



Dateline:

Paid for by the City of Loveland

LOVELAND

City of Loveland

Gangs Exist Here: Community Awareness Needed

Gang: A group of three or more individuals with a common interest, bond, or activity, characterized by criminal or delinquent conduct, and who refer to themselves by a group name or designation.

Colorado Revised Statutes 19-1-103(52)

Loveland, consider this a wakeup call. Gangs are here.

The good news is that their activities and criminal actions are not of the highly violent nature depicted on prime time TV...yet.

But they are here and their numbers are growing. They total not a few dozen but hundreds. The Loveland Police Department (LPD) maintains files on about 300 positively-identified gang members. Some are gang members contacted by police while in town here and others are full-time Loveland residents. Without a doubt, there are more local gang members not yet officially recognized, noted or photographed.

Loveland's gang members aren't segregated into specific neighborhoods; the Surenos live here, the Nortenos there, the Juggalos beyond the highway, the Skinheads over yonder. They are integrated into neighborhoods and residential complexes throughout Loveland. Sometimes a single household, sometimes a pocket of several households. Perhaps a block or two from your house, around the corner or just across the street.

Stemming the tide of gang influx into Loveland and growth of membership from within the current population is a major goal of the Loveland Police Department. Community awareness and communication are necessary

ingredients for the department's success. The department's success is the community's success.

Joint effort

Effort by both the police and community is needed to prevent further establishment of gangs and creation of gang strongholds. Making Loveland an unfriendly environment for gangs will encourage them to move elsewhere. The fact is, very strong anti-gang efforts elsewhere in the region have resulted in some gang growth here.

Criminal activity by these gangs is taking place in Loveland—just ask the local cops. Some are gang-motivated crimes, others are simply crimes by gang members. Relatively little is highly violent, but drug activity, break-ins, fights and graffiti are frequent.

LPDs efforts

So what is LPD actually doing about it? Reversing gang growth isn't an easy task. LPD's Gang Unit reports more second-generation members—the children of some gang members here are growing up to be like mom and dad.

Significant efforts of awareness and identification are under way by LPD on the streets, in the schools, with public service organizations, and with the gang members and prospective gang members themselves.

The schools—high schools, middle schools and even elementary schools—have gang members. LPD emphasizes continued awareness by the school administrators and the students. Efforts for greater awareness by other groups such as service clubs, youth groups and churches are under way.

Contacts by LPD officers on the streets, in the parks and even at the homes of gang members have been stepped up. As one officer explained, the appearance and gestures of gang members out in public is the equivalent of wearing a sign that says "I'm a member of a criminal organization" and thereby



A Loveland police officer displays binders containing files on local gang members. Almost 300 individuals of a variety of races, ages, genders and neighborhoods have been identified as gang members. Information and photos are available to police in those binders.

merits contact by an officer.

These contacts enable police to build their files, gain information about gang activities, note their residences, where they gather, their monikers, and of course, let the gang members know of constant police interest. The contacts often include taking photos of the members with their specific clothing, piercings and tattoos. Not long ago, a photo of a gang member wearing a customized hat resulted in an arrest for multiple graffiti violations.

Community efforts

What can citizens do? Be aware and don't hesitate to call the police. If obvious gang members are gathering or loitering, call LPD at 667-2151. An officer will be happy to come by and let the members experience the police presence.

Awareness of the start of gang presence or activities in a resident's neighborhood or especially in their own household is even more important, particularly where youngsters are involved. Watch for signs in a child's style of dress, music, items purchased, gatherings, etc. And watch for these signs from their friends, too.

Incurring costs

Happily, Loveland isn't yet suffering the fear, heartache and grief caused by intense gang violence. But even lesser gang activity brings economic costs to families, either directly or indirectly.

A break-in and theft in a car or home costs the victim money and long-term uneasiness. Gang presence can slash property values, drive customers from businesses, require graffiti cleanup and increase government costs.

Loveland police will continue to use its resources to make Loveland an unfriendly place for gangs. An uncomfortable lifestyle for gang members helps maintain the high quality of life here for the rest of the community.

FROM: Loveland Police Officers
Individual bits of gang info, photos, activity reports, etc.

TO: LPD Gang Unit

Gang info gathered, organized, analyzed;
coordinated efforts planned

FROM: LPD Gang Unit

TO: Loveland Police Officers
Gang info disseminated;
Coordinated efforts carried out

Be part of the gang solution

By being aware and alert to the existence of gangs and gang activity, community members can be of great assistance in reducing the gang presence in Loveland. It is especially important for parents to be alert to early signs of gang association by their children and children's friends.

Gang members aren't shy. They use a variety of methods to identify their gang affiliation, including:

- Tattoos
- Numbers
- Apparel colors
- Hand signs
- Graffiti
- Whistles

Loveland police encourage residents to call the Street Crimes Tip Line at 962-2831 with information about gangs.

NOTE: All these photos are local photos from Loveland police records. There are many more, including those too graphic to include here.

