



Jimmy Brown, Juvenile Court Counselor, reports to the over 150 people who met at King Facility September 23 on the role of the

justice system in dealing with youth and youth gangs.

Photo by Richard J. Brown

# Youth Gangs Task Force Holds Community Forum

by Dennis G. Payne

The Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods held the 1st Community Forum on Youth Gangs Problems in Portland on Wednesday, September 23rd, at the King Neighborhood Facility.

With a large banner stretched across the stage that read, "Gangs are only as strong as communities allow them to be", City Commissioner Dick Bogle opened the forum and proclaimed his faith in Portland's ability to overcome the threat of street gangs and offered a challenge to the citizens present. "We have a tradition in this city that we don't tolerate organized criminal activities and we don't tolerate gangs. And we are sending a message out tonight to these so-called gangs: We will not tolerate them in our city."

The community forum drew over 150 people, and they were presented speakers from the inner-Northeast area: Sharon McCormack, Area Crime Prevention Coordinator and Task Force Chairwoman; Charles Ford, board

member of the Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods; Officer Neil Crannell, a Portland police officer who specializes in gangs; Jimmy Brown, Juvenile Court Counselor from Multnomah County's Northeast office; Diane Feldt, Director of North Portland Youth Service Center; Larry Clayton, Diversion Counselor for Northeast (Urban League) Youth Service Center; Steve Hollingsworth, Portland Public Schools police officer; and Alcena Boozer, Director of Student Discipline for Portland Public Schools.

The basic theme repeated over and over at the forum was that without a unified effort, gang-related drug trafficking and violence will proliferate in Portland. Ms. Boozer stated in her remarks that, "Combating this problem brings to mind the analogy of a rope. Individually, the strands are weak; but when bound together, they are strong."

Portland Public Schools are attempting to get a jump on youth gang growth by educating staff members, students and parents. Ms. Boozer states: "We have been telling our students to say 'no' to drugs. Now, we're going to work just as hard so they can get an even more resounding 'no' to the invitation to join gangs."

The attraction for gangs to come to Portland is largely economics, the forum was told. Officer Crannell said: "They come here primarily to sell crack (cocaine). In Portland, they can get double or triple the money they get in L.A., where so much cocaine is available." In Portland, police have seen a growing increase in gang-related shootings, robberies, assaults and drug trafficking.

According to Police Bureau statistics, 19 gang-related crimes were reported in the city between May and June of this year. Gangs that have appeared locally in the past year may be affiliated with L.A.-based groups, police report.

The task force's main purpose in holding the forum was to bring to the public the work they have been doing since May and to let the public know that even though they have not formalized any plans to date to combat gang development in Portland, they have opened up inter-agency coordination and cooperation, and that individual agencies are actively working on programs to better serve the communities which have been impacted by gangs. Moreover, the task force is approaching the gang problem from a "city-wide" focus, identifying gangs from the Asian and White communities, as well as motorcycle clubs.

"We have only begun to move towards combating this problem in Portland," Ms. McCormack said. But the efforts of the task force have heightened the level of acknowledgement in Portland that we do have gangs and that we must be pro-active now to stop their spread.

The task force will continue to work on developing strategies for educating the communities and directing agencies resources towards proven approaches. Mayor Bud Clark's office has given the task force \$10,000 to come up with a "Portland plan to combat gangs", and the task force's work for the next several months will be in this direction.

Anyone wishing to volunteer to assist the task force may call the Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods office at 248-4575.

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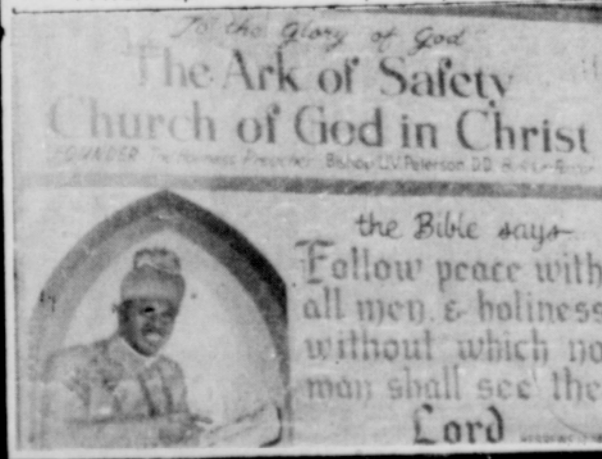


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BY Dr. Edward Ward



### Pain: A Dentist's Arch Enemy

Let us discuss tooth pain, a dentist's arch enemy. Tooth pain prevents the patient from establishing a nice, cordial relationship with the dentist. That's because a good percentage of the time when a patient seeks the aid of a dentist, the patient is already in pain. Therefore, everything the dentist does, in the patient's eyes, aggravates the patient's already painful condition.

Patients have come into my office with pain. I have asked, "How long have you had a problem with the tooth?" The patients have replied, "The tooth has been bothering me for several months, but it has been severe for several weeks." I don't care how you look at it, several months is a long time to suffer pain, especially when a visit to a dental office will result in almost immediate relief.

We dentists are so sensitive about the word "pain" that we practice dropping the word completely from our vocabulary. We replace the word "pain" with words like "discomforting tooth", "troubled tooth", "problem tooth" and "area of discomfort". Just to mention "hurting tooth" or "painful tooth" to the patient can result in the patient becoming more apprehensive about what is going to take place in the dental office.

Some patients go to the dental office with sweaty palms, queasy stomachs and other nervous symptoms anticipating that they will receive some pain.

However, after the appointment, which is usually a quiet, painless and very social occurrence, sometimes the patients react with joy that everything went so well. Sometimes, however, the patients react with depression because none of the presupposed or anticipated fears became a reality.

Today's dentists receive special training in pain and anxiety control. This training is geared towards making patients who have warranted and unwarranted fears more relaxed in the dental office environment and more receptive to dental therapy.

There are patients who don't seek relief from dental discomfort because of economic reasons. However, there are patients who have insurance coverage and there are patients with other means to afford dental therapy who still resist seeking the assistance of a dentist because of fear.

Do not wait until dental discomfort forces you to seek dental therapy. Long-term maintenance of good dental health, not dental crisis intervention (emergencies), is the goal of most dentists. However, sometimes it takes an emergency visit to get the patient into the office, at which time the dentist demonstrates concern and compassion for the patient. This may be the only opportunity the dentist may have to disprove some of the myths about dental therapy.

I have the greatest respect for man's fears and anxieties. However, let us put our fears and anxieties in their proper perspective, especially when they prevent us from seeking to gain better health.

Dr. Ward's office is located in downtown Portland: 610 SW Alder, Suite 1008, Portland, OR.

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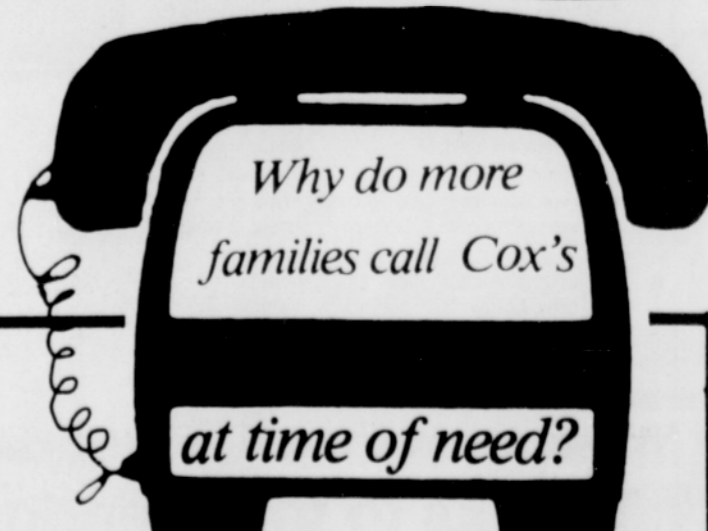
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