

SAFEGUARDING YOUR CHILD FROM GANGS

FEBRUARY 2004

UPCOMING PARENT PROGRAMS

TRUE OR FALSE?

- Gangs generally do not enlist children under age 12.
False— It's becoming common for them to enlist elementary schoolchildren age 9 or younger.
- Gangs give children attention and status they may not get at home or elsewhere.
True—Gang members tend to come from homes where they get little attention.
- Parents can do little to keep their kids out of gangs.
False— Parents can make the difference by being involved in their children's lives.

For more information on GHCC or to become involved—contact John Werner at 703.810.2203 or via email—John.Werner@fcps.edu

The Greater Herndon Community Coalition (GHCC) will be sponsoring a Parent Program entitled How to Motivate the Unmotivated Student. This program will be held on Wednesday, March 24th at 7:00 pm at Herndon High School. Our guest will be Dr. Peter Spevak who is the Director for the Center for Applied Motivation.

Dr. Spevak writes that broadly speaking, under-achievers are individuals who do not consistently apply effort and are working far below their potential. Their problem is not ability, but attitude. By their actions, they deny that today impacts on tomorrow. Does your child exhibit any of the following attributes?

- lack the ability to produce within a time limit
- unable to start projects/homework, but loses interest?
- able to work while being supervised, but stops their efforts when the supervision stops?

Dr. Spevak is also the co-author of *Empowering Underachievers: How to Guide Failing Kids (8-18) to Personal Excellence* (New Horizon Press).

Please mark your calendars and pass the word to your neighbors and friends about our upcoming Parent Programs. We look forward to seeing you on March 24th at 7:00 pm at Herndon High School.

Do you have an idea for parent program? We are always looking for ideas for programs that would interest parents. Please send your ideas for programs to Lisa Lombardozi (llombo@sigkit.com) and we'll try to include them.



WHY ARE KIDS DRAWN TO GANGS?

The reasons why kids are drawn to gangs are complex and varied, but some reasons are —

- ♦ Status, Identity, Attention
- ♦ Money
- ♦ Drugs
- ♦ Protection
- ♦ Intimidation and/or Excitement
- ♦ Peer Pressure
- ♦ Lack of Knowledge

Your children need **good social skills** to deal with other people. Try to build self-confidence and respect for others. Encourage honest communication,

cooperation, and personal responsibility. Your children also need **a balance between love and discipline**. Spend time alone with them, plan family time, listen to your children and ask their opinions. Talk to them about ways to deal with pressure from friends.

Teach your children about the dangers of gangs. Do not allow them to dress in gang-style clothing. Get to know your child's friends and the friends' parents. Educate them at an early age. Stay informed in what is happening in your community.

The Greater Herndon Community Coalition is funded by the Safe and Drug Free Youth Section, through the Federal Safe and Drug Free Schools and Community Act.

HISTORY OF GANGS

Gangs have been around since the early 1800's and have moved from inner cities to "edge cities" and suburbs. Charles Dickens referred to Fagin's group of young boys roaming the streets of London in Oliver Twist. In Fairfax County a rise in gangs and gang activity began in the early 1990's and a Gang Coordination program began to develop.

Today, Fairfax County has a permanent unit of 12 people in their Gang Investigations Unit. They use School Resource Officers, Police Officers, and Crime Prevention Officers to help provide links to the community in their fight against gangs.

There are approximately 40—45 gangs active at any one time. The age range of gang members is 10—22 years of age, but children much younger can be influenced.

Gangs are prevalent in many communities. The largest gang in our area is MS13. MS has gangs in all 50 states and have become so big that they have divided into cliques. They began in El Salvador. The east coast is a major hub for this gang. Other gangs in our area are MOB, Latin Kings, Folknation, Peoplenation, Black Gangster Disciples, Cryps, Bloods, Tiny Rascal Gangsters, 18th Street Gang, Park Ave, Jokers, 187, Hill Boys and others.

*As a parent,
you have a lot
more power to
keep your
children from
joining a gang
than you may
think.*

WHAT ARE SOME GANG INDICATORS?

Clothing is a popular way for gang members to identify themselves. They use colors to indicate their allegiance to a particular gang. The color blue is usually seen in the form of a blue bandana. Other colors popular with gangs are red, gray, black, and white.

Tattoos are common. Each gang will have its own symbol and members usually have this tattooed on their body. **Pants leg up** is another popular way of showing gang allegiance.

Hand signs are a way of indicating your gang allegiance without saying anything. Hand signs can be a way of communicating challenges or

insults. Gang members can carry on an entire conversation with hand signs.

Graffiti is another indicator. There are two types of graffiti—Gang graffiti and Tagger graffiti. Gangs use graffiti to claim their area or "turf" and they usually use their gang name in the graffiti. Tagger graffiti is more artistic and communication is secondary to the artistic element. Not all Taggers are gang members.

Attitude is a big hint. A gang member can be aggressive and will not tolerate someone getting in his face.

OUR MISSION

Out of concern for the safety and well-being of all children in our community, members of the GHCC believe that we must unite our efforts to support all young people with regard to character issues that will help foster drug/alcohol prevention and violence prevention in the Greater Herndon Community.

WHO IS GHCC?

The Greater Herndon Community Coalition (GHCC) is a group of parents, teachers, and community members whose focus is to educate, inform, and take a leadership role in coordinating the Herndon High Pyramid schools and communities.

Would your community group or organization want to have a Drug & Alcohol presentation given to your group? The GHCC has two presenters who are Fairfax County Drug Awareness Presenters who will give a Drug & Alcohol

information session free of charge. They will show you what kids are using and drinking. They discuss ways to use any moment to open a dialogue with kids about risky behavior; indeed, there are "no ordinary moments." For more information, contact Mr. John Werner at 703.810.2203.



CONTACT INFORMATION

- ◆ Fairfax Gang Investigations Unit—703.246.4650
- ◆ Fairfax County Reston Police Station—703.478.0904
- ◆ Town of Herndon Police Non-Emergency—703.435.6846