

Gang summit aims to show East Contra Costa youths alternatives to street life

By Paul Bugarino
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ANTIOCH -- Gang activity often associated with urban areas has become a growing concern in East Contra Costa.

The region traditionally has been home to some gangs, but local leaders think that street gang activity has increased over the past decade, particularly from urban areas such as Richmond and Oakland, because of the area's rapid population growth.

"If we don't display a presence of nontolerance, it opens the door," Supervisor Federal Glover said.

Local police agencies believe gangs see East Contra Costa as fertile recruiting grounds, he added.

Helping troubled youngsters find positive alternatives to gang life will be an emphasis of Saturday's East County Gang Summit.

The free event, hosted by Glover, the East County Gang Task Force and other community groups, will be held at Deer Valley High School in Antioch.

Gangs are always going to be present, but getting

youths involved in local programs and work experience can help keep them out, said Johnny Rodriguez, director of nonprofit agency One Day At A Time.

The Brentwood-based group tries to steer at-risk youths in Antioch away from violence and academic problems through counseling and after-school programs.

Saturday's summit will include several workshops, including a seminar titled "Local Gangs 101," in which Antioch police will talk about the gangs that are active in the region and the signs that a youngster is involved in one.

Antioch High

Principal Louie Rocha said he does not see an overwhelming problem with gangs in the schools, but educators must always "keep their radars on" for indicators such as gang colors and graffiti.

"We have to stay educated and aware so we're on top of it. That's part of the goal of the gang summit," he said.

Students at Antioch's two comprehensive high schools, Antioch and Deer Valley, will begin wearing uniforms in January. Having students wear uniform colors will make it easier to identify outsiders near campus who are trying to cause trouble, Rocha said.

A panel of former gang members, some of whom have spent decades behind bars, will be at the event to discuss their experiences.

Glover formed the gang task force, which is made up of law enforcement, courts, probation, schools, city officials and youth service agencies, in 2005 to help prevent gang activity in the area.



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Saturday's summit will be the second hosted by Glover for the region. The first was held in Pittsburg in fall 2007.

Contact Paul Bugarino at 925-779-7164. Follow him at [Twitter.com/paulbugarino](https://twitter.com/paulbugarino).

IF YOU GO

What: 2010 East County Gang Summit

When: 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday

Where: Deer Valley High School, 4700 Lone Tree Way, Antioch.

More information: Call 925-427-8138. To register, go to Supervisor Federal Glover's website, www.cccounty.us/supervisorglover

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