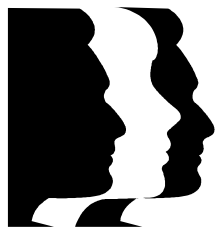


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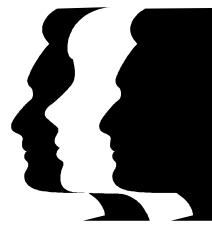


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Planning for Violence

Bradley County Sheriff's Dept. holds a Gang Awareness Seminar

by Jamie Ramirez

On Tuesday, June 22, 2010 a Gang Awareness Seminar was held at the Bradley County Judicial Complex off APD 40. This meeting was held by the Bradley County Sheriff's Department. Tennessee Gang Investigators Association Vice President, Deputy

Willie Espinoza, gave insightful information, not only on gangs in general but some of the gang activity that has been happening locally. He showed pictures of vandalized property with gang tags and explained what that means, whose tags they are, and where they are in this area. He also showed examples of everyday items

gang members might use to identify themselves with, footage of people in gangs, and some gang activities from YouTube and the media.

Sheriff Tim Gobble began the meeting with a "thank you" to those who attended. He said that it is important that as many people as possible go to meetings like this

so that they are aware that there is a gang presence here. He and Deputy Espinoza wanted the community to understand that Cleveland does not necessarily have a gang "problem" but we do have a gang presence. This is evident by gang tags on the sides of buildings, the underpasses of bridges, tagged traffic signs, and anywhere someone can reach with a spray paint can. It can also be seen on clothing gang members are wearing and symbols they're using. It was stressed that we can not keep "our heads in the sand." This isn't something that just happens in large cities like Los Angeles and New York, it's everywhere. However, even though there is a presence in Cleveland, the city and property owners have been doing a good job in cleaning up areas that have been spray painted.

The presentation was open to the public. In attendance were the media, church offi-

cials, teachers, guidance counselors and concerned parents. Those who were there asked questions so they could better understand the threat of what it means to have gangs in our area, and what they can do to both prevent our youth from joining gangs and how they help their community with the issue.

According to Deputy Espinoza, there are many visible signs that can help determine if someone is in a gang, such as color of clothing and accessories, hand gestures, paraphernalia, tattoos, scars, and even burns. A gang can be identified as "a group of three or more individuals who engage in criminal behavior, have a common identifier" such as one of the above mentioned, and they will "associate with each other on a continuous and/or regular basis." A gang member would be an individual who meets the above criteria along with

admitting they are in a gang. Other indications that someone might be in a gang are a "criminal record for participating in delinquent and/or criminal activity with a known gang member," has associations with known gang members, and/or has "been identified by a reliable informant or source as a gang member." They included some clues parents can use to tell if their kids are in a gang, such as staying out late for no reason, unusual desires for secrecy, consistently breaking rules and using gang style slang. These clues are generally the same no matter which gang is being addressed. Deputy Espinoza wanted to help the community understand the fact that, just because someone is wearing certain colors, it doesn't necessarily mean they're in a gang. But this, with other factors, can help us identify them.

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Domestic Violence Unchecked

by Ashley Murphy

Nashville police cleared from the books nearly 6,000 domestic violence cases in 2009, citing lack of cooperation by victims as the excuse for not pursuing arrests. However, state law makes clear that if there's other evidence or probable cause, lack of victim cooperation is not a valid excuse.

After investigating these

dramatic numbers, The Tennessean did an in depth report regarding domestic violence cases in Nashville and revealed that officers inside the domestic violence department themselves had concerns with the way some cases had been handled. In their investigation, the newspaper reported a case in which officers didn't even bother to log a report. The call to officers was regard-

ing a man's threat to stab his wife to death. Officers neglected to document the threat or take action, two days later, the wife was stabbed to death by her husband.

The newspaper also recruited help from two former Metro domestic violence detectives who reviewed several cases in question.

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