

# CONTRA COSTA TIMES

ContraCostaTimes.com

## Federal Glover: Local church leaders urged to address gang issues

By Federal Glover  
For the Contra Costa Times

Posted: 09/29/2010 03:02:41 PM PDT

Updated: 09/29/2010 03:02:41 PM PDT

According to recent Department of Justice reports, gangs are expanding across the country, moving out of their traditional bastions in the urban core and to the suburbs. That includes all our communities in East County. Geographic and political boundaries don't matter to them. They use the Internet's social networks and cell phones to communicate at lightning speed and sophistication.

Gang members are finding youngsters of all races and classes ripe for their recruiting pitches: to be cool, to have a good time, to be respected, to be somebody to fear, and to gain a sense of belonging.

What was once considered a problem in the inner city among the poor is now a problem that affects children from all economic strata.

Thank goodness East County's gang problem is not as severe as other parts of the Bay Area -- yet. If we do allow it to happen, the situation can deteriorate rapidly.

There is a chance for us to do something about the gang culture that is affecting the lives of our young people. I am sponsoring a Gang Summit on Oct. 9. It

will be 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Deer Valley High School in Antioch.

Here is a chance for the community to hear about the problem, to learn what the county is doing about it and what can be done by regular folk, parents and educators, clergy and community leaders, students and parents.

I am making a particular plea to the communities of faith to get involved

in this event.

Traditionally, faith leaders led the way for societal change. For awhile, the faith community shied away from the leadership roles they can provide. The pendulum is swinging back so that it is important to our moral leaders to step away from the pulpit and pews into public forums and the streets to turn their teachings into a way of life.

When I visit communities of faith across Contra Costa County, some have vibrant youth ministries while others struggle to find creative ways to draw young people into their membership. For those of us who are concerned about the plight of young people in our communities and want to do our part to offer alternatives, we have to ask the question: What are gangs doing to recruit young people and what makes their efforts so successful?

Gangs are dangerous and unhealthy. What gang members don't say to potential recruits is instead of good times, they might find hard time. They don't tell them about the harsh realities of violence, sexual promiscuity, drugs and crime. And once a youngster joins a gang, it is very difficult to get out. Many young people continue to endure gang life simply because they have nowhere else to go. This is exacerbated by the shrinking of cities' youth programs.



We focus on automating Marriott® Hotels' global invoice process. So they don't have to.

Learn more at [RealBusiness.com](http://RealBusiness.com)

Ready For Real Business 

Print Powered By 

# CONTRA COSTA TIMES

ContraCostaTimes.com

One local school administrator told me that she is seeing gang characteristics in kids as young as second and third grade. Children, she says, are imitating their older siblings.

[cccouny.us](http://cccouny.us).

Gang members hunt on the streets and playgrounds for their potential recruits. They seek young people who appear vulnerable, those who are being bullied, and even young people who exhibit confidence and talent. For the vulnerable and bullied, they offer safety and protection; for the confident and talented, they offer encouragement and support.

We know that gangs offer a false sense of protection, family, community, encouragement and support. Communities of faith can and have proven able to meet these needs for both young and old.

As gangs have been adept at using the new technology and working within the shifting social environment, congregations must also continue to evolve and embrace new ways to reach young people if they are to remain relevant in the community. This is what the Apostle Paul meant by becoming all things to all men in order to win them. To reach young people involved in gangs and offer them an alternative, we must be wise as serpents and as gentle as doves if we are going to help them find their true purpose in life.

I am making a special appeal to people of faith to join our civic leaders and our neighbors in tackling what is becoming one of the most pressing problems of our time -- the safety and future of our young people.

For more information on the Oct. 9 Gang Summit, go to [www.cccouny.us/supervisorglover](http://www.cccouny.us/supervisorglover).

**Federal Glover is the Contra Costa supervisor for District V. Reach him at [dist5@bos](mailto:dist5@bos).**

## PROTECT YOUR HOME

FREE

Home Security System!

\$850 Value!

CALL NOW and receive a FREE wireless remote control with **PANIC BUTTON!**



1-877-246-7519

Mon-Fri 9am - 10pm - Sat 9am-7pm - Sun 11am - 6pm EST



At no cost to you for parts and activation with only a \$99 installation fee and the purchase of alarm monitoring services. Terms & Conditions apply.

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™