

Group organized to keep city gang-free

By Janis Joseph
Emerald Reporter

They're known as Crips and Bloods, Hobbes, and Hell's Angels. However, there is a new Eugene group that just calls them gangs, and they have formed to prevent Eugene from becoming the next gang-infested town.

The Community Coalition for Gang Prevention was formed last February as a forum for minority issues which Lane County citizens felt were not being adequately addressed.

After several meetings, however, the scope of the coalition broadened to deal with the gang problem in general, said Jan Gund, media liaison for the group.

Although gang activity in Eugene has shown only embryonic signs of its existence, gangs have definitely established their presence, said Sgt. Rick Gilliam, Eugene police detective.

"It's just a matter of time," Gilliam said. "They're here (doing business), but they go back up to Portland."

Eugene is considered a prime target for gang activity because of the easy access to the town via I-5. The gangs in Portland

are growing by 50 members a month, Gund said.

Eugene is also a good target because of its reputation as the "meth capital," which coincides well with the production of a new drug called ice, the rock form of methamphetamine. Ice sells for approximately \$6,000 per ounce, which is an attractive incentive for gang members whose main source of income is drug sales, said Sgt. Gilliam.

In a meeting last Wednesday, the coalition discussed everything from how to roughly identify gang members to how to handle the growing incidents of gang-related graffiti.

The coalition is trying to stress education and prevention of a gang problem.

"We want to make contact with the high schools and get more young people involved," Gund said.

"Eugene seems to be doing most of the right things (to discourage gangs)," said EPD Capt. Jim Horton. "But we need to involve youth or we won't win. All cities that have a gang problem failed because it was the adults who tried to solve the problems."

Getting people interested and involved in gang prevention

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