth Ranch to find a different path. Having another son and daughters heightened her awareness for the need to change. She has made changes in her life. Bible studies have helped her.



Zero tolerance

How schools handle gangs

It can be difficult to identify gang members. Baggy clothing and dark colors are vague identifiers. To be proactive in detecting gang presence and to avoid unnecessary discipline referrals, **Columbia High School** annually trains its education staff to identify gang members. The district limits open enrollment.

New student protocol includes communicating extensively with the school that the individual is leaving and meeting with the family to be sure the prospective student and family understand school expectations. A gang member may enroll only if school personnel determine that the incoming individual has a strong support network. When Columbia School District expels a gang member, staff uses an exit interview as an opportunity to learn more about gangs.

Milton-Freewater School District also reports being proactive by promoting early recognition and zero tolerance for gang involvement. In the past six years, gang-influenced activity at Milton-Freewater schools has decreased. Annual staff training enables all teachers to be alert to early

signs of gang involvement, to support students, and to provide early intervention if gang involvement is suspected.

Lincoln Alternative High School's policy is also zero tolerance. Gang members and affiliates are expected to "leave the colors at the curb." Gang members stress the word respect, so the principal emphasizes that word when explaining expectations and providing positive reinforcement. The school suspends students for serious infractions only. Staff is trained to recognize and address behaviors related to ACEs (adverse childhood experiences) to help keep students in school.

If **Walla Walla Public School** officials suspect gang involvement, the student's family is contacted immediately. The effectiveness of this effort is limited when, due to a variety of reasons, the youth who is a gang member is the person in charge at home.

The school system is an avenue for building mutual respect between individuals and cultures. Cultural awareness and acceptance is increasing with the dual-language programs offered at three of Walla Walla's elementary schools. Special sessions that focus on character-building are offered throughout the district.

officer safety. They use scanner communication, quick backup response and a reserve officer program.

The Walla Walla County Sheriff communicates regularly with the manager of the Walla Walla County Housing Authority Farm Labor Homes. Farm Labor Homes will evict the individual or, in certain circumstances, the entire family if there is clear evidence that a gang member or affiliate is living in the community.

Depending on the jurisdiction, parents may be legally and financially responsible for their children.

Holding parents accountable for juveniles' offenses is difficult. Police may choose to cite youths and release them to their parents, but that seems to have minimal influence on changing their behavior. For a variety of reasons, children are in charge at home.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

The Walla Walla County Prosecutor handles approximately 250 juvenile cases annually. Of that number, an estimated 50 cases (20 percent) deal with gang activity. Gang members as young as 8 years old have been involved.

When a 16- or 17-year-old commits certain violent crimes (10 are specified in Washington State code), he or she will be charged as an adult. Offenders younger than 16 years of age must have a court hearing at which the judge determines whether they should be tried as adults. During the hearing, several factors are considered: mental health, criminal history, and/or whether the youth and family are connecting to local resources to make positive changes. The same factors are considered during sentencing.

According to the deputy prosecuting attorney, adult penalties are



FINDING

stronger deterrents than those for juveniles. Juvenile penalties end when the offender turns 18 or 21, depending on the crime.

It is common practice for the Walla Walla County Prosecutor to seek tougher sentences for gang-related activity. Gang members often seek a plea bargain before pleading guilty.

One of the challenges when prosecuting gang cases is that the victims of the criminal activity are often also gang members. Special sensitivity is required since some of those victims may become suspects in future criminal cases.

The gang mentality is for members to take care of justice themselves. That can make the courtroom a volatile setting. A gang-related case in Franklin County is costing hundreds of thousands of taxpayers' dollars because of additional security needs.

Once a person is found guilty, the judge must adhere to specific sentencing rules. Judicial discretion in sentencing is very limited. The State Attorney General is working with the state legislature to update the laws. Proposed revisions enhance punishments for gang-related activities, identify graffiti as a class C felony, impose stiffer sentences if guns are used in the criminal activity, and allow injunctions for areas such as schools and fairgrounds so

that law enforcement could intervene when three or more suspected gang members convene in the zone. The legislation also includes funding for prevention programs.

Milton-Freewater city codes limit police action. If stiffer penalties in Washington are imposed, there is a concern that there may be an exodus of gang members from Washington to Milton-Freewater.

Roles of the corrections and detention departments

JUVENILE JUSTICE CENTER

The Walla Walla County Juvenile Justice Center (JJC) works with young people between the ages of 8 and 18. JJC has rarely worked with children as young as 10. Eight to 10 percent of the youths in all of JJC's programs and 20 to 30 percent of those held in detention are gang-involved—of that group, 60 to 75 percent are Hispanic and 22 to 34 percent are Caucasian.

Juvenile offenders enter the system with a myriad of risk factors, including mental health issues; alcohol and other drug problems; a history of victimization or physical or sexual abuse, parental neglect, or antisocial behavior; negative peer exposure; and community risk factors.

Education is JJC's strongest tool. Full-time engagement in academic

Diego's story

Diego was born in Mexico City and moved to Vista Hermosa when he was five or six years old. He was very involved with sports in Prescott.

When he moved to Walla Walla in the sixth grade, he heard about gangs and saw tagging on a wall. As he grew older, he learned more. Gang members at Wa-Hi are easy to spot because they gather at lunch and meet older gang members at the transit station after school.

The gang did not approach him to join; he was attracted by the smoking, drinking and opportunity to make money. He began smoking, drinking and skipping school with them.

His grades were poor, and he did not show respect for his mother. She and police officers Saul Reyna and Kevin Bayne told him and his brother that they were taking the wrong path, but he did not listen.

Last summer he joined the gang for protection and because he did not want people to tell him what to do. He did not escape the latter; he discovered that the older gang members tell the younger ones what to do and who to fight.

His mother enrolled him at Jubilee Youth Ranch, hoping to change his life.

programs is an indicator for future success. The detention center classroom provides 220 days of classroom time each year. Pathways Back Day Reporting Program, offered in partnership with Educational Service District No. 123, is a 220-day program for out-of-custody youth. Lincoln Alternative High School is another option.

Aggression-replacement training (ART) is available to youth at JJC three times each year. ART is a cognitive behavioral program that uses skill streaming, moral reasoning training and anger control skills with gang-involved youth.

The BECCA Law was instituted in Washington State in the 1990s to provide legal options for adolescents and teens. It has helped to reduce the number of youths sent to state institutions.

There are three elements to this legal support mechanism: an at-risk youth petition, a truancy petition, and a child in need of services (CHINS) petition. CHINS enables a child to request help. Locally, CHINS is used when JJC and the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) work with a youth requesting to legally live with another guardian.

Families seeking help are directed to voluntary programs at Children's Home Society or to Division of Children and Family Services for Family Reconciliation Services (FRS). The juvenile court cannot mandate parent participation in programs through juvenile offender laws.

WASHINGTON STATE PENITENTIARY

According to Washington State Department of Corrections statistics, approximately 18,000 offenders are serving time under supervision or in prison. The peak age for criminal activity is between 16 and 27.

The average age of offenders housed with the Department of Corrections is 36.9 years. Though the average sentence is two years, the average age is increasing each year. Of the prison population, 4,893 are members of a gang (about 27 percent). Forty-four female prisoners and 30 of the 68 juvenile inmates in Washington State's Department of Corrections system are gang members.

The prison population tends to divide into racial groups. Most disturbances are racially motivated. As a result, the prison culture can influence an offender to change gang affiliation while incarcerated. The Norteños and Sureños are exceptions. They remain rivals even though they have similar racial dynamics.

Unlike other states, Washington does not house each gang in a different facility. Washington State Penitentiary is dedicated to providing an environment that helps inmates learn to get along. A reward and consequence system has reduced violent behavior by 40 percent in the past year.

According to prison officials, education is an integral part of an inmate's support system at the penitentiary. Personalized support,

including spiritual outreach and vocational and technical (vo-tech) skill building, is offered.

Correction facilities are not rehabilitation facilities. When released from prison, gang members are older, wiser and ready for action. By law, the offender must be released to the county of his or her first conviction. If there are no resources for them there, an exception must be granted through the prison and Community Corrections Department (CCD). Most are released to a halfway house for a probationary period. Department of Corrections' probation oversight is minimal; therefore, probation does not serve as a deterrent from reoffending. The Department of Corrections does not have recidivism statistics for gang members.

"I thought I was cool. I never went home—I thought my friends were family."

—Former gang member

Upon release from the halfway house, gang members usually prefer to be near family and relocate to their community of residence prior to incarceration. They often return to the gang with which they were involved prior to incarceration, especially if they have a gang tattoo. If a released offender wants to opt out of the gang with which he or she was affiliated prior to incarceration, he or she will move to another location.

What went wrong

Conversations with members and members' families indicated that an individual's circumstances may lead to his or her involvement with gangs. Some of

those mentioned include:

- ▶ An attraction to partying.
- ▶ The desire to escape problems at home.
- ▶ The desire to escape unwanted parental authority.
- ▶ Following the example of a parent or sibling who is involved with a gang.

- ▶ A lack of a father figure in the home.
- ▶ Too much free, unsupervised time.
- ▶ The need for protection.
- ▶ A lack of self-esteem, purpose and vision for the future.
- ▶ The desire to belong and be loved.
- ▶ Peer pressure.

PERSPECTIVES

OF MEMBERS AND FAMILIES

Personal stories about current and former gang members and their families are sprinkled throughout this report and offer unique insights about why individuals join and remain in gangs and the effects on their own lives and the lives of their families. (Note: to protect privacy, only first names are used.)

AGUSTIN'S STORY

Agustin is a finish carpenter for a local cabinet company and the father of two girls. He has lived in Walla Walla for more than 20 years. His parents were both in the home when he was growing up but were usually at work when he got home from school. It was natural for him to spend time with his friends. They grew tired of being bullied by another group and, at the suggestion of one of the friends who had lived in California, they formed a gang for protection. Females who associated with this gang formed their own gang, the Lady Wickeds. The girls partied with the gang and were spectators rather than being directly involved in the criminal activity.

The gang caused "mischief," and from 1992 to 1994, Agustin "just went with the flow" to be accepted and to belong. "Kids do not realize the extent of the trouble they can get into," he says.

First, it seemed cool to be part of the group, but Agustin's bad choices resulted in a jail sentence.

While he was in jail and after his release, a friend's non-judgmental support (counseling and just talking) played a big role in his later decisions. Because he came to realize that continued gang participation would lead to his death or a prison sentence, he decided to leave the gang. The gang considered him a valuable resource and pressured him to stay. But with support and a place to belong and feel safe, he was able to change his life.

"Kids do not realize the extent of the trouble they can get into."

MOM AND DAD'S STORY

Mom and Dad are not affiliated with a gang and are unsure why their sons have chosen to join the 18th Street Gang. The sons have been active members for at least five years.

Both parents have worked since their sons were babies. They have known their sons' friends and the friends' parents since grade school. When the children were young, the family did things together. That changed when the boys turned 14 or 15 years old and entered Walla Walla High School. Their attitude and behavior changed. They began returning late from school. One night, all of the windows in their van were broken. At first, the sons denied involvement; however, they later admitted that they had been fighting against another group because of a girl. They also admitted that they were involved with a gang.

Dad has always been involved with the family, but he is dealing with serious health problems. Mom's work schedule has made it difficult to monitor their sons' school attendance and other activities. Mom and Dad sought help. Walla Walla High School's intervention specialist enrolled the sons in an after school program. The sons did not attend the program regularly. The parents tried to involve the boys in church and soccer, but the boys were uninterested. The Juvenile Justice Center (JJC) acquainted the parents with gang identifiers (e.g. tattoos, clothing and symbols on notebooks) and directed the family to some local resources.

At this time, the young men are not very active with the gang. One is obtaining his high school education through Pathways Back at JJC. The other son recently returned to Walla Walla High School after working with Pathways Back for more than a year. When he first attended Walla Walla High School, he did not have discipline problems but, due to the

power that he has earned with the gang, the school is concerned that his re-enrollment will ignite gang issues. School officials are working closely with JJC to keep him in school.

The family worries about safety. Gang activity seems to worsen daily. Their property has been vandalized a number of times, and they have had to install video security cameras. Mom and Dad have told their oldest son that he will have to move out if the harmful activity continues. That threat seems to have had a positive effect on his behavior.

Mom believes that her sons will leave the gang someday. She does not know when, however, because they are afraid of being hurt.

JORGE'S STORY

Jorge's parents divorced when he was very young. His mother remarried while he was in elementary school, and the family moved from Toppenish to Walla Walla. His stepfather was a good role model and a friend, but when the parents started their new family, things changed. Jorge's stepfather was working extra hours to support the family, and his mother worked and was involved with caring for the small children. Jorge felt that he needed to find his own identity and to prove himself. He got into trouble and was expelled from school.

He attended a small alternative school where he met "wannabes" who later became full-fledged gang members. He changed from doing things with his old friends to hanging

The family worries about safety. Gang activity seems to worsen daily. They have had to install video security cameras.

out with others who were skipping school, abusing substances, and were feared and respected (an image that he wanted).

During one school year when he was living with his father in another community, local gangs formed. When he returned to Walla Walla, he found that friends had become enemies. The gang he was associating with was recruiting his best friend. When asked to join, the friend declined. Jorge has never asked why he declined, but thinks his interest may just have been a phase and that he had the sense to realize it was not a good long-term choice. The gang later asked Jorge to join when his friend was not present, and he felt pressured. "I wish I'd had enough sense to say no, too," he says. Most of the time being in the gang seemed good—drinking, having strength in numbers, feeling respected. But the gang was not always there. Those were fearful times.

Being arrested precipitated Jorge's decision to change. He had graduated from high school and was working. People in his life supported him. His uncle was his mentor; his father encouraged him to return to school. He moved to Yakima to avoid his gang and enrolled in community college. There he met members of other gangs and realized he could like them, instead of hating them simply because they wore different colors.

"Positive role models mean the world," he says. "What I'm doing now is being that support to someone who does not have it—being a friend, listening, giving a little guidance." Jorge helps others understand that current actions affect later options. For example, a felony conviction can exclude a person from certain jobs.

FINDING

Community resources

BUILDING TRUST

In 1991, when gang activity became a problem in Walla Walla, a community activist began his street ministry, because “everyone [was] talking about the gangs, but no one [was] talking with them.” As gang activity increased and gang members were sentenced to jail or prison time, he began to include the county jail and the penitentiary in his one-on-one outreach.

According to the activist, when young gang members are alone, they are scared and trying to determine what to do with their lives. It is hard for them to have a sense of future. Many have grown up in an environment without structure or boundaries. Most cannot relate to the world around them and feel disconnected.

Each human being has basic needs: to be respected, to make choices, and to have a place to belong. Gangs provide a place to belong. They are only bad when they become violent. Behaviors can change when individuals band together. Bad behavior is the result of anger, pain and feeling alienated. It is human to retaliate when wounded, and alcohol and drugs may exacerbate

the situation.

Dartmouth Medical School of Research reported in the 1990s that youth need two things: a healthy and emotionally deep connection with an adult and a source of meaning, such as a moral code or religious faith.

Anecdotal evidence shows that a large portion of Walla Walla High School’s student population feels disenfranchised.

CURRENT COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

A number of programs in the region focus on helping individuals succeed and on strengthening the family unit.

Commitment to Community.

Commitment to Community (C2C) was formed to build a healthier community, one neighborhood at a time. Using a holistic approach and focusing on long-term change, C2C builds neighborhoods one person or one family at a time. To discourage children from joining gangs, the effort focuses on building loving relationships with families in the neighborhood. C2C provides consistently safe gathering places with positive neighbor interactions in which the neighbors are told and are shown that they are valuable.

Programs are one of the structures used to get to know the neighbors. C2C offers after-school and seasonal programs in collaboration with other organizations—a homework club, indoor soccer, and activities for elementary-aged children. Success is not measured by the number of neighbors attending, but rather the quality of interactions among neighbors who are enthusiastically involved in a program or neighborhood activity on a regular basis.

Community Center for Youth. Community Center for Youth (CCY)

“Every kid that is deterred from joining a gang helps in so many ways that can’t be measured monetarily.”

—Local business person

provides outreach and support to youth between ages 12 and 18. CCY promotes life skills and social skills while helping teens develop respectful relationships with their peers, staff, volunteers and the community. This is achieved through activities that pique youth interest (such as sports, games, music and art) and by providing a lounge where youth can comfortably gather and feel safe.

CCY offers tutoring, social activities, and skill-building opportunities each week. A bicycle repair shop and bakery program provide vocational training for youth and will serve as a source of income for CCY. The Boy’s Council focuses on one-on-one outreach to young gang members or those who are at risk of becoming gang members. CCY is dedicated to increasing communitywide gang awareness.

Walla Walla Police Department statistics indicate that CCY programs and activities have a positive effect upon the community. Police



Chris's story

Chris has lived in Walla Walla for four years. He grew up in San Francisco, living in low-income housing in neighborhoods where drugs, alcohol and shootings were commonplace. When he was in the sixth grade, he joined a gang with at least 30 members who shared his Samoan heritage.

"I thought I was cool," he says. "I never went home—I thought my friends were family."

Chris served a year in juvenile detention. The day he was released, when he was 14, he saw his twin brother. The next day his twin was killed in a drive-by shooting. In 2000, he was with two friends and watched as they robbed two victims at a bus stop. He ran from the scene, but was caught and sentenced to two years.

He realized that his behavior—hurting people, purse snatching, taking money and apparel from students as they left school—was not good, that he did not

have a life, that being part of a gang was not worth the risks, and that he wanted to change. Friends helped him relocate to Walla Walla. He is seeking his GED and starting a family.

He believes that if he had stayed in California, he might not be alive today. Though family members ask him to visit, he does not because he is concerned that he would return to old behaviors—no matter how long he is gone, someone who does not like him would be waiting for him.

department data shows an 83.1 percent reduction in the number of contacts between police and 30 core participants after consistent CCY participation.

Friends of Children of Walla Walla. Friends of Children of Walla Walla is a local mentoring program focused on building healthy one-on-one relationships between adults and children. Their working premise is that safe, consistent interactions will have a positive impact on children, families, volunteers and the community.

In Friends' community-based program, adults commit to mentoring one child for one hour each week for one year. A school-based program in College Place brings mentors and young people together on the school grounds during lunchtime or for afternoon programs.

Juntos. Juntos (Spanish for "together") is a group of men organized to provide young people with an alternative to gang membership. To reduce young people's need for what gangs offer, Juntos creates an environment in which young people do not have to prove anything and can be themselves; can be encouraged (one-on-one and in groups) to discover their own potential; can receive positive reinforcement; and can be challenged to be their best.

Juntos members also discourage gang participation by explaining what being in a gang really means to gang members and those around them.

Jubilee Youth Ranch. Another resource for at-risk youth is Jubilee Youth Ranch. This multifaceted residential program for young men provides support in five essential areas:

- ▶ Academic education—the fully-certified private school provides a solid base upon which to build self-esteem, self-improvement and employability.
- ▶ Life-skills development assists youth in making positive choices.
- ▶ Quality relationships and positive mentorships.
- ▶ Vocational skill-building opportunities to increase future employability.
- ▶ Healthy beliefs and a strong value system.

The 32 staff members are role models who have a healthy belief system and emphasize honesty, self-control, integrity, accountability and forgiveness. Some staff members live on campus, providing around-the-clock supervision and creating a supportive community. Jubilee is in an isolated location where students are not likely to feel vulnerable or need protection from dangers that they have faced elsewhere.

The longer a student stays at Jubilee, the greater is his success when transitioning back into his community. Some elect to move to a new community so that they are less likely to revert to old habits and lifestyles.

Similar schools for young women are located in Vancouver, Wash.; Montana; and Utah.

Walla Walla Parks and Recreation Department. The Parks and Recreation Department is the largest non-school-based program in Walla Walla. Paid staff and hundreds of volunteers run year-round programs.

Programs cited as effective alternatives to gang participation include:

- ▶ Sports—soccer, flag football, swim team, track camps, etc.
- ▶ Visual arts at the Carnegie Arts building.
- ▶ Swimming lessons at the Whitman College pool.
- ▶ Events such as the father-daughter ball and mother-son bowling.
- ▶ Jefferson Park pool for those ages 10 and under.

Fees for some activities are charged on a sliding scale. The city has a scholarship fund so that no one is denied participation for inability to pay.

UPlay, a free summer recreation

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program for children 7 to 12 years old, is available five hours a day, five days a week during the summer months. In some cases, staff members are able to work individually with participants. The department also serves about 20,000 free meals during the summer, which continues a year-round USDA-reimbursed program available through school.

Trilogy. Trilogy is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to help children stay clean and sober. Free services provided by Trilogy include alcohol and drug intervention, education and recovery support groups, referrals to intervention specialists and treatment programs, weekly family support groups and community education events.

Currently, Trilogy provides youth support groups at the Walla Walla County Juvenile Justice Center and facilitates a parent support group. The focus of these groups is to validate the struggles of alcohol and drug addiction and to provide a circle of support and understanding to strengthen relationships between recovering youths and their caretakers.

Children's Home Society of Washington. The mission of the Children's Home Society of Washington (CHSW) is to develop healthy children, create strong families, build engaged communities, and speak and advocate for children. The organization takes a comprehensive approach to providing services—all CHSW clients benefit from the network of services available. Offerings include family enrichment, prevention and early-intervention programs, support groups, mentoring, and specialized programs such as after-school homework clubs offered in partnership with C2C.

A summer recreation program offered at Farm Labor Homes provides a safe environment for children while their parents are working,

prevents students' loss of academic skills during the summer months, and includes an outreach component for parents.

Speakers' suggestions for prevention

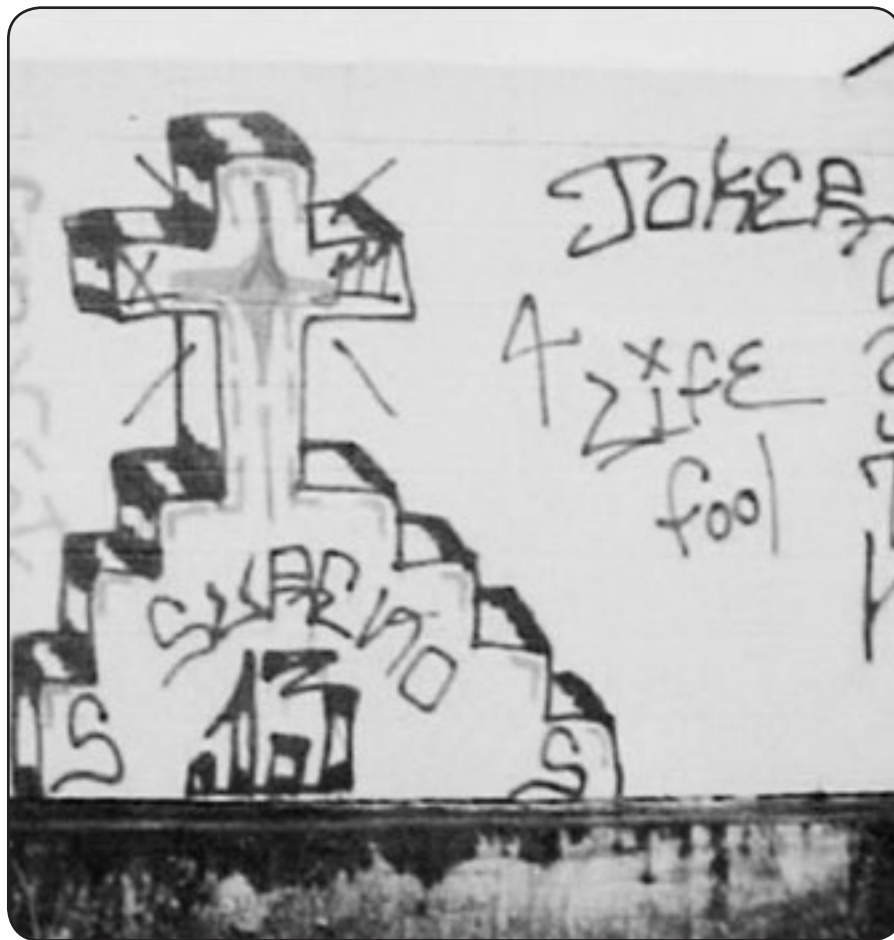
Each speaker offered ideas—some general, some specific—for preventing gang membership. Most of the speakers favored a balance of prevention, intervention and suppression when dealing with gangs.

Presenters stated that effective prevention starts early in a child's life. Adults must be willing to talk to youth about the consequences of criminal and gang activity. To be convinced, young people need to hear that gangs are bad from parents, siblings, schools and police.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

► Citing the effectiveness of the D.A.R.E. program, speakers suggested that awareness programs be offered to grade-schoolers so that they can understand the realities of gangs. "Stranger Danger" discussions could incorporate gang awareness. Police and Washington State Penitentiary staff could help increase community awareness through schools, community agencies, and special events. Law enforcement may also be involved with programs such as G.R.E.A.T.

► The job of law enforcement is primarily enforcement and suppression. Community members can collaborate with police and schools to help with prevention by focusing resources on strengthening families and neighborhoods. It was suggested that a separate entity involved solely with prevention is needed. Such a





Angel's story

Angel, now 14, has always been aware of gangs because his mother associated with members. He smoked and drank with gang members every day and, at age 12, joined the gang. He broke the

law "a lot" and spent time in detention. Though his mother tried to dissuade him from gang activity, he continued. She learned about Jubilee Youth Ranch and arranged for him to enroll so that he could change. He is now focused on finishing the school year.

group may be able to obtain resources, both financial and labor, to support prevention and intervention programs.

- ▶ Residents should actively address crime by covering graffiti as soon as possible and by reporting suspicious activity and crimes in progress.
- ▶ Several speakers suggested that laws should hold gang members accountable for their actions.

FAMILIES AND PARENTING

- ▶ Even gang members say, "I don't want my kids/siblings to join the gang." Parents and family members are most effective at convincing children to make good choices. JJC staff suggested that Functional Family Therapy, a short, evidenced-based, practical program, may be

useful to families.

- ▶ One mother said she welcomes opportunities to meet with and to learn from other parents.
- ▶ Families should be educated about gang identifiers, in order to be more alert to the signs of gang involvement.
- ▶ Parents need to learn to communicate effectively with teenagers and to deal with anger.
- ▶ It would be helpful if businesses better understood the impact of gangs on the lives of their employees.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

- ▶ A number of speakers noted that safe, consistent relationships between adults and young people, either in groups or individually, are positive factors that can be substituted for the

more negative gang influence. The relationships fill voids with structure and caring and intervene at an individual level with at-risk, disruptive children.

- ▶ Mentors are adults who commit to active involvement in at least one young person's life—listening nonjudgmentally, providing unconditional love, possessing fearless concern and acting on it (e.g., telling youths that their behavior is unacceptable), and helping them find direction.
- ▶ One speaker said that his life changed because of education, and that educators can change all lives by honestly caring, offering unconditional love, challenging the student, and doing what is promised.

- ▶ Provide consistently safe gathering places that youth can call their own. School programs and activities and community organizations provide options.
- ▶ Identify and invest in families who are struggling and in individuals with risk tendencies.

- ▶ Respect and protect elements of Latino and Mexican cultures and encourage individuals in those cultural communities to see the benefits of the larger social environment.

DRESS CODE

Two young gang members commented that having schools require students to dress in solid, non-gang colors would be positive. One felt that, even before he joined a gang, teachers viewed him as a gangster because of his dress and would not help him.

ECONOMICS

Job creation and job training for current and future generations are crucial—someone who is legitimately employed may not be inclined to fight the system because he or she is a part of that system.

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CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions express the value judgments of the Study Committee and are based on the findings.

1 Social groups of three or more people are not new. Some, such as athletic teams, can positively affect the community. Others, defined as criminal street gangs by RCW 9.94A.030, engage in anti-social behaviors and criminal activity and negatively affect the community.

2 Gang activity is cyclical and is currently increasing.

3 Local gangs are influenced by other groups involved with crime, especially drug trafficking.

4 Gang activity infects the whole region and affects all aspects of a community. It is destructive of social values, individual well-being and public health. It compromises limited resources: finances, property, family structure and emotional health. Currently, local gang activity includes drug trafficking and substance abuse, vandalism, graffiti, vehicle prowls, theft, burglary, arms dealing, assault, sexual assault and witness intimidation.

5 Gangs can affect school safety and create additional expense for school districts.

6 Exclusion and alienation (within schools and the general community) can push young people toward gang membership. The need for belonging, respect, status and protection causes people to join gangs.

7 Strength of family, neighborhood, education and economic status are critical factors influencing gang membership. Having positive, mature role models reduces the risk of a young person joining a gang.

- 8 The lack of family-wage jobs and family-friendly job schedules often affects the ability of parents to nurture their family.
- 9 More opportunity for positive social group participation, such as involvement in sports, academics, and service organizations, can decrease gang involvement.
- 10 Finding ways for our community resources and structures to be more inclusive of all families in the area may help prevent gang membership.
- 11 Bilingual and bicultural resources will encourage family involvement with the community and decrease marginalization.
- 12 Gang members can often be identified by tattoos, clothing, hand signs and colors. These outward signs are an important part of belonging to any group and validate individual members' sense of identity.
- 13 Gang members are not always easy to identify. Fashion changes; non-gang members may adopt gang identifiers; the assumption that someone is a gang member cannot be based conclusively upon attire or choice of friends.
- 14 It is important to have an effective system for early identification of children involved with gangs, in order to facilitate and promote timely intervention.
- 15 Prevention should start as early in a child's life as possible. It is "dollar wise" to intervene as early as possible.
- 16 Suppression of gang activities is important but is not a sufficient response to the problem of gang activity.
- 17 Suppression of gang activities uses a disproportionate amount of police resources. Law enforcement alone does not have the manpower, time or other resources to concentrate on gang crime.
- 18 More community awareness of gang-related issues and the procedures and limitations of law enforcement, justice and corrections is necessary in order to increase community support for prevention efforts.
- 19 Numerous resources are available in the community. How they work together is very important. Since there are still many gang members, there is a need for further improvement.
- 20 Resources available to families of gang members may not be well communicated and may not be adequate.
- 21 There can be a disconnect between existing resources and the populations most vulnerable to gang recruitment. We need to better align community resources with what family or individuals need. Networks of information and support from the neighborhood are needed for better access to resources.
- 22 Gang members' fear of law enforcement is lessening, and that makes law enforcement, justice and corrections work more dangerous.
- 23 Risk factors that lead to juvenile delinquency have been identified. These factors (multigenerational gang activity, for example) include both individual and community responsibilities.
- 24 Everyone benefits from positive, caring relationships, a broader community group and a moral code.
- 25 Stable relationships and high expectations are important in keeping young people safe from gangs. Organizations such as Friends, Community Center for Youth, Commitment to Community and Juntos are already successfully providing strong adult role modeling. We need more volunteers to commit to these efforts.
- 26 Overcoming stereotypes and fear is important in order to reach individuals.
- 27 Multigenerational gang activity is prevalent in our region and affects gang prevention, intervention and suppression.
- 28 Some gang members, once in, would like to be out. Some members in this region have been successful in leaving.
- 29 Some former members are not proud of what they did as gang members. Some want to be a part of prevention; their role in prevention is extremely valuable.
- 30 Learning the true meaning of respect is key to prosocial interactions between young people and authority figures and to young people's ability to develop self-respect.
- 31 It is important to communicate with potential, current and former members and their families to understand and respond effectively to gang activity.
- 32 Resources are available outside of our community that might be beneficial to gang prevention in our community.



Part of the 2010–11 Study Committee posed for a photo at the wrap-up session. From left, back row: José Quijano, Federico Diaz, Mark Higgins, Helo Oidjarv, Johnny Johnson, Sandy Trentham, Patricia Yenny, Marla Morrell, Bret Morrell, Susie Colombo, Damien Sinnott, and Jerry Owens; front row: Nancy Ball, Janie Millgard, Rick Griffin, Sarita McCaw, Cindy Godard-Gross, Leigh Hernandez.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are the Study Committee’s specific suggestions for change, based on the findings and conclusions. They are listed without prioritization.

1 A bicultural civic committee composed of representatives from existing community organizations and agencies involved with youth should be formed to focus specifically on gangs. They should educate the community about gangs to increase public awareness and public safety and to encourage public participation with prevention. This committee should continue the efforts established by the Reducing Gang Membership through Prevention Implementation Task Force.

2 A partnership of individuals, community organizations and, where appropriate, local government

should collaborate to:

Assist neighborhoods at high risk of gang activity to organize prevention activities:

- ✓ Residents should be educated about the connection between graffiti and other activities that can lead to gang action.

- ✓ A support group for parents of gang members and youth at risk of gang involvement should be organized to share ideas and to increase family resources for prevention.

Community agencies should be asked to facilitate this process.

- ✓ Neighborhood organizations should be established to continue educating children about the harm that comes from joining gangs.

Encourage independence and resilience in the children, youth and families in neighborhoods at greatest risk of gang involvement by:

- ✓ Promoting volunteerism in youth outreach and mentoring.

- ✓ Supporting the efforts of the Children’s Resiliency Initiative to communicate to families the key characteristics of resiliency.

- ✓ Encouraging the extension of child and youth programs and adult life skills training into the neighborhoods.

- ✓ Providing training for neighborhood conflict coaches and mediators who can work to deescalate tensions within the neighborhood.

3 Explore opportunities for mobilizing the medical profession to serve as a conduit to resources for parents of at-risk youth.

4 Walla Walla Community College, Blue Mountain Community College, and the local offices of the Employment Security Department should be encouraged to work with community agencies in developing employment opportunities for

at-risk youth. Any agency working with youth should be encouraged to develop viable employment and skill development opportunities.

5 Each community in the region should establish a teen center with its own facilities so that it is able to operate during hours appropriate for youth use.

6 Walla Walla's Safe Schools Committee and similar committees in the surrounding communities should conduct a thorough review of the schools' curricula and instruction targeted at skills that reinforce all-inclusive behaviors, conflict resolution, and community-building, stressing the importance of building those skills from kindergarten on.

7 Law enforcement officers should continue and possibly expand the use of home visits to meet with parents of students disciplined at school for gang activities.

8 The Juvenile Justice Center, schools and social service agencies should adopt parent empowerment models to help parents avoid gang risk factors.

9 The justice system should explore ways to be tougher on gang-related crimes.

10 To the extent appropriate, all law enforcement jurisdictions should be encouraged to designate a law enforcement officer who specializes in gang issues.

11 Explore specific needs, such as tattoo removal and relocation of members who want to leave a gang. Identify funding sources and implementation strategy.

Glossary

The following definitions were used throughout the study and in preparation of this report.

► **Affiliate:** A person who prefers, is friends with, or hangs out in general with a gang or its members. While not officially gang members, affiliates are considered by rival gangs to be members and are targeted as members if the opportunity arises.

► **Antisocial:** Hostile or harmful to organized society; marked by behavior deviating sharply from the social norm.

► **Being down (with the gang):** Showing dedication to the gang.

► **Crimed in:** Initiated into the gang by committing a crime.

► **Ethnic terminology:** Because there are multiple descriptors for each of the ethnic groups, the Study Committee has chosen to use the following in this report: Hispanic, African American and Caucasian.

► **Forced in:** An affiliate who has failed to commit to the gang but has been capitalizing on the benefits of the gang (reputation, parties, etc.) is beaten and forced into membership.

► **Forced out:** After the gang votes that the member is leaving dishonorably, he is beaten or killed. People who are forced out no longer have the support of the gang, and they are targeted as enemies at every opportunity by their former gang and by rival gangs.

► **Gang:** Any ongoing organization, association, or group of three or more persons, whether formal or informal, having a common name or common identifying sign or symbol, having as one of its primary activities the commission of criminal acts, and whose members or associates individually or collectively engage in or have engaged in a pattern of criminal street gang activity. (As

defined by RCW 9.94A.030.)

► **Jumped in or courted in:** Gang initiation by beating. In the 18th Street Gang, four members beat and kick the initiate for 18 seconds.

► **Jumped out or courted out:** Gang members vote whether a member may leave the gang honorably. The member endures another beating to be allowed to leave. In the 18th Street Gang, members now have to be "stabbed out." A member who has been jumped out no longer has the support of the gang, but also no longer has to commit crimes in the name of the gang. Rival gangs do not recognize this status and still target the individual as an enemy.

► **Locura:** Spanish word meaning "craziness."

► **Mad dogging:** Staring down or looking at a person in a manner meant to intimidate or disrespect. This activity causes many fights.

► **Moniker:** A nickname given by the gang to a member; usually reflects personality or physical characteristic.

► **Prosocial:** Tending to form cooperative and interdependent relationships with others of one's kind.

► **Sexed in:** In addition to being jumped in, this method is used to initiate females into the gang. This involves having sexual intercourse with numerous persons belonging to the gang during a single event. Females electing to join by being sexed in do not receive the same status as those being jumped in, and are viewed more as property of the gang.

► **Wannabe:** A person who is not in a gang but dresses and behaves as if he or she is. Use of this term by non-gang members reflects an inaccurate perception that the person poses no real threat.

► **Work:** Committing crimes. New members are assigned a mentor who teaches specialized skills. The newest members do the work because, if caught, young offenders go to "juvie" and a "life" sentence ends when they turn 21.

2010–2011

Study resource speakers

- ▶ Kevin Bayne, City of Walla Walla Police Department
- ▶ Saul Reyna, City of Walla Walla Police Department
- ▶ Mike Hammond, business owner
- ▶ Juliet Nelson, Providence St. Mary Medical Center
- ▶ Nabel Shawa, City of Walla Walla
- ▶ Linda Hall, City of Milton-Freewater
- ▶ Mark Higgins, Walla Walla Public Schools
- ▶ Kyle Miller, Columbia High School
- ▶ Bruce Neil, Central Middle School
- ▶ Jim Sporleder, Lincoln Alternative High School
- ▶ Scott Brashear, Walla Walla High School
- ▶ Scott Clayton, Milton-Freewater Police Department
- ▶ Bob Dutton, College Place Police

- Department
- ▶ Luke Watson, Walla Walla County Sheriff Department
- ▶ Joseph Golden, Walla Walla County Prosecutor's Office
- ▶ Michael Bates, Walla Walla County Juvenile Justice Center
- ▶ Norris Gregoire, Walla Walla County Juvenile Detention Center
- ▶ George Weise, Walla Walla County Juvenile Justice Center
- ▶ Steven Sinclair, Washington State Penitentiary
- ▶ Debbie O'Brien, Washington State Penitentiary
- ▶ Carla Schettler, Washington State Penitentiary
- ▶ Doug Barram
- ▶ Petra, mother of a gang member
- ▶ Dondi Cortinas, Walla Walla County Juvenile Justice Center
- ▶ Frank Martinez, Walla Walla County Juvenile Justice Center
- ▶ Agustin Herrera, Juntos
- ▶ Jorge Mancha, Juntos
- ▶ Chris Sailele, Juntos
- ▶ José Quijano, Juntos
- ▶ Michael Moses, City of Walla Walla Police Department
- ▶ Angel, Jubilee Youth Ranch student
- ▶ Diego, Jubilee Youth Ranch student
- ▶ Sandra, mother of a gang member

- ▶ Rick Griffith, Jubilee Youth Ranch
- ▶ Gary Lunden, Community Center for Youth
- ▶ Johnny Johnson, Community Center for Youth
- ▶ Cedric Johnson, Community Center for Youth
- ▶ Mark Brown, Friends of Children of Walla Walla
- ▶ Jovanna Centre, Friends of Children of Walla Walla
- ▶ Nicole McCauley, Friends of Children of Walla Walla
- ▶ Julia Leavitt, Commitment to Community
- ▶ Federico Diaz, Commitment to Community
- ▶ Kristi Wellington-Baker, Trilogy
- ▶ Lenna Buissink, Trilogy
- ▶ Meagan Anderson-Pira, Children's Home Society of Washington
- ▶ Stephanie Beigel, Children's Home Society of Washington
- ▶ Zenaida Guevara, Children's Home Society of Washington
- ▶ Mariela Rosas, Children's Home Society of Washington
- ▶ Keith Farrington, Whitman College Faculty
- ▶ Alex Kearns, Whitman College Student
- ▶ Harry Hansen, U.S. Marshal Service

Best practices and supplemental resources

Resource speakers and Study Committee members provided the following resources for supplemental information and model programs.

Studies and reports

- ▶ "Gangs & Guns in Rural Washington" (documentary)
video.kcts9.org/video/1784272361
- ▶ The United States Conference of

- Mayors Best Practices Center, "Best Practices of Community Policing in: Gang Intervention & Violence Prevention" (2006)
usmayors.org/bestpractices/community_policing_2006/gangBP_2006.pdf
- ▶ U.S. Department of Justice, National Gang Intelligence Center, "National Gang

- Threat Assessment" (2009)
www.justice.gov/ndic/pubs32/32146
- ▶ U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, "Best Practices to Address Community Gang Problems—OJJDP's Comprehensive Gang Model" (2007)
www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/222799.pdf
- ▶ U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, "Gang Prevention: An Overview of Research and Programs" (December 2010)
www.ojjdp.gov/publications/PubAbstract.asp?pubi=253165

► U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, "Gang Suppression and Intervention: Community Models—Research Summary" (October 1994)

www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles/gangcorr.pdf

► U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, "Gang Suppression and Intervention: Problem and Response—Research Summary" (October 1994)

www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles/gangprob.pdf

Articles

► Burch II, James H.; Chemers, Betty M., "A Comprehensive Response to America's Youth Gang Problem," U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Fact Sheet #40, (March 1997)

www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles/fs-9640.pdf

► Egly Jr., Arlen; Gleason, Debra K.; Howell, James C., "Modern-Day Youth Gangs," Juvenile Justice Bulletin (June 2002)

www.ncjrs.gov/html/ojjdp/jjbul2002_06_1/contents.html

► Finn-Aage, Esbensen, "Preventing Adolescent Gang Involvement," U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Juvenile Justice Bulletin (September 2000)

www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/182210.pdf

► Hoag, Christina, "Gang prevention program helps kids stay off the streets," Associated Press (Aug. 3, 2009)

www.policeone.com/community-policing/articles/1862052-Gang-prevention-program-helps-kids-stay-off-the-streets/

► Howell, James C.; Lynch, James P., "Youth Gangs in Schools," U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Juvenile Justice Bulletin, August 2000

www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/183015.pdf

► L.A. Times, "L.A. Gang Prevention Program Makes Progress but Lacks Oversight" (July 27, 2010)

latimesblogs.latimes.com/lanow/2010/07/la-gang-prevention.html

► Northwest Public Radio Archives, broadcast summaries for April 2011 "Living in Gangland" series and related articles

www.nwpr.org/07/Search/ArticleSearch.aspx?id=7473

► The Vancouver Sun, "T.A.G. Teens Against Gangs Video Contest Winners" (March 2011)

www.vancouversun.com/contests/tagcontest/contest.html

► U.S. Department of Education, "Federal Agencies Host National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention" (Oct. 5, 2010)

www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/federal-agencies-host-national-forum-youth-violence-prevention

► Walla Walla Union-Bulletin series, "Gangs, a Legacy of Violence" (June 13–19, 2010)

Websites

► About the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Comprehensive Gang Model

www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Comprehensive-Gang-Model/About

► City of Longmont, Colorado—Community Problem Solving, GRIP (Gang Response and Intervention Program)

www.ci.longmont.co.us/youth_services/problem_solving

► City of San Diego, California Commission on Gang Prevention & Intervention

www.sandiego.gov/gangcommission

► Faces of Prevention: Taking Our Neighborhoods Back

toltecmia.info/faces26

► G.R.E.A.T.—Prevents youth crime, violence and gang involvement

www.great-online.org

► Gang intervention and prevention programs in the Los Angeles Metropolitan Area

www.streetgangs.com/resources/programs

► Gang and violence prevention programs (including links for Washington State

programs)

www.mrsc.org/subjects/pubsafe/le/le-juvenile.aspx#Gang

► Los Angeles Police Department: "Jeopardy Program, Gang Prevention and Intervention"

www.lapdonline.org/for_your_family/content_basic_view/735

► Los Angeles Police Department: "Prevention, What You and Your Neighbors Can Do"

www.lapdonline.org/get_informed/content_basic_view/23475

► Nash County Sheriff's Department, City of Rocky Mount Police Department and United Way Tar River Region, North Carolina—Gang Resistance, Awareness, Suppression & Prevention Program

www.grasppforpeace.org

► National Gang Center Publications: "Comprehensive Approach to Gangs and Gang Prevention & Intervention"

www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Publications

► Northwest Public Radio Blog: April 2011 "Living In Gangland Series" radio broadcasts (most recent on top; first of series at the bottom of the blog page)

nwpublicmedia.typepad.com/nwpr_news

► Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Comprehensive Anti-Gang Initiative

www.ojjdp.gov/programs/antigang/index.html

► U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Youth Violence Prevention

www.ojp.usdoj.gov/programs/youthviolenceprevention.htm

► Washoe County School District, Nevada Gang Resistance Intervention Program (GRIP)

www.washoe.k12.nv.us/schools/safe-and-drug-free-schools/gang-resistance-intervention-program

► Yakima County Says No to Gangs

yakimacounty.saynotogangs.com/default.aspx

"I just went with the flow. Kids do not realize the extent of the trouble they can get into. First, it seems cool to be part of the group."

—Former gang member



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The mission of the Community Council is to foster a civic culture that inspires a citizen-driven, consensus-based, problem-solving process to prepare the greater Walla Walla area for future growth, change and challenges to enhance the quality of life for everyone. Community Council studies may be downloaded at www.wwcommunitycouncil.org.