

[print](#)

Gang summit to focus on prevention

by Justin Lafferty

10.07.10 - 09:29 am

In an effort to prevent an incipient local gang problem from growing into a major one, East County leaders will hold a summit this weekend, educating teens and parents on making smart choices.

District 5 Supervisor Federal Glover, along with members of local police departments and the District Attorney's office, are holding a gang summit – emphasizing the dangers of aligning with street gangs – on Saturday, Oct. 9 at 4 p.m. at Deer Valley High School. The event is free and open to the public

“There are alternatives to getting involved in gangs,” Glover said. “I think that throughout the nation, we start to see more as we continue to grow. It's like anything else. Some things come along with the growth.”

Glover said he wants to work with other agencies to prevent teens and young people from joining gangs, since they are the most susceptible to temptation. He last held a gang summit in 2007 in Pittsburg, but wanted to organize another one now for the fresh crop of high school students. While the earlier summit informed the public about gangs, the upcoming summit will focus on early prevention.

Ed Diokno, a policy analyst in Glover's office, said that while the problem isn't as bad as in other parts of the Bay Area, gang activity has increased over the past few years. While groups align themselves primarily with Norteños and Sureños, gangs affiliated with the Crips, Bloods and MS-13, as well as smaller groups, are also active in the area.

“The ties between local gangs and their affiliates are getting stronger with gangs from other areas,” he said. “We're focusing in on parents and students, and the main message we want to tell them is that there's help out here. There are choices you can make to address your needs without going into gangs, without resorting to criminal activities.”

The Antioch Police Department will lead a Gangs 101 class at the summit, teaching parents the early signs of gang recruitment and how to address them. The event also features presentations by other police departments and the District Attorney's office, showing the consequences of bad decisions. A panel of former gang members will talk with students and parents about the ugly realities of gang life. Glover said he is also working heavily with faith-based organizations for this year's event.

“Gangs themselves are only the symptoms of what's wrong in people's lives,” Diokno said. “It could be alienation, drug abuse; it could come from dysfunctional families. The need for protection, the need to belong – all these factors contribute.”

© thepress.net 2010