

July 19, 2006

Kathleen Self
Children's Advocacy Institute
University of San Diego School of Law
5998 Alcalá Park
San Diego, CA 92110

Ms. Self:

Enough.

When 11-year-old Mynisha Crenshaw died in November, the unintended victim of gang members seeking revenge for a prior shooting, it was enough – enough for The Sun to make youth violence and crime in our hometown the defining issue for our coverage in the days, weeks and months since as it will be in the days, weeks and months to come.

The Sun has published hundreds of stories since Mynisha's death, and response from the community – from leaders and residents alike – has been tremendous, and in a way, uplifting. Amid the relentless news coverage, change has come:

- The newspaper helped form a community group called Mynisha's Circle in memory of the slain girl.
- Mynisha's Circle sponsored a community walk that drew more than 1,000 concerned residents and local dignitaries.
- City leaders committed to hiring as many as 40 more police officers to make the streets safer.
- A new mayor is pursuing an ambitious plan aimed at revitalizing the city and cleaning up its most crime-ridden areas.
- Sen. Barbara Boxer introduced anti-gang legislation in Mynisha's name and is seeking funding for children's programs in San Bernardino.

At the center of it all are the community's children – those who stand to gain the most from change or suffer the most without. And sadly, they continue to die on the streets of San Bernardino. And while change has come, more is needed to ensure the safety of the city's youth. Following a particularly harrowing series of shootings in June, the newspaper on June 27 devoted its entire A-Section to solutions to crime and youth violence with a front page headlined simply, "Enough."

We respectfully submit for your consideration The Sun's coverage of youth violence and crime in San Bernardino. We recognize that the attached package of stories is daunting, but it represents only a portion of the coverage the newspaper has published – those stories that are either expressly focused on youth and youth services, or the major pieces that reflect the larger issues in play. While we have enclosed multiple copies of the June 27 section, we hope you are able to consider the larger body of work.

Please call or write with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Frank Pine
Senior Managing Editor
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frank.pine@sbsun.com

PS: You may note we changed the spelling of Mynisha's name in May. We did so at the request of her family. Official sources (police, courts, etc.) continue to use the old spelling, but we felt it best to honor the family's request.

Weather
Partly cloudy
High 79, Low 48
Air quality: Moderate
Page B8

THE SUN

Final
San Bernardino County
1★

San Bernardino County's Newspaper

TUESDAY | NOVEMBER 22, 2005

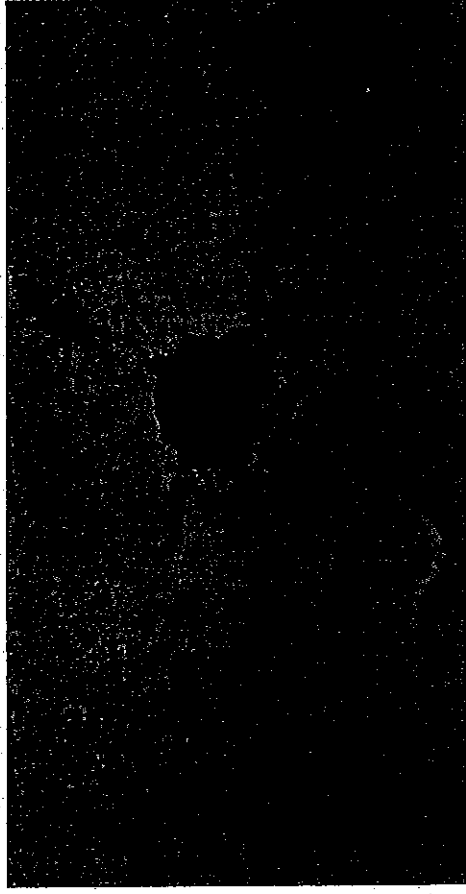
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CAN ONE LIFE MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Eleven-year-old Myneshia Crenshaw will be buried today.

She died nine days ago, shot to death during dinner with her family. Police say gang members are responsible, but there are no suspects. Outraged residents demand action. City leaders promise solutions.

Can this child's death lead to a safer San Bernardino?



STORIES BEGIN ON A3

Editorial: Myneshia's death should be catalyst for change | A14

Chief requests more cops

Beat plan hot issue at council meeting

By Kelly Rayburn
Staff Writer

ONLINE EXTRA
www.sbsun.com

> Read the letter the Cedarwood Apartments owner wrote to the San Bernardino police chief.

SAN BERNARDINO — Police Chief Garrett Zimmon appealed to the city's elected leaders Monday for more officers, but one City Council member said the department's strategy to combat violence has been a failure.

Zimmon's appeal for more officers was presented as part of a larger package about how his department is working to end a spate of violence in the city that has taken four lives by gunfire since Nov. 13, when 11-year-old Myneshia Crenshaw was killed as she was fixing a taco for dinner.

At the first City Council meeting since Myneshia's death, Zimmon said a year-and-a-half-old police plan to have officers patrolling 21 beats is already beginning to improve the city's policing.

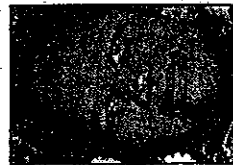
So far 15 beats are covered. When the program was adopted, Zimmon said, the department hoped to hire 25 new officers for it over a five-year period.

So far, none are on the street. The city has budgeted for 10 additional officers, six of whom would go to the beat program.

Zimmon said he hopes the city will add the 19 additional officers for the program, which he said is particularly important for fighting gangs and drug-related crimes.

To that end, Councilwoman Esther Estrada re-

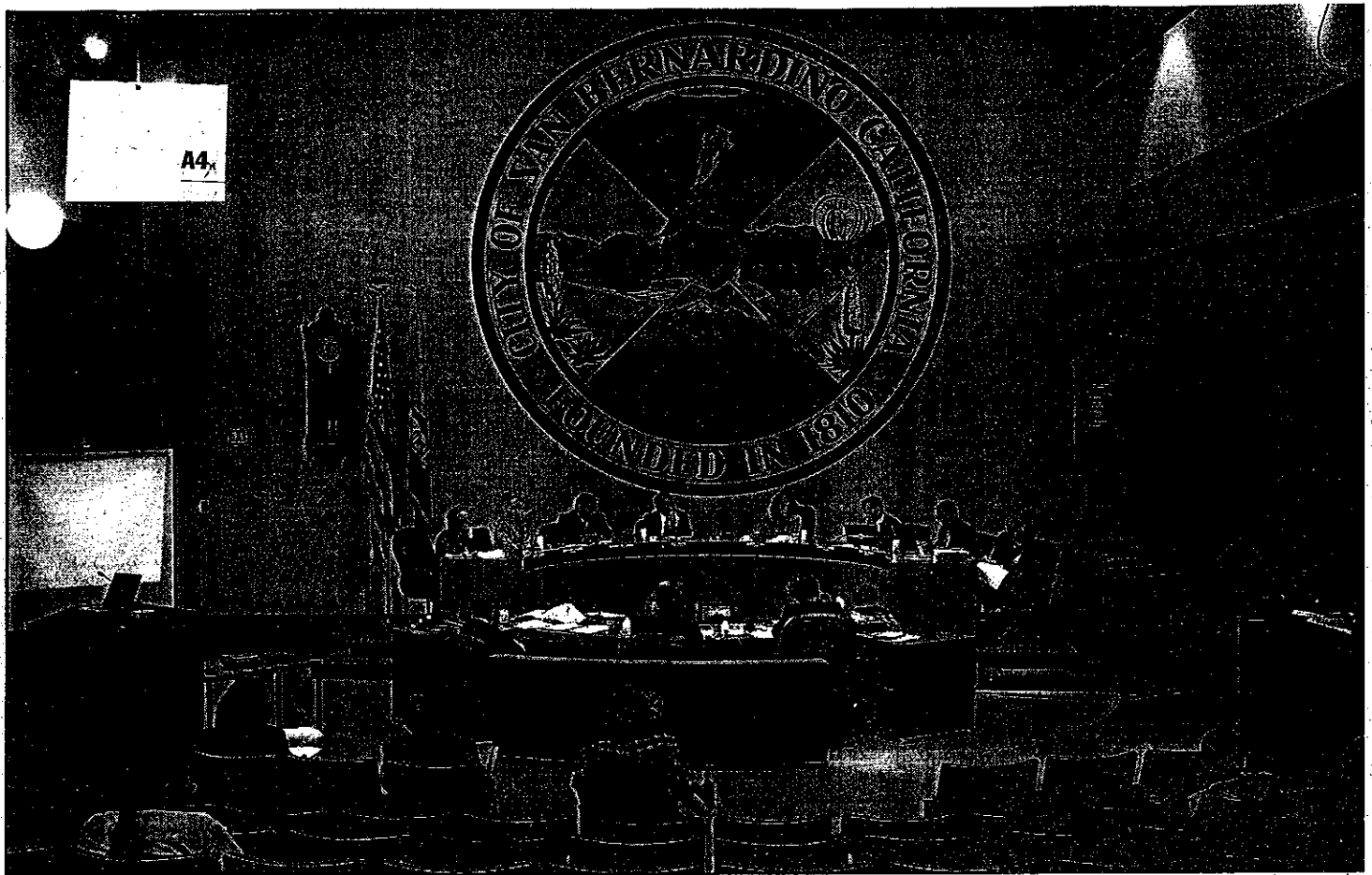
See CHIEF / Page A4



Myneshia Crenshaw



Al Cuizon/For The Sun
San Bernardino Police Chief Garrett Zimmon listens to City Attorney James F. Penman on closed-circuit TV as he discusses problems relating to the recent homicides in San Bernardino during Monday's City Council meeting.



Al Cuizon/For The Sun

The San Bernardino City Council discussed such issues as Police Chief Garrett Zimmon's beat plan and the recent spate of shootings at its meeting Monday. Zimmon, whose plan drew criticism from Councilwoman Wendy McCammack, requested officers to fully implement his system.

Chief

continued from page A3

requested the city hold a workshop to consider the city's finances and the department's needs and move toward hiring additional officers.

But Councilwoman Wendy McCammack, who is critical of the department's guidelines restricting when officers can use force, said she was not satisfied with what the chief proposed.

"What we are doing now is not working," she said. "The beat plan, now in its second year, is not working."

After he left the meeting,

Zimmon responded to McCammack's criticism of the beat plan. The chief said he disagreed. The program hasn't reached the level of success he hopes it will achieve, he said.

Besides needing more officers, Zimmon said the department would be working with schools, apartment-complex owners and pursuing a gang injunction against a group police say is active in the area around the intersection of Mountain Avenue and Lynwood Drive, the neighborhood where Mynesha was killed.

Police Lt. Mark Garcia identified the gang as the Crips-affiliated Pimps, Players, Hustlers and Gangsters.

Police are scheduled to meet with apartment-complex owners and managers today to discuss how to provide a safe environment for tenants and the rest of the city.

In a letter to Zimmon, Edward Harding, chairman of the company that owns the Cedarwood apartment complex where Mynesha was killed, proposed that property owners pony up the resources to install about 90 video cameras in the neighborhood in exchange for a greater police presence.

Harding said he would not be at today's meeting but that representatives from his company would.

At the meeting Monday, the

conversations between city officials were marked by solemn reflection on a so-called "week of strife" and spats between political rivals.

Mayor Judith Valles accused City Attorney James F. Penman of playing election-season politics with the slayings.

Valles has endorsed Judge Pat Morris, who is running against Penman to be mayor.

Penman charged that Valles was only addressing the crime matter because of the media attention paid to it.

"The mayor doesn't understand my thought process," he said later. "She doesn't know how deeply hurt I am by these children dying, and it's wrong of her to laugh it off as political."

"There's denial, you can pretend it didn't happen and move on with life. There's always payback at some point, though. There's letting it destroy you, losing yourself in depression or alcohol or drug abuse. Or you can fight back. You can make sure the child's loss extends beyond the pie charts, that she was more than a statistic. That's what I tried to do."

MARC KLAAS, father of Dolly Kloss, who was raped and murdered in 1993 at age 12

Nov. 22

MEGAN'S LAW



Megan's Law was named after 7-year-old **Megan Kanka**, a New Jersey girl raped and killed by a known child molester. The assailant moved into a home across the street from the victim's family, and they were never informed. Boosted by the efforts of New York Sen. Dean G. Skelos, the Kankas worked to enable local communities to be warned about sex offenders in the area. Every state now has a form of Megan's Law.

SAFE HAVENS



Garden of Angels founder **Debi Faris-Cifelli** worked for legislation in California that allows a parent of a newborn — within 3 days — to legally surrender a baby to any employee at any hospital emergency room or other designated "Safe Haven" in the state. It can be done anonymously, without having to fear being prosecuted. Former state Sen. Jim Brulte sponsored legislation that decriminalized "safe" abandonment, and Safe Arms for Newborns, Senate Bill 1368, was created to allow for a two-week "cooling off" period, giving the parent the chance to reconsider and work to reclaim the child. Garden of Angels is based in Yucaipa.

SAMANTHA'S PRIDE



Five-year-old **Samantha Runnion** was abducted from her Orange County community, raped and killed by her assailant who claimed he needed help with his dog. Her mother, Erin Runnion, became an advocate against child molesters. The organization was created to help neighborhoods organize, with all the adults pitching in, to look out for the children.

KLAASKIDS FOUNDATION



Polly Klaas was 12 years old when she was kidnapped from her Petaluma home in 1993. Police arrested Richard Allen Davis for raping and murdering the girl months later. Marc Klaas, Polly's father, started an advocacy group that lobbies for tough legislation for crimes against children and helps families navigate the red tape when dealing with a crisis.

UNDER INVESTIGATION

Among the unsolved homicides being investigated by San Bernardino police detectives and the coroner's office:

■ **Charles Gillespie**, 73, whose head, arms and legs were found Oct. 30 near Silverwood Lake, 30 miles from his torso in San Bernardino's Wildwood Park south of Waterman Canyon.

■ **Mynesia Crenshaw**, 11, killed Nov. 13 by bullets fired into her Del Rosa apartment.

■ **Alfredo Ampoyo**, 52, shot dead Friday night at a downtown bus stop blocks from police headquarters.

■ **Melanie Miers**, 16, fatally wounded early Saturday by a bullet to the head in a drive-by shooting at a birthday party in a middle-class north-side neighborhood.

■ **Jerry Ramirez**, 22, found Sunday evening apparently shot to death, whose death brought the city's homicide total to 55 so far in 2005, the city's highest violent-death toll in a decade.

— Staff reports

SPEAKING OUT

It's quiet where the bodies go

Regardless of how city leaders and police choose to frame the city's ongoing homicide crisis today, San Bernardino residents are dealing with a cold reality — there are a lot of different ways to die here.

As the past four weeks have shown, sudden, violent death can strike anywhere, anytime. In a crime-ravaged apartment complex. At a teen party in a middle-class neighborhood. At a gritty bus stop two blocks from City Hall.

In the quiet building where the bodies go, the San Bernardino County Sheriff-Coroner's Department on Lena Road, answers about the city's rash of killings since the day before Halloween are few and far between.

Jon D. Kroeker, a supervising deputy coroner investigator, said Monday afternoon he could not even clarify whether the city's latest shooting victim, 22-year-old Jerry Ramirez, was found on a mountainside near Old Waterman Canyon Road — as the coroner's Web site reported — or if he was found lying just off the road in a ravine — as the police reported.

Standing in a gleaming, sunlit hallway outside investigators' offices, Kroeker referred questions to coroner's spokesman Randy Emon. Emon also said he could not elaborate on his department's earlier press release. Emon added he could not share any information about any homicides in or linked to San Bernardino since Oct. 30.

"Since we combined with the sheriff, we can't let anyone look at the files anymore," Emon said, referring to the coroner's merger with the Sheriff's Department in January. "That's the case with open homicide cases and closed cases. We can't let anybody look at anything."

Some residents stunned

At Marco's Tires on North Waterman Avenue, a woman whose family moved to San Bernardino County when she was a child to escape crime in Glendale, opened her mouth wide in silent amazement when she heard about the recent killings.

"I'm just in awe," said Cynthia Rached, 26, manager of the business. "It's too much. I don't even watch the news because I don't want to know about it."

Rached sat at a small desk below the counter at Marco's, while several male employees clad in work blues ate lunch and watched television at a table behind her. Shiny rims racked on the walls reflected and refracted light in the dimness, while outside the open work bay the midday sun beat down on hot, black tarmac.

"It's too much negativity — homicides, killings, murder," Rached said. "Innocent children being shot and killed. This girl at the lingerie party, she was just 16, innocent. She was just trying to have fun and she ends up dead."

Violence and murder are as old as mankind, Rached said.

"But we hear about it more often in this day and age," Rached said. "You can't just say, 'Keep your kids inside.' That young girl was shot in her home. The other girl was outside. The man was at a bus stop. It makes you wonder where you're safe."

Rached's parents decided to move to San Bernardino County when she was 14 because they noticed so much gang-related crime and violence in Glendale, she said.

"My parents didn't want us to be any part of that," Rached said. "Back then San Bernardino was considered safer. Not any more."

Business as usual at gun shop

Inside one of the city's leading gun shops, Turner's Outdoorsman at 491 Orange Show Road, business was brisk Monday afternoon. But there has been no noticeable spike in sales at the store since Charles Gillespie's body parts were discovered Oct. 30.

Manager Jason Holling stood over a section of glass display counters that stretch more than 30 feet, while customers peered at the scores of semiautomatic handguns lined up on three levels of transparent shelving.

"This is the No. 1 selling store in our chain," Holling said. "We have 13 stores throughout Southern California."

Asked why the store is the Turner chain's sales leader, Holling laughed.

"Because this is San Bernardino — the high crime rate — people want guns for personal protection," he said. "I'd say roughly a quarter of our customers are from the city. We get people from Barstow, Palm Springs, all over San Bernardino County."

"We might see an increase if people start getting scared," Holling said. "But so far it's steady. We probably sell about 100 guns a week. Even with the 10-day waiting period for background checks."

— Compiled by Guy McCarthy

Taking a stand

Nov. 22

against violence



Ballarie Johnson of San Bernardino takes a moment to pray for the family of Mynesha Crenshaw, 11, whom she did not know, on Nov. 15. Mynesha's sister, Jaynita McWilliams, now 15, was injured and Mynesha was killed inside their home at the Cedarwood Apartments in San Bernardino.

Eric Reed/Staff photographer

Enacting change to put an end to fear

By George Watson,
Nikki Cobb and
Brad A. Greenberg
Staff Writers

The body of 11-year-old Mynesha Crenshaw goes into the ground today.

Her soul, according to the faith of her family, will go to heaven.

And as a city in shock watches from afar, some see the memory of this slain child soaring above a destructive morass that has suffocated San Bernardino for two decades, delivering some hope to people starving for it.

They are tired of the senseless slayings. They are tired of hiding, of staying silent, for fear they or their loved ones might meet a similar conclusion.

"We need to be outraged," said Councilman Rikke Ván Johnson, whose ward borders the neighborhood where Mynesha lived. "We can't be afraid anymore. That's the point we need to get out there."

The questions yet to be answered are: Like the proverbial Phoenix rising above the ashes, can some good come out of the slaughtering of innocence? Have people endured enough violence to force a change, as has been done in other types of tragedy around the United States?

Will they pressure the politicians — not only locally but perhaps statewide or on the federal level — to bring an end to a cycle that has spun for decades, ruining lives, destroying families and fanning fears not only in San Bernardino, but in nearly every

urban pocket across the nation? can some good come out of the slaughtering of innocence? Have people endured enough violence to force a change, as has been done in other types of tragedy around the United States?

Will they pressure the politicians — not only locally but perhaps statewide or on the federal level — to bring an end to a cycle that has spun for decades, ruining lives, destroying families and fanning fears not only in San Bernardino, but in nearly every urban pocket across the nation?

NOV. 22

The politicians are apparently ready to listen.

"I don't know what kind of legislation I am going to come up with. But we have to do something," said state Sen. Nell Soto, D-Ontario. "We have to let people know we are not going to sit back and let these kids kill one another or kill innocent people."

Soto believes that starts in the home. She and other politicians say parents need to reform the culture of the street, need to teach their children that firing a

gun is not an appropriate way to settle a score.

It seems simplistic. But in implementation, it may be unrealistic.

"We have said, 'Enough is enough.' We have said, 'We are taking back our streets.' We have said all of that," said San Bernardino Mayor Judith Valles. "The problem is the gangs are spreading nationally. We are experiencing the first wave of them hitting our city of San Bernardino."

"We have got terrorists on our streets."

If that is the case, and many criminal justice experts would agree, the San Bernardino crime calls for a national solution.

Rep. Joe Baca, D-Rialto, said he plans to speak with other Inland Empire congressmen in hopes of securing federal funding for San Bernardino crime prevention.

"We can't play second fiddle (with) public safety," Baca said.

David Kennedy, director of the Center for Crime Prevention

and Control at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York, said San Bernardino likely already has all the police officers and laws it needs to rid the streets of crime.

It's a matter of implementation. Because much of San Bernardino's problems are rooted in gangs, the city needs to take the same approach Boston did 10 years ago, he said.

Kennedy, who worked on Ceasefire in Boston, said gang members live in violation of the law. They sell and use drugs in public. They violate parole. They don't pay child support.

Law enforcement officials, he said, need to meet with known gang members to make one thing very clear: "The next time somebody from your group kills somebody, we are going to reach out and touch the entire group."

"This is easy. This is just ordinary law enforcement," said Kennedy. "What you then do, having made an example out of this group, you have a conversation with other groups. You

make it clear to them that the next group who kills somebody in San Bernardino is going to get exactly the treatment these guys got."

"Suddenly, they all start policing each other."

Maybe they don't become law-abiding citizens, but at least they aren't killing kids like Mynesha.

Successful examples of something good emerging from something horrific are far and near.

■ The rape and murder of a 7-year-old by a New Jersey sex offender led to the creation of today's Megan's Law, which lets parents learn of sexual predators in their communities.

■ The abduction and subsequent slaying of a child in Texas created AMBER Alerts, the notification system of kidnapped children, and a similar instance of a man's heinous actions with an Orange County girl introduced Californians to the concept.

■ And thanks to a Yucaipa woman, parents of a newborn in-

fant can legally give up their child without fear of prosecution. For nine years, Debi Faris-Cifelli pushed the effort, in addition to making a cemetery for abandoned babies who died alone and unknown.

"It really takes a community of people to come together," Faris-Cifelli said. "But somebody needs to stand up and take the lead. Those are the people who become heroes."

"A leader has to persevere and have the guts to say, 'That was the old San Bernardino. This will be the new one. If a gang member wants to live in our city, you better change your ways.'"

Just nine days ago, Mynesha was anonymous to anyone other than her family and friends. That

on a San Bernardino apartment and buried three bullets into her head and body as she sat down to eat dinner, leaving her gasping for life as her wounded sister fell beside her

Stand

continued from page A3

Police say Mynesha and her sister, Jaynita, now 15, who survived the shooting, were innocent victims ensnared in a gang-related slaying. The likelihood that a gang was involved came as little surprise in this city of 197,000 people. Among work-eligible adults, 40 percent make less than \$25,000 a year.

This remains a place where in many neighborhoods, people refuse to call police for fear of equally horrific retaliation. They would rather gather their children around them and take hiding in their homes, as was the case in the minutes leading up to Mynesha's killing, praying that none of the bullets they hear exploding will come near them.

Those days must change. Doing so might come through watching what others have done to make grand shifts in thinking.

Making a difference

Polly Hannah Klaas was 12 years old when she was kidnapped from her Petaluma home on Oct. 1, 1993.

A massive and highly publicized manhunt followed. Police arrested Richard Allen Davis for the rape and murder of the little girl months later.

"For a family, there are basically three reactions you can have to something like this," said Marc Klaas, father of the victim. "There's denial, you can pretend it didn't happen and move on with life. There's always payback at some point, though.

"There's letting it destroy you, losing yourself in depression or alcohol or drug abuse."

"Or you can fight back," Klaas said. "You can make sure the child's loss extends beyond the pie charts, that she was more than a statistic. That's what I tried to do."

Klaas started the KlaasKids Foundation, an advocacy group that lobbies for tough legislation for crimes against children and helps families navigate the red tape when dealing with crisis.

A separate group, the Polly Klaas Foundation, helps support families searching for a missing child. Glenna Records, director of communications for the Polly Klaas Foundation, said the little girl whose name the organization bears has had an impact.

"Polly made a huge difference" in the lives of other children, Records said. "It was the unique quality of the case."

"The kidnapper had actually come into an occupied house. It was as if everybody's home had been violated," she said.

Marc Klaas said the work he does in Polly's name keeps him going.

"It doesn't give me a lot of time to consid-

er the consequence, the loss," he said. "I found my purpose, or all would be forgotten — Polly forgotten, too."

Other organizations have also risen from a parent's or a community's response to a lost child.

Megan's Law, a nationwide registry and watchdog network for child sex offenders, was established after the rape and murder of 7-year old Megan Kanka in 1994.

Megan's murderer lived across the street from her home. He had been previously convicted for sexually assaulting another child, a history unknown to Megan's parents, Richard and Maureen Kanka.

The AMBER Alert plan, operating in all 50 states, is a system for broadcasting information to the public when a child is missing.

The plan was created in 1997 as a legacy to 9-year-old Amber Hagerman, kidnapped and murdered while pedaling her bicycle in Arlington, Texas.

Five-year-old Samantha Runnion was kidnapped by a man claiming to want her help finding his Chihuahua. The assailant raped and asphyxiated the child on July 15, 2002.

Today, the Joyful Child Foundation has a program, Samantha's Pride, to save other children from a similar fate.

Samantha's Pride helps neighborhoods organize, with all the adults pitching in, to look out for the children.

"For Samantha's family, the goal is for her not to have died in vain," said spokeswoman Shana Starr. "This is what they are dedicating their lives to, what they are dedicating (Samantha's) life to."

Helping out

Marc Klaas said such efforts can help deal with the pain. But nothing can take it away. "You can never make back the price paid," he said.

"Who the hell wants to build a legacy over their child's body?" Klaas asked.

"Living in memory and actually living are two very different things. Polly can live in our hearts, but those memories fade over time, as if they were a Polaroid," he said. "The price we paid was far too great."

Faris-Cifelli said her effort began by educating people to the sad situation involving the abandonment of newborns. People wanted to help, they just didn't know how, she explained.

The next step was empowering people. That came with the creation of the foundation, which led to contacting state legislators, primarily former State Sen. Jim Brulte, who took action in Sacramento.

"The media helped a lot, too," Faris-Cifelli said. "They really called it to attention. The media can really bring about change."

There's a delicate balance there for the media, though, between being an informative vehicle to becoming an advocate for

change, said Bob Steele, a scholar on ethics at the Poynter Institute, a journalism think tank in Florida.

A newspaper has two roles, Steele said, when it comes to its community:

■ It gives readers substantive, factual information.

■ It provides context, history, information from outside the paper's geographical region, and acts not only as emotionally evocative but provocative.

"When we write stories, we evoke emotion," Steele said. "Sometimes it might cause fear. Sometimes it might cause anger. Sometimes it might cause frustration. Sometimes it may be panic."

"We also write stories that evoke hope. Good journalism not only informs and educates, it gives citizens possibilities for how to respond."

Journalists are not cheerleaders or advocates, he added.

"But journalists are both conveying substantive information, giving citizens ways to process and reflect upon the information, and communicate with each other as a community."

In the case of The Sun, the newspaper has dedicated several reporters and significant space on its pages every day since Mynesha's slaying.

"The death of a child, under any circumstances, is unfathomable to most of us," said Steve Lambert, The Sun's editor. "In cases like this, the media are uniquely positioned to raise awareness of the deeper issues that may be at play — and in the end, help stir a constructive dialogue, and constructive change. We're not the story, but we can help raise the story to a new, higher level of understanding."

What everyone seems to understand, particularly, is that any change that does happen can be enabled by politicians. But for an effort to truly be propelled forward, it's up to people in the community.

Tom Dunham, spokesman for New York state Sen. Dean G. Skelos, R-Rockville Centre, author of that state's Megan's Law, the model for those that followed, lauded the mother of the victim in that case for pocketing her pain and striving for something good.

"A lot of the credit should go to Maureen Kanka for realizing she could take this horrible tragedy and turn it into something that could protect hundreds of thousands of children around the country," he said.

Within two years of Megan's death, every state in the union required sex offenders to register. The federal government also passed a law that would deprive state's grant money if they didn't create a registry.

Change, it appears, can indeed happen. And then, perhaps the real question becomes, the one still not answered, who has the heart for it?

NOV. 22

Data ranks city among most dangerous in U.S.

By Kelly Rush
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — With 55 homicides committed this year, including four in the past nine days, a report released Monday confirms what residents here already know:

The city is dangerous.

A ranking released by independent publishing company Morgan Quitno Press lists San Bernardino as the 18th most dangerous city in the nation among 369 studied.

Morgan Quitno, using data from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Program, analyzed data from 2004.

The rates for murder, rape, robbery and assault were calculated per 100,000 residents in a city and then compared to a national average.

Although San Bernardino earned the dubious distinction of making the top 25 on the list, the city improved two spots compared with last year's report, which had it pegged at 16.

Several factors could account for the dip, said Scott Morgan, company president.

Only cities with a population of 75,000 or greater are included in the report. Cities that have grown and are newly added

See DANGER / Page A5

Tuesday, November 22, 2005

Danger

continued from page A3

added to the list could push other cities into lower rankings, he said.

Although the murder rate in San Bernardino increased from 48 in 2003 to 50 last year, violent crime dipped overall.

There were 2,864 violent crimes reported in 2003 in the city and 2,635 the following year, according to the FBI, an 8 percent decrease.

Morgan cautioned that the ranking should not be used without considering other factors of crime as well, including population, demographics and a community's attitudes toward crime.

"The beauty of numbers is that, incomplete as they are, they help you define the problem a little better," he said. "They help you come up with solutions. People like to have numbers to go with a largely emotional argument, and we fill that little niche."

Mayoral candidate and City

Attorney James F. Penman said the rankings indicate that current crime-reduction strategies are not working.

"The city, for the last seven or eight years, has been driven by PR considerations," he said. "It seems if we keep saying everything is OK and crime is down, everything will be fine and crime will go down, but that isn't the way things work."

He said it wasn't until the media began shining a spotlight on the issue that city officials began to increase police patrols and talk about short-term solutions.

"The biggest problem San Bernardino faces right now is that the mayor and her cohorts are in denial," he said.

Mayor Judith Valles and police Chief Garrett Zimmon did not return calls seeking comment Monday.

Penman said the city needs to contract privately for its helicopter patrols instead of using the Sheriff's Department, which has a massive territory to patrol.

He also said the city should begin aggressively pursuing fed-

eral and state law enforcement grants and seeking injunctions against gangs.

Rep. Joe Baca, whose 43rd District includes San Bernardino, said the list indicates to him that public safety must be funded at the highest levels.

"I think we're all disappointed" about San Bernardino's ranking, said the Rialto Democrat. "We'd like to see us off the chart. We need to support law enforcement and bring in more cops, develop and fund programs that are important at a local, state and federal level. We all need to come together."

Baca said federal grants from agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security and the Justice Department are available.

The \$400,000 he secured this year for mobile data computers for the San Bernardino Police Department is just a chunk of what's available, if grant writers are submitting proposals.

"I don't believe you should ever give up, and I don't believe you should move out," he said. "Anything can be turned around, and that's our responsibility."

Violent crime: Who's

NOV 22

EDITOR'S NOTE: *As readers converse online about crime in San Bernardino and what can be done about it, reader Jeff Kaplan and Sun columnist Conor Friedersdorf have engaged one another in debate. Both agree that Myneshia Crenshaw's murder is a tragedy and that measures must be taken to make future slayings less likely. Yet they disagree about the root causes of violent crime.*

The Sun established its Troubled Town blog as a forum for community discussions with the idea that public discourse can produce no losers. One's ideas are strengthened either by the act of defending them or the realization that they are somehow mistaken. We excerpt the following exchange as an example of what The Sun hopes to see more of in the future.

To read more, go to: www.insidesocal.com/troubledtown/.

Kaplan first:

There is plenty of blame to go around, but most of the blame should be directed at a society that habitually discriminates against minorities, crowds them into substandard living conditions, treats them like second-class citizens, denies them a truly equal education, and then waits for them to commit a crime so they can be warehoused in the prison system. It's the American society itself that should share part of the blame for turning its back on a whole segment of its own American citizens.

The indiscriminate killing of a young and innocent 11-year-old girl is reprehensible and beyond tragic. A society predicated upon social and economic injustice toward historically disadvantaged groups, however, is also reprehensible. . . . The vicious killer that fired the gun deserves to be punished to the fullest extent of the law and should pay dearly for his crime against that young girl, her family, and society. But this problem is not going to go away until society itself confronts its history of bigotry, intolerance, and hatred against historically disadvantaged



CONOR FRIEDERSDORF

people . . .

Then Friedersdorf:

It is one thing to decry racism, discrimination, unequal schools, etc. It is quite another to imply that minority citizens who face such things are so prone to violence that even murders they commit should be mostly blamed on society's failings.

Pulling a gun's trigger to kill innocents is a personal failure of conscience and humanity no matter the slings and arrows of one's past. To suggest otherwise is a slur against the vast majority of poor people and minorities who would never dream of committing murder. It makes little sense to deny minorities their agency when most exercise it quite admirably.

The blame-society message is the narrative's second flaw: Much of it is objectively incorrect. Take the claim that violent crime today can be blamed on historic discrimination against the perpetrators' racial group. Admittedly, that hypothesis makes intuitive sense. But it is impossible to square with reality.

As a historically disadvantaged group with a disproportionately high murder rate, blacks seem the best example supporting the claim. Yet black murder rates rose during the Civil Rights Era and peaked during the early 1980s, trends that don't square with the notion that discrimination causes violent crime.

Other historically disadvantaged groups erode the case further. Chinese immigrants functioned as de-facto slaves for a time in U.S. history, and have faced serious discrimination that lingers even today. Yet Chinese murder rates are lower than the rate for whites. . . .

Our society has seriously talked about social and economic

justice for years while somehow failing to recognize that social justice demands, rather than precludes, a crackdown on criminals. Gangs, murderers and drug dealers prey on poor communities, disproportionately destroying minority lives.

Kaplan:

. . . limiting the blame to a person's "personal failure of conscience" doesn't address all the issues of this tragic story.

People who are forced to live in conditions of poverty and that face discrimination will seek ways to survive and secure their own existence. This is human nature and has nothing to do with race, religion, age or culture. Myneshia's killer didn't wake up one morning and say: "Today I am going to have a personal failure of conscience and kill an innocent child." Myneshia's killer was (probably) operating in an environment of hopelessness and knew no other life than power through the barrel of a gun and survival (economic and personal) through the use of violence.

This does not excuse the murderer's actions . . . But the discussion cannot stop there — we take criminal justice seriously but then don't pursue the causal connections between people and crime. Why did the murderer senselessly shoot into an inhabited apartment at a family sitting down for dinner?

I return to the concept of discrimination and the resulting lack of economic opportunity and truly equal education. The plight of the black community was hardly solved during the Civil Rights Era. Equality of economic opportunity and education was not achieved during the 1980s. It is not equal now in 2005. Institutional discrimination, the kind that habitually restricts the hope of blacks and other historically disadvantaged groups to achieve full equality, is alive and well today.

We live in a society where the likelihood of incarceration (during their lifetime) for blacks is 16.2%, which is almost twice

ont from A6

Tuesday, November 22, 2005

to blame for its rise?

that of Hispanic-Americans (9.4%) and over six times that for whites (2.5%). That is a stunning statistic. This is not to suggest that any of these groups are more or less prone to crime by their nature. That is a repugnant concept and has no place in civil discourse.

Providing truly equal educational and economic opportunities is not going to solve every problem. But neglecting the causal connections between poverty, discrimination, and the resulting hopelessness, is a myopic denial of how society marginalizes minorities.

Friedersdorf:

Kaplan is right when he asserts that there are other "contributing factors." But I find the factors he identifies — poverty, racism and historic injustice toward one's ethnic group — unconvincing as "contributing factors" to high murder rates.

This isn't because I find such a connection implausible on its face. I can imagine a causal connection that leads, for example,

from racism to murder. Then again, I can imagine a causal connection that leads from being abused as a child to murder, or from drug use to murder, or from an absent father to murder. Many such causal relationships make intuitive sense, but only some are explanatory factors driving a high murder rate.

When I consider racism and historic prejudice against one's ethnic group as explanatory factors for violent crime in the United States, I'm underwhelmed by the evidence.

America has many groups who have suffered prejudice, many groups who have suffered from racism and many groups who confront some racism even today. But the murder rates among these groups are wildly different in a way that doesn't seem to be correlated with the amount of discrimination they have faced historically, the amount of time that has elapsed since they last faced significant oppression or the level of racism they confront today.

If our purpose is to attack violent crime and its root causes we ought to focus on those things that

are contributing to the problem most directly. My expertise isn't sufficient to say with certainty what those culprits are, but here are somewhat educated guesses:

■ Street gangs

■ The black market in illegal narcotics (in which dealers and distribution networks defend their territory using guns, often wielded by gang members)

■ Unsupervised children, especially males whose fathers are absent (or children whose family members raise them as gang members)

■ Dangerous neighborhoods that lead children who'd otherwise eschew gangs to join them for protection

Solving these problems is a tall order — solving them completely is impossible. Yet they seem to me more easily addressed than rooting out the remaining racism in a society where we've gone to great lengths to ensure our institutions and laws are no longer racist. They are surely more easily addressed than historic discrimination, which we cannot change no matter how much we wish it could be otherwise.

Frustration escalates

Minister takes community to task at SB meeting



Jennifer Cappuccino/Staff photographer
San Bernardino minister Michael Parrison, left, listens Thursday night at the town hall meeting at Arroyo Valley High School.



Al Guiton/For The Sun
Archie Caddell, 70, of San Bernardino and others listen to Mayor Judith Valles at the meeting Thursday night in San Bernardino.



Al Guiton/For The Sun
The Rev. Reginald Beamon of San Bernardino addresses the audience at Thursday night's town hall meeting.



Jennifer Cappuccino/Staff photographer
Malia Carrington of San Bernardino waits for an answer to her question Thursday night about the Neighborhood Watch during a town hall meeting at Arroyo Valley High School. Councilman Rikke Van Johnson hosted the meeting.

Meeting

continued from page A1

By Gina Tenorio
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — After more than a half hour of quiet hand-wringing and mild-mannered suggestions, the Rev. Reginald Beamon had had enough.

"I have not heard many suggestions here tonight," the frustrated minister told the crowd gathered Thursday night in the Arroyo Valley High School cafeteria.

"They've been killing people," he said referring to gangs, his voice booming across the room. "And I do blame the community."

Heads started nodding. Eyes widened. It may have been a small spark, but it was at least close to what Councilman Rikke Van Johnson said he had hoped the town hall meeting would do — empower the community to stop the violence.

The event was the second such meeting in the city this week.

Among Van Johnson's goals was to appeal to the community to work with city leaders and law enforcement to help curb the kind of violence that has led to a number of shootings in the area and to the death of 11-year-old Mynasha Crenshaw on Sunday night in the Del Rosa area.

With Van Johnson were more than a dozen police officials, including Chief Garrett Zimmon, some City Council members and Mayor Judith Valles.

If the community had ideas or solutions or concerns, a meeting was the place where they were going to be aired.

But even in the safety of the forum, the residents in attendance were slow to start, hesitating to go to the microphone even when encouraged.

"I think we need to keep the children in school and not let them stay at home," said Magin Valdez, 44, a resident of Delmon Heights.

He followed some who chose to speak from their seats. The father of a teenage girl who attends Arroyo Valley High stepped up to the microphone.

"They should be in school," he said of troubled teens. "They should be learning. I want them to be somebody. We have to guide them."

Sandy Bonilla, a prevention program manager with Casa de San Bernardino Inc., appealed to the councilman to consider spending more funds on the neighborhood nonprofit.

"The suggestion here is to use the neighborhood organizations as the cultural brokers," Bonilla said.

Along with those suggestions came the reminder from the Police Department about the 24-hour hotline and police Lt. Diane Holmes' request for members of the community to encourage all young men in the neighborhoods to join the police force.

When few of the residents stood by the microphone to take an opportunity to speak, Beamon stepped up.

He accused some family members throughout the city, particularly fathers, of idly sitting by as their children choose a gang family over their own. He accused them of taking the money and turning a blind eye to the pain caused by the gangs.

Then turning to the police, the minister apologized.

"You're doing your job," he told the officials gathered in the back. "But the people we need to reach won't respond when you're around."

Someone knows someone who knows someone who knows what happened, he told the crowd.

As Beamon lay the challenge at the community's feet, Holmes and Van Johnson offered to do what they could.

"At City Hall, we don't have all the solutions," Van Johnson told the crowd of more than 100. "But maybe someone out there does."

Contact writer Gina Tenorio at (909) 386-3854 or via e-mail at gina.tenorio@sbsun.com.

Bloggers point fingers in killing

We know who to blame for the murder of a little San Bernardino girl shot inside her family's apartment.

Amid the grief and outrage sparked by her death — the festering anger at a crime problem left unsolved for too long — we know who deserves our scorn.

It isn't the police, even if they haven't gained the trust of enough residents to preempt trouble within their beat. It isn't the City Council, though their failure to dedicate more resources to policing is inexcusable. It isn't the owner of the apartment complex, even if he hasn't cracked down as much as he might on tenants with ties to gangs. It isn't residents, though they ought to overcome their fear and mistrust of police so that criminals can be reported and caught before they murder again.

The guilty party, the man responsible for Mynasha Crenshaw's murder, is the man who pulled the trigger.

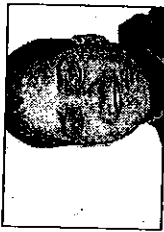
Police say he is a black man in his 20s, 6 feet 3 inches, about 200 pounds, with an average build and dark complexion, his neck marked with a letter "C" tattoo.

I blame that tattooed man. He is the object of my outrage.

Many of you agree.

"If we raise enough hell and raise it long enough you can best believe something positive is going to come out of this," Linda R. wrote on The Sun's new Troubled Town blog.

Though the blog is brand new, a few dozen residents have weighed in already. It is a heated conversation.



CONOR FRIEDERSDORF

"I say show no mercy in punishing these urban terrorists, they chose their life, let them suffer the consequences of it," commenter Julie wrote, expressing a sentiment shared by many.

Then there is the finger-pointing, which isn't necessarily a bad thing. Criticism can be constructive, if its targets have the maturity to take it as a well-meaning effort to improve society. And, on target or not, it's at least an accurate barometer of what many believe to be true.

"There is NO police out there!!!" an anonymous commenter wrote. "In the worst areas of the city, which is many parts on the Westside, there is no police patrolling that part. It gets to the point that you feel very unsafe and don't want to go outside. And as long as the city is corrupt with crooked cops and foul mayors this city will NEVER become safe."

A police officer has a different take: "All I can say is most of these people that grieve for the murdered are just as much to blame as the criminals," he wrote. "The residents refuse to help the police, they cry when we are there and when we are not. They want us to enforce the law, but are angered when we

take a loved one to jail. The residents of these apartments are mostly thugs and parolees. These residents refuse to be accountable for their actions and the actions of their families and neighbors."

Amid all the argument and emotion, an ever-present pessimism clouds the blog.

"As I write this little response I feel like I am spitting into the wind," David Owens writes. "What can one single person do to make a difference in this city? Nothing!"

In fact, the dozens who have taken the time to add their two cents show that San Bernardino has many willing to chip away at the crime problem, if only they knew how.

Here's a first step: Let's channel our understandable outrage.

Of course, it is maddening — a little girl is dead, and each of us can point to common-sense steps that police, politicians, landlords and residents might have taken to prevent her killing. So far each group has pointed at the others.

Let's agree that the truly guilty party is a man with a tattooed neck.

That knowledge should help residents tell police how they can better help them. It should help police to tell residents how they can reciprocate. It should help the politicians and the landlords, too. We all have a part to play.

You can begin by visiting <http://www.insidesocal.com/troubledtown/> to offer your insights into San Bernardino's crime problem. No one of us can solve it alone. Among us all, we've got the answers, if we can only work together to assemble our knowledge.

Leads come up short in shooting

Police say even gangs denounce violence that kills the innocent

By Kelly Rush
and Gina Tenorio
Staff Writers

SAN BERNARDINO — Someone knows who gunned down an 11-year-old girl at dinner, a shooting authorities say is gang related. But no one has turned him in.

Police say gang members often will call with anonymous tips about who pulled the trigger in such cases.

Even hardened criminals, people in and out of jail for robbery, assault or murder, know killing an innocent child, such as Mynesha Crenshaw, is wrong.

That's why some feel compelled to turn in the killer, police say.

Crenshaw was having dinner with her family at an apartment complex Sunday night when gunmen sprayed the apartment with bullets. Several other children were in the room at the time.

Though police Lt. Mark Garcia could not confirm that detectives have received such tips on Mynesha's case, others who investigate such incidents have. Sheriff's Detective Joe Silva, who has looked into more than 400 cases involving gangs, said informants care about maintaining their reputation on the street, even if talking to authorities could get them in trouble.

"They'd rather lose their life than be known as someone who hurt a young child, an elderly person or a handicapped person," he

said. "They don't want to get that reputation as someone who shoots little kids."

It's this unwritten honor code that prompts fellow gang members to call on cases involving someone considered innocent or helpless, he said.

Silva has been a member of the county SMASH team, or San Bernardino County Movement Against Street Hoodlums, since its inception in 1989.

Time and again gang members, either current or former, will provide information to authorities about certain cases, he said.

"If the crime is very, very serious and they didn't think that it was carried out right . . . they'll probably start making tips right away," he said.

San Bernardino police Detective Gary Robertson said gang members are trying to hit the target, not the defenseless.

"I've spoken to some gang members, and they've said (shooting children) is nothing to be proud of," Robertson said. "It's not something that, even within their gang ranks, they tolerate."

"A couple of the gang members that I've talked to (said) the reason you don't see very many drive-by shootings is because of the number of innocent victims (that could be hit)."

In 2003, a 13-year-old boy named Jeremy Figueroa shot three young girls at Lytle Creek Park.

During his trial, his defense attorney said it was the teenager's deep need to be accepted by a gang that led him to commit the crime. He wanted to get respect, the attorney said, that he may not have felt he was getting anywhere else.

Instead, his crime disgusted many in the Verdugo Flats gang

so much that members turned him in, according to court testimony.

Gang members usually will refuse to speak to authorities at the scene of a crime, fearing that other members will see them talking and assume they're giving up information to authorities, Silva said.

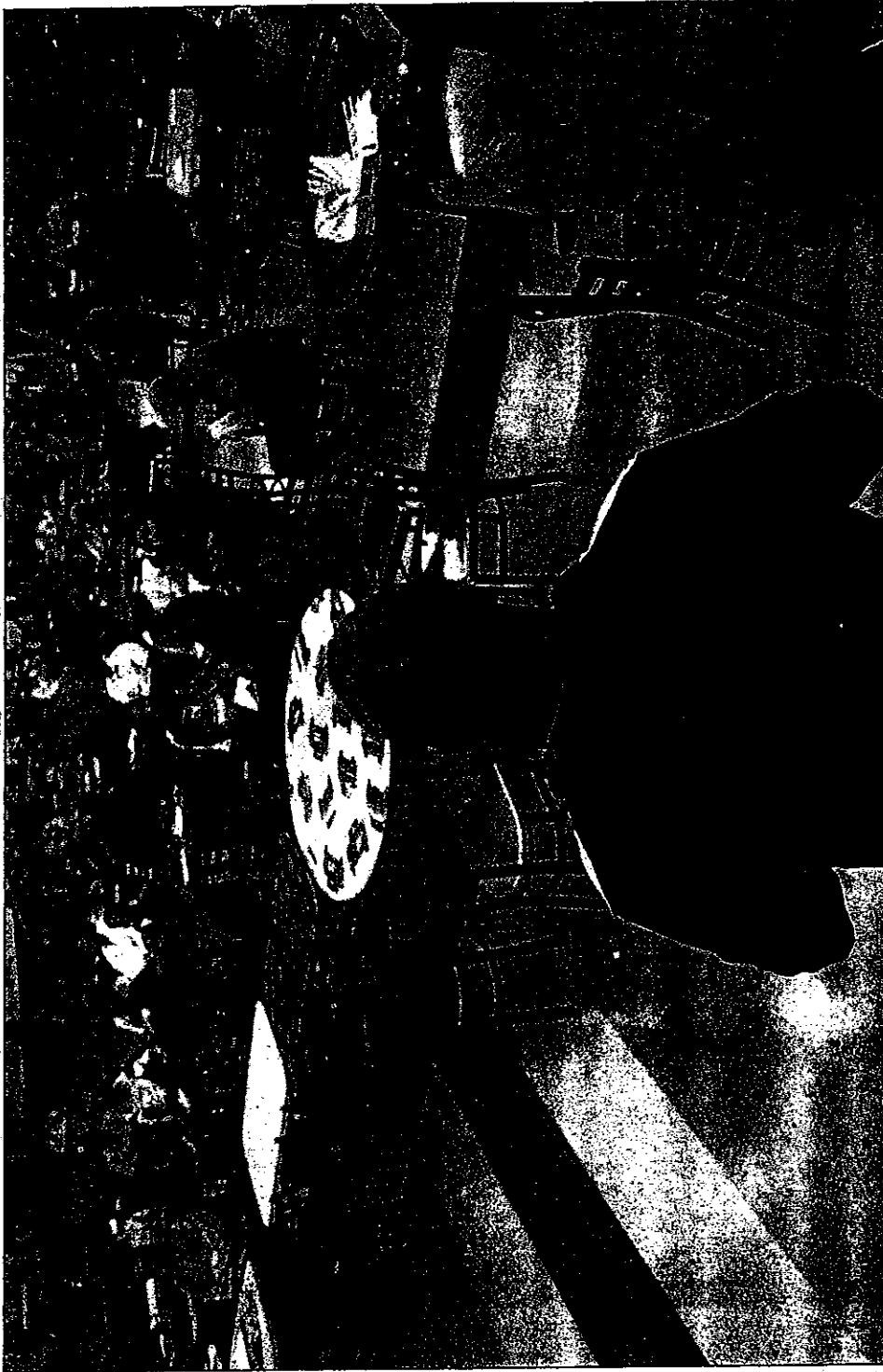
But they'll call in later, anonymously, if they feel like talking, he said.

In a case like Mynesha's, tips will come from community leaders, such as pastors, residents and activists as well as the gang members, he said.

A child's killing is just that senseless.

"You're going to have the community in an uproar, and they're going to do the detective work themselves trying to find out who did this, and they're going to call it in," Silva said. "That's what a community should do."

SB SUN Nov. 18, 2005



Photos by Al Culzon/For The Sun

The Rev. Reginald Beamon of San Bernardino addresses the audience during Thursday night's town hall meeting.

SB SUN

Nov. 18, 2005



LEFT:

Yahira Monsivais, 16, of San Bernardino holds her brother, Anthony Caballero, 4, at the town hall meeting Thursday night in San Bernardino.



RIGHT:

San Bernardino Mayor Judith Valles addresses the audience at the town hall meeting Thursday night.



WHAT CAN WE DO?

SB gang injunctions

1. Seventh Street Gang - 1997
2. Sur Cruz/Ones - 1998
3. Five Time Homeown Chps Gang - 2003
4. Verdugo Flats Gang - 2003
5. Delman-Heights Bloods Gang - 2004
6. Projects Chps Gang - 2004
7. California Gardens Chps Gang - 2005

By Mike Cruz
Staff Writer

Gang injunctions can be an effective, policing tool for restoring once peaceful neighborhoods, but only when aggressively enforced and when combined with other methods of law enforcement, experts say.

An injunction is a judge's order that prohibits gang members from gathering in a specific area and acting as a gang. It can help increase violations for the members who are already on probation.

As police and city leaders search for ways to combat gang violence in San Bernardino, injunctions are one of many tools that have been discussed in the wake of the shooting death of 11-year-old Myeshia Cranshaw.

Myeshia died in a barrage of gunfire aimed at a San Bernardino apartment in which she was eating dinner with family members. Her older sister was wounded in the attack.

Authorities have arrested and filed charges against six suspects in Myeshia's death, and all six are members of the PPHG gang — an acronym for Pimps, Playboys, Hustlers and Gangsters, an affiliate of the Chps street gang — authorities said.

See INJUNCTION / Page A7

Tuesday, December 6, 2005

Injunction

continued from page A1

The San Bernardino Police Department is discussing whether to pursue an injunction against the PPHG, according to the City Attorney's Office. However, police have not submitted the paperwork for an injunction, said Jolene Grider, deputy city attorney.

Police officials did not return calls for comment.

Seeking help in the courts for the fight against gangs is nothing new for San Bernardino. The city has requested and received seven injunctions against violent street gangs since 1997, all of which affected neighborhoods west of Interstate 215.

Grider said she was not aware of any other city in San Bernardino County to have obtained a gang injunction, which she believes speaks to the strength of city officials to put gangs out of business.

"That's one of the most effective tools that we have," Grider said. Gangs find their strength in numbers and their ability to intimidate as a group, she said.

Weighing the Idea

Pros

- Hurts a gang's ability to do business
- Gives the neighborhood back to the residents
- Puts individual gang members on notice
- Less gang visibility and fewer run-ins for residents

Cons

- Should not be used without other tools for curbing gangs
- Takes time to compile evidence
- Might negatively impact neighborhoods not seriously affected by gangs
- Gangs might move to new areas

"You effectively take their power away," Grider said.

By removing gang members from a street, residents are free to venture outside, communicate with one another, enjoy their front yards and allow children to play, officials said.

The City Attorney's Office generally wants two years' worth of specific evidence about gang activity in a neighborhood. The city attorney then takes the report, along with the specific names of participating gang members, and asks the court for an injunction.

Names are not necessary, but naming specific gang members officially puts them on notice, Grider explained.

"I think legally and constitutionally it's a little stronger if you have them named and serve them," Grider said.

A violation of a gang injunction is a misdemeanor, for which the maximum penalty is six months in jail and three years probation. But for defendants on probation, violating an injunction can be a probation violation, said Deputy District Attorney Cheryl Kelsey, who oversees the Hardcore Gang and Career Criminal Unit.

In the field, lawmen can use an injunction, along with gang

enhancements and zero-tolerance policies, to keep streets and blocks clear of gang members and bring in violators.

"Gang injunctions are very, very helpful," Brown said.

Deputy Mike Martinez, a member of the sheriff's gang unit, grew up locally in gang neighborhoods, at a time when gang activity was relegated only to certain areas.

"Now it's pretty tough to find a neighborhood that doesn't have that," Martinez said.

Experts say that injunctions are typically used by police along with other tools for controlling gang activity, such as situational crime prevention, altering the flow of traffic in targeted areas, anti-loitering statutes, traffic checkpoints, aggressive truancy and curfew enforcement and a crackdown on weapons violations.

However, injunctions work best when combined with other methods, such as providing economic opportunities, job training, remedial education and community involvement, according to a 2002 report called "Responding to Gangs from the National Institute of Justice."

"Policing that involves enforcement only will solidify

gangs, increasing cohesion among gang members," wrote the report's authors, Winifred I. Reed and Scott H. Decker.

In a study conducted earlier this year that looked at the Verdugo Flats area of San Bernardino, researchers from UC Irvine and USC surveyed residents and reported an 8 percent drop in intimidation by gang members as well as less visibility of gang and a decreased fear about being confronted by gang members.

For other concerns, the Verdugo Flats injunction proved less effective, such as whether affected residents experienced less violence, increased sense of social control and more trust in police, according to the study.

The study also determined that community involvement was key to an injunction's success and that an injunction can have negative effects on a neighborhood where gang activity is less of a problem.

"Resident involvement and control over their neighborhood is an important step in sustaining any gains from the injunction, so residents should be involved either as part of the injunction process or soon after," said David Sloane, professor in the USC School of Policy, Planning and Development, and co-author of the study with Cheryl Maxson, lead author and a professor of criminology, law and society at UC Irvine.

Contact writer Mike Cruz at (909) 792-5628 or via e-mail at mike.cruz@sbaun.com.

Plans to add police officers discussed

By Leonor Vivanco
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — City leaders discussed Monday a few ways to add cops to the city's crime-plagued streets but did not identify how to fund the expense.

"The roof is leaking, and today we sat at the table and watched the water puddle on top of the table," City Councilman Chas Kelley said after a workshop at City Hall.

Suggestions included hiring back retired officers and providing financial incentives to attract new ones.

The council is reacting to public outcry in the wake of recent violence, including the death of 11-year-old Mynasha Crenshaw, who was killed by stray bullets as she was sitting down to dinner in her family's Del Rosa area apartment.

Although Mayor Judith Valles set the tone for the collaborative meeting when she said, "We're not here to place blame or point fingers," some council members left the meeting frustrated.

"I want action now. Not tomorrow. Now," Kelley said after the meeting. "For an hour and a half we talked and walked away with nothing."

The council was told city coffers would have a projected \$4.2 million surplus by the end of the fiscal year, which is June 30.

See COUNCIL / Page A8

INSIDE

GRASS-ROOTS EFFORT

Residents gathered downtown to discuss how to improve the city's future.

Page A6

GANG TASK FORCE

Riverside County's Sheriff's Department, DA teaming with local, state, federal agencies. Page A11

LEAP IMPACT

Law Enforcement and Education Partnership Initiatives.

Page A6

ONLINE POLL SWAPSHOT

Go to www.sbsun.com and participate in our unofficial survey.

Do you have confidence in the SB Police Department?

Yes



No



Figures are rounded off. The above results are from a total of 328 responses, collected as of 6 p.m. Monday.

Council

continued from page A1

But the council did not commit to spending any of it on additional officers.

They also did not discuss pursuing the federal grants mentioned last week by Reps. Jerry Lewis, R-Redlands, and Joe Baca, D-Rialto.

"I was hoping to hear some ideas of where we find the money," said Councilman Neil Derry, who said he plans to suggest spending the surplus on more officers at the next meeting.

Councilwoman Susan Lien Longville said the meeting went well.

"I thought it was productive. We need much more, but it was a start," she said.

There was a consensus to meet with the police union as early as today to gauge support for creating a special unit that would use retired officers on a part-time basis. Eleven non-sworn employees working a combined 10,400 man-hours would cost the city \$293,000 each year.

The unit would respond to burglary and robbery calls from private alarm companies. It would free up the equivalent of four sworn officers.

The police union will also be asked their thoughts on offering financial incentives to bring police officers to the city.

City workers would get up to \$1,000 to refer police officers to the San Bernardino Police Department. Officers who make a lateral move to San Bernardino would get \$5,000 in signing bonuses while recruits would get \$2,500. Plus, they would receive \$2,000 in relocation expenses under one proposal.

The workshop itself sent the message that crime prevention and suppression is the city's No. 1 priority, Councilwoman Wendy McCarmack said.

"Does it make me feel any safer on the streets? Not yet," she said. "But I see a turning breaking through the clouds."

Even if money was allocated



San Bernardino Mayor Judith Valles waits for the start of a city workshop held at City Monday. The workshop was requested to examine the finances of the city in hopes of police officers.

Al Culzon

the hard decisions that are necessary and make the commitment to fund what the chief needs," Derry said.

Residents need to pressure their elected officials to cough up the money to pay for more cops, Derry said.

"They need to contact elected officials and we need more police on the streets now and do it takes to do it," he said.

SB Sun
Dec. 6, 2005

Getting a jump on crime

Partnership tries to keep kids on track

By Selicia Kennedy-Ross
Staff Writer

Schools and law-enforcement agencies from the local to the national level are working closely with schools to make their campuses safer.

In San Bernardino County, education and law-enforcement officials have teamed up through a panel called the Law Enforcement and Education Partnership. Established during the 1995-96 school year as part of the Gangs and Drugs Task Force, the partnership was originally organized to address school safety and enhance communication between schools and law enforcement, said Herbert K. Fischer, San Bernardino County's superintendent of schools.

Law enforcement's role in helping provide a safe learning environment is crucial because students who don't succeed in school are at greater risk of ending up in the criminal-justice system, Fischer said.

The recent spate of violence and rising number of homicides in San Bernardino, including the shooting death of 11-year-old Mynisha Crenshaw, has heightened community awareness of violent crime.

This needs to be an ongoing discussion, not just a one-time discussion, during like this meeting," he said. "You can't get one way out of this issue. There needs to be intervention, but a very heavy dose of prevention."

The partnership, established by the Superintendent of Schools Office, includes representatives from several local law-enforcement agencies and school districts.

The meetings every other month allow law-enforcement and school officials to compare notes about disturbances at different campuses and "to see what's working and what's not," said Clark Morrow, a training specialist for the Sheriff's Department.

Procedures and programs that are successful in one area can be expanded to others, LEERP members said.

In the years since the partnership began, several initiatives have resulted from it, including Operation Clean Sweep, established in 1998. The program operates on 100 county campuses and trains school administrators to write student citations handled in juvenile traffic court. Consequences range from a fine to community service.

Law-enforcement officers also look at the level of gang involvement within schools and surrounding neighborhoods so administrators can better understand campus problems.

Morrow said the program is particularly useful for far-flung school districts that don't have school police, such as Silver Valley Unified, Needles Unified,

See LEERP / Page A5

LEEP

continued from page A1

Barstow Unified and Trona Joint Unified school districts.

Another arm of Clean Sweep is the Juvenile Intervention Program, which targets at-risk youth between ages 13 and 17 as a last resort.

On Monday morning, 10 frustrated parents enrolled their teenage daughters with such offenses as truancy, fighting and assault, at the Central Detention Center in San Bernardino. The teens are searched, booked, fingerprinted and dressed in white jumpsuits.

They are then paraded through the jail where inmates tell them what life really is like behind bars. They eat in the jail's dining hall with the jeers of inmates ringing in their ears.

Some girls cry. Others are quiet and look scared. Two smirk.

At the end of the visit, they are handcuffed and shackled at the waist and taken to the county Coroner's Office. There they see

this lifestyle's destination.

About 350 teens have participated in the program since it began in 2001. It has a 72 percent success rate, said Deputy Paul Arce, who helps run the program. But that means three of the 10 girls likely will be back.

Yet some school safety experts say studies show such programs do not have a lasting effect.

"If the program is modeled off the classic 'Scared Straight' program, then we know these efforts do not work in the long term," said Wayne Sakamoto, school-safety coordinator for San Diego County Office of Education and consultant for the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

"They typically don't work for long, because they work on an emotional level. The immediate effect is 'Wow, I could really get locked up.' But then, as time goes on and they get further and further away from that program, they get farther away from that fear."

Programs that include the

Coroner's Office are more beneficial, Sakamoto said. But in order for such programs to work, at-risk youths need mentoring from a caring adult who can help them form better decision-making skills.

Through LEEP, the District Attorney's Office has established an anti-truancy initiative, Project LET, or Let's End Truancy. The DA is also working on GIFT, Gun Violence Intervention for Teens, a program aimed at middle-school students.

"Once upon a time, we didn't talk to educators. I think we didn't think about them," said Karen Bell, chief deputy district attorney. "I mean who thought we would ever have DAs in schools? Now we have three."

"This is part of our efforts to deal with issues before they become criminal issues. Prevention is expensive, but it's a lot cheaper than prosecution and incarceration."

The biggest problem threatening campus safety nationwide is gangs, Sakamoto said. Racial diversity issues and hate-motivated behavior run a close second, he said, with bullying,

drugs and truancy following behind.

At the federal level, government agencies like the Department of Justice are working with school districts to find solutions for high schools plagued by racial conflicts. On Nov. 29, the Justice Department began working with faculty and staff at Pacific High School in San Bernardino, where tensions have exploded into violence three times during the past two months.

Federal officials have trained school staff to run a Student Problem Identifying and Resolving Issues Together forum, which starts today and ends Wednesday. About 100 students from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds who are leaders in their social groups were invited to attend the forum.

"We teach them how to take a real and honest look at problems in their school environment and then come up with series of options and recommendations," said Stephen Thom, a Justice Department spokesman. The forum allows students to share freely what they think is

causing the tensions on campus, said Linda Hill, spokeswoman for the San Bernardino City Unified School District.

A handful of these students will form a council that will help monitor tensions on campus and address troubles before they escalate, Hill said.

The tensions at Pacific High are not isolated. They are a reflection of a national trend, Thom said. As communities diversify, sometimes schools aren't prepared to manage the demographic shift.

"There's been a higher level of violence in the last four to five years at schools across the country," Thom said. "We're

seeing an increase in demand for the program nationwide."

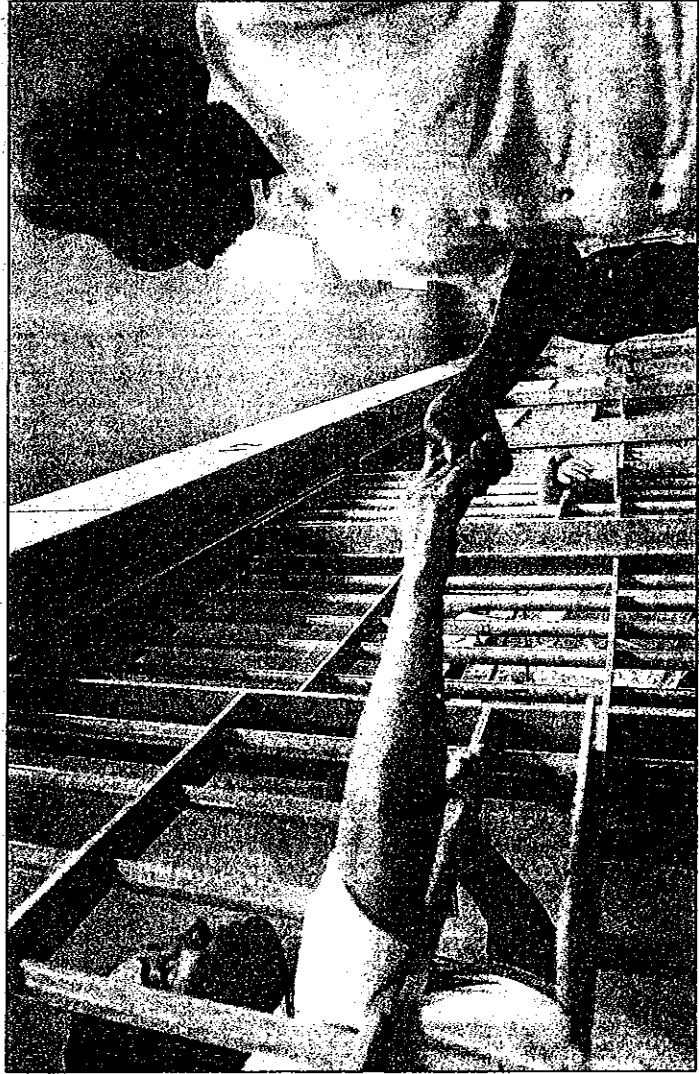
By focusing on prevention, schools and law enforcement together can have a long-range impact on crime, said San Bernardino Police Chief Garrett Zimmon.

"Dr. Fischer recognizes that if we can't prevent our kids from getting involved in the criminal justice system, we're going to have trouble getting them out," he said. "It becomes a revolving door."

Contact writer Selicia Kennedy-Ross at (909) 386-3885 or via e-mail at selicia.kennedy@sbsun.com.



Girls wait in a cell at the Central Detention Center in San Bernardino during a Juvenile Intervention Program event on Monday. The program aims to show teenagers the reality of life behind bars.



ABOVE: Dolores Arriola, left, and Melissa Mejia wait in a cell to talk to girls in the Juvenile Intervention Program on Monday.

LEFT: An inmate reaches out to a girl after talking to her about life in jail and staying out of trouble. About 350 teenagers have taken part in the Juvenile Intervention Program since its inception in 2001. The program is part of the Law Enforcement and Education Partnership.

Dec. 6, 2005



San Bernardino County sheriff's Deputy Stacy Nunn and an inmate talk to a girl in the Juvenile Intervention Program on Monday. The teenagers in the program are admitted by their par-

Deputy JoAnn Duran searches a girl during an intervention as Deputy Stacy Nunn looks on. The program tries to help at-risk children between ages 13 and 17. On Monday, 10 girls took part in the program. They are searched, booked and fingerprinted before meeting with inmates to learn the truth about life behind bars.



Deputy JoAnn Duran secures a girl for transportation in chains at the Central Detention Center in San Bernardino on Monday. As the final part of the intervention, the girl is then taken to the Coroner's Office.

Photos by Brett K. Snow | Staff photographer

Dec. 6, 2005

UPDATE

San Bernardino death investigations

■ Mynesha Crenshaw, 11, of San Bernardino was killed Nov. 13 in the 1400 block of East Citrus Street in a gang-related shooting. **ARRESTED:** Shawn Lamont Davis, 18, Patrick Lair, 27, Sinque Morrison, 29, Sidikibi Greenwood, 34, Harold Philips, 23, and Michael Barnett, 19.

■ On Monday, a judge delayed a preliminary hearing for suspects accused of participating in the shooting death of Mynesha Crenshaw for at least a week.

Judge Michael Dest determined more time was needed to allow lawyers for the six defendants in the murder case of 11-year-old Mynesha to catch up on newly provided information about the case.

Deputy District Attorney John Poston provided 300-page packets of discovery to each defense attorney, with an advisement of more to come, he said.

"There is a substantial amount of new discovery in this case," Dest said before rescheduling the court dates.

Three of the five defendants — Philips, Barnett and Greenwood — agreed to waive their right to a speedy preliminary hearing in San Bernardino Superior Court on Monday.

Defendants Shawn Lamont Davis and Patrick Lair had previously opted for the quicker hearing. But Dest ruled that all five suspects will have another hearing Dec. 16 and a preliminary hearing on Dec. 20, when the district attorney will have to convince Dest the case should go to trial.

A sixth suspect, Sinque Morrison, was not in court.

■ Tami Kay Potter, 39, was stabbed to death in a parolee group home in the 1500 block of North Wall Avenue on Nov. 25. **ARRESTED:** Daniel Moreno, 24, identified as a Verdugo Flats gang member in San Bernardino.

■ Barry E. Jones, 24, identified as a member of the gang PPHG, or Pimps, Playboys, Hustlers and Gangsters, was shot and killed Nov. 9 in an apartment in the 2900 block of Mountain Avenue. No arrests have been made, but police believe the shooting is tied

to the Nov. 13 shooting of Mynesha Crenshaw, committed by gang members targeting the apartment she was in with her family.

■ Floter Warhop III, 39, was found dead Nov. 7 in his vehicle in a San Bernardino tow yard in the 2300 block of East Mountain Woods Street. His girlfriend, Maria Kaminski, 36, was found dead in her Colton apartment two days earlier. Police believe the killings are connected. No arrests have been made.

■ Alfredo A. Ampoyo, 52, was shot to death Nov. 18 as he stood at a bus stop on D Street north of Fourth Street. He struggled with at least two men before he was shot. No arrests have been made.

■ Melanie Miers, 16, was shot Nov. 19 at a house in the 4500 block of North Mountain View Avenue as she stood outside with two males. She died that day at a hospital. No arrests have been made.

■ Jerry Ramirez, 22, was found dead Nov. 20 in Waterman Canyon, north of Highway 18. **ARRESTED:** Alfredo Rodriguez, 18, Edward Hernandez Sr., 48, Edward Hernandez, 25, and Benjamin Hernandez, 46.

■ The torso of Charles Gillespie, 73, of San Bernardino was found Oct. 30 in Wildwood Park. His arms, legs and head were found earlier the same morning in a turnout on Highway 138, near Summit Valley Road. No arrests have been made.

■ Alfredo Villela, 27, was shot Oct. 26 while walking in the 700 block of East Base Line. He died six days later, on Nov. 1, at a hospital. No arrests have been made.

County area

■ Leeann Carrell, 49, and daughter Angelina M. Carrell, 27, were found dead by family members in their Mountain Avenue condominium Nov. 22. No arrests have been made.

■ John Doe # 57-05: His badly burned remains were found Nov. 28 near Dale Evans Parkway, about two miles west of Interstate 15 near a transmission tower. No arrests have been made.

Dec. 6, 2005

Dec. 6, 2005

A6 The Sun — San Bernardino County 1 ★

Hope for city coming from bottom up

By Megan Blaney
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — A grass-roots improvement effort is sprouting among the tangled weeds and broken bottles in the city's downtown.

"We need to clean up this town in more ways than one," said Tori Stordahl, who helped organize the group's first meeting at a downtown cafe Saturday. "It's up to the community and the neighborhood to watch out for their own."

Stordahl heard the shots that killed gang member Barry E. Jones in November. She heard the shots that were fired in retribution four days later that killed 11-year-old Myneisha Crenshaw. And she knew she had to make a change. But she couldn't do it on her own.

A recent rash of shootings in San Bernardino and its ranking among the most dangerous cities in the country has stirred a storm of ideas from city leaders and a flurry of dismay from residents.

Stordahl, who lives in a county area alongside the city's Del Rosa neighborhood, wants to channel that energy into a lasting community effort to change the city.

"People forget way too quickly," she said. "The whole city of San Bernardino needs to get proactive."

Inspired by The Sun's Troubled Town Blog, Stordahl and Mark and Katrina Cato jumped into action. After writing notes back and forth on the online forum, the Catos offered up their restaurant — the California Soul Cafe on Fifth Street — as a meeting place. Stordahl began distributing fliers throughout the city and invited residents and city officials to attend.

Seventh Ward Councilwoman Wendy McCamack printed fliers for free for the meeting, Stordahl said.



Al Cuzon/For The Sun

Tori Stordahl of San Bernardino, left, and California Soul Cafe owners Mark and Katrina Cato have started a grass-roots community group in hopes of rallying community members to improve San Bernardino.

City Councilwoman Susan Longville, who represents the 2nd Ward in the heart of downtown, was the only city official to attend the meeting.

Lien Longville recommended the group develop and prioritize long- and short-range goals.

"We can help them achieve those goals by forming a partnership with them that will cause some successes," she said. "Many cities have that, but they have that because they're committed to supporting those groups."

She frequently attends community meetings and block-watch groups but said they are usually dominated by city officials because residents are reluctant to speak up.

"Rarely do I have a chance to sit and listen to citizens sit and share ideas and debate," she said. "To me, this is where the consistency will come — when the community does not let leadership off the hook down the road."

Stephanie Vance, an advocacy guru with the Washington, D.C.-based Advocacy Associates LLC, agreed that change starts at the ground level. Residents should design specialized solutions, she said.

"They need to be very specific. A lot of times people talk to elected officials and say, 'Boy, we should do something about crime.' And then their response is, 'Yes, we should,' and nothing gets done."

Vance recommended the group meet regularly and follow some basic guidelines:

- Be specific — figure out what is needed in the community.

- Develop a message that resonates — use names and descriptions of how the residents are affected by crime.

- Study the elected officials in the city and county and their jurisdictions before deciding who to approach with ideas.

- Be persistent.

"It can take a long, long time to create change," Vance said. "Sometimes people get frustrated and give up after six months, when it can be a several-year process."

The group is so young that it does not have a name — a topic that will be addressed at the next meeting, Mark Cato said.

"We're still in our infancy stage as a group," he said. "But we know we just wanted to put a challenge out to the city. 'Get off your butt, and let's do something.'"

About eight city residents who attended Saturday's meeting discussed street lights, after-school programs, adult education and employment opportunities and family responsibility as areas that need improvement, said Stordahl and Cato.

There is no date set for the next meeting, but it will be reported in The Sun.

Contact writer Megan Blaney at (909) 386-3828 or via e-mail at megan.blaney@sbsun.com.

SB SUN
Dec 6, 2005

Initiatives established as a result of LEEP

■ 1996 — Probation officers on campuses

A cooperative agreement between school districts and the San Bernardino County Probation Department to assign a probation officer to school districts that requested participation.

OPERATED BY: San Bernardino County Probation Department

COST: Current cost to school districts is 25 percent of the cost for staffing of probation officers on campus, between \$100,000 and \$125,000 annually. School safety grants also help fund the program.

EFFECTIVENESS: The program once reached a high of 25 probation officers but funding cuts have reduced that number to about 10.

■ 1998 — Operation Clean Sweep

Operates on 100 school campuses throughout San Bernardino County and encompasses a citation system, security assessments of troubled schools by a law enforcement agency and motivational speakers. Under the program, sheriff's deputies train school administrators to write citations for first-time offenders. Students must appear in juvenile traffic court, where consequences range from a fine to community service, but there is no permanent mark left on a juvenile's record. The program is particularly useful for isolated school districts that do not have their own school police department such as Silver Valley Unified, Morongo Unified, Needles Unified, Barstow Unified and Trona Joint Unified school districts. The Juvenile Intervention Program, aimed at at-risk students between 13 and 17 years of age from schools across the county, is also part of Clean Sweep. Since 2004, 350 teens have gone through the program, which has a 72 percent success rate.

OPERATED BY: San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department

COST: None. Offered free to school districts.

EFFECTIVENESS: In its first year, there was a 36 percent reduction in calls for service. Current figures are not

■ Project LET — Let's End Truancy

The San Bernardino County District Attorney's Office established an anti-truancy initiative called Project LET, which places three deputy district attorneys on district campuses to focus on the truancy issues before they become criminal issues. Under the LET program, the District Attorney's Office is pushing for legislation that would establish a pilot program regarding truancy cases to be sent directly to juvenile traffic court overseen by a hearing officer instead of being tied up in criminal court.

OPERATED BY: San Bernardino County District Attorney's Office

COST: None. Free of charge to school districts.

EFFECTIVENESS: Project LET has made attempts for three pieces of special truancy legislation in San Bernardino County. All three failed.

■ 2005 — Gun Violence Intervention for Teens (GIFT)

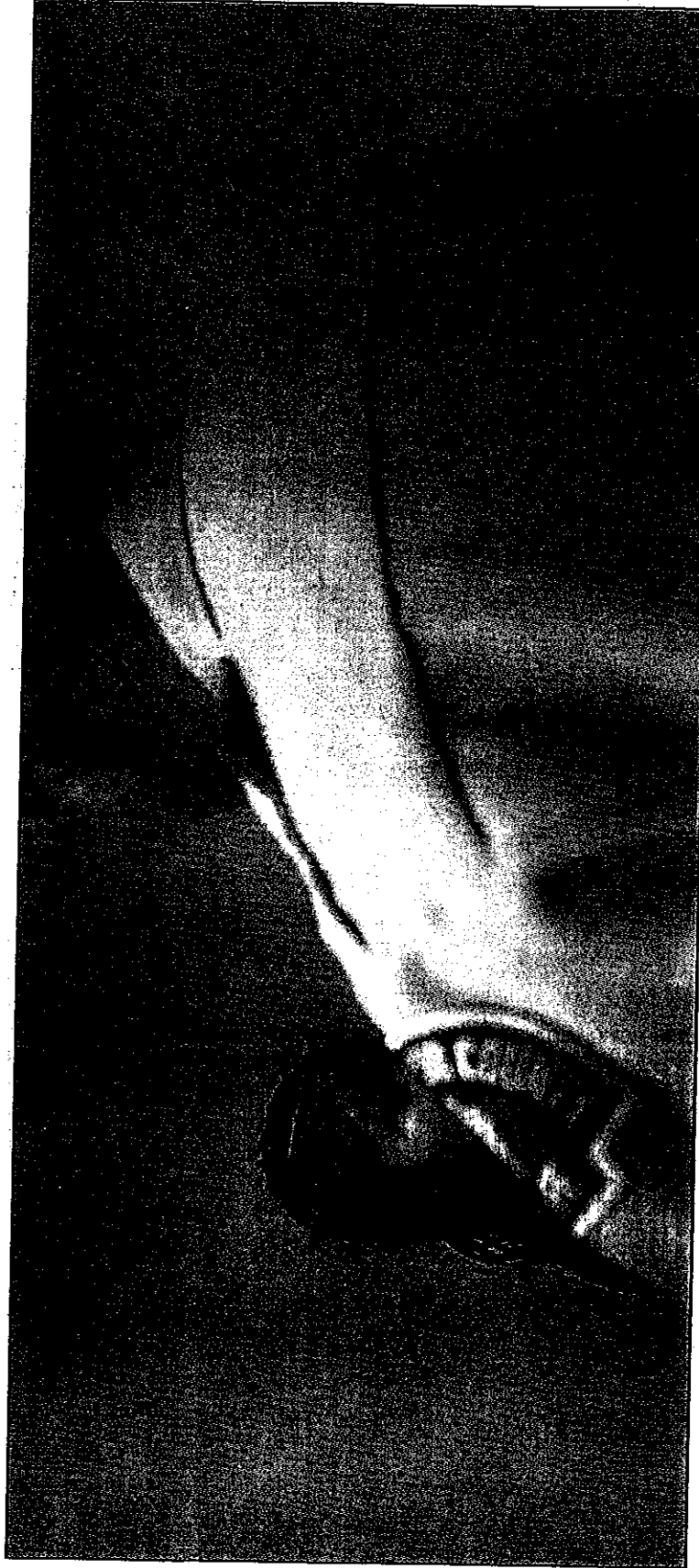
A new anti-gun violence initiative aimed at middle-school students to discourage them from using guns.

OPERATED BY: San Bernardino County District Attorney's Office

COST: Unknown. Still being compiled.

EFFECTIVENESS: Unknown.

— Staff reports



San Bernardino County sheriff's Deputy Paul Arce talks to a girl about her attitude in a cell of the Central Detention Center in San Bernardino during a Juvenile Intervention Program event on Monday. Arce said the program has a 72 percent success rate..

Brett K. Snow/Staff photographer

SB SUN Dec. 6, 2005

Whether art reflects life in San Bernardino or vice versa, youngsters close to crime and violence create some of the region's most wrenching imagery.

RAW TRUTH



Brett K. Snow/Staff photographer

Wynae Hill, 12, of San Bernardino stands in front of one of the many murals painted on the outside walls of Central City Lutheran Mission on Wednesday. The images above and below were drawn by her brother, Deon Story, 8, also of San Bernardino.

By Guy McCarthy
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — In a city haunted by gangs, drugs and weapons — where bullets kill children — distraught youngsters sometimes pick up pens, pencils or paints to sort out their feelings.

Poetry, drawings and murals creat-

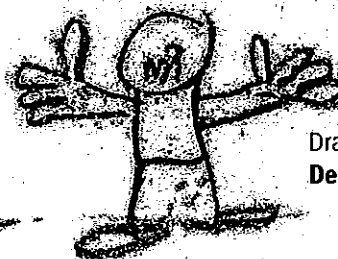
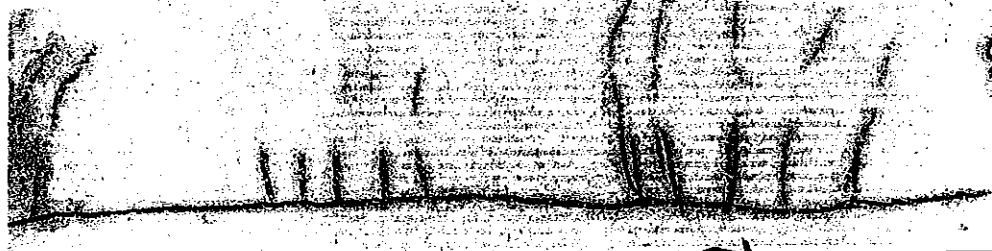
ed by San Bernardino teens and pre-teens over the past five years provide glimpses of how innocents and young adults view the violent world they grow up in.

While city leaders grapple with a surge in gang violence and unsolved homicides, grown-ups should take seriously whatever children have to say, how-

ever disturbing it may be, experts say.

"You see a sense of helplessness, chaos, anger and fear," child psychologist Charles Shipley said Tuesday after reviewing several youngsters' drawings. "When children create images like this, adults need to pay attention. People need to look at this and understand

See ART / Page A4



Drawings by
Deon Story

SB SUN

Dec. 7, 2005

Art

continued from page A1

what's going on here."

Since 2000, the Central City Lutheran Mission on West 13th Street has published books and seasonal newspapers comprised entirely of urban youth art.

"Why do people have beef?" 8-year-old Deon Danthony Story wrote at the mission last week in a brief essay about recent shootings in San Bernardino.

Deon drew a stick figure with a gun firing point-blank at another, showing how a street "beef" — a dispute, an argument, a fight — often gets settled in and around his North I Street neighborhood.

"They need to be worry about they life," wrote Deon, who lives across the street from railroad tracks paralleling Interstate 215. "That's all I have to say."

Children are resilient. The night after he made the drawing, Deon laughed and danced at a hip-hop jazz miss at the mission. But his art was grounded in the ugly fact that children are dying senselessly.

The city's surge of homicide victims in the past six weeks includes 11-year-old Mynasha Crenshaw, killed Nov. 13 by bullets through an apartment window in the lower Del Rosa area, and 16-year-old Melanie Miers, slain Nov. 19 in a drive-by shooting outside a party on North Mountain View Avenue.

"You can't take anybody for granted because they could be dead — anybody," said Matanya Pruitt, 17, an occasional poet and lyric-writer who was schoolmates with Melanie since seventh grade. "She didn't seem like she was involved in anything like fights and arguments. She was always happy."

'Dangerous age'

Parents, teachers, police and elected officials should pay particular attention to what children and teens express about violence, said Shipley, who has worked with adolescents and pre-adolescents in San Bernardino for 33 years.

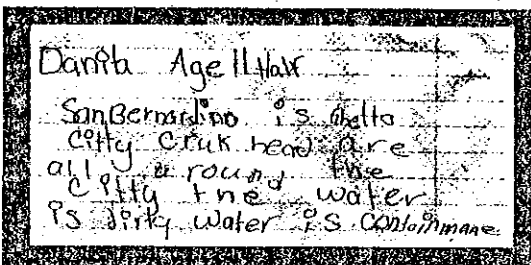
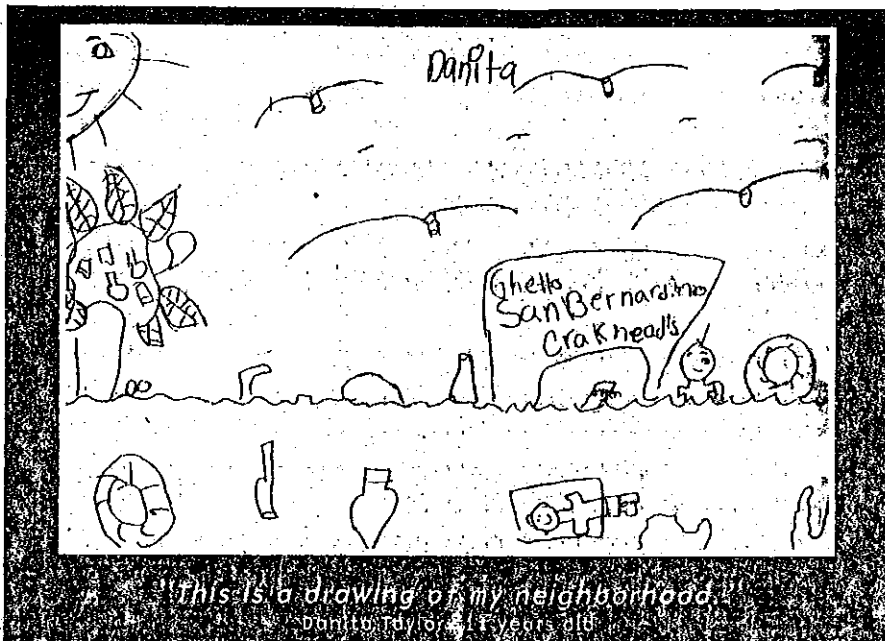
"When you have children making drawings like this, walking to school in fear, diving in the bushes when cars drive by, that tells us something about our community," Shipley said.

"Sometimes children can lead us," Shipley said. "Not to promote fear, but to remind us that right now the community is dangerous."

Teens and preteens often have more problems coping with violence and danger than other age groups, particularly in lower-income neighborhoods where crime is more routine, Shipley said.

"There are more confrontations in these age groups, among boys and girls," Shipley said. "Certainly in ghettos and barrios you have more of that, not just on the streets but on the playgrounds as well."

"Boys and girls are going through physical changes, hormonal and emotional changes," Shipley said. "When children draw and write like this, you can see they are very concerned about a number of things. A lot of times they will draw what they can't or won't say."



Courtesy Images

The drawing above and written words at left reflect life in San Bernardino from the perspective of 11-year-old Danita Taylor. These words and images were published in 2000 with many more like them in a booklet titled "No Regrets: West Side del Barrio."

Children's words and images — like those in the booklet and from Wynae and Deon — sound a warning for grown-ups, including city leaders, experts say.

Adults should pay attention to all of it."

Deon's 12-year-old sister, Wynae Hill, wrote last week about a neighborhood friend who she said was injured in a gang-related shooting about two months ago.

Wynae said hearing about the shooting scared her and made her afraid for other people in her neighborhood. Writing about it helped her express her feelings, she said, but she was still scared about the possibility of more shootings.

'No regrets'

Drug abuse that fuels crime and violence is a popular topic among youngsters who try to make sense of reality in their neighborhoods.

In a 2000 collection titled "No Regrets," published by the mission, 11-year-old Danita Taylor wrote, "San Bernardino is ghetto city. Crackheads are all around."

A picture Danita drew includes a smiling sun, birds, a tree and the words "Ghetto San Bernardino Crackheads." Verse and photos linked page-to-page in "No Regrets" include the following:

"Oranges get sucked and plucked for their Vitamin C
"Meat is cooked solid and sucked to escape reality."

On one page, a photo of steaming pots on a stovetop precedes a photo of a young man inhaling deeply from a pipe.

Giving children and teens from strife-torn neighborhoods an outlet to express themselves is one goal of publications like "No Regrets" and Reality Check, the mission's seasonal newspaper.

"If they don't get out their anger and frustration and sadness and confusion this way,

they let it out on someone else," said Alex Avila, the mission's cultural director.

Avila, 28, who grew up in New York City's Bronx borough, has been at the mission since 2000.

"We're trying to give the kids safe outlets to express themselves," Avila said.

If anyone finds the results offensive or alarming, all the better, Avila said.

"People should be offended. They should be mad that children and people are dying in their streets," Avila said.

"This is everyone's city, but it's like a Third World country — people are hungry, homeless, and the youth are killing each other. If the kids' expressions draw attention to that, or help change things at all, that's a positive. As painful as it is."

Getting political

Ivory Juarez was 17 when she wrote a poem titled "The Community," published last year in a 2004 collection "3 Crossed to Plant a Seed."

Her rhyme saddled city government officials with a measure of blame for the state of affairs in San Bernardino.

"I look at my community and the grounds that we meet, so much poverty
The neighborhood looks so dead beat, abandoned
luxuries I need I see ...
The City council isn't — thinking about stuff that is legit
Stuff that matters to the community and especially for our schools to better help
What we have left."

Inner search

George Gonzales, 15, a stu-

dent at San Bernardino High School, explored a personal path in a poem last year titled "If I Could."

"If I could plant myself all over again
And live a better life
I would regret seeing people get stabbed with knives
Get away from all of my problems
Moms always tripping
I got cats telling me they wanna catch me tripping
So they can kick my ass
Sometimes I wonder how long it's gonna last
And why
I got so many problems I feel like breaking down to cry
But I'm holding it inside
For as long as I can
But it's just too much —"

'Drop guns'

Young local artists also focus on contraception, sexually transmitted diseases and teen pregnancy.

In another "3 Crossed to Plant a Seed" entry, two girls exchange lines in a cautionary poem, "Dialogue of the Pretty Boys."

Marshay: "Yeah it was cool but we didn't use protection. I'm lucky though because I'm not pregnant and I don't have any infection."

Ivory: "Girl you are so lucky but don't ever risk your life for a pretty boy ..."

Just as rap music and independent filmmakers documented urban rage before the 1992 Los Angeles riots, pop culture reflected simmering problems in the immigrant suburbs of France years before civil unrest sparked by alleged police brutality spread from city to city last month.

It remains to be seen whether art foretells the future of San Bernardino, or if it simply mirrors what's already happened. In the meantime, local youngsters are documenting life and death their own way and offering solutions.

About two weeks ago, Nate Maldonado, 19, drew an image of two young men dropping handguns for the next cover of the mission newspaper Reality Check.

"We wanted to do something for the community," Maldonado said. "The message is to drop the guns, stop the killing. Because so many of the victims have been innocent bystanders."

While children's and teen's art that reflects criminal violence may be disturbing, youngsters' efforts present an opportunity, Shipley said.

"These images can be used as a springboard to open discussions," Shipley said. "Between children and their parents and teachers. Between children and police officers, as well. Too many children today learn about the police through hip-hop music and imagery."

"Even elected officials can use these images as a platform to spur dialogue at community meetings," Shipley said. "What could be more important than considering children's fears and emotions in all this? When we listen to children, and do our best to protect them, we're protecting ourselves and our future."

Contact writer Guy McCarthy at (909) 335-5819 or via e-mail at guy.mccarthy@sbsun.com.

Weather

Mostly cloudy; drizzle possible

High 70, Low 42

Air quality: Moderate

Page B8

THE SUN

San Bernardino County's Newspaper

San Bern

FRIDAY DECEMBER 9, 2005

WWW.SBSUN.COM

Seeking solutions for

SB

WHAT IS MYNESA'S CIRCLE?

The death of 11-year-old Mynesa Crenshaw in a gang-related shooting last month is a tragic illustration of escalating violence in and around San Bernardino.

The Sun created Mynesa's Circle as a lasting tribute to her and a means for the community to unite in the war on crime and violence.

Community leaders and concerned citizens from many different walks of life — business, law enforcement, education, government, religion — are being brought together to discuss and pursue solutions to the problem.

It is not a finger-pointing exercise. It is not

a political venue. Rather, it is an opportunity for all to hold a mirror to ourselves and ask what we can do, together as a community, to build a wall — a circle — of hope and security around our children.

The Sun has also enlisted a wide array of media partners to help shine a spotlight on the issue. These include The Black Voice News, El Sol, KITE-AM (590), the Inland Valley Daily Bulletin, the Redlands Daily Facts and Cal State San Bernardino.

Among those attending Thursday night's meeting or who have agreed to help:

■ Betty Dean Anderson, former City

Council member, San Bernardino
■ Donald Baker, president, Slater Bros. Markets

■ Robert Batzer, president, publisher, The Sun

■ The Rev. Reggie Beamon, Pastors on the Premises

■ Fred Board, publisher, Redlands Daily Facts

■ Ruddy Bravo, general manager, El Sol Voice News

■ Hardy Brown, co-publisher, The Black Voice News

■ Mark and Katrina Cator, California Soul Cafe

■ Arturo Delgado, superintendent, San Bernardino City Unified School District

■ Herb Fischer, superintendent of schools, San Bernardino County

■ Edna Herring, superintendent, Rialto Unified School District

■ Walter Jarman, president, NAACP-San Bernardino branch

■ The Rev. David Kaike, Central City Lutheran Mission

■ Al Karnig, president, Cal State San Bernardino

■ William Leonard

■ Sheriff Gary Penrod

■ District Attorney Michael A. Ramos

■ Larry Sharp, president, chief executive officer, Arrowhead Credit Union

■ Ron Stark, KITE-AM (590)

■ Tori Stordahl

■ Heck Thomas, San Bernardino Adult School

■ Mark Uffer, chief administrative officer, county of San Bernardino

■ Gary Underwood, police chief, San Bernardino City Unified School District

■ Mayor Judith Valles, San Bernardino

■ Rikke Van Johnson, San Bernardino councilman, 6th Ward

■ Bobby Vega, Casa De San Bernardino

■ Garrett Zimmon, police chief, San Bernardino

■ Sun Reader Advisory Board: Daniel Blakely, Barbara Lee Ham Covey, Mark Henry, Julie Hernandez, Lynette Kaplan, Brenda Mackey, James Magnuson, Julian Melendez, Ernest Ott, Jeffrey Pryor, John Ragsdale, Glenda Randolph, Nora Taylor, David Torres.

If you are interested in taking part in this effort, please join our community weblog at www.sbsun.com.

Dec. 9

Preschools: A lifetime investment in children

By Emily Sachs
Staff Writer

The boy is big for his age, which enables him to size up a room of other people and make his domination known.

He is confident and greets others, but he can't compromise, he throws fits when he doesn't get his way, and he shows no empathy when others get hurt.

Not yet even 4, he has already faced being kicked out of his preschool for his behavior, which directly

Its from his tumultuous and abusive home life in a tough neighborhood, said Shealia K. Carvin, director of Heigh Ho State Preschool in San Bernardino, where the unidentified boy is a student.

"I wanted him to stay," Carvin said. "I wanted to work with him because we needed to try to do that. We needed to try to help."

Carvin believes so strongly in the benefits of preschool that the 20-year veteran of the early education system has lobbied in Sacramento for universal preschool.

In the wake of a decade-high record of homicides in the city of San Bernardino, preschool is just one of a number of solutions that could stem the violence, if not now then in the long-term future.

Among other things, studies have shown that people who had at least one year of preschool are more likely to complete high school and go on to college, less likely to be in special education or held back, and less likely to

**TROUBLED
TOWN**

**WHAT CAN
WE DO?**



See PRESCHOOL / Page A8

Preschool

continued from page A1

commit crimes as juveniles.

A long-term study by University of Wisconsin researchers compared non-preschool children to those who had attended an inner-city Chicago preschool. Among their findings were that preschool graduates had:

- 41 percent fewer arrests for violent crimes
- 26 percent greater high school graduation rate
- Half the likelihood of needing welfare and other social services as adults.

Law enforcement officials from Fight Crime: Invest in Kids California, a nonprofit anti-crime organization, estimate that \$19 billion could be saved in crime costs, welfare and other government impacts if all 3- and 4-year-olds in the state were in preschool.

While a comprehensive crime prevention strategy has many components, preschool clearly makes a difference, said Catherine Atkin, president of Preschool California, an Oakland-based nonprofit that is working to make preschool available to all youngsters.

Pros

- Proven success: readying children academically, socially and behaviorally for school.
- Boosts high school graduation and college-going rates and reduces delinquency and special education.
- Targets children when their brains are most developing.

Cons

- Isn't mandatory, potentially leaving out the most at-risk children.
- Parents of means can buy better education through private schools.
- Is not timed at home with parents, which experts agree is ideal early education.

Elementary schools shoulder the burden of underprepared students, she said. And when children fall behind in the classroom, they are hard-pressed to catch up, making it more likely they will be caught up in less academic pursuits — primarily gangs and delinquency.

"Children who do better in school do better for their lifetime," Atkin said.

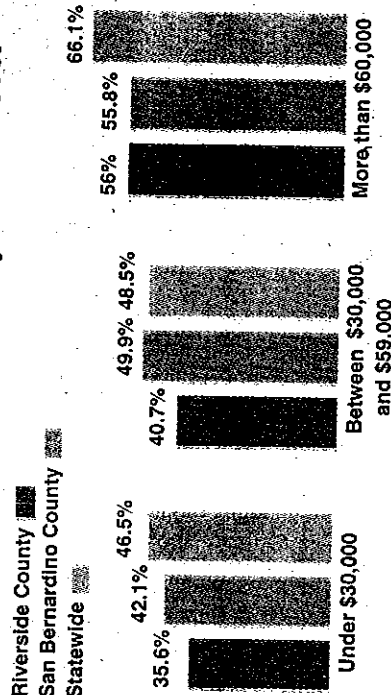
Georgia and Oklahoma offer preschool to all 4-year-olds, and Florida voters passed a universal preschool measure two years ago.

It is likely that California voters will have their say shortly. A petition with 1 million signatures recently was turned in to

Preschool enrollment rates of 4 year olds



Preschool enrollment rates by income level



Source: Children Now

Staff graphic

the secretary of state for verification. It will be decided next month if a measure will be placed on the June ballot.

The Preschool for All Act would provide part-day preschool for all willing 4-year-olds in the state for one year. The measure would be paid for through a 1.7 percent tax increase for the 0.6 percent wealthiest Californians.

The \$2.3 billion raised annu-

ally would cover most of the costs for the schools, which would be likely operated by the county Superintendent of Schools office.

San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools Herbert R. Fischer is a longtime supporter of universal preschool and is watching the likely ballot initiative closely, said spokeswoman Christine McGrew.

His interest in preschools is

directed primarily at the academic foundation that they provide, especially for literacy. Children who aren't reading by the third grade are more likely to drop out of school and enter the criminal justice system, McGrew said.

"It ends up being kind of a quality of life economic issue as well in the long term," she said.

Carvin, the preschool director in San Bernardino, sees both long-term and immediate benefits of early education.

She said she convinced teachers at her school to allow the difficult boy to stay. Since August, his improvement is impressive.

He is learning to catch a ball, something he had never tried before. He scribbles. And where he first tore books apart when handed them, now he sits quietly and looks at the pictures.

Things aren't perfect, of course. Recently his mother came in and saw him playing with a purse and demanded he not do that again. When Carvin said such pretend play would someday make him a better father, she said the mother backed off.

"So maybe we'll make a difference," Carvin said.

Contact writer Emily Sachs at (909) 386-3879 or via e-mail at emily.sachs@sbsun.com.

Friday, December 9, 2005

Group discusses assault on crime

By Gina Tenorio
Staff Writer

WHAT TO DO

SAN BERNARDINO — Community leaders gathered Thursday night to speak, listen and exchange ideas about how to clean the city of crime.

At its office on Gannett Parkway, The Sun hosted the first meeting of Mynesha's Circle, a community partnership created by the newspaper in tribute to 11-year-old Mynesha Crenshaw, whose life was cut short by gang violence.

"This is all about solutions," Editor Steve Lambert told the crowd of invited guests. "What can we do?"

posed this question to c. 40 community leaders from the fields of law enforcement, religion, business, education and government and opened a torrent of ideas that flowed from the group.

"I was here when we were named the All-American City," said Betty Dean Anderson, a former San Bernardino councilwoman. "I was here when we were named murder capital of the world."

San Bernardino police have reported 56 homicides this year. For the past two years, the city of 200,000 has been ranked among the 25 most dangerous in the nation.

Mynesha's death Nov. 13 — she was fatally shot when suspected gang members sprayed an apartment in the Del Rosa area — has galvanized the

Among the things suggested Thursday night at The Sun to take a huge bite out of crime:

ACTION

1. Create a vision of what the group should achieve.
2. Develop a mission statement.
3. Organize neighborhood walks.
4. Take a suppression, intervention and prevention approach to crime.
5. Try and stimulate people and business investment in the community.

SOLUTIONS

1. Honor Mynesha. Keep her memory alive so that others will remember.
2. Hold people accountable for their acts and make them understand the value of life.
3. Combine resources. Organize safety groups together, create a data bank that law enforcement can access to identify problem spots.
4. Create hope.
5. Push funding agenda.

See CIRCLE / Page A8

LEFT: John Ragsdale of Highland talks Thursday night at the first meeting of Mynesha's Circle at The Residents and community leaders gathered to solutions to problems associated with crime.

Brett K. Snow/Staff photographer

VOICES



"It's an issue that concerns all of us. We all have a vested interest in what goes on in our community."

ARTURO DELGADO

Superintendent, San Bernardino City Unified School District

"It's important to relay information to the community on how it needs to be involved. They are important as a component."

WALTER JARMAN

President,
NAACP-San Bernardino branch

JUDITH VALLES

San Bernardino mayor

As parents, we need to take responsibility for our children. I appreciate the paper advocating for more after-school programs. Faith communities are doing as much as they can. But we need to coordinate our efforts to do much more. The whole community has to come together. In many cases, we do, and we have. We just have to be more vigilant."



"My desire would be that something would come out that would have a long-term positive effect in San Bernardino and surrounding communities."

RIKKE VAN JOHNSON

San Bernardino councilman



"Some of the solutions are as easy or as simple as letting people know what services are available to them."

GARY UNDERWOOD

Police chief, San Bernardino City Unified School District

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"First you have to say gangs equal drugs. Drugs equal money. Second, we need hope. A lot of these young men think that 21 is when they are going to die."

GARRETT ZIMMON

San Bernardino police chief

Dec. 9
Conn. from
"Circle"
Al



Local residents and community leaders sit in a section of The Sun newsroom Thursday night at the first meeting of Mynesha's Circle, a gathering seeking solutions to problems associated with crime.

Photos by Brett K. Snow/Staff photographer

Dec. 9

Circle

continued from page A1

anger and frustration that so many residents have lived with for so long.

The reasons for the violent turn in the city are numerous: the region's 35,000 lost jobs during the past 20 years; the spread of poverty; the air of despair; the breakdown of the family. Members of Mynasha's Circle said those issues need to be addressed.

"First you have to say gangs equal drugs. Drugs equal money," said Police Chief Garrett Zimmon. "Second, we need hope. A lot of these young men think that 21 is when they are going to die."

And third, if anyone in the group believes that talking to mom and dad is a way to end the problem, in many cases, they would be mistaken, Zimmon said.

The violence that has permeated several areas of the city may be fostered by urban culture, some suggested. Others said more attention needs to be paid to youth programs and more emphasis needs to be placed on after-school programs. If youths are to stay out of gangs, the community must reach the children at a young age, such as preschool, they said.

And when those kids get through high school and move on to higher studies, they need to be enticed to come back home and improve San Bernardino, said District Attorney Michael A. Ramos.

"Where are the 22- or 23-year-old college students?" Ramos asked. "We don't want them to move away. We want them to stay here and invest in the community."

The business community also must get involved, said Ernest Ott, a member of



Ron Stark of KTLE-AM (590), left, San Bernardino Police Chief Garrett Zimmon and District Attorney Michael A. Ramos attend the first meeting of Mynasha's Circle on Thursday night at The Sun. Community leaders and residents gathered to discuss seeking solutions to problems associated with crime.

The Sun's Reader Advisory Board. He said they need a reason to invest and need to know that they will make a profit in this community.

"Profit is not a bad word," he said.

Ott also suggested creating an award or fund in Mynasha's name so that she will be remembered for years to come.

"In a few years, people will wonder

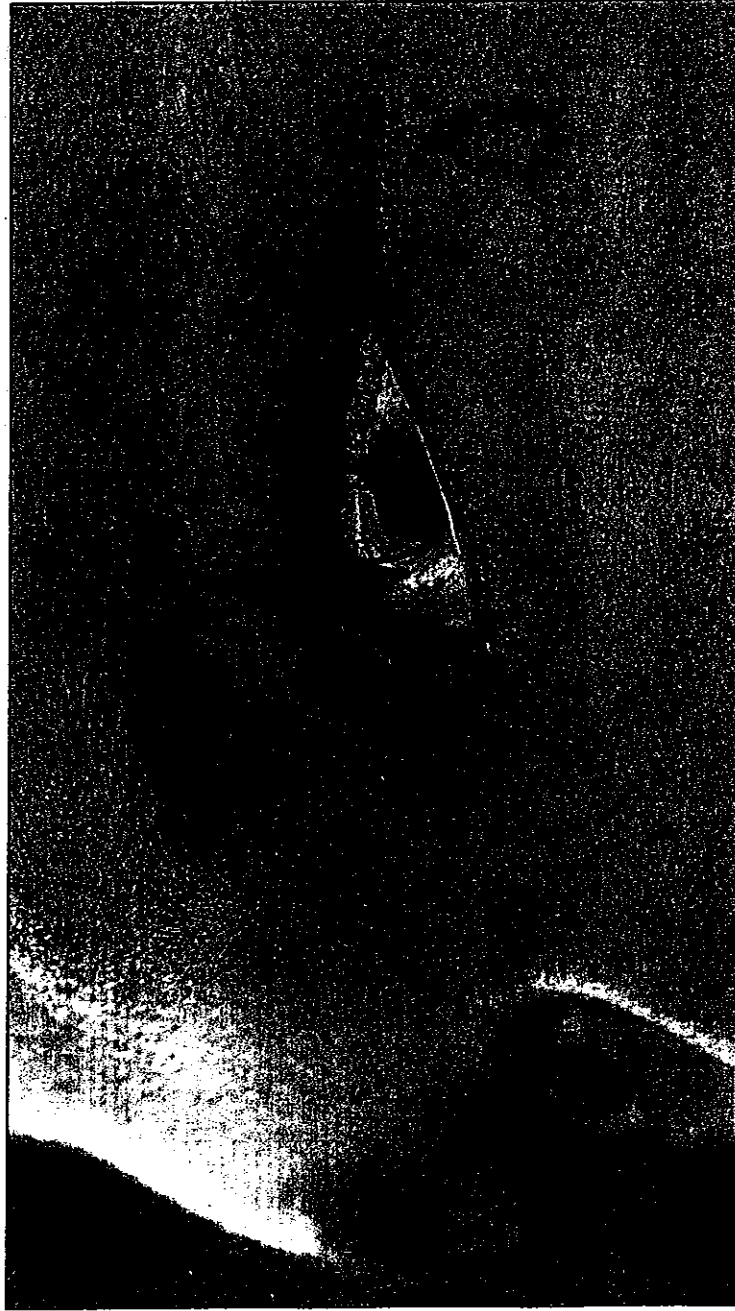
who she is," Ott said.

Lambert carefully documented recommendations onto a huge note pad for all to see. Among the suggestions was to find a way for gangs to become personally accountable for the lives they take and to make them realize that they may be ruining their own lives with the violence they spread.

"Most of these gangs are interrelated," said the Rev. Reggie Beamon. "We need to get them in a room to show them they're connected. They have to realize that they are connected like, 'Oh, you're so-and-so's cousin.' And they have to see that what they're doing is senseless."

Contact writer Gina Tenorio at (909) 386-3854 or via e-mail at gina.tenorio@sbsun.com.

Born to lose?



Christopher Lewis of San Bernardino has been surrounded by gangs and violence his entire life. Now 29, he has served time in some of the most dangerous prisons in California — Tehachapi, Corcoran, Pelican Bay and Salinas State Penitentiary. Currently, he's back in prison at the California Institution for Men in Chino, serving a one-year sentence for failing a probationary drug test.

SB man says gang culture part and parcel of life since Day One

By Sara A. Carter
Staff Writer

Christopher Lewis never gets away. Not from his family. Not from his gang. And not from police.

But mostly, it's himself he can't escape.

"I was somewhat doomed from the beginning," he says. "For most of us, little homies included, life on the

streets is all we know. We got to learn to survive, to defend ourselves ... sometimes at a high price."

Today, Lewis sits in a cell at the California Institution for Men in Chino, serving a one-year sentence for failing a probationary drug test. He's expected to be released early — possibly by the end of January.

Lewis has been surrounded by gangs and violence his entire life. His

father belonged to the People's Temple, a follower of cult leader Jim Jones, whose 900 adherents committed suicide at Jones' urging in Africa in 1978. Lewis' father, Christopher Lewis Sr., was not among them, though. He was already dead, believed to have been killed by members of the cult when Lewis was 2.

See LIFE / Page A6

Thomas R. Cordova/Staff photographer

SB SUN

Dec. 24, 2005

the state's toughest prisons. Lewis was released on probation 17 months ago.

His old Pomona neighborhood had changed, though — his gang, the Angulo Mafia Crips was displaced by Latino gangs while he and other members of his gang were in prison.

Almost immediately, Lewis was in trouble again.

Rival gang members wanted him dead. He was shot while driving in Pomona by members of a Latino gang who opened fire on his car.

He flunked his first probationary drug test and no-showed a mandatory court hearing.

His freedom, just won, would be short-lived.

Lost at birth

"It's a vicious circle," says James Diego Vigil, a noted gang expert and doctor of criminology and anthropology at UC Irvine. Most gang members grew up in dysfunctional homes. Many were stereotyped from the outset by schools, law enforcement and other public agencies. Some suffered from mental illness or depression that went untreated.

"They were lost at birth. They are categorized as gang members from their youth," Vigil said. "They live in a violent world many people do not understand."

Violence has been Lewis' worst enemy and the greatest enemy of those who got in his way. Sometimes he is filled with a violent rage that has only seemed to tame itself in his older age, he said.

"I never expected to live this long," Lewis added. "I guess it's for a reason."

After serving out their convictions, they're released to the streets with minimal life skills, knowledge or rehabilitation, said his wife, Serina.

"I mean, he couldn't even change the oil on the car," she said. "He had no idea how to pay bills or just do the simple things in life. It has been really hard for him."

Vigil added that after incarceration, many young gang members leave prison with very little choice but to return to the streets.

which conducted by Cheryl M... an assistant professor in criminology and law and society at UC Irvine who has studied gangs for more than 20 years, said understanding the roots of youth violence needs to go beyond political debates or law enforcement. To understand the reasons behind gang culture, researchers look more to the community, individual and family.

"Long periods of incarceration don't destroy gangs," she says. "We're looking at school experience, home life and violence prevention programs. We're trying to identify the common factors of resilient youth."

For Lewis, joining a gang was a means of survival in a troubled neighborhood. But once in, he could never get out. As he grew older, drugs, weapons and retaliation became facts of life.

"I've seen so many of my little homeboys die," he said. "Most of us only had each other growing up. We protected each other from the world outside. But everything changes, doesn't it? Later we ended up killing each other."

A new beginning

In May 2004, Lewis learned he was going to be a father. Serina was expecting their first child.

For the first time in his life, Lewis considered going straight.

"I am judged completely in the outside world," he said. "I have been judged since the day I was born. I don't want that for my baby. I want my baby to know who I was and learn from my mistakes."

On Oct. 19, 2004, Neveah was born. When the nurses at Pomona Valley Hospital brought the baby to Serina's room, Lewis was with them.

He wrapped Neveah in his arms and held her close.

Serina, exhausted from hours of labor, smiled and cried with him.

"I want to make it work for my baby," he said. "I want the war to end. ... I want Serina to be safe."

Serina was hopeful that day, believing their family would find peace.

"I wish people knew him the way I do," she said. "I wish the world would give men like him

Saturday, December 24, 2005

another chance."

But it's not that easy, Lewis said, when he himself has a hard time doing just that.

Throughout 2005, Lewis worked to eliminate gang rivalries in San Bernardino. He convinced many of the city's gang members to rent a recording studio on Base Line, where they can make music together with the hope of formulating a truce.

They did. The studio was Lewis' dream.

Over the past year, he, his wife and gang members from San Bernardino and Los Angeles counties were working day and night recording music under their new name, Yankee Doodle.

"Bloods and Crips coming together like brothers," Lewis said.

"I can't believe it. There is no way in hell we'd tie our colors together in the past. Now, we're changing our philosophy. We are an army of men no longer killing each other."

The bass thump emanating from 2 Xtreme 4 Records' studio reverberated throughout the back lot most nights.

It was better than the sound of bullets, Lewis said.

The smell of marijuana wafted in the air while the men gathered around preparing to record.

Many gang members frequented the studio laying track after track of their own rap music. They competed in rap competitions throughout the city.

Even Latino gangs connected with the music project. Verdugo Flats, one of San Bernardino's most dangerous Latino gangs, made their way into the compound as well, under the unspoken truce.

Many believed if they could do something together, it would help stop the violence.

No escape

In August, Lewis was shot six times — in the thigh, hands and shoulder — while visiting friends in Las Vegas.

Like a "cat with nine lives," he survived, he said.

He cheated death, but not the law.

Before Neveah's first birthday, in October, Lewis was apprehended by police at the studio. They had visited the studio months before with FBI officials in a gang sweep, but they did not recognize him.

Lewis confronted them at the iron gates of the studio.

"Smile, we're going to take your picture," one FBI agent said to Lewis.

"Go on and take it," Lewis yelled. "But I'm going to take yours as well."

He did, and within a month, he was arrested again for violating his probation.

Lewis is now spending his days in the Chino Institute For Men.

"Believe it or not, I'm tired of living my life this way," he said.

"I want things to change, and I want my black brothers and sisters to stop killing each other."

At home in San Bernardino, his wife finds some comfort in a community that has in recent weeks made confronting crime a top priority in the wake of the fatal shooting of Myeshia.

"If anything has come out of the death of that poor innocent child, it is the amount of attention she is bringing to a community that is totally out of control," Serina said. "It seems like people in this city are dying all the time because of gang violence. There's got to be a way to stop it, to change it."

Life

continued from page A1

At home, his uncles were early members of the Crips, a notorious Los Angeles street gang.

By age 12, he had joined a gang himself, despite having moved to Pomona to live with his aunt, a former probation officer in Los Angeles County.

The years since have been a blur of crime and punishment.

At 13, he was given a juvenile life sentence in the California Youth Authority for assault with a deadly weapon. Three months after his release from CYA at age 18, he was behind bars again. Now 29, he has served time in some of the most dangerous prisons in California — Tehachapi, Corcoran, Pelican Bay and Salinas State Penitentiary.

His longest stretch of freedom since age 13 was 16 months, much of which he spent on the run.

Christopher Lewis is a criminal.

But he is also a victim of a culture of violence that has turned impoverished communities into feeding grounds for what experts say are complex criminal enterprises or, more simply, gangs.

"Everyone is a victim of gang violence," said Jose Espinoza, a Los Angeles detective who's spent more than 30 years working gang neighborhoods. "You've got to go back and get them when they're kids. Many of these gang members get jumped in as early as middle school."

Nationwide, gang activity is on the rise, and homicides are up more than 50 percent, Espinoza said.

In San Bernardino, where Lewis most recently lived, crime has become a central issue in city politics following the gang-related slaying of 11-year-old Mynisha Crenshaw last month. With the city ranking among the top 25 most dangerous in the United States for two years running, residents are demanding action, and city leaders are scrambling to respond.

While the most audible cry is for more police on the streets, all acknowledge the problem is far more complex and that real solutions must come from the community and focus not just on law enforcement, but ultimately on better living.

Like many, if not most, Lewis, too, wants a better life. Married with a daughter, he wants out of the gang culture. He recognizes, however, that his prospects are not good, escape unlikely.

"If one thing is predictable in my life, it's that I can never change who I am," he said. "I can never get a break."

Life of violence

"Give me a DoubleDouble, animal style," Lewis barks at the menu in an In-N-Out Burger drive-through. Then, turning: "Can't help it. I'm a big boy."

It's fall 2005, and Lewis has been free from Salinas Valley for nearly a year. It won't last, though. It never does.

At the window, the drive-through clerk is apprehensive. Maybe it's the tattoo on Lewis' arm. It says "Cop Killer" in bold black prison paint.

Lewis hands over his money and accepts his food in silence. Then, pulling away, he reflects: "Can't do nothing right now about

the tats. It's who I am."

Raised in South Central Los Angeles, an area notorious for gang activity, Lewis has lived in the heart of violence all his life.

After joining the Crips, he moved to Pomona and lived in the Angela-Chanslor neighborhood, one of that city's most dangerous communities.

As he grew older, his crimes became more serious. Armed robbery. Assault. He spent more time in prison than at home.

That's where younger gang members become "soldiers," he says.

"You got to show them straight up who you are," he says.

Lewis didn't wait to make his mark in prison.

He began picking fights in the cafeteria in his first week to show other gang leaders he wasn't someone to be "messed with."

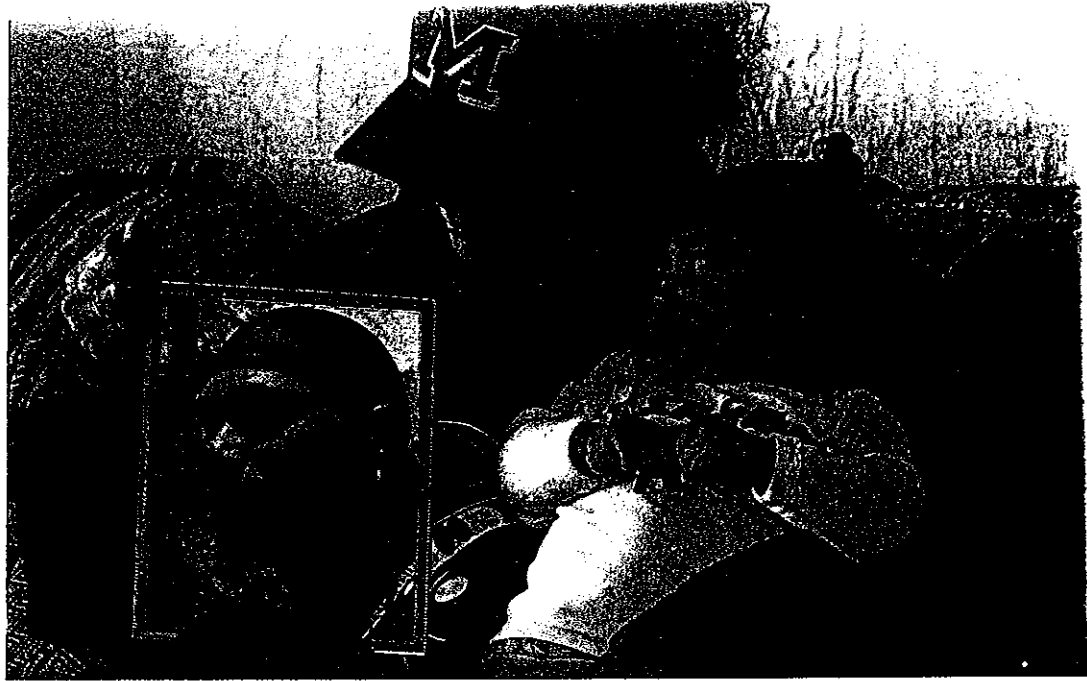
The fighting was vicious, he said. It had to be.

"I live my life on the offense," he said. "Otherwise, they'd kill me."

In prison, he studied Swahili, Arabic and read nearly 100 books on history in an attempt to better himself. He found war histories most compelling. He also spent a large majority of his reading learning about hip-hop and rap.

"Since the beginning of men have waged war," he said. "I grew up in a war zone. I'm a soldier with an X-gene."

After seven years in some of



Gabriel Acosta/ Staff photographer

Serina Lewis, 34, of San Bernardino holds a photo of Christopher Lewis, left, and their child, Neveah, 1, at 2 Xtreme 4 Recordin in San Bernardino.



Thomas R. Cordova/Staff photographer

Lewis hangs out at the San Bernardino recording studio 2 Xtreme 4 Recordin in June.

Weather

Scattered showers
High 63, Low 41
Air quality: Good
Page B8

THE SUN

San Bernardino County's Newspaper

• SATURDAY | DECEMBER 31, 2005

WWW.SBSUN.COM

Deadly year for SB

Community galvanized over senseless killings of innocent children

By Guy McCarthy
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — Easy access to weapons that kill, unchecked drug trafficking, transient criminals and escalating gang violence contributed this year to the city's highest homicide total in a decade.

The fact that the more than 55 victims included innocent children in run-down neighborhoods did little to provoke citywide anger or indignation until the Nov. 13 killing of 11-year-old Mynesha Crenshaw.

Mynesha's death focused public attention on a senseless killing and what it meant to the rest of the city.

Mynesha was sitting down to dinner in a crime-ridden Del Rosa area apartment complex when a bullet through her living-room window ended her life. Elected leaders and police officials stepped up their rhetoric and took action. As of Dec. 30, seven suspects in Mynesha's killing were behind bars.

Since Mynesha's death, elected leaders, community activists and law enforcement officials — spurred in part by heightened public scrutiny — have taken more deliberate steps to reduce crime, street shootings and gang activity. They've also added more than 50 officers to patrol the city, including county deputies, and beefed up anti-gang measures.

Local authorities have taken major steps in the war on crime. Solutions, however, remain elusive.

In an ongoing struggle to shore up the city's faltering economy, local leaders have embraced growth without investment in older, impoverished neighborhoods.

Entire sections of the city remain fertile ground for ongoing cycles of misery — where unemployment climbs, families break down, crime and drug-use fester and gangs easily take hold.

Since Proposition 13 stripped local governments of vital property-tax revenue in the late 1970s, the popular panacea in cities from the San Geronimo Pass to the coast has been to build revenue coffers by building more homes and businesses.

The trouble is, according to some social critics, that economic development too often ignores or excludes sustaining and redeveloping down-trodden urban areas. Infusions of cash into brand-new tract neighborhoods coincide with declines in service in older areas.

A nearly powerless underclass of people is left to fend for itself.

Heightened public scrutiny of police tactics in San Bernardino has exposed specific flaws in city crime-fighting strategies since Mynesha's death.

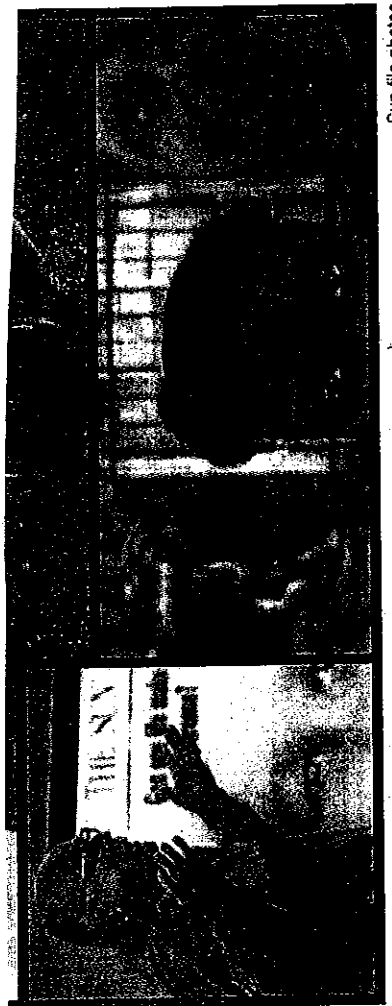
■ San Bernardino and its Police Department have been accused of passing up millions of dollars in federal funding opportunities, leaving the city vulnerable to gang migration from Los Angeles, San Diego and Riverside communities — towns, cities and

See CRIME / Page A6

Dec. 31
Page 1

NEIGHBORHOOD WALKS

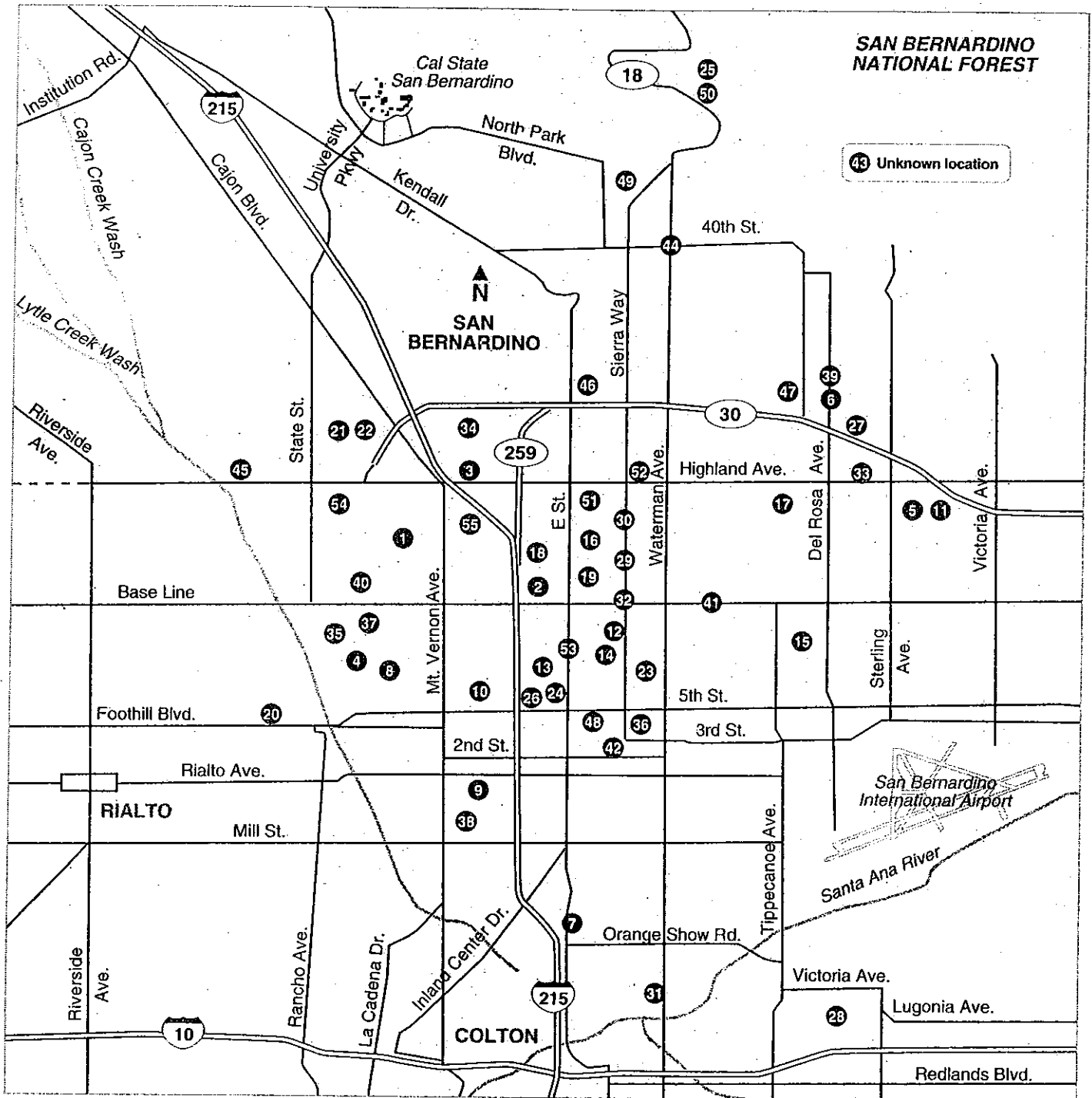
connect to
earlier effort lasted
1 year



Sun file photos

Dec. 31

San Bernardino homicides - 2005



Source: San Bernardino County Coroner's Office

Staff graphic

Begin each
day with

THE SUN

**Mommy gave me all
her shoes...**

She says they hurt her feet.

*I hope she doesn't find out
about FOOT EFX*

cause then I won't have anything to play dress up with!



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Saturday, December 31, 2005

Crime

continued from page A1

counties that have used available resources to push gangs out.

■ Police have been unable to keep pace with homicide investigations, failing to arrest suspects in four of every 10 homicides in the past decade.

■ Political infighting and union dissent have undermined a police beat system introduced in 2002 to reduce street crime.

■ Already under-staffed to patrol existing beats on the street level, law enforcement authorities face the additional challenge of an entire network of unintended, subterranean shortcuts and hideouts used by innocents and criminals alike — the web of flood-control channels, ditches and basins where people routinely go but police do not.

In spite of hard truths that lurk in any long-term, dispassionate assessment of cause and effects in San Bernardino, local leaders have committed in the past two months to doing whatever's necessary to make the city's streets safer for children like Mynesha.

Steps that may contribute to real results include:

■ Substantial increases in police patrols in city and unincorporated areas.

■ More aggressive gang enforcement commitments from the district attorney.

■ Comprehensive anti-crime platforms from both remaining mayoral candidates.

■ A tougher city stance toward owners of apartment complexes where lower-income and middle-income tenants face an environment that breeds crime.

■ Emergence of local leaders at the grassroots level. People who care about what happens on their streets and in their neighborhoods have stepped forward to ensure their voices are heard.

However many more police officers the city decides to place on the streets in 2006, San Bernardino leaders and residents face a daunting task in confronting the underlying causes that led to the killing of Mynesha Crenshaw.

The recent formation of Mynesha's Circle, a broad-based coalition of elected leaders, law enforcement, activists and concerned citizens, may ensure that public safety in San Bernardino remains the city's top priority in 2006.

But whether her life and death can truly make a difference remains to be seen.

Contact writer Guy McCarthy at (909) 386-3872 or via e-mail at guy.mccarthy@sbsun.com.

A4 The Sun — San Bernardino

LOST LIVES

**By George Watson
and Robert Rogers**
Staff Writers

They were mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, daughters and sons.

Some were God-fearing folk. Others brought fear of God to those they met. Some were too young ever to have done either.

All of them were loved by someone.

And all of them died violently here in San Bernardino.

On average, someone died intentionally by the hands of another just about every seven days — 55 people in 56 weeks.

Enough people to fill many restaurants. Twice the number that fills most classrooms. Enough to play full-court games on six basketball courts.

"It should make people say, 'Enough is enough,'" said Sandra Goulsby, whose son Shanar was shot to death Aug. 2. "This is about people. It doesn't matter what race or creed they are. They are people."

In recent weeks, reporters for The Sun have scoured the city in search of the dead and their stories. Many left legacies — if only in the memories of those who knew them and loved them. Of others, precious little could be learned.

This is what we know:

JAN. 1

Aaron Leach

Growing up poor with seven siblings meant Aaron Leach's family had to stretch every last dollar.

Leach, 18, took on a job in high school to help his mother pay the bills. He also visited a barber shop, watching the barbers cut hair so he could do the same.

"There were times we couldn't afford haircuts so he got really good at it," said his mother, Bernay Howard. "And then he'd cut the hair of the neighborhood kids. He'd come home from a long day of work and there would be a line of children waiting at the door, and he'd cut their hair for \$5."

Leach was a sports star at Arroyo Valley High School who also was known for greeting everyone at his church.

"Old ladies would tell me he was the only young man who would come up and say hi to them," his mother said. "I had no idea so many people knew Aaron, from so many other towns. They all came to his funeral."

Leach died Jan. 1, gunned down on West Evans Street while visiting friends. A friend was also shot.

Police initially made an arrest in the case but because no witnesses came forward, Howard said, the man was released — on the day Leach was buried.

JAN. 13

Raymond Peredia

Raymond Peredia and a friend found themselves in a fight with two men behind a gas station.

What began as an argument devolved quickly into a battle. Peredia fought with one of the assailants before the second combatant opened fire with a gun, striking Peredia several times.

Peredia, 21, was found dead lying on the ground behind the store on West Base Line.

JAN. 16

Raul Payan

Raul Payan came into the world on a Valentine's Day and never stopped loving.

He loved his family. He loved his little girl from the moment she was born, later giving her the moniker, "Shortie." And near the end of his 29 years, he loved his new girlfriend.

His father, Ralph Payan, named his son Raul but everyone knew him as Ralphe.

Everyone seemed to know him, whether it was the people he helped through his job as an inspector with San Bernardino County's vector control department or the friends he made pumping iron.

"He was even friends with a judge he met lifting weights," Ralph Payan said.

Payan fell in love with his girlfriend several months before his death. The couple were at a dance club when they encountered his girlfriend's estranged husband. Ralph Payan said she was in the process of divorcing the man.

After a quarrel, everyone was ejected from the bar. Payan and his girlfriend were then attacked by the husband and his friends, his father said. The girlfriend es-

no County 1★

caped, but Payan died from the beating he took with a baseball bat.

Payan's family finds solace in memories of his teddy bear heart. They recall how this gentle giant could use his huge mitts to draw such beautiful pictures that he once won an internship from an art institute.

And they see him in Shortie as she grows older. They just wish she was doing that with her dad.

JAN. 18

Javier Cornejo

Police found Javier Cornejo lying on his couch after they were summoned by a frightened neighbor shortly before midnight.

The caller reported hearing gunshots at the home on North Cabrera Street but waited in fear for a half hour before calling, police reports indicate.

The first officers to arrive got no response when they knocked and had to force entry. But it was too late. Cornejo, 35, was pronounced dead from a gunshot wound to the head.

JAN. 23

Natasha Harris

On this night, Sunrise Lane claimed another victim.

Natasha Harris was found lying on the ground outside an apartment complex on Sunrise Lane. She received medical attention but succumbed to a gunshot wound to the head five hours later.

Harris, 17, had been sitting in front of her apartment at the time of the shooting, investigators said. The area, known in and around the neighborhood as Little Afrika, has been a sad source of violence.

Shootings have stolen a handful of lives in recent years, including the slaying of a young man in a dingy field where children play among trash, glass and jagged rocks.

FEB. 2

Mario Smith

Someone found Mario Maurice Smith's body inside a motel room late in the morning.

Smith, 49, had suffered head injuries that claimed his life. An unknown weapon had been used in the assault.

Jesus Borrego

A tattered letter found in Jesus Borrego's wallet provided a glimpse into his most sacred dream: giving his son, 3-year-old Jesse, a family, a stable home and a strong sense of right and wrong.

"He always carried a letter saying how precious his son was," said his mother, Linda Alonzo, of Highland. "He felt he had nothing and wanted to prevail through his son, show him how to live life right."

Borrego lost that chance when a friend stabbed him several times and left him bleeding on West Ninth Street.

His family recalls the 22-year-old spending afternoons cheering on the Dallas Cowboys, sketching Spiderman and Shamu for his son and teaching little Jesse how to play football.

Borrego insisted people call him "J-Dog" and his son "Little Dog," though the monikers have faded since his death.

"My son was such a loving person with a big old smile and a heart for everybody," Alonzo said. "It still hurts; the pain is

JAN. 28

Mickey Dupree

The construction job may have been temporary, but Mickey Danta Dupree loved it. He especially enjoyed coming home covered in grime.

It meant he was earning his keep, recalled his mother, Sharon Cleveland.

"We've always struggled, living from motel to motel," Cleveland said. "He'd see me crying and want to help."

The 25-year-old was slain Jan. 28 after two men harassed his fiancée. She went inside a convenience store and when she returned, she heard three shots. The man with whom she had been counting on having children lay dying on the ground.

"Mickey always wanted to have children, too," Cleveland said. "He just wanted to wait until he was married."

The pair had planned to marry last April.

"Mickey was always a sad person," she said. "He could make you laugh, though. He was a real sensitive guy who just wanted to make other people feel good."

Lost Lives

Saturday, December 31, 2005

still fresh."

FEB. 8

Earl Wood

He was a transient who had come back to San Bernardino. It was a choice that cost him his life.

Earl Donald Wood, 54, died at Lytle Creek Park, having endured repeated blows with a stick to his head. He had been living in the High Desert but returned to San Bernardino.

The attack appeared to be a robbery as Wood's pockets were turned outward. The stick was found nearby.

FEB. 11

James Burnside

Jimmy Burnside liked to help. Several years ago, the muffler on his brother's car roared each time it ran. Burnside decided he would buy a new muffler for his brother, Ray.

"He took his last dollars and got it repaired," recalled Ray Burnside, 51. "He said, 'Don't worry about it, you're my brother.'"

Burnside, a San Bernardino native, was just like that. He was a fix-it sort of guy. And if someone needed something fixed but couldn't afford it, he would still take the job.

"Just pay me what you can" could have been his mantra, said his brother.

In a strange twist that ended Burnside's life, a first cousin is accused of killing him at the age of 56. His brother said he had no clue what erupted between them.

What makes it so bizarre, Ray Burnside said, is two of his other brothers died at the hands of another relative back in 1974.

Parker III.

Parker, 22, hadn't had a chance to see his boy, who was all of 2 weeks old. But on March 17, he called his sister, Mercedes, who was visiting with the child's mother.

Parker would be arriving soon to see the boy, he told his sister.

"He called me and was asking, 'What does he look like?'" Mercedes Parker said. "What's her doing?"

Parker never made it. He was shot and killed before he had the chance.

The slaying walloped the Parker family. Out of fear, his mother moved out of town. The rest of the family will follow when they can, said Mercedes Parker, 22.

It was always a close-knit family. Parker sometimes repaired cars at his father's car shop. He loved going to boxing matches, and once bought two sets of boxing gloves to stage mini-matches.

He even had the chance to see the mercurial boxing champ Mike Tyson fight in person, thanks to a trip orchestrated by his father.

It was another instance of someone who strived to get as much out of life as he could, she said.

"He was taken too young," his sister said. "Way, way too young."

APRIL 2

Deshaun Jones

Paramedics discovered Deshaun Marquette Jones on a sidewalk on North Mountain View moments before dying from a gunshot.

Jones, 36, had been shot in the head just outside of his apartment.

Townsend, 25, was found dead on Mountain View Avenue. She had been living with her grandmother in the drab, olive-colored complex.

Her child lived with her and the rest of the family.

"I don't want to talk about any stories of her," said a man who answered the door where she lived. The man claimed to be the father of Townsend's child.

MAY 31

Jerome Edwards

If only Jerome Darnell Edwards' job in Arizona had started earlier.

Edwards, 33, was on the verge of heading east for a construction job. It was the next step in the 33-year-old man's move toward a respectable life.

But Edwards lost the chance after stopping at a convenience store for some cigarettes on May 31. He was shot and killed.

"Wrong place, wrong time," said Don Forhriep, his 59-year-old stepfather. "He had been in prison before. But he was really trying to clean his life up."

"He knew he was wrong and he had paid for his time."

Forhriep misses the energy Edwards always displayed.

"He was on the go," Forhriep said. "He got off on stuff like that."

Forhriep recalled a time tree-trimming in the backyard. Edwards had a broken arm but saw his stepfather at work. He grabbed a chainsaw and scaled a ladder to begin cutting with his one good arm.

The energy apparently was misplaced because the next thing Forhriep knew, Edwards had tumbled off the ladder.

"He was just like that," Forhriep said with a chuckle.

Richard Hollins

Richard Marquis Hollins was found dead at Seccombe Lake Park. He was found with a gunshot wound to the abdomen.

JULY 6

Javier Diaz

For almost all of his adult life, Javier Diaz could be found somewhere close to his wife.

Diaz, 73, adored his betrothed, Toni. Together, they owned and operated Toni's Market in San Bernardino. Diaz's son-in-law, Caesar Gutierrez, remembers as a child how Diaz would be baking and his wife running the cash register.

"You know your buddies at work?" Gutierrez said. "She was his buddy."

But there was one other love that could take Diaz away from his beloved Toni, if only for a few hours.

"That's one dude who loved playing golf," Gutierrez said. "He played tournaments, charities, anything he could. And he had so many sets of clubs."

Diaz nearly was forced to give up the game some 20 years ago after suffering a stroke that paralyzed his left side. But Diaz spent countless hours retraining his body to play.

Toni Diaz passed away in the spring of 2005. Three months later, to the day, Diaz was killed by a man police say is a young transient.

MARCH 8

Shicole Bester-Collins

While visiting a motel room rented by her brother, Shicole Deshon Bester-Collins suddenly found herself in a fight for her life.

She sustained several stab wounds to her chest inside the Econo Lodge Motel where she put up a struggle to survive. The 18-year-old woman was dead when police arrived shortly before 3 a.m.

Police arrested her boyfriend and charged him with her murder.

Jailine De Jesus

Of all of the murder victims in 2005, Jailine De Jesus had the tiniest chance of making it.

That's because, at the age of 19 months, Jailine could not take care of herself.

Jailine's parents summoned paramedics to their home. The child had been found injured and barely breathing, the couple told police.

After the child was whisked to a hospital where she died shortly after arriving, doctors discovered bruising on the child's abdomen.

Her parents have been charged with assaulting a child under the age of 8 that resulted in death. The cases are pending.

MARCH 17

Theodis Parker

The birth of his third child obviously excited Theodis Trenell

MAY 1

Mark Minchaca

If you needed a pick-me-up, finding Mark Minchaca was always a good place to start.

Connie Minchaca remembered how her godson, who was 17 when he was slain by a gunshot on May 1, would do a goofy song-and-dance whenever she felt low.

"I'd be looking in the mirror and say, 'Ugh, I look bad,'" said Connie Minchaca, 34. "And he'd come and take my hand and do a little dance with me."

His mother, Sylvia Phillips, is at a loss without her beloved son. Her boy had struggled with getting in trouble in his earlier years but had truly turned the corner.

Together, they attended night school three times a week so both could get their GEDs. He gave her money for bills from his paycheck, also taking out some to tithe to his church.

"He always brought joy to our lives," said Phillips, 43. "It's just so hard. For his New Year's resolution, he said he wanted to get very, very close to God."

MAY 22

Vanessa Townsend

Vanessa Townsend died from a gunshot one house down from the dilapidated apartment complex she lived in.

Witnesses said a man got out of a black compact car, spoke briefly to Townsend and then shot her several times.

APRIL 20

James Ramirez

The children who live at the north end of Fairfax Drive still miss their protector.

Someone gunned down Jim-Ramirez in the early hours of April 20 inside an apartment. A few steps outdoors is where Ramirez played shepherd to the neighborhood rascals.

"He got along real good with kids," said Natalie Perez, the aunt to two of Ramirez's nephews. "I'd let mine out and I didn't have to worry about them."

James Charles Ramirez had just moved in with his mother to her apartment on North Fairfax Drive.

He would lead kids in games of duck-duck-goose and kickball atop the raggedy, patchwork grass between three two-story apartment buildings. Or he'd let the youngsters watch "Spider-Man" on his handheld DVD player.

When his mother went to work, Ramirez, 19, cleaned her apartment, recalled neighbor Michelle Caradine.

"He was trying to turn his life around," she said. "He really was. He'd tell his siblings to stay out of gangs, not fight, that sort of stuff."

FEB. 13

Francisco Godoy

He lived in Corona but died on a porch in San Bernardino.

Francisco Godoy, 27, had lived in San Bernardino earlier in his life but had since moved south, records show. Something brought him back for a visit.

Authorities believe a Chevrolet Blazer that was seen passing the house where Godoy was visiting may have been the source of the bullets that flew early that evening.

Godoy lived long enough to receive medical treatment at a hospital but died less than two hours after arriving there.

FEB. 16

Maria Guadalupe Gonzalez

A rare tip involving a gang slaying led to the arrest of the man accused of killing Maria Guadalupe Gonzalez.

The 47-year-old died after being shot twice, in the back and leg, by a known 25-year-old gang member. Officers found her writhing on the floor of her living room.

In a bit of irony, Gonzalez would not say who had shot her.

Dec. 31 Lost Lives

JUNE 9

Kerry Gebhardt

Being the mother of six kids, Kerry Ann Gebhardt's head was filled with intriguing tales.

So the 37-year-old began writing children's books. She showed some of them to her kids' teachers, and they encouraged her to contact a publishing house.

After reaching one firm, Gebhardt received a letter asking her to submit her work, said her mother, Alice Gebhardt.

Shortly after the letter arrived, Gebhardt was gunned down outside of a camper. Humberto Magana, 49, also was slain in the shooting. His relationship to Gebhardt is unclear but his mother believes she did not know the dead man.

Gebhardt's stories now fill a large envelope that her mother has saved.

Now, Alice Gebhardt is helping raise her daughter's kids, whose ages are 1, 2, 5, 6, 8 and 18.

"I don't know how long I will be able to take care of them," said Alice Gebhardt, who is 67. "I still have my health. But you never know."

As expected, the children have taken the loss hard. Cecilia, a precocious child who at the age of 2 has thick brown hair and bright, brown, marblesque eyes, is especially troubled.

"She keeps asking when her mother is coming home," Alice Gebhardt said.

Humberto Magana

For about two months, Teresa Magana was beset with concern for her brother-in-law.

She told her relative, Humberto Magana, 49, to be careful and come by more often than every other week. After Humberto Magana didn't come by one day, those fears grew.

Sadly, her intuition proved true with the news of Humberto's slaying. He was killed, along with Kerry Gebhardt, in a shooting outside his motorhome.

"I told my husband I was worried about his brother," Teresa Magana said. "I still can't believe it."

Humberto Magana had been happy in the weeks leading up to his death, she said. He spent most of his working life as a jack-of-all-trades whose ever-changing employment ensured he was always showing off his varied abilities.

But he had been hired by a tree-cutting company and had hopes for some long-term work. Now, he is gone, leaving behind a teenage daughter and a host of grieving relatives.

"My daughter misses him so much she wrote a letter," Teresa Magana said. "He always helped her, like every time she moved, he was there."

JULY 12

George Griffin

Three men confronted George Robert Griffin late in the night along Spruce Street.

They opened fire, striking the 52-year-old man repeatedly with multiple gunshots.

Police found Griffin shortly afterward lying in the street.

Records indicate Griffin was from Texas and had lived in San Bernardino for the past several years. At one point, Griffin lived in the Sunset Hotel, a low-rent, last-resort locale that sustained a fire and has since been turned into a chain hotel.

Griffin had a lengthy criminal record of petty offenses, records show.

JULY 31

Barry Knight

It was just before daylight when Barry Joseph Knight was found dead in front of a hotel on West Fifth Street.

Little is known of Knight. A woman who lives on Acacia Street recalled receiving mail for Knight, although she didn't know him.

On one occasion, Knight arrived at her door and asked for his mail. The woman handed it over, and Knight disappeared.

AUG. 2

Shanar Goulsby

From his days as an overweight child, Shanar Edward Lee Goulsby garnered the nickname "Chubs."

Goulsby eventually grew into his body and learned how athletic conditioning could keep him slim, recalled his mother, Sandra Goulsby.

Sure, there were times, particularly around Christmas, when his weight would increase and be noticeable on his slight, 5-foot-10 frame. He was famous for what his family called his "manipulating the menu" to ensure his favorites were always served.

"But he knew his limits," said Sandra Goulsby, 55, of Chino. "Around the holidays, he would eat to his fill and then stop and be working out soon after."

His mother acknowledged that her son, one of four children, had his share of struggles, which included a stint in prison. But she saw a new excitement in her boy after he was accepted into Riverside Community College, where she works in the admissions department.

"He wasn't always able to do the right thing, but his heart was always in the right place," she said.

She had taken the week off to help her son select his classes, enabling him to join his other three siblings who have either graduated college or are in the process of doing so.

But after getting his head shaved just the way he liked it, which was part of what everyone called his "clean dude" image, Goulsby had gone to his girlfriend's apartment. An encounter with another man outside of the complex left Goulsby fleeing for his life.

After running through his girlfriend's apartment and jumping out of a window into the courtyard, Goulsby was shot and collapsed. The suspected shooter was later arrested.

Goulsby was 25 years old.

LOST LIVES

Lives

continued from page A4

AUG. 8

Susano Torres

Few deaths fit the tragic description — senseless violence — better than the slaying of 16-year-old Susano Torres at the 1400 block of North Sierra Way in the middle of a hot Aug. 8 afternoon.

Wrong place, wrong time.

Police say that less than an hour before he gunned down Torres and wounded his 19-year-old brother, Armando, Torres' shooter killed two men at a Colton car dealership.

"It's very possible (the shooting) was random," San Bernardino police Sgt. Mike Desrochers said at the time.

AUG. 12

T.D. Rabon Jr.

T.D. Rabon Jr. was tall and athletic with an easygoing manner.

Someone shot him. His body was found Aug. 12 on South Waterman Avenue.

Christine Gordon, 51, knew Rabon since they were children playing sports and games at the Mill Center in the 1960s. Gordon's brother George also was killed in San Bernardino this year, giving Gordon, a lifelong Inland Empire resident, a soured outlook on the place she's always called home.

"I can't imagine why anybody would want to hurt T.D. I was totally shocked when I heard about it," Gordon said.

Something happened to the lanky Rabon, 54, said another childhood friend, leading him to live a life of transiency over the past few years and be estranged from his family. Family members of Rabon declined to speak on his behalf.

The salt-and-pepper-haired Rabon was a fixture along Waterman Avenue, always with his bike and often with a bag of aluminum cans.

"I'd always see him on Waterman scooting around on a bicycle," said the friend, who refused to give his name. "Not riding, just scooting with one foot on the ground and one on the bike."

SEPT. 19

Roberto Fernandez-Amador

Roberto Fernandez-Amador blended like a chameleon into the working-class L Street neighborhood in which he lived with his aunt and uncle.

His neighbor, Teresa Garcia, 60, recalled Fernandez-Amador as a steady, soft-spoken young man with a rock-solid work ethic.

He worked at a used car lot, had a girlfriend and loved his tan pickup truck, Garcia said.

"Roberto was just a good boy," said Garcia, 56. "Every time I saw him, he was either going to work or tinkering with his truck. I can still remember how he'd sit in it out on the street listening to mariachi music."

Fernandez-Amador, 24, who'd always blended in, was noticeably gone.

"I remember when the cops came to the house, and I knew something was wrong," Garcia said. "I was worried. So I went over, and his aunt Maria said they had murdered him."

Fernandez-Amador's body was found near the street on West Alturas Street. He'd been shot.

SEPT. 25

Brian Frye

Kevin Frye cares for a brown 1977 Oldsmobile Cutlass Supreme.

The old car might fetch a few hundred dollars on the open market. But to Frye, 23, the car is invaluable. It's a keeper for the next decade.

The car belonged to Brian William Frye, Kevin's slain 26-year-old brother, and he vows to care for it until his 4-year-old nephew is old enough to have it.

The boy has his father's sandy hair and bubbly energy, but he'll

never have his father to talk to.

"The car is a strong reminder of Brian, and I know he'd want me to take care of it and give it to his son," Kevin Frye said.

Brian Frye was a son, brother and anchor to his small family, especially his mom. He was shot to death and found on Lugo Avenue.

His family is close-knit. Frye grew up in Riverside with his mother and younger brother. He was the de facto man of the house. Now his brother struggles to assume his role.

His mother, Shirley Frye, 55, can't heal the wounds of losing her first-born son. She talked about her son, describing his smile, his blue eyes, his noble stubbornness.

She sobbed because her heart is broken. She now keeps her son's ashes in the house.

"He's here, with us, he'll never be hurt again," she said.

OCT. 15

Adelaja Russ

Adelaja Russ had made it. He was on his way.

"Adelaja grew up here, but he was positive and ambitious, and that took him to Colorado and to Texas," said Donald Morris, Russ' uncle.

Russ, 26, worked as an operator for Verizon Information Services in San Antonio for nearly a year.

What was meant as a brief visit home to see his family, including his fiancée and 6-year-old son, instead proved to be an end to his promising future.

Russ was killed when a drive-by shooter sprayed his grandmother's home on West Virginia Street. Russ' family believes the intended target was a man standing beside Russ.

Russ' family, big in number and longtime fixtures in San Bernardino, struggle to pick up the pieces. They remember a gregarious young man who took his infectious smile everywhere, Morris said.

"We were just talking the other day about how when Adelaja was 2, and his father was trying out being a vegetarian, Grandma brought out all this chicken and meat for supper and the little boy, looking up to his dad, said, 'Grandma no, we don't eat meat anymore.'"

AUG. 4**Richard Jamie**

When Richard Cristobal Jamie was a child, he was struck by a car while riding his bike along Avenue E in Yucaipa, recalls his former neighbor Susan Neff, 59.

"I always thought the kid was very lucky to have not been hurt real bad when that car hit him," Neff said. "We warn our grandkids to this day to be careful and walk their bikes across that street; it's like the freeway."

Jamie survived speeding cars, but not bullets.

He was killed when someone shot him multiple times on Davidson Street. He was 24.

"Why would anybody want to kill that boy?" Neff asked.

Fabian Boone

Brenda Martin and her grandson Fabian Boone were perfect roommates in their cozy apartment. She provided the sage advice and good cooking, he the brilliant smile and wry sense of humor.

Martin loved it when her strapping, 6-foot grandson would watch television with her, lacing banal sitcoms with his own comedic commentary.

Boone was a good boy, she said. He was too busy planning to propose to his girlfriend and provide a stable family for his 2-month-old son to get caught up in gangs, Martin said. He wanted to be the father he never had.

So she didn't worry when she was awakened by the 1 a.m. crackle of gunshots Aug. 4. She heard them regularly.

But minutes later she heard a knock at her door.

"Some of his friends said Fabian had been shot," Martin recalled as she cried. "I don't even remember how I felt or what I did. I was just overcome."

A white pickup crept up the street. Witnesses reported a man jumping out, producing a handgun and firing multiple rounds, some of which hit Boone in the chest, killing him two months shy of his 19th birthday.

Martin believes it was a case of mistaken identity in the dark night. She said Fabian took "someone else's bullets."

"I thought things would turn out different for him, I never thought he'd become one of the statistics," said Martin, 60.

Boone's son is now 6 months old. Like his father, he'll grow up fatherless.

AUG. 15**James Spivey**

Police officers found James Spivey, 31, on North Sierra Way, less than a quarter mile from where Torres and Boone were shot and killed just less than two weeks earlier.

Paramedics dispatched to the scene pronounced Spivey dead, spent shell casings scattered nearby.

SEPT. 6**Robert Lucas**

When Robert Lucas, 50, was choked and stabbed in the neck, reportedly by two other patients, his was the first homicide at Patton State Hospital since 1994.

Another inmate would be killed at the hospital two months later.

SEPT. 15**Josephine Kelley**

At the age of 90, Josephine Frances Kelley was too young to die.

Alert and quick-witted, the spry Kelley had eluded any hint of senility, said Susan Hassett, her daughter, best friend and roommate.

Tragically, her keen senses may have made her a target for death, Hassett said.

Hassett said she expects her mother's slaying, for which no one has yet been charged, will be solved. She said the motive was robbery.

Hassett remains haunted by her mother's death. They were best friends since Hassett's birth 57 years ago. Her last memory of her mother is of discovering her body when she came home.

"I could do no wrong in my mom's eyes. Since I was a little girl, she was my confidant, always there for me, always selfless," Hassett said.

Born in an Irish-Catholic Chicago enclave, Kelley came to San Bernardino in 1966 with her husband and three children. Hassett remembers the wonder and awe with which the family greeted California.

It's bitter irony, Hassett said, that the place that once brought the family such life and hope is now the host of its most devastating loss.

"My mother loved San Bernardino, she loved the area," Hassett said. "She saw a change, but nothing bad had ever affected her until that day."

OCT. 4**James Salazar Jr.**

Officers responding to calls of shots fired discovered James Salazar Jr. on the sidewalk on West Ninth Street suffering from multiple gunshot wounds.

Officers pronounced the 23-year-old dead at the scene.

OCT. 13**Yobani Mendez-Ramirez**

About 11 p.m., Oct. 13, officers responded to a call reporting a man had been shot in front of a residence on West Congress Street.

Less than an hour later, 16-year-old Mendez-Ramirez was pronounced dead at Loma Linda University Medical Center.

OCT. 15**George Gordon**

The last 22 years of George Gordon's life were marred by mental illness, but his core character traits remained unchanged.

"George was a quiet loner, but a sweet man," said his sister Christine Gordon, 51.

It has always been a bit of a mystery what happened to her 43-year-old brother once he entered adulthood. As a child, he was an energetic and bright Boy Scout who loved the outdoors and was close with his father. He graduated from Redlands High School and enrolled at Crafton Hills College.

But at the age of 21, something happened.

"George just lost his mind," Christine Gordon said. "The doctor didn't know what happened."

Looking back, Christine said, her brother had become physically ill, and that may have damaged his brain.

But none of it dulls the sting of his untimely death. Christine can't think of why anyone would kill her brother, who was a skinny 5-foot-5 with a fear of people.

Now, she feels pain every time she goes out on the streets near Del Rosa Avenue, where Gordon was killed.

"I used to look for George. He was always walking around, and I'd stop and talk to him and buy him a soda," Christine said. "I don't look for him now, but I think about him."

Dec. 31

OCT. 28**Brandon Christopher Smith**

Brandon Smith, 20, was found about 3:30 a.m. in the parking lot of an apartment complex on West Second Street.

Suffering from a stab wound to the chest, Smith was transported by paramedics to Loma Linda Medical Center, where he was pronounced dead at 5:43 a.m.

OCT. 29**Michael Anthony Devers**

A medical response unit was flagged down by a vehicle occupant who complained of a friend in need of medical attention.

When the paramedics realized 20-year-old Michael Devers had been shot, his companions had already left.

Devers was pronounced dead less than an hour later at Loma Linda University Medical Center.

OCT. 30**Charles Gillespie**

For many, the ghastly discovery of 73-year-old Charles Gillespie's dismembered body on the eve of Halloween is seared into memory, like a bitter taste or smell.

Different parts of Gillespie were found in two places miles apart.

NOV. 7**Floter Warhop III**

Floter Warhop III's mother, Sweet, declined to speak at length on behalf of her son, but she did say that Warhop left with her "a legacy of love."

He also leaves a legacy of unfinished life taken too soon by violence.

Warhop, 39, was found shot in his GMC truck on West Highland Avenue, days after his girlfriend, 36-year-old Maria Kaminski, was discovered dead in her Colton home.

Kaminski's father, Daniel, said his daughter had for years dealt blackjack at Pechanga Casino. Kaminski was born in the Philippines and had endured the agony of giving birth to a baby who died soon after birth due to complications of prematurity.

Kaminski sympathizes with Warhop's mother.

"Whoever killed them killed our hearts," Kaminski said. "A

NOV. 18**Alfredo A. Ampoyo**

It is a mystery why anyone would want to harm Alfredo A. Ampoyo. But someone did.

Ampoyo, 52, was killed near a bus stop on North D Street.

Ampoyo was a gentle, quiet man who worked as a home-care nurse, said Stephanie Roberts, a friend of Ampoyo's since 2001.

Roberts described Ampoyo as a shy, slight-of-frame man who avidly read books and newspapers. Once the timid Ampoyo trusted someone enough to open up, Roberts said, he could wow with his broad knowledge of everything from history to horticulture.

"Fred," as his friends called him, was born in the Philippines to a native mother and American Navy serviceman father.

He has an 18-year-old son living in Northern California.

Roberts is still mystified by his death.

"It doesn't follow. Fred always minded his own business and would never be aggressive or confrontational. He was so gentle," Roberts said. "All I can imagine is he didn't have something that those who killed him wanted."

NOV. 19**Melanie Miers**

Melanie Miers died nine days after her 16th birthday, shot in the head by a drive-by shooter outside a party on North Mountain View Avenue.

Miers was a student at San Bernardino High. Her father, Rick Miers, described her days after her death as a kind, caring and peaceful person.

Miers enjoyed swimming and playing water polo and was active in a youth group at Our Lady of the Rosary Cathedral church.

NOV. 20**Jerry Ramirez**

It appears forbidden love cost Jerry Ramirez his life at 22. The male members of a family, possibly enraged by Ramirez' relationship with a female in their family, are accused of abducting and killing him.

Ramirez was discovered Nov. 20 in lower Waterman Canyon, dead from multiple gunshot wounds to his head.

Dec. 31**DEC. 7****Dwight Wenholz**

Dwight Wenholz looked forward to coming home.

It never happened.

Instead, the long-term patient at Patton State Hospital, originally committed for making bomb threats, died on the hospital's bathroom floor, killed by another inmate. He was 42.

But the pain of Wenholz's death didn't die with him. The tall, easygoing little brother with reddish hair and Minnesota roots is missed.

"I can still remember Dwight as an easygoing, energetic little junior high kid," said Sandy Wenholz, who is married today to Dwight Wenholz's older brother, Dwayne. "He was quiet and gentle, always the little brother."

Sandy Wenholz said she and her family, who live in the Bay Area, are still miffed as to why Dwight remained hospitalized. She and her husband talked to him regularly on the phone, and always looked forward to the thoughtful Christmas cards he sent.

DEC. 9**Angela Marshall**

Little is known about Angela Evvon Marshall, or "Jane Doe" as she was listed in the police report chronicling her homicide. Marshall was a 27-year-old black woman who may have been aged beyond her years.

The report filed by the officer who discovered her body in a motel room on North E Street estimated Marshall's age to be "30-40."

Marshall had sustained a fatal injury to the right side of her head.

Three days later, police arrested Frank Macias, 49, of San Bernardino in connection with the death. He was released two days later after prosecutors declined to file murder charges. The District Attorney's Office cited insufficient evidence.

OCT. 26**Alfredo Villela**

Villela, 27, was found shot at 775 East Base Line.

He died six days later at Loma Linda University Medical Center.

DEC. 11**Michael Johnson II**

His hulking frame earned Michael Lagrand Johnson II the nickname "Truckstop." But he was a gentle giant, soft-spoken and one who enjoyed time to himself.

Having graduated from Arroyo High School in June 2004, Johnson, 19, was in the period of aimless searching that can envelope those who have a lull between high school and the next step in life.

Those who knew Johnson said he liked to help people.

The day after Johnson was gunned down in a drive-by shooting in front of a home on North 18th Street, his aunt, Edie Sales, and his friend Anjellica Vasquez, hailed him as a hero.

Vasquez said Johnson, who was walking toward his car, pushed her and Johnson's 2-year-old cousin into the house, saving their lives while his big body caught the fatal bullet.

NOV. 25

Tami Kay Potter

Tami Kay Potter's mother, sister and stepfather can't understand how a woman who devoted so much of her life to the less fortunate could be struck down by the type of person whom she sought to help.

The day after Thanksgiving, Potter, 39, was stabbed repeatedly in the chest and neck in a halfway house for parolees on Wall Avenue, police say by a 24-year-old male gang member.

Potter's Arizona-based family is angry and anguished. They admit to not having as much faith in the goodness of people as did their daughter.

"I just can't understand it. She devoted her life to helping the worst off, those who had the least," said her mother, Sharon Joseph.

Potter worked eight years as a probation supervisor for the San Bernardino County Probation Department and taught criminal justice courses at area community colleges. George Post, a deputy chief probation officer, said Potter compiled a long record of solid work performance evaluations.

"Tami had some very good years here. There were people here who cared a lot about her," Post said.

It is unclear what lurked behind a recent turn in Potter's life. Potter had been stricken by depression. Post said Potter's employment was terminated by the department this year, but would not elaborate. Her mother said her firing was "unjust."

The prism through which Tami's family looks at the world has darkened.

"She was kind and giving to everyone, no matter their backgrounds or problems. Even drug addicts and criminals, she felt they all had a chance," Sharon Joseph said, sobbing. "And now she's been murdered there. You

NOV. 9

Barry Jones

In an incident that police believed could be related to a shooting that claimed an 11-year-old's life days later, officers responded to a midnight call at an apartment complex on North Mountain Avenue.

Once there, they discovered a man shot inside apartment No. 13. He would survive.

At the same time and initially unknown to officers, Barry E. Jones, 24, who was shot in the same incident, was dumped by someone at St. Bernardine's Hospital. Jones' shirt was soaked in blood. He died from a gunshot wound to the chest.

Jones was a known member of the Pimps, Playboys, Hustlers and Gangsters gang, police said.

NOV. 13

Mynesha Crenshaw

Mynesha Crenshaw's senseless death — she was shot and killed while eating dinner when bullets ripped through her apartment's walls — galvanized city-wide outrage at the escalating violence.

But Mynesha had better things to do with her future than become a symbol of indiscriminate violence. She loved cartoons like SpongeBob SquarePants. She loved sunflower seeds and pop music.

She was only 11.

The grim brutality of her death — her small head and torso were riddled with three bullets — doesn't lend itself to calls for community activism or rallies to take back the streets. It shocks and sickens before it inspires.

Still, perhaps the crushing tragedy of an innocent, little girl

born into poverty, bouncing from one blighted complex to the next before getting caught in the crossfire, does yield a ray of light.

Advocates see her as a symbol of the heavy toll poverty and its cohort, violence, exact on each succeeding generation.

live in a tarnished place. California has changed dramatically."

Conclusion
to Lost Lives
Dec. 31

DEC. 19

Ronald Berver

Those who loved Ronald Berver knew he was thinking about the future.

First on Berver's list was selling his gold Ford Escort to buy Christmas gifts for his four children.

Instead, Berver was gunned down next to his car in front of his godfather's North Davidson Street home. He was temporarily staying there following a five-month stint in jail for failing to appear in court.

The 45-year-old was a skilled mechanic who helped friends and family fix their cars and appliances.

His godfather, Tony Valdez, said he was hoping to get a job as a mechanic.

Valdez, his stepson, Bo Botello, and neighbors who rushed out to the street after hearing gunshots were next to Berver when he took his final breaths moments after being shot.

ABOUT THE TOTAL

In 2005, 55 people have been slain in San Bernardino. Additionally, three people were killed in officer-involved shootings. Two other people died, but suffered their injuries previous to 2005. Two women were slain in the city's sphere of influence but outside of the police department's jurisdiction. Their cases were handled by the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department.

Weather

Still quite warm
High 84, Low 46
Air quality: Moderate
Page B8

THE SUN

San Bernardino County's Newspaper

Final
San Bernardino County
1★

FRIDAY / JANUARY 6, 2006

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50¢

Spreading a new message

By Megan Blaney
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — Concerned residents outlined an ambitious New Year's resolution Thursday night — to make a positive difference in their neighborhoods.

Members of The Sun's community action group gathered at the newspaper's offices to share ideas, inspiration and vows of support to improve the quality of life for San Bernardino residents.

The group is named Mynesha's Circle in memory of an 11-year-old girl who was the victim of gang-related violence in November in the Del

Rosa area. Her death — one of 57 homicides in the city in 2005 — incited outrage and a cry for solutions to the city's gang-crime problem.

The first of several neighborhood walks meant to encourage residents to take pride in their communities and spread word of the group's efforts is scheduled for Jan. 14.

"This is an early, bold statement, a show of strength," said Sun Editor Steve Lambert, who moderated the discussion.

"We want to hear what the community has to say. We need them to help us make a difference."



MYNESHA'S CIRCLE

A daily spotlight on potential solutions to crime in Del Rosa. Visit www.sbsun.com.

See CIRCLE / Page A8



Assistant Sheriff Rodney Hoops talks about how different law enforcement agencies are working to make San Bernardino safer. He spoke Thursday night at the third meeting of Myneshia's Circle at The Sun in San Bernardino.

Photos by Jennifer Cappuccio/Staff photographer

Circle

continued from page A1

The Jan. 14 walk will begin at 3:30 p.m. in the parking lot at the Church of God Prophecy, 3030 Del Rosa Ave. Walkers may begin congregating at 3 p.m. The march will span a 1- to 2-mile area around the neighborhood where Myneshia was slain. The route will end at the church parking lot, where residents will be able to visit informational booths to learn about such topics as emergency and disaster preparedness.

The walkers also intend to distribute fliers to inform residents about how to get involved.

Tim Evans, president of the Unforgettables Foundation, urged members of the group to spread the message to everyone on their block. "I don't think you can ever underestimate the power of a single life to make a difference," Evans said.

The diverse group includes law enforcement officers, school officials, religious representatives, ex-gang members, Mayor Judith Valles and others with a wealth of institutional knowledge and access to essential resources. Despite their various backgrounds, members share a common denominator — a passionate desire to make change happen.

Group members hope that drive to succeed will result in a neighborhood improvement project that com-



San Bernardino Mayor Judith Valles talks about after-school programs Thursday night at the third meeting of Myneshia's Circle at The Sun.

pares to the Villages of East Lake in Atlanta. Once a crime-ridden ghetto, the East Lake housing projects were transformed into a nice neighborhood with parks, playgrounds and a top-notch golf course that hosts the annual Tournament of Champions.

The southern city's neighborhood transformation can be attributed to a number of factors, including support from the city government and the private sector. But the crucial determinant came from the East Lake residents themselves.

"This happened because of the buy-in from everybody," said the Rev. Reggie Beamon. "The same people who lived in them when they

were housing projects live in them now. It's all because they have bought into it."

Beamon believes San Bernardino can undergo the same transformation.

"This is providential," he told the group of about 35 people. "The timing is right. It's now."

The Sun is flying an East Lake representative out to the Inland Empire next week for a series of forums to help city representatives understand how they might enact a similar change in San Bernardino.

"It takes a great deal of courage and understanding to accomplish that," Valles said. "We have the possibility."

Teenager killed in SB

15-year-old
shot dead by
another teen

By Gina Tenorio,
Leonor Vivanco
and Megan Blaney
Staff Writers

SAN BERNARDINO — One 15-year-old boy is dead, and another has been arrested for the shooting.

Police on Monday arrested 16-year-old George Basquez, who they suspect killed Christopher Paul Ransom in an apartment in the 100 block of Olive Street.

Christopher was the second teenager killed by gunfire in the city since Friday, and the city's second homicide of the year. He died just minutes from the scene of the first homicide — Friday's shooting death of 14-year-old Dustin Michael-Roy Namanny.

"I'm speechless for once in my life. What do you say?" said Mark Cato, owner of California Soul Cafe and member of Myeisha's Circle, a community group on a mission to find solutions to the violence that has plagued the city. "What is this — 2006 killing kid day every day?"

Officers were called Monday afternoon to the 100 block of Olive Street, where neighbors reported hearing shots in the area. When officials arrived to the apartment where the shots originated, they found Christopher dead, San Bernardino police Sgt. William Hanley said.



A San Bernardino police officer tapes off the scene of the city's second homicide of 2006 in the 100 block of Olive Street in San Bernardino on Monday. Gabele Abate/Star photographer

He had been shot in the upper body, coroner's officials said. Witnesses told detectives they saw the suspect running away from the home, Hanley said.

Residents in the area were cooperative and led police to a home in the 300 block of Evans Street where officials easily took him into custody, Hanley said.

See SHOOTING / Page A4

Jan. 10, 2006

Shooting

continued from page A1

Investigators did not reveal a motive for the shooting.

Several residents from the neighborhood were taken in for questioning. One woman who asked not to be identified said she was a witness and was cooperating with the investigation, but was terrified. She stood shaking on the front porch of a home near where the shooting occurred.

"My nerves are frayed," she said in Spanish. "And I still have to go to work."

She declined to discuss what she had seen, in part because she was too traumatized, she said. Her husband, who was aware of what his wife had seen paced inside the home and begged his wife to come inside.

"Please," he said in Spanish. "I am so nervous. We are so scared. We can't believe what has happened."

Monday's shooting followed a weekend of gunfire and death, where one 14-year-old boy was shot and killed, another was shot and wounded, and a 19-year-old man was shot and killed in Rialto by San Bernardino police after a high-speed pursuit.

Residents of the neighborhood surrounding Olive Street said their neighborhood, like many others in San Bernardino, needs intervention.

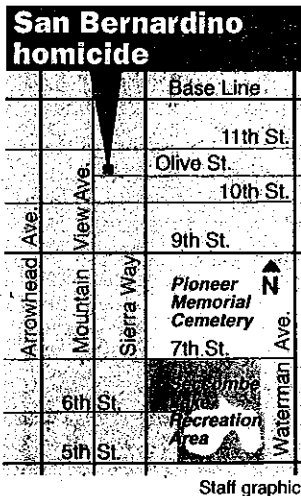
"This neighborhood needs Christ," said one woman who sat on her porch observing police activity. She did not identify herself but had some onlookers, many who walked across Mountain View to watch, nodding their heads.

Yolanda Mitchell, 34, happened to be driving by when she saw the squad cars and yellow tape. She rushed over to check on her mother, who lives a few houses down from where the shooting occurred.

"When I used to live here it was bad," she said. "It's still bad. A lot of gangs, drugs. That was back in 1997."



Olive Street residents stand outside the scene of a homicide in their neighborhood in San Bernardino on Monday.



Staff graphic

San Bernardino had 56 homicides in 2005, according to San Bernardino police. There were three other deaths that were officer-involved shootings.

One of those deaths — 11-year-old Mynesha Crenshaw who was slain by gang bullets — sparked outrage among city residents and a push for solutions from city officials.

Law enforcement agencies enacted a quick solution, albeit a temporary one, that paired California Highway Patrol with the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department to help the San Bernardino Police Department

patrol the city's most violent areas. But the teams, called saturation patrols, ended on Jan. 1.

Cato, a local activist, said the patrols should have stayed in place until more San Bernardino police officers could be brought in.

"It seems like when we had the large police presence, everything was quiet," Cato said. "As soon as that disappeared, we're at it again, we're starting all over again."

The Rev. Ramon Ramos of Victory Outreach Church in San Bernardino recently attended a meeting of Mynesha's Circle. He was saddened to hear of yet another young death.

"It's tragic. It's sad, another young life, wasted potential, someone that could've been something," he said. "It just gives you more of an urgency to get out there and make more of a difference."

"It's a constant reminder that our work isn't done," he said of the ministry that reaches out to people in the inner city to live productive lives.

Mayoral candidate and Superior Court Judge Pat Morris pointed out that his crime-fight-

ing plan, dubbed Operation Phoenix, calls for an immediate installation of 40 more officers as well as additional gang-prevention programs.

"I am horrified by this continued disaster of gun violence in our city," he said. "People have talked about getting tough on crime yet nobody thus far in the position of authority has backed it up with any action."

The City Council on Monday agreed to allow the Police Department to create positions for 35 more officers — to answer a demand for greater safety since Mynesha was killed in November.

Morris' opponent, City Attorney James F. Penman, said there probably wasn't anything police officers could have done to prevent Monday's shooting.

"Those tragic deaths that arise out of a sudden dispute between two people, two friends, two family members, what have you, the police probably would never even be called until after the crime has occurred," he said. "Therefore, we can't prevent that type of crime by policing. That isn't to say there aren't other things you can do, especially working with youth."

SB SUN

Jan. 10, 2006

EXTRAS

OUR WORDS

"People do not vote because they don't care. It is much easier to look the other direction and point fingers than it is to take action."

— From The Sun's Troubled Town Blog

INSIDE

ANNEXATION PROSPECT

San Bernardino might acquire high-crime area (Page A4)

LOG ON

GET INVOLVED

Join The Sun's online forum by visiting the Troubled Town Blog.

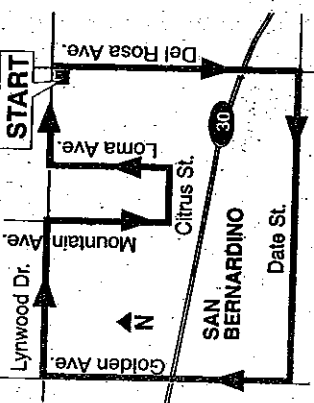
CATCH UP

Read past crime stories in The Sun.

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Join us in the Walk for Change

On Saturday, take a big first step in making our community safer. Join members of Mynesha's Circle in a "Walk for Change." The two-hour walk will take a path through the neighborhood where 11-year-old Mynesha Crenshaw was killed Nov. 13. Her death has led to a communitywide call to end violence in our community and spurred creation of Mynesha's Circle by editors and the publisher of The Sun newspaper as a lasting tribute to a child whose life ended so needlessly.



START
Saturday, 3 p.m.
Church of God Prophecy
3030 Del Rosa Ave.
San Bernardino

For more information please call:
The Rev. Reginald Beamon
(909) 910-6053

UPDATE BOX

FRIDAY

■ Dustin Michael Roy Namatny, 14, is fatally shot at a field station where he was staying in the 900 block of North Crescent Avenue in San Bernardino. Police were still looking for suspect David Jeffrey Harard, 22, who also lived there, and Jason Lee Alszmann, 23, of Redlands, who may have been a witness.

SATURDAY

■ While playing with a friend and a gun, an unidentified boy, 14, is shot and wounded in the 1400 block of Windsor Drive. The children thought they had unloaded the gun, police said.

SUNDAY

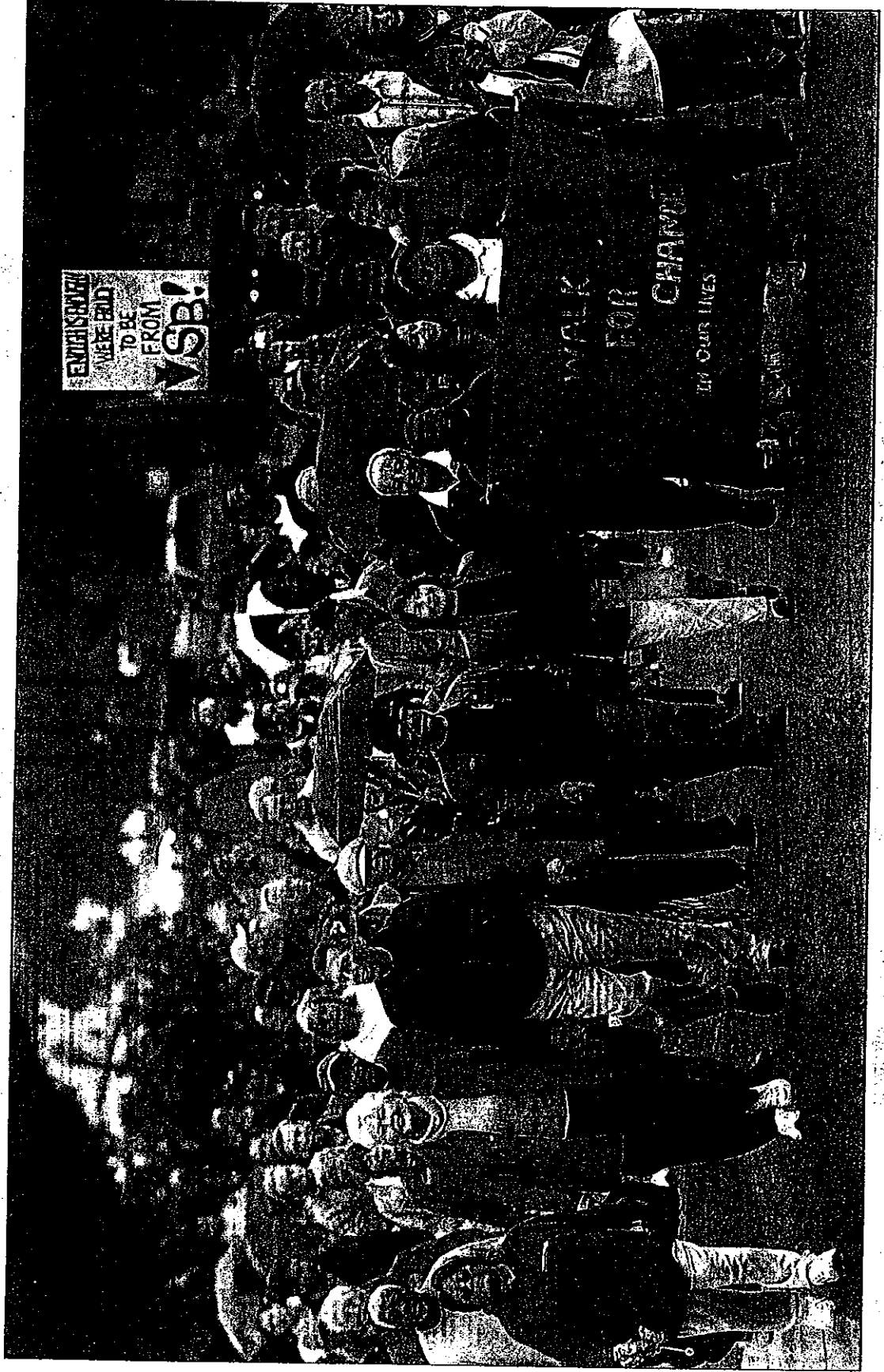
■ San Bernardino police shoot and kill Tyrone Brooks, 19, after a high-speed car chase from San Bernardino to Rialto.

MONDAY

■ Hours after the shooting death of Christopher Paul Ransom, 15, in an apartment in the 100 block of Olive Street in San Bernardino, police arrest Jamaal George Basurto, 15.

SAN BERNARDINO MARCHES AGAINST VIOLENCE

Walk for Change



Participants in Saturday's "Walk for Change" make their way north on Golden Avenue in San Bernardino's Del Rosa neighborhood where 11-year-old Mynasha Crenshaw was killed in an apparent gang-related shooting Nov. 13. More than 1,000 people walked a two-mile loop to protest violence in the city.

Jennifer Cappucco/Staff photographer

SB SUN Jan. 15, 2006

Residents observe march, hope for change

By **Leonor Vivanco**
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — The streets of the Del Rosa neighborhood were filled with chanting and singing Saturday afternoon as marchers passed by to demonstrate their commitment to driving crime from the troubled area.

And the windows were filled with faces.

Children pressed their faces to window panes. So did mothers and fathers, older women with bandannas over their hair and young men in T-shirts.

Women with young children on their hips ventured out their front doors to watch the crowd, sometimes to take a flier or card, or join in the shouting, but mostly to watch the 1,000 marchers pass.

"I'm so grateful people are interested in us and willing to come out here and show us they care," said Maryann Kissel, 48, who watched from the front lawn of her apartment on Mountain Avenue.

She said she wants to feel protected and has not been sleeping well because of her fears for her family's safety.

"A lot of people want a change," she said. "I hope this does help us a lot."

With graffiti a common sight and gunshots a common sound, some neighbors said it will take more than one organized walk to change their surroundings.

Martin Luther King Jr. marched more than once, said Belinda Robinson, 37.

"There's going to have to be more," she said.

Resident Kim Carter walked down Lynwood Drive separate from the marchers.

"After the walk is through," she said, "then what?"

The community needs to discuss "tangible solutions that eliminate the poverty-stricken conditions," she said.

The loss of more than 35,000 area jobs and plummeting home values have knocked San Bernardino from its perch as a one-time All-American City. These days, the city is considered one of the most dangerous in the country.

Mynesha's Circle, a community action group, was formed to discuss solutions to violence and crime after 11-year-old Mynesha Crenshaw was killed in an apparent gang-related shooting Nov. 13. Her death inspired many of the marchers who participated Saturday.

"It touched our hearts," said Cassandra Rounds, who lives with her three children around the corner from where Mynesha was shot. "I think it will be a wake-up call for the community to get involved."

She and her family moved to the city from Fontana a year ago, and they don't feel secure in their home, she said.

"I'm just hoping it could be a safer environment for my children," the 36-year-old added. "We're terrified. I don't even let my kids go out and play."

As marchers approached the slew of apartment complexes near where Mynesha was killed, residents standing outside expressed defeat and hopelessness.

"There's no way crime is going to change," said Catherine Barnes, 20.

"They don't care about anything or anyone," she said of the gangs and criminals.

"It's not going to help," said Easter Carrell, 20, "because this is a terrible neighborhood."

The only way it will improve, she said, is "if people get evicted who are out partying all night and drinking."

People living in the buildings need to unite and form Neighborhood Watch groups, some residents said. They also want apartment owners to improve the tenant-screening process and look for better security options, like additional gates and patrols.

Lisa Ward, 40, said the violence at the Cedarwood Apartments, where Mynesha was killed, has forced her to search for a new home in Riverside.

"This is hell over here," she said.

But she said she could see the walk triggering a change.

"If they keep it up and don't let it be a one-night thing, then it can have an effect," she said.

Although crime has robbed the city of its pride, some said, it has not stripped the determination of some to better the city.

The walk will hopefully rally the community together so they care about their own neighborhood and work together, said Rudy Guajardo, owner of Rudy's Sports Cards for 10 years.

"I think they'll be more encouraged to get involved and report crimes," he said as he watched the march proceed past the R & S Plaza on Del Rosa Avenue. "When that happens, less undesirables come around."

By Megan Blaney
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — "One, two, three, four. We won't take it anymore!"

The battle cry of a community fighting against crime and violence rang out over the Del Rosa neighborhood Saturday afternoon.

More than 1,000 concerned Inland Empire residents marched in the "Walk for Change" in the hopes of spreading their message of safety and community pride.

The 2-mile journey began at the Church of God Prophecy on Del Rosa Avenue and continued to Date Street, Golden Avenue, Lynwood Drive, then detoured down Mountain and Loma avenues to include Citrus Street — where 11-year-old Mynesta Crenshaw was

killed at the Cedarwood Apartments by apparent gang bullets on Nov. 13. The girl's death sparked a communitywide cry for safer neighborhoods, and The Sun founded a group in her memory called Mynesta's Circle to harness that energy.

The walkers — a diverse group of all ages, ethnicities and walks of life — were undaunted by the overcast sky.

The surging mass of people stretched for blocks. Walkers were greeted with a wall of noise on Del Rosa Avenue as drivers honked and cheered out the windows of their vehicles. San Bernardino police officers guided traffic around the walkers.

The forecasted rain held off for a while. But when raindrops

See WALK / Page A6



INSIDE

RESIDENT REACTION

Del Rosa area residents hope event will lead to changes. | A7

PERSONAL FOCUS

Stories from the scene of the "Walk for Change." | A7

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Join The Sun's online forum by visiting the Troubled Town Blog. Read past stories from The Sun's coverage of crime in San Bernardino.

CATCH UP

PHOTO GALLERY

More from Saturday's "Walk for Change."

Time for next step, say Saturday walkers

By Emily Sachs
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — A thousand people took the message of nonviolence to the streets Saturday afternoon, but now it is time to bring the message home, people agreed at a town hall-type forum after the "Walk for Change."

Parents need to keep closer watch over their children, social-service agencies need to bring their services to those most in need, and churches need to reach out to ailing souls if a complete

change is to happen, many who should have been in only through reaching ... that we'll make a difference. Mayor Judith Valles told 250 people at the forum the Church of God Prophecy up from the block in Rosa area where 11-year-old Mynesta Crenshaw was killed apparent gang-related Nov. 13.

Perhaps due to its location church sanctuary or in

See MEETING / Page

SB SUN Jan. 15, 2006

SB SUN Jan. 15, 2006

VIGNETTES

More than 1,000 people turned out Saturday for the "Walk for Change," sponsored by Mynasha's Circle. Here are a few of the scenes and stories.

Unique Olague strode the 2 miles of the "Walk for Change" proudly carrying a billowing flag adorned with a peace sign.

"I am a pacifist," she said. "This is the first time we're using this, but it won't be the last."

The flag had been hanging in her room, but she said it would do more good out in the open, for others to see.

"I'm just happy that I'm out here, that I'm getting involved, that all these other people are getting involved, too," she said.

About halfway through the walk, John Futch, director of the Cross Cultural Center at Cal State San Bernardino, huffed as he walked the city streets, leaning on a wooden walking stick.

"People have forgotten why they're here, why they're on this earth," he said. "I don't do walking. But I did for this. San Bernardino is going to rise from the ashes like a phoenix one of these days."

He's more likely to participate in a more stationary activity next time, though.

"And we've still got at least another mile," he said in disbelief.

Care was taken to make sure San Bernardino's mayoral runoff candidates, Superior Court Judge Pat Morris and City Attorney James F. Penman were given an equal time Saturday.

During public introductions of civic leaders before the walk, one man made sure people knew where he stood.

"Our next mayor is here, too!" he shouted, grandly pointing out Penman nearby.

Penman held his finger to his lips to shush the man, but then mouthed "thank you" with a grin.

By the time the walk had ended, someone in the Morris camp had caught up: A pile of Morris campaign materials had appeared on a table in the lobby of the Church of God Prophecy before a town hall-type forum. The materials included copies of "Operation Phoenix," his crime-fighting plan.

Debra Vargas and her family walked to show their support for the family of Mynasha Crenshaw, the 11-year-old girl killed in an apparent gang-related shooting on Nov. 13.

In 1992, they lost her 21-year-old brother, Sal. He was shot and killed as he waited outside his girlfriend's house to be picked up by his uncle.

"I feel sorry for the 11-year-old girl and her family," Vargas, 46, said.

"There is too much violence," she added. "It needs to be stopped."

The violence is so bad, she says, she worries that her 4-year-old granddaughter riding in the back of her car might get sprayed by bullets.

But Saturday's walk could be a catalyst for change, she said.

"If everyone sticks together, I think it will slow (crime) down."

Gun locks were by far the hottest item going from the tables covered with free materials from community organizations.

One boy took about four from the Al-rothead United Way table, commenting that they would make good bike locks. A man grabbed one, suggesting that it might keep someone from stealing his gun.

The key-operated locks are designed to keep guns from being discharged.

The most surprising taker was a teenager, said Jennifer Celise-Reyes, who was staffing the First 5 table.

"He asked if it would fit around an M16 rifle," she said. "He may have been in ROTC."

Eighth-graders Janosha Farkas and Lindsay Conry don't want to read the newspapers anymore.

"There's too many kids dying," Lindsay said.

They didn't know the 11-year-old girl whose death inspired the "Walk for Change," but they marched anyway to show their support for Mynasha Crenshaw and all the other children in San Bernardino.

"Nobody deserves to die like that," Lindsay said.

She and Janosha say they've started worrying about their own safety.

Janosha said she sometimes wonders, "Am I going to be the next person shot?"

Sunday, January 15, 2006



Rick Storza/Staff photographer

LEFT: Pewe Salgado, 60, left, and her daughter, Cecilia Chagolla, 40, both of San Bernardino, march Saturday along Del Rosa Avenue in San Bernardino during the "Walk for Change." Chagolla's daughter, Alicia, 18, was shot and killed in gang crossfire during a high school graduation party in June 1988.



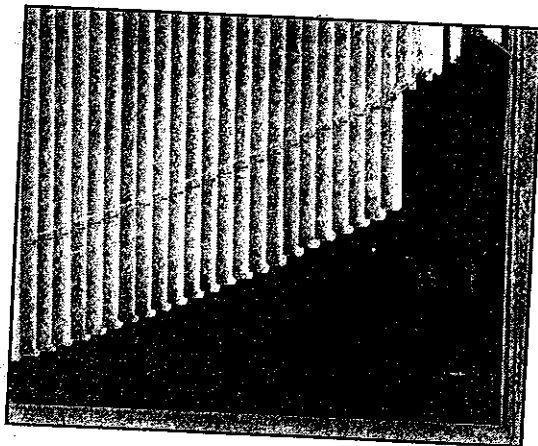
Rick Storza/Staff photographer



Jennifer Cappuccia/Staff photographer

Cedarwood Apartments resident Jose Pabon watches Saturday's "Walk for Change."

SB SUN Jan. 15, 2006



Rick Storza/Staff photographer
A young resident of the Cedarwood Apartments in San Bernardino peers out of a second-story window Saturday to watch participants in the "Walk for Change" as they stop to pray in remembrance of Mynesha Crenshaw, 11, who was shot and killed at the complex on Nov. 13.



Al Cuizon/For The Sun
The Rev. Reginald Beamon, right, leads the "Walk for Change" on Saturday. Community leaders and members of the public took a 2-mile walk that passed through the neighborhood where 11-year-old Mynesha Crenshaw was killed.

Standing up to gangs

Reformed gang members, others working to turn youth away from gang life



Photos by Gabriel Acosta/Staff photographer
Former Rialto police officer Walt Snyder Jr., 45, stands in the hallway of Serrano Middle School in Highland. Snyder has a passion to counsel at-risk youths to prevent them from getting involved in gangs. He counsels at Serrano and other schools.

INSIDE

COPING

New group offers support to families of slaying victims.
Page A4

LOG ON



WALK FOR MINNESOTA'S CIRCLE CHANGE

Watch video footage from Saturday's "Walk for Change" through San Bernardino neighborhoods.

GET INVOLVED

Join The Sun's online forum by visiting the "Troubled Town" Blog.

CATCH UP

Read past Sun coverage of crime in San Bernardino.

WWW.SUNSUN.COM

By Mike Cruz
Staff Writer

As a former Pomona gang member, Terrence Stone knows the challenge of turning around a young life going down the wrong path.

Growing up, Stone experienced the harsh realities of gang life — one that eventually led him to sentences in the California Youth Authority and state prison. In fact, he has a younger brother who is still in prison, serving a 36-year sentence he received at age 16 for gang-related crime.

Today, when Stone shows troubled youths the photographs of his past, they don't recognize him. His clothes have changed. The way he walks and talks is different. How he lives his life is different, too.

Stone spends his time saving the lives of at-risk youth through an organization he co-founded with another brother, Marqus Stone, called Young Visionaries Youth Leadership.

The group is one of several in San Bernardino County that bring a message of hope to young gang members in local schools that they can turn their lives around. The recent wave of gang violence and resulting deaths in San Bernardino brings pain to Stone because of the young lives being shattered.

"To me, it breaks my heart because they don't understand yet," Stone said.

The young men and women involved with gangs usually don't realize there are other ways to live and often find it difficult to break free from the immense pressure to stay loyal to

"...it breaks my heart because they don't understand yet."

TERRENCE STONE

co-founder, Young Visionaries Youth Leadership

Reform

continued from page A1

their gangs and neighborhoods, he said.

Bringing former gang members to speak with at-risk youths at schools and in the group's own facility is one way he tries to show them there is another way.

Still, Stone knows he can't wrench every person from the grip of gangs, which often provide young, torn lives with the semblance of a home on the street, offering security, money through drugs and a brotherhood cemented in blood. Breaking away is one of the hardest things a gang member can do.

"They're thinking, 'What if it don't work out? What if I can't get that job?'" Stone said. "What can I go back to? I have to go back to the neighborhood. I have to go back to the same guys I just turned my back on."

But there are others who also know the feeling.

Ray Culberson created a program called Kids in Chaos, which reaches out to at-risk youths. Culberson is now the director of youth services for the San Bernardino City Unified School District and uses his first-hand knowledge of gang life to help steer students clear of gangs.

Simply spending more money is not always the best way to reach out to troubled young people, says Culberson. Instead, he challenges professionals

throughout San Bernardino County to use existing resources, think smarter and create ways to help young people.

"People want to blame this on the kids, but it's not all the kids. It's an adult issue," Culberson said. "We can keep complaining. But as professionals, we have to develop strategies and programs to meet those needs."

"In a lot of cases, we're not rising to meet that challenge."

Culberson also created a group called Real-to-Real Concepts, which was run by former school-district police Sgt. Walter "Duke" Snyder. The program also brought former gang members into local schools to impact young lives, but it has since been grounded by lack of funding.

"The people who were funding it, they couldn't afford to fund it anymore," Snyder said, adding that he has since been volunteering to assist at-risk youth in schools.

"I made a promise years ago that I have to do what I have to do, and I'm not going to quit because no one will fund it," Snyder said.

Snyder grew frustrated because he saw a need for the Real-to-Real program, and he had proof that it was working — changing lives.

Snyder's son, Walt Snyder Jr., a former officer in the Rialto Police Department, also works with youth on the verge of joining a gang or trying hard to avoid the lifestyle.

Three years ago, Real-to-Real brought former gang members Kenneth

See REFORM / Page A4

Reform:

11/16/06

Judice and Tiffany Stafford to talk with students in San Bernardino Unified. The goal was to provide a perspective, direct from the streets, that students could relate to.

Although the Real-to-Real program aimed to benefit the students, it also heavily impacted some of the gang members who were brought in to speak.

Today, Judice is living a life that is the polar opposite to that of a gang member, which shows other youths that a change is possible with the right support, said Snyder Jr. Judice has put himself through school, gotten married and now works in the construction industry, he said.

"(Judice) was just unbelievable. What a great kid," he said. "He's doing so well now."

Of the 10 to 15 gang members that Snyder used in the program in the last few years, Judice and Stafford are the only two people who have maintained a connection with him, Snyder Jr. said.

As for the current wave of gang violence in San Bernardino, Snyder said it comes in cycles and is also generational.

"I think we had a down period. There was a brief truce about the old drive-by (shooting)," Snyder said. "The thing that's scaring me most is we're going back to that old drive-by."

The gang members from generations ago could at least be talked to, and they would listen — highlighting a major difference between older and new-generation gangs, Snyder said.

"These new guys, they're out to make



Gabriel Acosta/Staff photographer

Walt Snyder Jr. counsels a 13-year-old student at Serrano Middle School in Highland on Jan. 5.

a name for themselves," he said.

However, while most professionals agree there is a role for former gang members to intervene in young lives, not everyone agrees that speaking at school assemblies and events is the best use of their benefits.

"There are no national studies that say bringing ex-gang members to high school is effective whatsoever," said Paul Callanan, supervising probation officer for the San Bernardino County Probation Department. He is also a key person in the county Drugs and Gangs Task Force.

"It's not to say it doesn't impact kids. It may," Callanan said, adding that former gang members often have a more valuable role elsewhere in the chain: in outreach and networking.

Reaching gang youths — convincing them that they have other choices and can get out of the gang — can often be the most difficult first step. Then, those young people need the necessary support for long-term change.

San Bernardino County's plan to combat gangs calls for bringing together many different community and faith-based organizations to assist and support youths who make the commitment to leave gang life behind.

For example, support must be available for mental health, substance abuse and family issues, or for youths who may have dropped out of school and have no jobs. The difficult part becomes providing young people with support and strength to change their lives to keep them from going back to the gang, Callanan said.

"There's a lot more to changing kids than telling them how hard it is out there to be a gang member," Callanan said.

Contact writer Mike Cruz at (909) 386-3880 or via e-mail at mike.cruz@sbsun.com.

Slain girl's family calls for justice

By Mike Cruz | Staff Writer

It was the first shot — a pop in the night — that felled Mynasha Crenshaw as she rose from the dinner table to fetch a taco for her stepfather.

The 11-year-old girl, one of nine children in the family apartment that night, died in a hail of gunfire from gang members aiming to exact heavy payback on what they thought was the home of a rival gang member.

"They just came and started shooting," said Roshatta Joseph, the girl's mother.

In all, authorities said, 15 to 20 gunshots were fired into the small, corner apartment of the Cedarwood complex in San Bernardino's Del Rosa area on Nov. 13. Mynasha died later that night; her sister, Jaynita McWilliams, who was 14 at the time, survived a gunshot wound to her arm.

Mynasha's slaying galvanized

the community, prompting the public to demand action and city leaders to scramble for solutions.

State and local law enforcement agencies deployed officers to temporarily bolster San Bernardino's beleaguered Police Department, and in the days and weeks that followed, police rounded up seven suspects — all believed to be members of the Pimps, Players, Hustlers and Gangsters street gang.

"The shooting was the direct



Roshatta Joseph, mother of Mynasha Crenshaw, sits in San Bernardino Superior Court on Thursday for the preliminary hearing for seven suspects in the fatal shooting of her daughter. Judge Brian McCarville on Thursday ordered all seven to stand trial.

INSIDE | A4

RALLY FOR CHANGE: Outrage over Mynasha Crenshaw's death along with the city's distinction as the nation's 18th most dangerous has fueled a drive to make crime-fighting and prevention a high priority.

ONLINE EXTRA

www.sbsun.com

- > **GALLERY:** See more photos from Thursday's court hearing.
- > **SLIDESHOW:** An audio-photo overview of the case so far.
- > **BLOG:** Weigh in on the city's ongoing struggle to reclaim its streets.

See **SUSPECTS** / Page A4

2/24/06

MYNESA SLAYING SUSPECTS IN COURT

Ordered to trial



Photos by LaFonzo Rachal Carter/Staff photographer
All seven suspects in the Myneshia Crenshaw slaying are in San Bernardino Superior Court on Thursday for a preliminary hearing. The 11-year-old girl was killed in an apparent gang-related shooting Nov. 13 at the Cedarwood Apartments in San Bernardino's Del Rosa area.

Suspects

continued from page A1

retaliation for the murder of one of their own," said San Bernardino police Officer Travis Walker, who testified as a gang expert Thursday at a preliminary hearing in San Bernardino Superior Court. "The gang was outraged by the murder and sought retaliation against the rival gang at the time, which was the Rollin' 60s."

San Bernardino Superior Court Judge Brian McCarville on Thursday ordered all seven suspects — Michael Barnett Jr., Shawn Davis, Sidikiba Greenwood, Tyshon Harris, Patrick Lair, Sinque Morrison and Harold Phillips — to stand trial.

Police believe the shooting that claimed Mynesha's life was intended as retribution for the death of PPHG gang member Barry Jones, killed four days earlier in a shootout just around the corner from the Cedarwood Apartments.

The revenge plot, according to authorities, was hatched in an Auto Zone parking lot on 40th Street, where a car wash was being held to raise money for Jones' funeral.

Angry about Jones' death during a shootout with a Rollin' 60s gang member a week earlier, senior PPHG member Sidikiba Greenwood started talking about payback, according to police testimony on Thursday.

A large group of PPHG members met up outside Greenwood's apartment to formalize their plan and arm themselves. At about 6 p.m., several PPHG members, which allegedly included all the defendants except Greenwood, got into cars and drove to the area near Citrus and Mountain av-

enues to look for members of the Rollin' 60s gang.

"Everyone went over there armed," said San Bernardino police Detective Gary Robertson during testimony.

The gang members parked their cars on East Citrus and wandered into the apartment buildings clustered there. Davis later told police he unknowingly shot at his cousin, identified as Lucky Kelley, who apparently was trying to warn residents to stay in their homes.

A resident told them a Rollin' 60s gang member lived at 1414 E. Citrus Ave. in Apartment No. 22 — a small corner unit in the Cedarwood complex.

With lookouts posted on the street corners nearby, the gang members gathered outside the apartment, armed with a .45 caliber handgun, a 9 mm handgun, a .22 caliber rifle and a 7.62 assault-style weapon.

They could tell there were people inside. Rival gang members, they thought.

Then they opened fire.

Three adults and nine children were inside Apartment No. 22 enjoying a taco dinner in celebration of their new home.

At about 7:20 p.m., Vincent Hatfield, Mynesha's stepfather, was sitting on the couch. He saw shadows outside moving by the window, but thought nothing of it. People often walked by the apartment.

Mynesha was sitting at the kitchen table.

Hatfield asked her to bring him another taco, and as quickly as he made the request, she stood, he said.

There was no warning, no knock on the door, no shout from outside.

"We heard a noise, POW, the first bullet came in," Hatfield said. "The next thing I knew she was collapsed on the floor."

At the sound, other children

emerged from a bedroom.

"I was just trying to tell them to get down," Hatfield said. "I said don't come into the living room."

Hatfield hurried to the kitchen to try and protect Mynesha and the other two girls there.

"It looked so bad," he said. "I was thinking all three of the girls got shot in the kitchen."

Only Mynesha and her sister, Jaynita, now 15, were hit.

Mynesha died later at Loma Linda University Medical Center from a gunshot wound to the chest. Her sister is still recovering from a gunshot wound to the arm.

In the wake of Mynesha's death, the community has rallied for change.

Residents have demanded a renewed war on crime, and city leaders have responded. Violence and crime prevention became the defining issue of the mayoral runoff, in which Superior Court Judge Pat Morris prevailed earlier this month after touting an ambitious plan to win back the city's streets.

His opponent, City Attorney James F. Penman, was equally ambitious in vowing to make San Bernardino safer. Residents and leaders alike, along with The Sun, have formed a community group in Mynesha's memory dedicated to building a better city.

The group, Mynesha's Circle, sponsored a walk through the Del Rosa neighborhood where Mynesha was killed. More than 1,000 people attended the two-hour march and subsequent town-hall meeting.

Still, violence continues to be a source of anguish in the city, which ranked No. 18 on a list of the 25 most dangerous cities in the United States last year.

The problem, however, will not be easily solved, experts say. Violence is

unpredictable.

Roshata Joseph, Mynesha's mother, said the family knew nothing about the area and nothing about anyone who had lived in the apartment before them.

"They just came and started shooting,"

Police say Davis, Morrison, Lair and Bennett were the shooters. Harris and Phillips were there, but didn't fire, according to testimony. Both were beaten later by fellow gang members for failing to shoot, police said.

Greenwood is accused of organizing the hit.

All have been charged with murder, two counts of attempted murder, conspiracy and special allegations of being a gang member.

All seven have pleaded not guilty.

Even today, Mynesha's sister, Jaynita, is afraid to go outside, her mother said.

Jaynita saw the gang members' cars, and fear of retaliation lingers, Joseph said.

Friends and family members of the suspects in court on Thursday didn't make things any better. The hard looks. The cold stares.

Hatfield and Joseph insist they're innocent victims. They have no gang ties, they say.

The family has moved out of the apartment, but still, Jaynita does not go to school. School officials bring her work to her home. Her forearm is still in a cast, and doing homework in a difficult task.

"She has no feeling (in that arm), still, to write with," Joseph said.

Now, the family wants justice.

Said Hatfield: "I really want to see them die like my daughter died."

2/24/06

GET INVOLVED

FIGHTING CRIME

■ **WHO:** The Way World Outreach, a church dedicated to bringing economic and spiritual relief to people in run-down neighborhoods

■ **WHAT:** A "Stop the Violence" campaign to strengthen the voice of residents who want to cut down on local crime

■ **WHEN:** 2 p.m. Saturday

■ **WHERE:** Mountain View Manor, The "Yellows," 1407 Genevieve St., San Bernardino

■ **INFORMATION:** Call (909) 884-7117

NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING

■ **WHO:** Loma Linda City Council

■ **WHAT:** Meeting to discuss how a planned 28-unit apartment complex on Ohio Street might affect the surrounding neighborhood.

■ **WHEN:** 7 p.m. Tuesday

■ **INFORMATION:** Call (909) 884-7117

CRIME TIPS

Anyone with information about any crimes in San Bernardino should call the city's hot line at (909) 384-5656.

LOG ON

CATCH UP

Read past stories from The Sun's coverage of crime in San Bernardino.

GET INVOLVED

Join The Sun's online forum by visiting the Troubled Town Blog.

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Suspects in the fatal shooting of Mynesha Crenshaw are brought into San Bernardino Superior Court on Thursday for a preliminary hearing.



2/24/06

Crime group gelling

Mynesha's Circle takes official tone

By Robert Rogers
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — Decisions about the guilt or innocence of the seven men charged in the killing of 11-year-old Mynesha Crenshaw could be months away. But the wheels of change can spin faster than those of justice.

Since the girl's death in November, efforts have sprouted throughout the city to clean up its neighborhoods and its crime problems.

"We as a community are more proactive because of Mynesha's death," said Kent Paxton, Children's Network director for San Bernardino County and a leading figure in Mynesha's Circle, an organization initially formed by The Sun that is committed to finding solutions to the city's crime woes.

"When a child dies needlessly because of senseless violence ... if people aren't spurred to action (by that), I don't know what will," Paxton said.

A year earlier, San Bernardino was considered even more violent — ranked as the 16th most dangerous city in the nation — but the reaction from city and community leaders was relatively muted.

... was before Mynesha.

She was having dinner with her family the evening of Nov. 13 when bullets tore through the walls of her Del Rosa apartment. The unintended victim in an apparent gang-related shooting, Mynesha became symbolic of the city's widespread violence, and her death galvanized community leaders who wanted to make a difference.

Outrage over her death, combined with the city's distinction as the 18th most dangerous in the nation in 2005, fueled a drive to make crime-fighting and prevention a high priority. Crime took center stage in the election of a new mayor and prompted the City Council to approve hiring 35 new police officers.

It also inspired more collaboration among government, church, community and grass-roots organizations.

In west San Bernardino, Victory Outreach Church has stepped up its weekend street rallies against the kind of violence that ended Mynesha's life.

Newly formed The Way World Outreach has launched an adopt-a-block campaign that involves members going door-to-door to clean garbage-strewn areas.

The Del Rosa Neighborhood Action Group, also known as DR NAG, has stepped up its efforts since the bullets that killed Mynesha rang out in its back yard.

"People are digging in and saying they're going to be here, their children's children are going to be here, and with that hope comes commitment," Councilwoman Susan Lien Longville said.

Lien Longville, herself a veteran of grass-roots participation since she attended the University of Wisconsin in the late 1960s, said the commitment of residents to attacking long-term problems is encouraging.

"We saw in the (mayoral) election that people recognized there were no easy answers, and that if you wanted to address the issues of a troubled community you would have to do some hard work," she said.

Just a few months after its first meeting, Mynesha's Circle has shifted into the hands of Mayor-elect Pat Morris and Paxton. The group is fashioning a mission statement and met recently to hammer out ways to better coordinate city and county resources to reduce crime.

Paxton said the meeting is a significant step.

"This is where the Circle is picking up momentum and taking on a life of its own. We're talking about defining agencies' roles and how to spend dollars the most effective way possible," Paxton said.

Elsa Valdez, a professor of sociology at Cal State San Bernardino and a San Bernardino City Unified School District board member, said the participation of elected officials would enable the group to move forward.

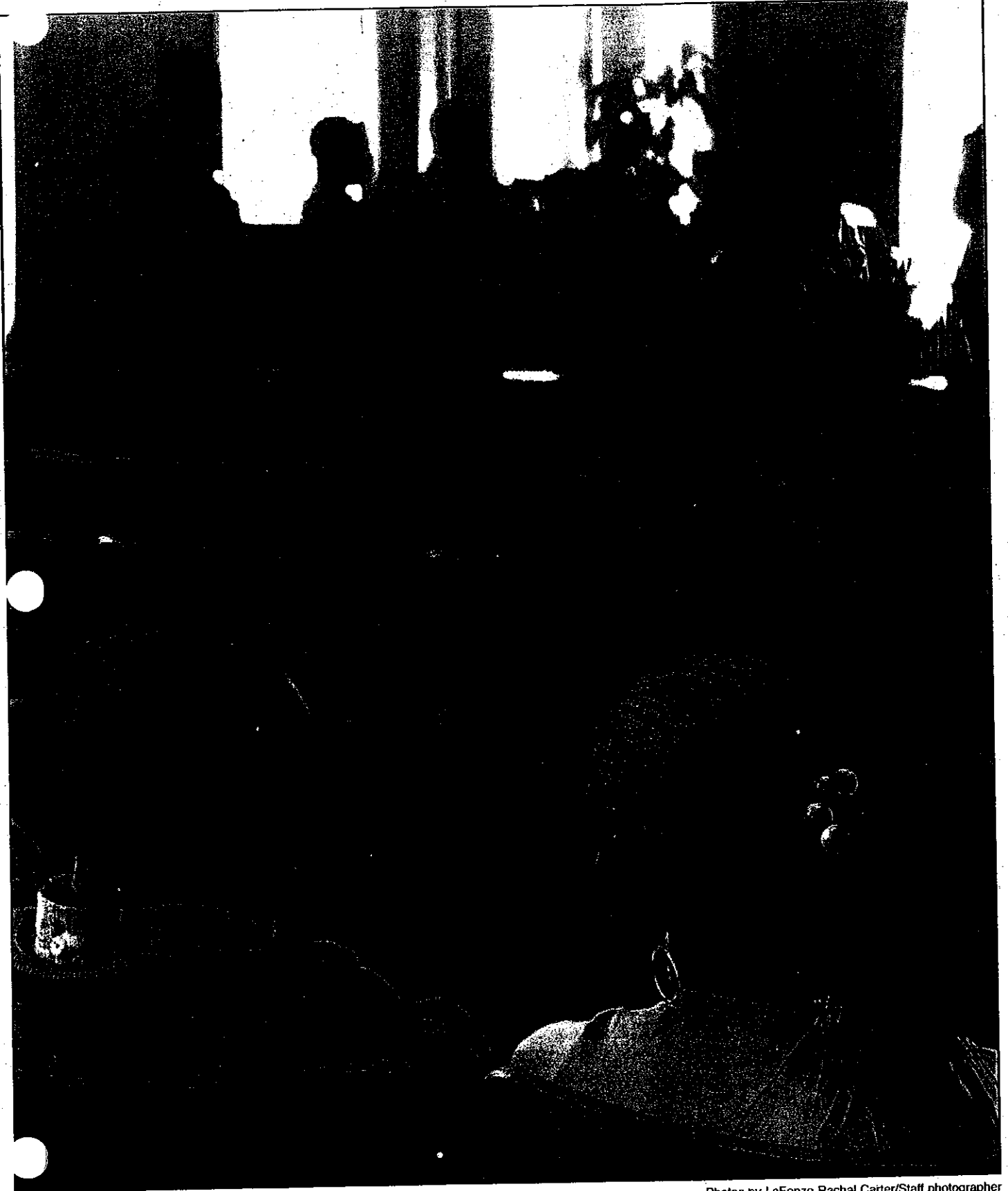
"As long as we can get buy-in from our local officials, these groups can continue to plan and move forward with plans that require money and funding," she said. "The families and individuals who belong to these community groups — they don't have the type of resources that are necessary."

The Circle, which draws from every sector of the community, has not lost its diversity by taking on a more official tone. It has accelerated its schedule and begun "taking structure," Paxton said.

A Circle subcommittee gathered Tuesday at Casa De San Bernardino, a downtown nonprofit drug- and gang-prevention center, to codify its guiding principles, a list that included a dedication to diversity and balancing suppression, prevention and intervention.

Staff Writer Megan Blaney contributed to this report.

2/24/06



Photos by LaFonzo Rachal Carter/Staff photographer

Mynesha Crenshaw's stepfather, Vincent Hatfield, left, and her mother, Roshatta Joseph, are in court Thursday in San Bernardino for a preliminary hearing for seven suspects in the fatal shooting of the 11-year-old girl at the Cedarwood Apartments in San Bernardino on Nov. 12.

Concerned for SB

Feinstein addresses need for anti-gang efforts

By Kelly Rayburn
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — Sen. Dianne Feinstein touted her proposed anti-gang legislation Friday, calling increasing gang violence a "growing cancer" that the federal government has not done enough to stop.

Feinstein, D-Calif., offered remarks at a luncheon put on by the Inland Empire Economic Partnership and San Bernardino Area Chamber of Commerce at the National Orange Show Events Center before moving on to Rialto to push for clean-water legislation in front of a perchlorate-treatment facility.

Feinstein, first elected to the Senate in 1992, visited at a time many people say could prove a turning point for the city.

The city has the region's worst crime rate — one of the highest in the country. But many observers see change on the horizon and a new mayor, Pat Morris, is to be sworn in March 6.

Although crime is particularly egregious in San Bernardino, the senator addressed a crowd that included elected officials from the region and stressed that the increase in gang violence was not a problem that could be pinned down to one location.

"In the county of San Bernardino, how many gangs do you think you have?" she said. "Three hundred seventy-six."

She rattled off statistics that, she said, show the county's level of gang activity is on par with Los Angeles County's on a per-capita basis.

"But the tentacles of the gangs here move far beyond the county lines," she said. "They've gone national and they've gone international."

See FEINSTEIN / Page A6



Al Citron/For The Sun

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., and San Bernardino Mayor-elect Pat Morris shake hands at a luncheon at the National Orange Show Events Center on Friday.



A spotlight on potential solutions to crime in our community.

LOG ON

Watch video of Sen. Dianne Feinstein speaking on gangs, drugs, the economy and perchlorate.

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INSIDE

FEINSTEIN TARGETS WATER

Senator pushes her \$50 million legislation for water cleanup.
Page B1

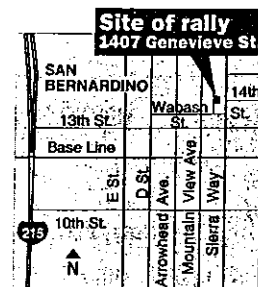
JUDGE MORRIS NO MORE

Pat Morris to step down from position as Superior Court judge on March 6. Page A6

PAROLEE SWEEP

27 taken off the streets.
Page A6

STOP THE VIOLENCE



Staff graphic

The Way World Outreach, a church dedicated to bringing economic and spiritual relief to people in run-down neighborhoods, invites the community to join its "Stop the Violence" campaign.

The campaign kicks off with a rally at 2 p.m. today at The "Yellows" at Mountain View Manor, 1407 Genevieve St., San Bernardino.

For information, call (909) 884-7117.

SBSUN Feb 29, 2006

Feinstein

continued from page A1

She described street gangs as extensive criminal enterprises and said the federal government should use the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, or RICO, to fight them. RICO was originally designed as a tool to go after the finances of organized crime.

Feinstein's speech also covered illegal immigration, President Bush's proposed budget cuts, methamphetamine use and ethics reform in Congress.

Josie Gonzales, 5th District county supervisor, praised Feinstein for being the first national politician she's seen to clearly articulate the basic destructiveness the increase in gang violence is having in communities throughout the nation.

Gonzales said federal aid could be key to local efforts against gangs.

"Obviously, we need all the help we can get," she said.

Feinstein first introduced her legislation along with Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, in January 2005.

It would authorize \$762.5 million in federal dollars over five years to support law-enforcement efforts against gang violence as well as intervention programs for at-risk youth.

Feinstein said she hopes the legislation can be passed this year.

Morris, who attended the luncheon, said if the legislation passes, he is confident San Bernardino would use the newly available federal resources effectively in its anti-crime efforts.

In the crime plan Morris formulated during his mayoral campaign, he listed proposed federal anti-gang legislation similar to Feinstein's as a possible source of future funding for additional police officers.



Al Cuizon/For The Sun

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., speaks to members of the San Bernardino Area Chamber of Commerce and city officials on Friday about increased gang activity nationwide.

GET INVOLVED

WHO: San Bernardino County Grand Jury

WHAT: The Grand Jury seeks volunteers to investigate all aspects of county, city and special district governments, and to hear information on certain criminal investigations. Jurors will serve from July 1 to June 30, 2007.

WHEN: Applications are due by April 21.

WHERE: San Bernardino County Superior Court, 351 N. Arrowhead Ave., San Bernardino

INFORMATION: Call (909) 387-3825.

WHO: The Fontana Black Awareness Parade Committee and the city of Fontana

WHAT: Black History Month Parade

WHEN: 10 a.m. today

WHERE: Starts at Sierra Avenue at Arrow Boulevard and ends at Veterans Park at Merrill and Palmetto avenues

2/26/06

Love as the solution



Jacqué Valencia, 23, of Highland hugs a boy during the "Stop the Violence" event at the "Yellows" apartment complex in the 1400 block of Genevieve Street in San Bernardino on Saturday. "This is bringing everybody together," said Ralph Maddox, a resident of the complex who attended the event, sponsored by The Way World Outreach church.

Gabriel Acosta/Staff photographer

Opening city's eyes and ears

By Kelly Rayburn
Staff Writer

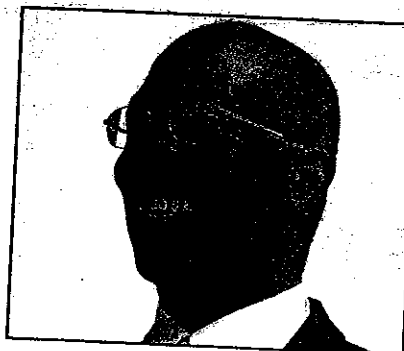
SAN BERNARDINO — The neighborhood associations in Rikke Van Johnson's 6th Ward are less active than those in many other parts of the city.

Crime — though declining — is high. Voter turnout is low.

Civic engagement overall is not what Johnson would like it to be.

So the councilman, first elected in 2003, is coordinating town-hall meetings that have been held somewhat haphazardly so far. Johnson said he plans to hold them on a regular basis.

His idea is to let constituents know what he and the rest of the City Council are doing



Sixth Ward Councilman Rikke Van Johnson speaks at a town-hall meeting on Thursday at Arroyo Valley High School in San Bernardino. He encouraged his Westside constituents to ask questions and let him know what the City Council could do to help their neighborhoods.

Steven Lewis/For The Sun

INSIDE

GET INVOLVED

Find out how you and your neighborhood can make a difference.

Page A6

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Ward

continued from page A1

to address their concerns on such issues as public safety and infrastructure.

But the meetings are also a plea for residents to take some initiative and pay attention to what goes on at City Hall — and to come to the table with plans to fix the ward's problems.

At the most recent meeting, Johnson pitched his position as one in which he can advance constituents' ideas but only if they share those ideas with him.

"When you bring me things," he told a group of about 50 or 60 people Thursday night in the cafeteria at Arroyo Valley High School, "I will do what I can to make those things happen. And if not, you can get me out and get someone else in here."

Johnson's Westside ward stretches along Interstate 215 and includes some of the city's

most crime-ridden neighborhoods.

His call for civic engagement is similar to that issued by Mayor-elect Pat Morris.

Morris said Friday the low voter turnout — about 20 percent — in the Feb. 7 election was evidence that far too many of the city's residents are disengaged.

He said he will work to "broaden the base of investment" in the city to make people feel "they count and they're accountable."

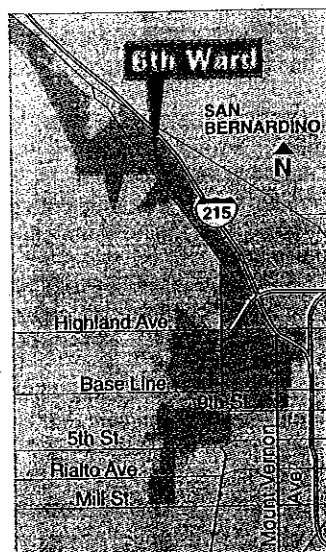
Johnson said he believes he and Morris share much of the same philosophy — which he hopes yields positive changes in his ward.

He concedes that his meetings have been of mixed success so far.

"You see the same people, unfortunately," he said after Thursday's meeting.

That's not to say nothing gets done.

In a question-and-answer session — during which Johnson thought there were too few questions for him — one man,



Staff graphic

Walter Ringer, asked why the city hadn't cleaned up trash and debris that he said had been building up on empty lots near his home for the past two years.

After some hemming and hawing about whether Ringer was talking about an area that was in the city's or Caltrans' jurisdiction, Peggi Hazlett, who



Steven Lewis/For The Sun

Councilman Rikke Van Johnson uses photos to illustrate his remarks at a meeting at Arroyo Valley High School in San Bernardino on Thursday. Johnson said he plans to hold such meetings regularly so citizens can air complaints and ask questions.

works in the Mayor's Office, stood up.

She asked Ringer to specify a location that was within the city's jurisdiction that could be cleaned up with a volunteer crew. Ringer did.

answered, "I'll be out there with a volunteer crew and we'll see what we can do."

The audience applauded.

Johnson's plea for residents to become more involved in their neighborhoods is echoed

Sunday, February 26, 2006

She wielded crime data that showed that felony crime dropped more than 8 percent in the city's western police district in 2005 and that it is down another 6 percent so far this year.

But homicides, she said, are not dropping.

"I want this year to be below what last year was," she said, "but I need your help in doing that."

She urged people to give police tips about gang activity and told them they could do so anonymously.

Afterward, Holmes approached Johnson as he packed up electronic equipment he used for his presentation.

They shook hands, and Johnson, referring to the audience, said, "Where were the questions? Where were the questions?"

Asked how he could bring more people to the table, he said, "That's the ongoing dilemma."

Chuckling lightly, he said, "It's not like you can break down their doors and drag them

2/26/06



Photos by Gabriel Acosta/Staff photographer
A member of The Way World Outreach church raps during the "Stop the Violence" event at the "Yellows" apartments in San Bernardino on Saturday. The event offered free clothes and food and gave neighbors in the high-crime area a chance to get to know one another.

GET INVOLVED

WHO: San Bernardino Adult School.
WHAT: In honor of California Adult Education Week, the school offers an open house to introduce the community to its programs, including high school diploma completion classes and vocational training.

WHEN: The one-hour open house begins at 2:15 p.m. March 16.
WHERE: The adult school's Green Room, at the corner of Base Line and E Street in San Bernardino.
INFORMATION: Call (909) 388-6000.

“

Everyone wants to be part of something good. These people are starting to feel like a part of a family.”

MARCO GARCIAS
Pastor

Neighbors unite for crime fight

By Stacia Glenn
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — A rally against violence stirred hope in a crime-riddled neighborhood Saturday, building tenuous bonds among people who are normally too afraid to spend an evening visiting with neighbors in the street.

The Way World Outreach, a church dedicated to cleaning up the streets, kicked off its "Stop the Violence" campaign at Mountain View Manor, an apartment complex on Genevieve Street commonly known as the "Yellows."

As city officials and community leaders search for solutions to cut down on crime in the nation's 18th-most dangerous city, churches and citizen groups are trying to do their part.

The cul-de-sac was crammed with hundreds of people sitting on porch steps talking or lining up for face painting and free food. Dozens of children squealed with joy as they bounced in the Astro-jump. Others focused intently on throwing a ball in a cup so they could walk away with a much-coveted goldfish prize.

"I think it's real positive. It's going to make a big difference," said 53-year-old Ralph Maddox, who stood on the sidewalk holding his grandson. "Everybody'd usually be in their own little shell, but this is bringing everybody together."

Maddox has lived in the "Yellows" for four years with his wife and 9-year-old twin daughters, he said, and he sometimes worries about his family's safety.

His wife, Alicia Maddox, 51, said violence has calmed down in the area recently but that more needs to be done. She suggested putting a gate around the apartments to keep out criminals.

As she sat in the doorway watching children playing in the street, she smiled and said, "We ain't gonna stand for it no more. This has gotta help, especially if

See STOP / Page A6

Lucrecia Flores, 10, of San Bernardino was one of many children to have their faces painted Saturday. Children could also take part in games, contests and singing.



Stop

continued from page A1

they pray. Prayer changes everything."

Brand-new clothes hung from a tree in front of the yellow buildings, and 200 bags of groceries were set out for those who needed them. About 120 members of The Way World Outreach milled about, mingling with residents and talking about Jesus to those who expressed interest.

Pastor Marco Garcias said the rally was a success because

it united a community, if only for a day, and demonstrated a positive family dynamic that he hoped would be carried into the surrounding homes.

"Everyone wants to be part of something good," he said. "These people are starting to feel like a part of a family."

Most said they were grateful to see such hope brought to the neighborhood, but others said it is just the first in many small steps in combating crime.

"I look at the newspaper every day and see somebody got killed," said 25-year-old

owns a recording studio open to children looking for alternatives to gangs, stood on the curb watching the festivities.

He applauded the church's efforts to rebuild the community but questioned why San Bernardino police did not participate in the event. It would have been helpful for officers to meet residents and be seen as encouraging rather than oppressing, he said.

"You gotta do more than just tell them to stop the violence," Lewis said. "We gotta lock hands somehow. Communication's the key."

Tommy Driver, who has lived in the area for six years. "But if the thugs see something like this around, they're going to think twice."

Love was the message of the day. Children of all ages packed onto a blue tarp, singing and repeating messages and Bible verses about the importance of love. They played games aimed at forging new friendships, yelling excitedly when toys were handed out to the winners.

Chris Lewis, a former gang member from Pomona who



Rise of the ANTI-HERO

By John Weeks
Staff Writer

ONLINE EXTRA

www.sbsun.com

> REEL TO REAL:
Violence in
entertainment
spills into daily life.

INSIDE



KRATOS
'God of War'

AT THE HELM

Many popular
video games let you
become the world
of characters.

PAGE A6

We used to boo the villains. Not anymore.

In the movies, Darth Vader, the murderous tyrant of the "Star Wars" saga, has become an idol for millions of young people. Other celluloid killers like "Scarface," Freddy Krueger and Jason Voorhees have achieved pinup status with sales of millions of popular posters.

On TV, wholesome families of the past, the Cleavers and Bradys and Huxtables, have given way to dysfunctional families in hit shows like "The Sopranos" and "Desperate Housewives."

Video games such as "Grand Theft Auto" offer endless hours of amusement for teens who like to pretend they are gang lords stealing cars or shooting police officers.

Megastar rappers like Jay-Z, Snoop

See ANTI-HERO / Page A6

JAY-Z >>



TONY SOPRANO
'The Sopranos'

PHOTOS COURTESY OF HBO, ROCKSTAR GAMES AND GUTTY IMAGES / PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY TONY MAHER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

ANTI-HERO

continued from page A1

Dogg and 50 Cent, who by their own admission have worked as pimps, hustlers and drug dealers, now make fortunes spreading a musical gospel that glorifies thug life. Get rich or die trying, they say.

As consumers, we support an entertainment industry that is crowded with anti-heroes, and we are paying a stiff price, experts say.

Our pop culture is a mirror of our society. It's an easy step from glorifying antisocial behavior in our entertainment media to tolerating it and letting it take root in our community. Make-believe mayhem translates smoothly to real-life mayhem.

And real-life mayhem exacts a terrible toll, as we have seen in a recent wave of killings that has shocked the Inland Empire.

"The violence we see in movies and hear in our music helps perpetuate the violence that permeates our society," says the Rev. Reginald Beamon, a San Bernardino community activist and a leader of Myneisha's Circle, a coalition for reform named after Myneisha Crenshaw, an 11-year-old San Bernardino girl who died in an apparent gang-related shooting Nov. 13.

"Movie violence, TV violence, those are bad enough, but I think the violence in music now is even worse," he says. "Because of how we're spiritually made, music speaks to our soul in a special way. We walk with a rhythm. And what we put in our body is what we get out. If we put violence in, we get violence out."

Beamon is himself a former Compton gang member and music-industry player. He once managed and worked with rap performers like Ice-T, Eazy-E and Bone Thugs-n-Harmony.

"Rap music is just getting more and more violent. That's a big reason I got out of that whole thing, because of the violence. It was getting worse and worse," Beamon says. Art always has depicted violence. Mankind's earliest cave paintings show scenes of entertainment and violence agree that today's mixture of entertainment and violence represents a toxic brew of unprecedented volume and proportion.

How did we come to this? One argument is that pop culture took a fateful turn some 30 years ago, in the 1970s, and continues down that road to this day. '70s were about disillusionment. In the '60s, people felt confident in their power to take action and make a difference. They believed that social ills could be remedied through collective effort. People organized, marched and demonstrated in support of rights, civil rights, black power and brown power.

But idealism took a beating in the '70s. In 1970, National Guardsmen fired into a crowd of Vietnam War protesters at Kent State, killing four college students and wounding nine. The 1973 oil crisis crippled U.S. consumers and provoked dark speculation about collusion between government and big business interests. In 1973 and '74, Vice President Spiro Agnew and President Richard Nixon resigned in separate scandals.

The national mood turned pessimistic. Activism turned to skepticism. A spirit of community interest was replaced by a spirit of brooding self-interest.

The door mood was reflected in the pop culture. Pop music gave way to punk. Best-selling books of the decade included titles like "Winning Through Intimidation" and "Looking Out for No. 1." Television turned acerbic even sitcoms had a caustic edge, as seen in the likes of "All in the Family" and "M*A*S*H." On the big screen, so-called "disaster" movies became national favorites, along with ultra-violent films like "The Godfather," "Taxi Driver" and "A Clockwork Orange."

The most popular film of the decade, "Star Wars" (1977), was first regarded as lighthearted escapism fare, a reaction against the prevailing dark mood of the nation. But the evolution of the "Star Wars" franchise proved to be telling in another way.

While the heroic Luke Skywalker and his fellow freedom fighters occupy the centerpiece roles in the first "Star Wars" movie, it was Darth Vader, the larger-than-life villain, who became the public's favorite. By the time the six-part "Star Wars" saga reached its conclusion, in 2005, Darth Vader had stolen the spotlight completely, taking full ownership of the centerpiece role.

A Rolling Stone cover story last summer, timed to coincide with the release of the final "Star Wars" installment, was titled "The Cult of Darth Vader." The murderous monster, originally a supporting player, had become not only the greatest movie villain of all time, but a treasured pop-culture icon.

"People like villains because they're powerful and they don't worry about the rules," "Star Wars" creator and director George Lucas told Rolling Stone.

These days, villains also have another edge. They can thrive in a culture where traditional heroes have failed, and anti-heroes are embraced as an alternative.

"We are experiencing today in our country a crisis of character," Charles W. Colson told Harvard Business School students in a speech reprinted in the Fall 2005 issue of Christian Ethics Today.

Colson, a former aide to Nixon who went to prison for his role in the Watergate scandal, says America has been shocked in the past quarter-century by the downfall of many individuals in positions of authority and trust. He pointed not only to Nixon, but to other political leaders like the Keating Five, a group of U.S. senators implicated in a national savings-and-loan scandal, and Marion Barry, who was mayor of the District of Columbia when he was arrested on narcotics charges.

Religious leaders such as TV evangelist Jimmy Swaggart and Jim Bakker, not to mention a long list of Catholic priests, have been disgraced by sex scandals, Colson says. And baseball great Pete Rose, ruined in a gambling and perjury scandal, leads a long list of tarnished sports heroes. The loss of legitimate role models during the last three decades has set America adrift, says Colson, a reborn Christian who today is chairman of Prison Fellowship Ministries.

"The reason we have the most terrible crime problem in the world is simple: We've lost our moral consensus." Traditional heroes have faltered, and anti-heroes have emerged to fill the vacuum, especially in our pop culture.

Among the most dramatic examples are rap stars, who have their own intriguing link to the '70s. The disco dance craze of that era came and went quickly, but not without portentous ramifications. A variant of disco, spawned in its shadow, has not only continued to thrive, but has become today's pop-culture goliath.

Hip-hop, with its immense roster of fierce, street-tough heroes, can be seen as a ghettoized version of disco. "The white folks had their hip-hop and that was their dance," rap star and actor Ice-T (Tracy Marrow) told The Sun. "But there was a big difference. Disco went away, just

See ANTI-HERO / Page A7

SB SON MAR. 5, 2006

ANTI-HERO

continued from page A6

like that, but hip-hop is still here. It's everywhere. It ain't ever going away."

The evolution of hip-hop tells us much about the potent hold it continues to have on pop culture and society.

Most young blacks and Latinos of the mid-'70s lacked the money and access to join the white throngs that crowded urban clubs where disco was king. Undaunted, they invented an alternative called the park jam, or street jam. First in the South Bronx of New York, then in other cities, crowds would gather in a park or cul-de-sac, break open the base of a public street light, and splice wires to power up a turntable and speakers. It was party time.

Pirating the electricity was part of the fun, says Fab 5 Freddy (Fred Brathwaite), one of the pioneers of hip-hop who helped chronicle its development in the 2004 VH1 documentary "And You Don't Stop: 30 Years of Hip Hop."

"It was the aspect of the park jams smashing open the base of the street lights and plugging into the city's power. It was like, 'Yeah, where you gonna get the power? So the fact we were kind of TAKING the power was hot. The attitude was basically, 'It was us against them.'"

The revelers, many times numbering in the thousands, also found other ways to celebrate their "otherness" from the disco world, the white world.

Graffiti, so reviled by the establishment, was embraced by hip-hop culture. Tagging was a way to advertise an event, mark a venue and extol the bragging rights of a particular neighborhood and the "homeys" who lived there.

"It was a response to these kids being marginalized," says Michael Holman, creator of the documentary "Graffiti Rock." "This was their way of saying, 'We aren't nobodies. We're somebodies.' You bomb your name on a train, and that train is going to go all over the city. That's what it's all about. Look at me."

The music and dancing at park jams also took edgy forms. People danced on grass and pavement instead of parquet floors. At times, a distinctive way of dancing evolved that seemed to mimic street fighting. Dancers, either alone or in rival pairs, would drop to the ground, writhing and whirling, as a crowd gathered to watch and cheer. The dancers were called B-Boys, and their moves were called break dancing.

Most distinctive of all was the music at park jams. Revelers followed the lead of a black DJ playing black music, instead of a white DJ playing ABBA or the Bee Gees. In time, the black DJs developed a signature method of "sampling" sounds and snippets from other songs and blending them to make new songs.

In a way, then, the park jams used stolen power to play stolen tunes. And DJs disguised their identities by using inventive aliases, like Kool Herc and Grandmaster Flash. But something else was happening that would become the unique invention of the park jam scene. The DJs became more and more flamboyant, and they instigated more and more interaction with the crowd, exhorting dancers with shouted commands, cues and rhymes.

They were becoming performers, not just disc jockeys, and they were inventing a brand new kind of music: Rap.

A rivalry between East Coast record label Bad Boy and West Coast label Death Row Records reached its apotheosis in a personal, public feud between their respective stars, Biggie and Tupac Shakur. The feud reached a horrifying flash point when Tu-

pac Shakur, founder of Def Jam Records, says, "With N.W.A. strapped to go onstage, we were a lot of guns around, guys getting in after the Rodney King beating in Los Angeles in March 1991 and the police officers rioting that erupted when a jury acquitted West Coast hip-hop produced a host of major new stars, including Public Enemy, Snoop Dogg (Calvin Broadus), and the late Ice-T. The whole attitude was: 'F--- you.'"

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In fact, hip-hop culture derives its name from the lyrics to a seminal rap song, "Rapper's Delight," recorded in 1979 by the Sugar Hill Gang.

Older forms of black music, including gospel, jazz and rhythm and blues, had long before been co-opted into mainstream music. With rap, blacks once again had a music they could call their own. As P. Diddy (Sean Combs) would later put it, with defiant glee, at a music awards show: "We got the microphone now."

Despite its rough edges, hip-hop was first seen, like disco, as a form of escapism, a mostly harmless outlet for channeling energy and aggression. Competitive dancing was better than street fighting, after all.

Hip-hop was viewed as a positive alternative to the gang culture that also was gathering strength at the time. The Black Power and Brown Power movements of the '60s had largely dissipated in the '70s, failing victim to disappointment, apathy and infighting.

Street gangs rose out of the remnants of those movements. "You had all these kids with all this energy, organization and Coker, a chronicler of hip-hop and author of the book "Unbeatable: The Life, Death and Afterlife of the Notorious B.I.G." In the beginning, hip-hop culture and gang culture were separate, in fact opposing, forces. Instead of the gang message of anger and violence, hip-hop was all about partying, looking good, having a good time.

As the '70s gave way to the '80s, though, and hip-hop ceased to be a novelty and started gaining stature as a cultural force, it changed. Performers started to take themselves more seriously. The message started to harden.

"Hip-hop became more reflective of actual ghetto and barrio life. It started tackling subjects like poverty, slum housing, gang-banging, crime and drugs. It became more antagonistic and confrontational."

"Don't push me, because I'm already close to the edge," was the refrain of a 1982 hit, "The Message," by Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five.

The crack-cocaine epidemic of the '80s, which made millions out of a few pushers but left whole communities enslaved and impoverished, also had an insidious impact on rap music, says Bill Stephney, founder of Stepz Records and co-creator of the group Public Enemy.

"This changes completely the nature of the music," he says of surrounding the crack trade, the materialism surrounding the crack trade. So what had been a culture designed to minimize violence in the black community — put your knives down, put your guns down, we're going to rhyme against each other — now becomes a culture that reflects a violence unforeseen in the black community."

This new kind of rap was so different, it picked up a new name: Gangsta rap. One of its first stars was L.A. rapper Ice-T, who re-

members, "I was on the streets, hustling, doing all kinds of illegal activity, pimping, robbing, and my friends were like, 'Write about THAT, man,' and that was, like, the invention of gangsta rap."

Ice-T's first hit, "6 in the Mornin'," was a diatribe against the Los Angeles Police Department and its chief at the time, Daryl Gates, legendary in the black community for ordering pre-dawn raids on suspected crack houses and gang hideouts.

West Coast hip-hop, centered in L.A., emerged during the '80s as a major force and was perceived as more radical and gang-influenced than its East Coast counterpart.

"Gangster music fueled hip-hop the same way violence fuels Hollywood," says Will.i.am. (William Adams) of the Black Eyed Peas.

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Says Stephney: "A lot of L.A. hip-hop is about fear — I gonna kill you before you kill me."

The L.A. group N.W.A. fired a shot heard 'round the hip-hop world with their 1988 album "Straight Outta Compton," a raucous depiction of Southern California gang life. One song, "F--- the Police," earned official censure by the FBI and other law-enforcement agencies.

"Listening to the album was like going on a drive-by," says Ice-T. "The whole attitude was: 'F--- you.'"

Rick Rubin, founder of Def Jam Records, says, "With N.W.A. strapped to go onstage, we were a lot of guns around, guys getting in after the Rodney King beating in Los Angeles in March 1991 and the police officers rioting that erupted when a jury acquitted West Coast hip-hop produced a host of major new stars, including Public Enemy, Snoop Dogg (Calvin Broadus), and the late Ice-T. The whole attitude was: "F--- you."

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pac was shot dead in Las Vegas in September 1996, and Biggie was shot dead in Los Angeles in March 1997.

Police still list both slayings as unsolved.

Both coasts held their breath, but a feared hip-hop Armageddon didn't come to pass. In fact, arguably there has been a melting of sorts in the hip-hop world, at least among its first generation of stars.

Many of these individuals are now mainstream celebrities. Queen Latifah (Dana Owens) is an Academy Award-nominated actress. Will Smith is one of Hollywood's most bankable stars. Other rap artists also have parlayed their fame into big-screen careers, including Ice Cube (Oshae Jackson), LL Cool J (James Todd Smith) and Ludacris (Christopher Bridges).

Ice-T plays a cop, ironically enough, on TV's "Law and Order: SVU." Snoop Dogg is an in-demand schmoozer on the TV talk-show circuit. Chuck D (Carlton Ridenhour) lectures on college campuses. P. Diddy promotes voter registration through his "Vote or Die" organization.

Jay-Z (Shawn Carter) is a business tycoon who runs record labels, clothing lines, nightclubs and a vodka company. He even owns a share of the New Jersey Nets basketball team.

That's not to say that the hip-hop landscape isn't still crowded with angry young men. And women.

Lil' Kim (Kimberly Jones) is in prison, convicted of perjury after lying to investigators about a 2001 shooting in New York. Harlem rapper Cam'ron (Cameron Gites) is recovering from a gunshot wound he received in October on a Washington street. Eminem (Marshall Mathers) recently remarried ex-wife Kim Mathers, who evidently has forgiven him for writing songs about murdering her. 50 Cent (Curtis Jackson), a former drug dealer who has survived multiple shootings, still celebrates the gangster life in albums like "Get Rich or Die Tryin'."

Recent stories of a public feud between 50 Cent, who is from New York, and Compton rapper The Game (Jayceon Taylor) have stirred unpleasant memories of the Biggie-Tupac tragedy. In February 2005, a member of The Game's entourage was shot in the leg on a New York street.

The hip-hop juggernaut continues unimpeded, however. Hip-hop not only dominates the pop culture of America's minority communities, it has become pervasive in the nation's mainstream culture.

Says Ice-T: "Hip-hop has influenced the world totally, whether it's film, commercials, sports. ... It's the sound of the last two decades."

Hip-hop's stars, like artists of every kind and every era before them, argue that it is their job to hold up a mirror to society and that the violent themes and imagery of their art are accurate and necessary.

In order for hip-hop to change, they say, society must change. It's a chicken-or-egg argument that is as old as art itself.

But perhaps because hip-hop has become so potent and influential a force in early 21st century America, many voices are being raised against it, saying that it does more than chronicle violence, but also glorifies and perpetuates it.

"Rappers are always saying they want to keep it real, but the reality is that rap music is perpetuating the violence in our culture," says Beamon, the San Bernardino community activist.

The minister believes rap stars and their labels should be held accountable. "We need to start demanding that the record companies be more responsible. We can say to them: You keep causing the problem, so now you better become part of the solution."

"I can guarantee you, if some other Fortune 500 company was out there causing this kind of havoc in the community, society would rise up against it, and that company would be shut down tomorrow."

Spending money in hip-hop culture could go toward helping society instead of harming it, Beamon believes. "Music companies make a ton of money. They make millions of dollars off gangsta rap. They could put some of that money back into the community to help the community, to build social programs, to inspire the next generation of kids to rise up and escape from poverty and violence."

Beamon's words are echoed by author and minister Bernice A. King, the daughter of Martin Luther King Jr.

"The murder epidemic that is destroying our cities," she says, can largely be blamed on the "glorification of violence in U.S. films, television and popular music."

Society must take a stand, King says. She has called for stronger warning labels, a stricter rating system and selective consumer boycotts against purveyors of violent entertainment.

"We have to become more active about confronting the culture of violence that permeates U.S. media. We have to find new ways of encouraging and challenging them to sponsor art and entertainment that celebrate peace and love and create a culture of nonviolence."

Research assistance for this article was provided by Jennifer Johnston, reference librarian at the San Bernardino Public Library.

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Bloody, sociopathic protagonists populate popular video games

By Redmond Carroll
Staff Writer

It's never been a better time to be bad — if you're a gamer.

While moviegoers, TV addicts and music lovers have grown to root for the bad guy, flawed characters have also earned a special place in the hearts of video-game players.

The heroic landscape once ruled by bouncing plumbers and speedy blue hedgehogs has been changed by the arrival of demon hunters, mentally tormented cops and most recently, gangsters.

Eric Elder, who heads the Game Art and Design program at the Art Institute of California, in Los Angeles, links the shift to darker characters to the classic "Superman vs. Batman" discussion.

In the '50s, people's idea of the ideal American was good and wholesome, like Superman," he said. "But then in the '70s, '80s and '90s, people just couldn't relate to something like that, because it's not realistic. Batman is more interesting — he's heroic and loyal, but he's got issues. There's different shades to him."

Elder also mentioned key characteristics that an anti-hero must have in order to appeal to the audience.

"First, you have to give him one really good attribute — he loves his family, he loves what he does, things like that," he said. "Then, when he does the bad stuff, you have to believe he's doing it for the right reason. It's his mission."

The concept of heroes and anti-heroes wasn't prevalent in the

early days of gaming because there wasn't any technological room for it, said Keith Robinson, president of Intellivision, one of gaming's oldest companies.

"Back in the late '70s and '80s, the games didn't have all the pixels and the size to allow for personality. You'd have a game like 'Pitfall Harry,' but all you knew was that his name was Harry," Robinson said. "Now, you have cinematics and other things that create these almost living and breathing characters."

While it's difficult to find a game that "started" the

move toward grittier, darker heroes, there's certainly no problem finding them now. Many of today's more popular games feature protagonists that range from dark and brooding to bloody and sociopathic.

For example, there's Max Payne, a skilled but chronically depressed police officer constantly haunted by the deaths of his wife and baby. One of the most awarded games of 2005, Sony's "God of War," features Kratos, a former Spartan warrior whose skin is covered in the ashes of his dead family — whom he killed with his own hands. There's also Agent 47 of the "Hitman" series, a blank slate of a man who excels at the art of contract killing.

Gaming's darker side has drawn plenty of public ire, especially when it comes to the concept of street violence. A favorite target is the "Grand Theft Auto" franchise, which places players in the roles of various thugs, all of whom enjoy a violent freedom that has been well-documented and often decried.

The game currently in the cross hairs is "25 to Life" from Eidos Interactive. It pits police officers against gangsters.

Players assume the role of a gang member who's trying to leave behind his life of crime. But much of the action involves the main character shooting scores of police officers to survive.

Upon the game's release, the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund launched an online petition to pull it off shelves. According to the fund's Web site, the petition has amassed more than 200,000 signatures.

"We've obviously touched a vein in society," said Bruce Mendelsohn, spokesman for the organization. "With the reaction we've gotten, we might try to bring even more pressure."

The Rev. Reginald Beamon, a San Bernardino community activist and a one-time gang member, said games like "25 to Life" don't do anything to illuminate the real struggle against gangs.

"It secures the stereotypes of who these gang members are, what they look like, as well as their activities," he said. "It could also bring a sense of value — get them thinking, 'We're getting recognition for who we are.' We need to make sure the young people playing these games get an education."

That's the plan for Roderick Woodruff, co-founder of the Urban Video Game Academy, which educates inner-city kids about the basics of game design — meaning plenty of math and writing.

Woodruff manages the school in Washington, but there are other academies in Baltimore and Atlanta.

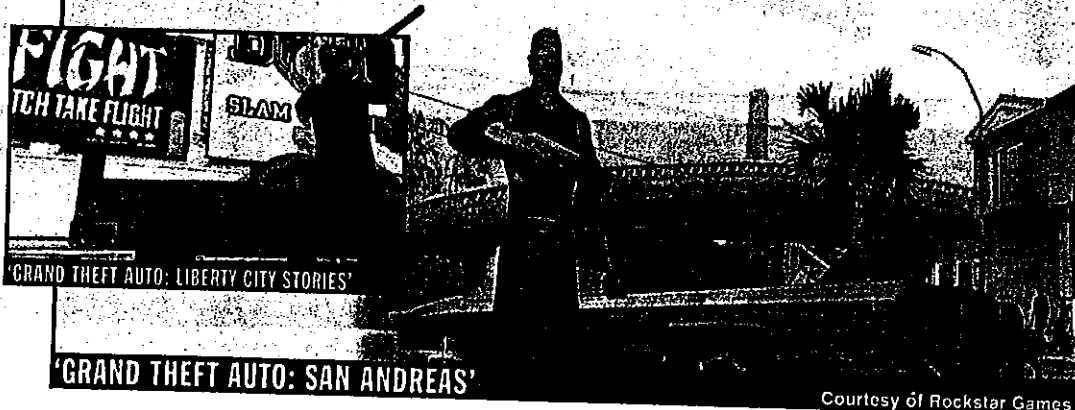
"We're trying to create a new crop of storytellers," he said. "What we're seeing now with some characters is that it's all about misogyny and killing. There's nothing to emulate. We're out of the age of Superman."

Elder, of the Art Institute, said we're probably going to stay there.

"There's definitely going to be more variation in the future," he said, "but I can't see us going back. Society would have to move backward."



'GOD OF WAR'
Courtesy of Sony



'GRAND THEFT AUTO: LIBERTY CITY STORIES'

'GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS'

Courtesy of Rockstar Games



The Rev. REGINALD BEAMON

“Rappers are always saying they want to keep it real, but the reality is that rap music is perpetuating the violence in our culture.”



TUPAC SHAKUR



ICE-T



SNOOP DOGG

“Listening to (N.W.A.’s ‘Straight Outta Compton’) was like going on a drive-by.”

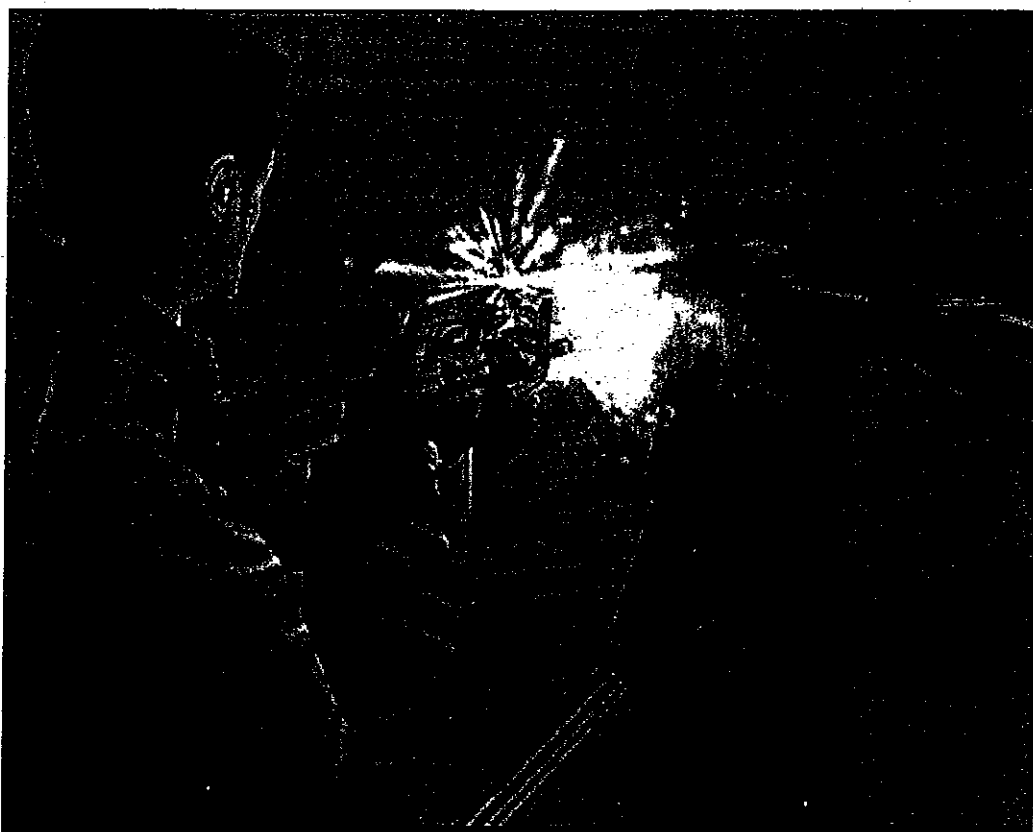
— Ice-T



ICE-T

File photos courtesy of Getty Images, The Associated Press, Staff

Sunday, March 5, 2006



'MAX PAYNE'

Courtesy of Rockstar Games

GAMERS EMBRACE THEIR DARK SIDE

A little girl, a large legacy

By Mike Cabiz
Staff Writer

Roshatta Joseph didn't think anything was out of the ordinary as she sat alone with her family in a San Bernardino apartment building on a rainy night that November night. No knocks on the door. No shouts from outside.

Then, without warning, before the shots rang out, and bullets tore into the building's Cedarwood apartment, striking and killing her little girl.

Eight months later, followed, Joseph's daughter, Mynesha Crenshaw, has been taken to the local lexicon and a force of change.

City and county officials have approved the hiring of nearly 60 additional police officers, and a debate rages over how to pay for them. Grass-roots efforts to fight crime have sprung up throughout the Inland Empire, from churches to neighborhoods.

Mynesha is the face of a community that drew 1,000 people to the Des Kosa neighborhood here sponsored by The Sun in January.

The demands for reform even helped bring San Bernardino's first oral hunger strike to the streets. Former Supervisor George Pataki promoted a broad-based effort to bring crime prevention.

See MYNESHA

"I'm not giving up, and I thank everyone else for not giving up."

ROSHATTA JOSEPH

Mother of Mynesha

Hatfield, Crenshaw

Joseph >>



Mynesha

continued from page A1

Joseph calls her "my special queen." She keeps a photo of the 11-year-old above her bed as a way to stay connected.

"Every morning, when I get up, I say 'I love you, baby,'" Joseph said.

The 33-year-old woman has kept a low profile since Mynesha's death on Nov. 13. She and her family, which includes husband Vincent Hatfield and six other children, have since moved out of the Cedarwood apartment complex.

She knows the community has rallied in Mynesha's memory to quell crime and violence and wishes to thank residents for supporting her as she bears the loss of a child.

She would like to be involved in the movement to make San Bernardino safer — even march in the streets, if needed — but the pain of her daughter's death still overwhelms her. And staying out of the spotlight is the best way to keep her family safe, she said.

"I'm not giving up, because God didn't put me on this Earth to give up," she said. "And I thank everyone else for not giving up."

She believes in the cause that has been inspired by Mynesha.

"If we don't get together, it's not going to stop," she said about the violence. "There's going to be another shooting, another innocent child, at another point in time."

A troubled neighborhood

While the Cedarwood apartment complex is no one's idea of a dream home, many tenants say they're happy just to have a place to live. For working-class people struggling to make ends meet, the complex offers cheap rent and a roof over their heads.

At Cedarwood, there are no curved walkways or sculpted fountains, like at many higher-end apartment complexes. There are no lush lawns, no sparkling pools, no tot-lots where children can play.

Cedarwood is in a neighborhood with other low-rent apartment buildings. It's a neighborhood where suspicious cars are common. Where guns and knives are plentiful. Where drug sales flourish.

Ironically, many residents say they came there to escape the big-city slums and gang life of Los Angeles.

Even Joseph, who grew up on 119th Street in Compton and later lived in Panorama City, where she met Hatfield, moved to San Bernardino hoping to leave the hard life behind and give her children better opportunities.

Joseph and members of her extended family were enjoying a taco dinner in their new apartment, No. 22, on the night Mynesha was killed. They had moved in little more than a week before.

The first-level, corner apartment sits right next to the sidewalk and street.

Hatfield saw shadows outside the apartment the night of Nov. 13 but disregarded them. Sitting on the couch with relatives, he had just asked Mynesha to get him another taco.

Sitting at the kitchen table with two of her sisters, Mynesha stood up to comply with her stepdad's request. She was struck by the first bullet that pierced the apartment wall.

"The next thing I knew, she collapsed on the floor," Hatfield said.

Then came 15 to 20 more gunshots, as the adults in the apartment started yelling for everyone to drop to the floor. Of the dozen people in the apartment, nine were children ranging in age from 2 months to 16 years.

When the shooting was over, there were nine bullet holes on the south side of the apartment and four holes in the window area on the east side, where Mynesha was struck.

"Man, it looked so bad," Hatfield said. "I was thinking all three of the girls in the kitchen were shot."

Mynesha's sister, Jaynita McWilliams, now 15, was the only other person struck. She was shot in the forearm and is still healing from the mental and physical wounds, her family said.

"She has no feeling (in her arm), still, to write with," Joseph said.

A deadly plan

Police believe the bullets were fired by members of the PPHG gang who were seeking retaliation for the death the previous week of one of their own, Barry Jones, 24.

Seven of the gang members have been charged in Mynesha's death. All are expected to appear in court today working up to their trial.

Authorities say the seven plotted the shooting in the parking lot of an Auto Zone store on 40th Street, where a benefit car wash was held Nov. 13 to raise money to cover Jones' funeral costs.

Several members of the PPHGs — also known as Pimps, Players, Hustlers and Gangsters — armed themselves and drove to the Cedarwood complex, authorities say. There, they walked among the apartment buildings and car-port areas looking for members of the Rollin' 60s gang, whom they believed were responsible for Jones' death.

One of the gang member's cousins saw the group as he drove by Cedarwood, authorities say. He got out of the car to warn tenants, even though he didn't live there. Someone fired at him but missed, and he watched the group continue its hunt.

An unidentified person told the PPHG members that one of the people they were looking for was in apartment No. 22, and the group quickly made its way to the unit, authorities say.

Minutes later, Mynesha was killed. The suspects in her death — Shawn Davis, Sidikiba Greenwood, Patrick Lair, Michael Barnett Jr., Tyshon Harris, Sinque Morrison and Harold Phillips — are charged with murder, attempted murder, conspiracy and special enhancements for alleged gang crimes. If convicted, they each face four life sentences.

A devastated family

Mynesha's parents say they have no gang ties and that the shooting was a case of mistaken identity. At a court hearing two weeks ago, Joseph quickly denounced speculation that gang members may have targeted Hatfield.

"My husband does not gang-bang. He's a 29-year-old family-oriented man with his wife and children," Joseph said. "There's no hanging out, selling, gang-banging and killing people."

As she talked, she grew angry about the seven men accused of killing her daughter. She swayed and stomped her foot. Her long braided hair whipped back and forth.

"I want their families and their mothers to feel like I am feeling," Joseph said. "I want them to feel just like me."

Mynesha had Bell's palsy, which caused her mouth to have a slightly twisted appearance. Her mother saw Mynesha only as "special," "smart" and "talented."

Joseph said her daughter loved books, Barbie dolls and her SpongeBob SquarePants doll. Joseph had dreams for Mynesha — high school graduation and, one day, a wedding.

"I can't say that now because she's not here," Joseph said.

Stress has taken its toll on Joseph, who said she sleeps fitfully.

"I'm scared to let my guard down," she said. "Right now, I want to go on vacation so bad. I know I need a good night's sleep."

The shooting has also had a tremendous impact on Mynesha's six siblings, Joseph said. Jaynita, the sister who was wounded in the shooting, still wears a cast on her arm.

Brothers Danielle, 1, Vincent Jr., 7, Dayshon, 5, and Janay, 2, as well as a grown-up brother, E'ron Jackson, face their own struggles as a result of the slaying.

"All seven of my children had to suffer, and they're suffering now," Joseph said.

Hatfield has four other children who live out of the area. They all cried when they heard the news and are still traumatized by Mynesha's death, Joseph said.

Though individuals react differently when faced with the death of a child, one thing is certain: It traumatizes a family and creates a sense of uncertainty for the survivors, a local youth pastor said.

"The experience I have is that it puts incredible pressure on the security of the other children in the family," said Tim Evans, who has worked as a youth pastor for 25 years and as chaplain at Loma Linda University Children's Hospital for 12 years.

"Parents, extended family and friends have to work hard to find ways to reassure other children in the family that they are safe and they will be protected as much as possible," Evans said.

A call for change

In the aftermath of Mynesha's death, San Bernardino was listed, for the second consecutive year, as one of the 25 most dangerous cities in the nation.

By year's end, 56 people in the city were slain, the highest figure in a decade.

"It's hard when people your age die," 15-year-old Aloni Gonzalez said during the Jan. 14 march in Mynesha's neighborhood, a "Walk for Change." "Sometimes I wonder if I should even leave my house."

The voices of community leaders and citizens alike are calling for positive change.

Among them are Mark and Katrina Cato, who have opened up their California Soul Cafe on San Bernardino's Fifth Street as a meeting house.

Inland Congregations United for Change is working with local youth to focus on the underlying issues that contribute to crime and violence.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., visited San Bernardino recently to talk about the "cancer" of gang violence and how the federal government can do a better job eradicating it.

Kent Paxton, director of San Bernardino County Children's Network and a leader of Mynesha's Circle, said, "What we need to do in this community is make it a safer place for kids. And not just kids, but everybody."

Although she no longer lives in San Bernardino, Joseph said she believes there is hope for the city and its residents.

"The city can be saved," she said. "It can be saved if everybody lets it be saved, if everybody reaches out."

Her daughter, her "angel" is part of the solution, she said.

"She was blessed. God sent her here for a purpose, and she's going to serve that purpose. She won't die in vain. All this gang-banging and violence, she's going to stop it all."

Contact writer Mike Cruz at (909) 386-3880 or via e-mail at mike.cruz@sbson.com.

Crime in SB tumbles 20%

Officials credit police, community awareness

By Joe Nelson
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — Thanks to tougher policing and greater community awareness, crime in February dropped more than 20 percent over the same period last year.

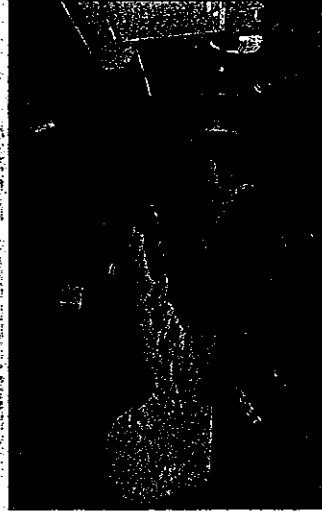
The drop follows a spate of homicides and other violent crime in the city over a three-month period. It's too early to call it a trend, but interim Police Chief Michael Bildt gives credit to deployment of Crime Impact Teams and a greater awareness of the crime problem by the community.

February also showed the biggest drop in overall crime for the month in five years, Bildt said. "Crime is a multidimensional issue, but in this particular case, just looking back at the last month, I think the Crime Impact Teams combined with community awareness has had a positive impact," he said.

The last homicide in the city, as of Saturday evening, occurred Feb. 4 when 37-year-old Kenneth McDonald was shot dead in front of an apartment complex in the 1900 block of Little Zion

San Bernardino police Sgt. Jarrod Burguan cruises along Interstate 215 during his Crime Impact Team patrol in San Bernardino on Thursday. The team's crack down in the most crime-ridden areas.

Gabriel Acosta
Staff photographer



A spotlight on potential solutions to crime in our community. For more, visit www.sbsun.com.

See CRIME / Page A7

Crime

continued from page A1

Manor Drive. Several people were standing outside the complex at the time of the shooting, but haven't been able to provide detectives with information that could help identify a suspect, police said.

Overall crime — including homicide, rape, robbery, assault, burglary, theft and auto theft — was 20.34 percent lower last month than in February 2005, statistics show. Crime rose nearly 7 percent in February 2005 over February 2004, dropped 0.28 percent in February 2004 from February 2003, and rose by 9.2 percent in February 2003 over February 2002.

The numbers also reveal the city's overall crime rate in February 2002 showed a 48.6 percent drop over the previous February, when Lee Dean was police chief. The current chief, Garrett Zimmon, took the reins of the Police Department in January 2002.

Zimmon went on medical leave for heart and hearing problems on Jan. 9. City government sources say he has no plans to return.

Zimmon and his department came under scrutiny after the apparent gang-related shooting death of 11-year-old Mynasha Crenshaw on Nov. 13 at an apartment complex in the Del Rosa area. Authorities labeled it an act of gang retaliation. The girl's death triggered a public outcry to stop the violence plaguing the city.

About two weeks after Mynasha's death, a Kansas publisher ranked San Bernardino as the 18th most dangerous city in the nation.

Crime also became the focus of a contentious mayoral runoff that featured both candidates promising to clean the streets.

Whatever the circumstances that have contributed to the current violent crime cold

spell, officials say all they can do now is hope for the best.

"We are all holding our breath. It's been a good month," said newly elected Mayor Pat Morris. "We've got a higher community awareness of the issue. People are on the lookout for problems in their neighborhoods and are reporting them to police. I think it's been a good command strategy over the last month."

He said the city budget is under review to see if more money is available for hiring additional police officers to cut overtime among the rank-and-file.

In January, Billdt launched a short-term crime-fighting strategy entailing five Crime Impact Teams. Each team is comprised of six officers assigned to one of the city's five command stations.

The teams crack down in the most crime-ridden areas, typically areas frequented by gang members, drug users, prostitutes, parolees and probationers.

Additional officers work overtime shifts to augment the Crime Impact Teams and patrol the crime-prone areas of the city.

The strategy tends to keep an active police presence in the most dangerous areas of the city and thwarts criminal activity, officials said.

"It's a high-visibility type of thing. The public recognizes there are more (police) out here. If they (criminals) see us out more and more, it may deter them from what they're doing," said Sgt. Jarrod Burguan, sitting behind the wheel of his police cruiser on Thursday.

The Police Department's traffic sergeant by day, Burguan volunteered to work a six-hour overtime shift Thursday. He traversed from one end of the city to the other, from Fifth and D streets downtown to Mount Vernon Avenue on the Westside to University Parkway on the northwest side.

Burguan often assisted other officers during traffic stops, and ultimately worked overnight after three people were killed in a traffic collision at Base Line and State

Street at 2:44 a.m. Friday.

He said time is the telling factor when it comes to San Bernardino's crime rate.

"I think it's just an overall slowdown," Burguan said. "This city has some issues. It's not likely we'll be able to go three, four or five months without a homicide, but if we can go several months with only two or three, that would probably mean something."

Experts tend to agree that although many factors affect the crime rate, it is something law-enforcement officials and community members can get their arms around, to a certain degree.

"I think that putting the Crime Impact Teams out there is definitely making a difference," said police Lt. Mark Garcia. "Obviously, when you put more officers on the street, you're going to reduce crime because you have high-visibility patrols and you have more people doing proactive work. . . . I think the Crime Impact Teams are here to stay."

Larry Gaines, chairman of the Criminal Justice Department at Cal State San Bernardino, said, "What we'll be looking for is how long this trend will hold. Of course, you'll have monthly fluctuations, but you'll want to see the same pattern over a period of months."

While it's welcome news that February's crime rate is the lowest it's been for that month in five years, Gaines said it is still too soon to tell if it's anything more than a typical fluctuation.

"This is what we would call kind of a spurt in the statistics," said Gaines. "The bottom line is, essentially we're expecting to solve problems that are long-term social problems. It is a Band-Aid because pretty soon it's going to break loose somewhere. We expect the police to solve these problems, but if we don't deal with those conditions that cause crime, it's going to continue."

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THE SUN

San Bernardino County's Newspaper

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WWW.SBSUN.COM

Starting out even

By Selicia Kennedy-Ross
Staff Writer

Lunch is almost over. The scent of pizza still lingers at the Boys & Girls Club Head Start on San Bernardino's West Ninth Street.

Minutes later, the 3- and 4-year-olds clean up after themselves and brush their teeth.

Then, they sit in a circle and sing.

Despite bright pictures on the walls and toys strewn about, this doesn't seem like a place that can determine a child's entire future.

Research shows, however, that children who attend preschool not only have a more solid academic future but a brighter one overall. These studies suggest that an afternoon of finger painting, snacks and stories fights crime, increases graduation rates and helps children lead more successful lives as they become

adults.

In regions like San Bernardino County, which is grappling with recent waves of violent crime, experts, educators and community leaders are searching for solutions to prevent children from becoming statistics in the juvenile justice system. In San Bernardino County, preschool may be more than just a casual option. It could be a lifesaver.

But there is a high price for preschool.

Middle-class families and the working poor who aren't quite poor enough to qualify for free Head Start or state preschool programs struggle to afford the cost of private preschool, paying tuitions comparable to that at a state university.

Fewer than one in five 4-year olds in California is able to attend preschool, according to the 2000 U.S.

See **PRESCHOOL** / Page A4



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Preschool

continued from page A1

Census, in part because 75 percent of publicly funded preschools statewide have waiting lists, according to a report by Fight Crime: Invest in Kids California.

An initiative sponsored by Hollywood film director Rob Reiner, slated to go before voters June 6, could change that. Proposition 82 would make state-funded universal preschool available free to every 4-year-old in California by 2010, when roughly half a million children will be eligible.

As Election Day for the much-touted preschool initiative nears, educators, child experts and critics study whether it will work and if there will be enough teachers and classrooms for everyone. Some contend the measure will be a godsend to middle-class families. Others say a free preschool program will lower the quality of public preschools while driving private schools out of business.

The future of the measure — once considered a shoo-in — is now uncertain. A key backer has withdrawn support, and even Reiner is under fire.

Initiative backers estimate it will cost about \$2 billion to jump-start the program. Funding would come from a tax on California's wealthiest — individuals with an annual income of more than \$400,000 and couples with an income that exceeds \$800,000.

A study released by the Rand Corp. last spring projected that a universal preschool system would ultimately pay for itself by reducing costs to taxpayers — as much as \$2.62 for every dollar invested in preschool — through savings on welfare and police services.

Money major obstacle

It's 1:20 p.m., and work time begins.

The preschoolers at the San Bernardino Boys & Girls Club Head Start indicate to their teacher where they will go work or play. Some paint, while others work on rainbow crafts or play house.

Semaj McNeese, 3, isn't sure if she wants to be a photographer or an artist during work time. She flirts with photography, pretending to take pictures with a toy camera, then moves on to drawing.

If it isn't for Head Start, Semaj's grandmother, Denise Thompson, who is



Photos by Brett K. Snow Staff photographer
ABOVE: Erikka Braddock, 3, left, and her class sing a song that helps the children learn numbers. **BELOW:** Semaj McNeese, 3, brushes her teeth while attending a session at the Boys and Girls Club Head Start program on Thursday.

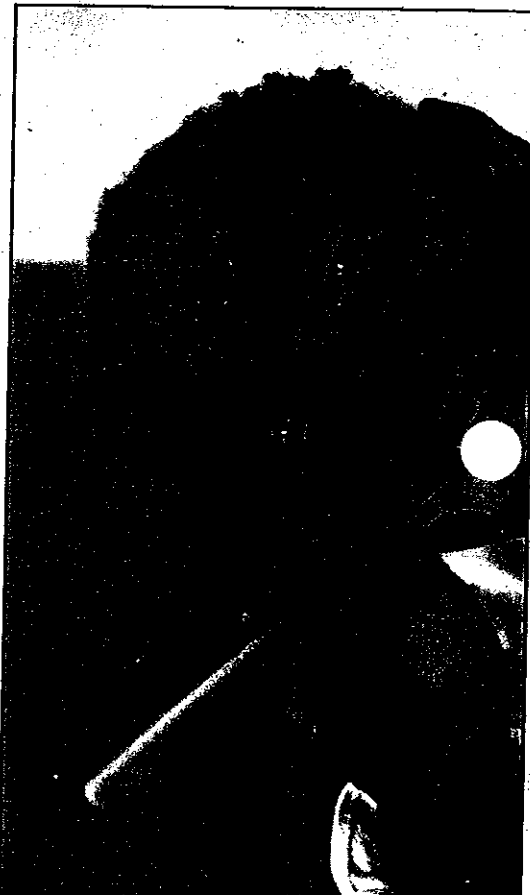
raising the girl, said she would be unable to send her to preschool. That's why she supports a free universal preschool system.

"I'm a big believer in it," the 46-year-old Thompson said. "Places like this have rules and structure. The things they would learn in kindergarten, they are learning now at 4 and 5 years old."

Preschool paves the way for students as they enter their early school years because it prepares them for the experience and fosters good study habits, said Andy Megaw, president of the Upland Teachers Association.

"With the state standards, they are getting tested in the third and second grade, so preschool gives them an advantage," said Megaw, a third-grade teacher at Valencia Elementary in Upland.

In California, the average cost of attending a part-time private preschool is \$4,022



per year. A year's tuition at a California State University campus is about \$3,164.

Middle-income families, who make too much money to qualify for publicly funded programs like federal Head Start or state preschools, struggle to pay for private preschools.

"Families can't enroll their kids in quality preschool because they can't afford it," Brian Lee, deputy director of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids California, has said. "Even if they can afford it, they have to compromise the quality of the program."

Federally funded Head Start is available only to low-income families. Sometimes preschools have to turn people away because they make too much money.

"We have people who come in here and offer to pay for it themselves," said Sharri Carroll, site supervisor for Boys & Girls Club Head Start. "And we have to tell them that we're sorry but they can't."

Veronica Lugo of San Bernardino knows the feeling.

Lugo is a stay-at-home mom whose husband makes too much money to qualify for Head Start. Yet they are unable to afford a private preschool.

"You don't qualify for anything, but you can't afford anything either," Lugo said.

Lugo sends the couple's 3-year-old daughter, Anaely, to Las Familias, a church-based preschool in San Bernardino.

It's affordable because parents do the maintenance and run the school's activities.

Studies show that for every 10 children enrolled in public preschool statewide, four end up on waiting lists.

Dorothy McQueen, an eligibility worker at Boys & Girls Club Head Start, said there is a waiting list of 20. She is already compiling a waiting list for next year.

So far, it has about 45 names.

A bite out of crime

As work time nears its end, 4-year-old Jacob Moore plays on the computer.

A buzzer rings indicating his 10-minute turn is up. Jacob doesn't want to give up his seat but suddenly loses interest in the computer when he sees the indoor "sandbox" — full of beans instead of sand — has been abandoned.

One of the key lessons preschools teach is socialization, Carroll said. Social skills are the main focus along with working, problem solving and separation from parents.

Jacob's father, Timothy Moore of Loma Linda, said preschool has made a big difference in his son's behavior toward other children.

"He used to always be fighting," said Moore, 22. "He's calmed down a lot, and he pays attention more. He fights less,

studies show preschool has multiple returns — and not just financial.

A December Rand study that tracked stu-

dents from an inner-city Chicago preschool showed a drop in juvenile crime. The study suggests the same could happen if all 4-year-olds in San Bernardino and Riverside counties by 2010 were enrolled in quality preschool for one year.

If less than two-thirds of the 68,000 4-year-olds in both counties enrolled in a universal preschool program, at least 4,000 fewer cases would be filed in the juvenile justice system, the study suggests.

The report predicts 1,400 fewer students would drop out of high school and 1,900 would not be held back in school. The study also shows youngsters who attend preschool may be less likely to try drugs and alcohol, join gangs or be truant.

Jack O'Connell, state superintendent of public instruction, proposed a universal preschool system last year, complete with standards that every preschooler must master and a credentialed program for preschool teachers.

O'Connell has said such a system can help level the playing field between the haves and have-nots, calling it "a great equalizer in our society."

Julianne Martin, chairwoman of the department of child development at San Bernardino Valley College, said universal preschool would provide all children with the same quality of education, no matter the tax bracket.

"It puts all children on the same footing," said Martin, who sits on the board of First 5 San Bernardino, the county's Children and Families Commission. "This will help them graduate from high school and go on to earn money and contribute to the economy."

People who are working are also less likely to commit crimes, she said.

Amanda Wilcox-Herzog, an associate professor of psychology at Cal State San Bernardino, said the trick is creating a "high-quality preschool."

"We have some good ones, but not all are up to par," Wilcox-Herzog said.

A high-quality preschool will help disadvantaged children more than their more affluent counterparts.

Wealthier parents are likely to have more free time to spend with their children and more resources like expensive developmental toys to give them. The working poor may have to hold down two jobs, Wilcox-Herzog said.

About 70 percent of preschool-eligible children in San Bernardino County by 2010 — an estimated 23,000 — are expected to enroll in free preschool. The county will need roughly 577 classrooms for them.

It's Carolyn Tillman's job to make sure they will have a place to go.

Tillman, special assistant to Herb Fischer, San Bernardino County superintendent of schools, is the area liaison for preschools and is compiling a list of preschools that may want to participate in the Preschool For All program.

The list includes for-profit, nonprofit, faith-based, Head Start and state preschools in 33 school districts.

There are 400 licensed child-care facilities in San Bernardino County. The list includes district-run state preschool programs and Head Start programs and 650 licensed large family-care centers, which have more than 1,400 children.

It is unclear how many Preschool-For-All facilities there will be because O'Connell has yet to decide what will define a "high-quality preschool," a standard all universal preschools must meet.

County educators cannot put a plan together until the preschool initiative passes, Fischer said.

Should it pass, O'Connell will have six months to set the guidelines for a high-quality preschool program. After that, county offices statewide will have one year to develop a plan for their preschools and until 2010 to put it in place.

Educators and experts are also split about what is more important for a 4-year-old — an emphasis on academics or child development like motor skills and socialization, Fischer said. A delicate balance must be struck, he said.

"This will essentially be like adding another grade level," Fischer said. "This is the same discussion that took place when kindergarten was introduced in the late 19th century. There was a great debate as to whether these children were ready to come to school."

To this day, kindergarten is not mandatory, although every child must attend first grade, Fischer said. There are few children eligible for kindergarten who don't go.

A 2005 report by the National Institute for Early Education that focused on preschool programs in five states showed large gains in early language literacy and mathematical skills in children who attended.

"Ninety percent of our brain growth occurs before the age of 5, and children are eager to learn at this age," Martin said. "The downside, as I see it, is that I don't know if all 4-year-olds are ready for the same mold. My underlying worry as a parent and educator is that sometimes we take young children and push them when they aren't ready, and they burn out."

Then there is the difference between day care and preschool. Day-care providers supply supervision that meets children's basic needs, but preschool is targeted at academic development and preparing a child for school.

If universal preschool becomes a reality, Fischer expects to see more child-care providers moving into the preschool arena, especially in San Bernardino County.

Although for some parents like Moore, Head Start provides not only preschool but a service similar to day care. With two small children, it's a big help.

"I work full time, but I'm also on call," Moore said.

Primary's preschool proposition



Brett K. Snow/Staff photographer

Children learn to make artificial snow in class at the Boys & Girls Club Head Start program on Thursday.

Academic credentials

Preschool teachers do not need a bachelor's degree. But if Proposition 82 passes, they will.

All public preschool teachers would be required to have a four-year degree by 2014 and a teaching credential by 2016. Teaching assistants would be required to have a two-year degree.

"Over the last 20 years, what we've seen is a pretty steady decline in the qualifications of preschool teachers since there was little oversight," said Nathan James, spokesman for the Yes on 82 campaign.

Low requirements have resulted in low pay, James said, making it hard to retain a good work force.

The initiative would set aside \$700 million for established preschool teachers to earn the credits needed to get their degrees, James said. It also sets aside funding for colleges and universities to develop preschool-teaching programs.

The Rev. Petra Malleis-Sternberg, pastor at First Congregational UCC of San Bernardino, which runs the private Las Familias preschool for low-income families, was surprised the initiative would require veteran public preschool teachers to earn a degree.

"Wow, that would be a big change," she said.

Wilcox-Herzog applauded the requirement.

"But it will be difficult to get the current work force back in school and earning those degrees," she said.

BENEFITS OF PRESCHOOL

Children are:

- More likely to be able to read by the time they reach third grade.
- Less likely to be placed in special education or held back in school.
- More likely to graduate high school and go to college.
- Less likely to be arrested or jailed.
- More likely to support themselves as adults.

Source: Yes on 82 Campaign

Initiative criticism

Critics like California Parents For Educational Choice and the California Montessori Council have come out against the preschool initiative, contending "free preschools" will dramatically lower the quality of preschools.

Proposition 82 could drive private preschools like Montessori out of business, said Alan Bonsteel, president of the Tiburon-based California Parents for Educational Choice.

Bonsteel said his group is concerned about a lack of oversight of universal preschool system.

"There are no checks or balances in place. Prop. 82 money will be put into the hands of the county offices of education, and they will decide (which program) gets to participate or not," Bonsteel said. "Montessori schools could go out of business as county education offices channel Prop. 82 money toward public preschools."

This could lead to other private preschools going out of business in California, Bonsteel said, which would mean "decreased competition, less parental control and fewer choices."

James said the initiative was drafted to include all preschools to help serve the 500,000 children who would be eligible for universal preschool in 2010.

Malleis-Sternberg, whose church runs Las Familias, which charges between \$90 and \$110 per child per month, said she isn't worried free preschool would cut into the school's clientele. The preschool, which serves about 40 children, is expanding its classes and has a waiting list.

"We are in favor of anything that supports families and children, so whatever happens happens," Malleis-Sternberg said. "But I think the families here are really committed. People come back with children and grandchildren and friends years later."

Mitch Hovey, superintendent of the Yucaipa-Calimesa Joint Unified School District, said he has seen the benefits of preschool as an elementary principal.

"It helps to lay a solid foundation not

just academically, but allows children to interact with other kids," Hovey said. "What I've noticed is when kids who haven't had that opportunity go to kindergarten for the first time, it's traumatic for them."

But Hovey, who sits on the county's P-16 Council, which focuses on academic growth from preschool through college, also wants to see facilities for free preschool ready.

"That would be one of our the biggest hurdles," Hovey said. "The intentions of these programs are always well and good, but we need the funding to implement them."

It's time to see snow, the San Bernardino Head Start teacher tells her class.

The children watch, gasping and squealing as the teacher adds water to a powdery white substance that mysteriously expands as soon as the liquid touches it.

Like his classmates, Christian Maravillo grabs handfuls of the "snow," made of the same material used in diapers to absorb liquid. He and the other children delight in spreading the "snow" around the table and squishing it between their hands.

Now that he is 5, this will be Christian's last year at Head Start.

Dee Serrano watches her son and recalls how he started preschool with a speech problem.

"He was 3 but he wouldn't speak," said Serrano, 30. "Now he's talking. They are so advantaged when they leave here. My oldest came out of here reading."

But with three kids to support, private preschool was not an option for Christian.

"Maybe I would have been able to afford it with my first," Serrano said, "but it would have been too much with my second."

MAJOR MOOD SWING AT PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Al Cui/For The Sun

Students play basketball during recess at a San Bernardino County elementary school. The dark and violent climate middle and high school students often live with can now be found at the elementary school level.

MAJOR CAUSES OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE

- Ethnic and cultural ignorance, gang and group protection activities, media (TV, music and video games)
- Lack of values and respect
- Dysfunctional families that leave children overburdened by stress with limited resources

WAYS FOR EDUCATORS TO ADDRESS SCHOOL VIOLENCE

- Improve multicultural sensitivity in the classroom
- Reach out to community agencies and law enforcement in school partnerships
- Enforce discipline policies firmly, consistently and fairly
- Show concern for and interest in students

Source: California Commission on Teacher Credentialing

By Selicia Kennedy-Ross | Staff Writer

Walk through any airport in America and the passengers know. Don't joke about bringing bombs on the plane.

Enter any public school, and the students know, too. Don't talk about bringing a gun.

Schools, once thought of as the safest place for children, are no longer the impenetrable havens they once were. In an era where school shootings, beatings, rapes and campus riots have become not only reality, but for some the norm, campus safety is no joke.

Some experts say schools have become too vigilant. Others say not enough. And school officials nationwide are erring on the side of caution, taking any and all threats the only way they can — seriously.

In San Bernardino, two second-grade boys at North Park Elementary School, the same school where a first-grader brought an unloaded gun to school last month, were disciplined this week for making drive-by threats — despite the fact both are too young to drive.

At Victor Valley High School, a 16-year-old girl reported she was jumped by a dozen other girls this

week on the way to class.

In the Coachella Valley, a 10-year-old girl says she was raped in the bathroom of her elementary school, an attack that has rattled school officials and caused major changes in the campus' day-to-day operations.

Heightened security

Since the tragic mass shooting at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colo., in 1999 that left 15 dead and 23 wounded, schools have changed the way they view campus security.

Security cameras have gone up. Visitors must sign in and out and wear badges.

Reports of terrorist threats, no matter how seemingly insignificant, are always investigated.

Herb Fischer, superintendent of schools for San Bernardino County, said any and all threats to student

See **SCHOOLS** / Page A4

INSIDE

PRECAUTIONS

See what steps area school districts have taken to prevent violence. **Page A4**

GET INVOLVED

A list of upcoming events that offer a chance to help your community. **Page A4**

LOG ON

ONLINE EXTRA

Columbine official recalls '99 shooting.

CATCH UP

Read past coverage of crime in the region.

SPEAK UP

Join The Sun's online forum by visiting the Troubled Town Blog.

WWW.SBSUN.COM

STEPS TAKEN BY LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS SINCE COLUMBINE

RIALTO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

- Video surveillance installed at high schools and middle schools
- Canine detection service hired
- Security increased, with 10 new security officers in past three years
- Number of Rialto Police Department school resource officers increased from three to five in the past two years
- Research-based violence- and drug-prevention program put into place at all school levels
- New emergency crisis management and response plan that deals with incidents ranging from power failure to fallen aircraft disasters developed
- New color-coded identification program created for students who ride elementary school buses to ensure students board the correct bus and exit at the proper stop

BEAUMONT UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

- Two campus supervisors added at Beaumont High School
- Canine detection service employed
- Community task force started to identify problems, including student discipline and campus safety

SAN BERNARDINO CITY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

- School police officers train annually with the San Bernardino Police Department and the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department
- All school police officers are trained to respond to an active shooter
- School police applicants must meet the same training requirements as sheriff's deputies
- Surveillance cameras have been installed
- Stronger ties forged with school psychologists to evaluate kids who are troubled

VICTOR VALLEY UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

- Canine detection service employed
- All security officers receive training to learn how to defuse fights and deal with weapons on campus
- Surveillance cameras installed on some high school campuses

Sources: Rialto Unified, Beaumont Unified, San Bernardino City Unified and Victor Valley Union High school districts

GET INVOLVED

ASSESS CHILDREN'S NEEDS

- **WHO:** First 5 San Bernardino, the county's Children and Families Commission
- **WHAT:** "Community Conversation" town-hall meetings aimed at identifying strategies to improve services for children through age 5
- **WHEN AND WHERE:** Noon to 1:30 p.m. and 5:30 to 7 p.m. today at the Ontario YMCA, 215 W. C St.; 5:30 to 7 p.m. Tuesday at 56389 Pima Trail, Yucca Valley; noon to 1:30 p.m. and 5:30 to 7 p.m. March 30 at First 5 San Bernardino, 330 N. D St., San Bernardino
- **INFORMATION:** (909) 386-7706

Have an event you'd like your neighbors to know about? Let us know. Call (909) 386-3877 or e-mail citydesk@sbcrum.com

Schools

continued from page A1

safety will be taken seriously by school officials. He also said schools are entering a new era of openness and striving to let parents know whenever dangerous or suspicious incidents occur.

"With heightened awareness of school-safety issues nationwide, I applaud them for that," Fischer said. "They are working to assure parents that our schools are being as open as possible and at the same time as cautious as possible."

A number of school-safety summits sponsored by local legislators have been held in the past few months. The county Probation Office has developed a special gang-intervention plan and has made a commitment to work with all county schools, Fischer said.

Gary Underwood, police chief of the San Bernardino City Unified School District, said that since Columbine, the universal police doctrine for responding to a shooter on campus has changed.

In addition to surveillance cameras and controlling who has access to campus, stronger ties to school psychologists have been adopted in order to evaluate kids who may be troubled.

Controlling visitor access can be more difficult in Western states where schools are laid out in an open, sprawling fashion, as opposed to East Coast schools, which are typically built in one building with several levels.

Newer campuses typically have only one entry point, which is easier to police, as opposed to older schools, which may have several, Underwood said.

All threats taken seriously

Two second-grade boys at North Park Elementary School in San Bernardino were disciplined this week for making threats off-campus about a drive-by shooting, district officials said.

District spokeswoman Linda Hill confirmed the students were disciplined but wouldn't elaborate, citing student privacy laws.

"We want our parents to know the district takes any threat to students' safety seriously," Hill said.

School board trustee Tony Dupre, speaking from a conference in Las Vegas, said he was unaware of any incidents at the elementary school but that the district must respond swiftly to threats under the Education Code, even if no weapon is seen.

"We cannot take that lightly, and the student will be ultimately recommended for suspension or possible expulsion," Dupre said.

The district can be held liable if threats are made, it takes no action, and then a student later acts on the threats.

Trustee Elsa Valdez, whose 6-year-old

as a veteran educator, the incident involving the two boys disturbed her.

"We had to look into it," she said. "I was concerned about it. And if there were rumors here like at Beaumont, I would probably keep my granddaughter home as well. As a parent or grandparent, you can't afford to take any chances."

At Victor Valley High, a 16-year-old student claimed she was jumped by a dozen or so other students on her way to class. The school resource officer is investigating the attack, said sheriff's spokeswoman Shelley Williams.

"The girl claimed she was jumped by other girls, and we've investigated," said Principal Elvin Momon. "So far, it looks like two girls fighting and nothing more."

community issues sometimes end up at schools and educators don't know what they will get on a daily basis, he said. Administrators and campus security must listen and look for signs that are out of the ordinary and be prepared to respond to almost anything.

But if someone says they'll bring a gun onto campus, all bets are off, Momon said. "We're gonna react," he said.

Doing things differently

At Palm View Elementary in Coachella, no students goes to the restroom alone. A school employee has been dispatched to monitor the bathrooms full time.

A 10-year-old girl reported that she was sexually assaulted in a bathroom during school hours within the last 10 days, said Principal Maria Grieve. The Riverside County Sheriff's Department, which is investigating the incident, has no suspects yet.

"We have totally changed the way we do things," Grieve said. The school district is providing a full-time security guard for the campus. More yard supervisors have been added, and two will stay throughout the school day.

Parents have also volunteered to monitor the office door to ensure campus visitors sign in. That's in addition to it being monitored by a school secretary.

"There's been a shift in our society and parental responsibility — almost to the point of us raising their children for them," Grieve said. "We have some parents who see us as a baby-sitting service. That's why more of them are joining gangs. They want to belong to a family, and gangs become a substitute family."

Widespread campus violence

Violence has plagued the region's school campuses in the last six months, and it is not limited to shootings. Among the incidents was a fight at A.B. Miller High School in January in which 20 students were detained by police. Pacific High School has seen a spate of fighting since the beginning of the school year.

On Jan. 9, rumors kept roughly half of Beaumont High School's 1,500 students from coming to school after Internet chat

room conversations indicated some students might bring firearms to school. A month later, shots were fired in a Beaumont neighborhood, causing a short lockdown at five nearby schools. Last month, Beaumont High School had its worst fight in recent history when a brawl broke out after a school assembly.

"We've become a society very afraid of violence, and it's hit close to home in this general area," said Karen Poppen, an assistant superintendent for the Beaumont Unified School District. "This is not just a school problem, it's a community problem. The question is how do we come together and how are we going to solve this?"

Last fall, the school district began working with Beaumont police, and training for district security officers has improved along with the level of security as a whole, Poppen said. Earlier this month, interim Superintendent Nicholas Ferguson began holding community task force meetings to discuss issues like campus safety and student discipline.

Such problems are new for the district, Ferguson said.

"We're not accustomed to that kind of thing," he said.

Jerry Sturmer, director of educational safety and security for the Rialto Unified School District, said he has noticed more physicality between students — and an increase in gang activity.

"We must react to violence," he said. "We need more resources, right now they are extremely limited."

Sturmer is frustrated about applying for a competitive five-year \$500,000 state grant, only 35 of which are being offered.

He is also angry that the federal government is cutting Safe and Drug-free schools money by 21 percent next year, money that pays for school resource officer anti-drug and anti-violence programs.

"Everybody says we need safe schools," he said. "But nobody wants to pay for it."

Changing times

Ever since Columbine and 9/11, in some ways school officials have "sometimes overreacted," said Valdez, a professor of race and ethnic relations at Cal State San Bernardino.

"We've all been told all the signs were there, but no one paid attention," she said. "Are these kids going to go and carry out what they say they will? Who knows?"

Children are bombarded every day with violent images on television, movies and video games, and society is becoming desensitized to violence, Valdez said.

Times have changed.

Students in the '60s and '70s would get into trouble, fighting and drinking beer and smoking, but it was different from today, Valdez said.

"You didn't ever hear about the same type of vicious crimes like shootings and rapes," she said. "And there was never anybody getting raped in the bathroom."

Boxer's on board

Urges a Mynesha's Law

A spotlight
on potential
solutions to crime
in our community.
For more, visit
www.sbsun.com.



By Andrew Edwards
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — Sen. Barbara Boxer said Friday she would introduce anti-crime legislation in the name of Mynesha Crenshaw, an 11-year-old girl slain here in an apparent gang-related shooting in November.

In a Friday meeting with leaders of Mynesha's Circle, a community group formed to fight crime in the wake of Mynesha's death, Boxer, D-Calif., challenged city and county officials to propose legislation in honor of Mynesha's life and promised to back a new law.

"We should take that little girl and we should write a piece of legislation after her — some piece of legislation that can capture the imagination and

the spirit of the people," Boxer said.

Boxer asked local leaders to craft language for a new law that could fund such endeavors as housing or community policing programs. Boxer said she and Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., would introduce legislation intended to heal troubled communities.

Mayor Pat Morris, a member of Mynesha's Circle, said he would take Boxer up on the idea.

"We're going to do exactly as she suggested," Morris said. "We've got to find those issues that resonate with the federal government."

New legislation could fund preschool classes or aid regional efforts to combat gang crimes and drug trafficking. Morris, a former judge, said Fri-

See **BOXER** / Page A4

Sen. Barbara Boxer makes a point during her visit to The Sun in San Bernardino on Friday.



Photo by Eric Reed
Staff photographer

Illustration by
Elaine Datton



Photos by Eric Reed/Staff photographer

June Rentas, left, director of the Inland Empire Job Corps Center in Muscoy, walks with Sen. Barbara Boxer, 5th District county Supervisor Josie Gonzales and Fontana Councilwoman Acquanetta Warren while on a visit to the center on Friday.



ABOVE: Boxer and San Bernardino Mayor Pat Morris chat at The Sun on Friday during Boxer's visit to the Inland Empire.

LEFT: Boxer talks with Inland Empire Job Corps Center student Diana Gomez, 17, during her business and technology class in Muscoy on Friday.

Boxer

continued from page A1

day that he would like to see a prosecutor from the U.S. Attorney's Office assigned to gang and narcotics cases.

"We ought to have federal prosecutions," Morris said.

Mynesha's death Nov. 13 has proven a catalyst for the community, prompting renewed vows to fight crime in San Bernardino and surrounding cities and bringing city leaders and residents together in a common effort to build a stronger and safer community.

In a visit to The Sun and later at the Inland Empire Job Corps Center in Muscoy, Boxer exhortated the White House for what she believes are financial policies that ignore Americans' needs. She blamed tax cuts and the cost of the war in Iraq, now in its fourth year, for siphoning dollars away from domestic programs.

Specifically, Boxer registered her displeasure with proposed funding cuts for social programs like the Job Corps, after-school education, community development block grants and a grant program used by police departments to fund operations.

Since 2001, federal funding for the Community Oriented Policing Services, or COPS program, has declined. In 2001, more than \$1 billion was allocated nationally for the program. That number dropped to \$478 million in the 2006 federal budget as Washington's priorities shifted from defending Americans from crime to homeland security and terrorism-related concerns.

Morris said reductions in federal funding from the COPS program have cost the San Bernardino Police Department as many as 20 officer positions.

Boxer said she wanted civic leaders to work with local congressional representatives to bring more federal aid to the San Bernardino area.

Though Boxer criticized Republicans, she also said the city should seek support from Rep. Jerry Lewis, R-Redlands, to secure federal aid for the San Bernardino area. Morris agreed and said the city would work with Lewis, Rep. Joe Baca, D-Rialto, and both of the state's senators.

Lewis, who chairs the powerful House Appropriations Committee, could not be reached for comment Friday. His spokesman, Jim Specht, said Lewis understands concerns about programs losing funding but points out that most domestic programs experienced budget cuts last year.

According to numbers provided by Boxer's staff, Community Development Block Grants — partly used by cities to finance nonprofit community organizations — were targeted for a cut of more than \$1 billion in the White House's budget proposal for 2007.

But President Bush can only start the budget process, and allocations can change significantly by the time senators and representatives finish the budget. Both Boxer and Specht said they expect Congress will not approve all of the cuts recommended by Bush.

"It has a very, very large constituency in the House," Specht said.

When told of Boxer's idea, Baca praised the senator's emphasis and said he would support legislation bearing Mynesha's name.

"Dollars coming into the area is what can turn tragic negatives into positive outcomes," Baca said. "(Funding) could mean recreation programs, neighborhood programs, DARE programs. We've got to look at what we can do to turn around

these communities."

Specht cautioned that it could be difficult to pass federal legislation in Mynesha's name if its focus was specific to the San Bernardino area. Representatives of other communities would likely notice the proposal and want their communities' needs addressed as well.

Staff writer Robert Rogers contributed to this report.

FROM THE CIRCLE TO THE SENATE

Making Mynesha's Law

Civic leaders
work on little
girl's legacy

By Selicia Kennedy-Ross
Staff Writer

Anna Caballero reached her breaking point in 2004, the year Salinas had a record 20 homicides.

The Central California coast city had become infested with criminals, pinned under the yoke of gangs from a nearby state



prison, plagued with murders, drive-bys and assaults.

How to help

Those with suggestions for Mynesha's Law may call the San Bernardino Mayor's Office at (909) 384-5133.

"We felt like a city under siege," said Caballero, the mayor of Salinas. "We just couldn't get control of the situation

beyond the resources we had. Even with extra officers on the street we couldn't get a handle on it."

Caballero turned to Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif. The two worked with Salinas and Monterey County officials to draft legislation asking for federal money to help the embattled city.

A year later, 350 miles away, an 11-year-old San Bernardino



MYNESHA'S CIRCLE WALK FOR CHANGE



NEIGHBORHOOD PATROLS

BOXER VISITS COMMUNITY LEADERS

Sun file photos

See MYNESHA / Page A4

Mynesha

continued from page A1

girl was shot to death in the apartment she was staying in — galvanizing a community that, like Salinas, had finally seen and heard enough.

Enter Boxer again, with an offer of federal legislation in honor of that little girl, Mynesha Crenshaw, and a challenge to the community to help define what specifically "Mynesha's Law" could consist of.

Since making her offer last week to leaders of Mynesha's Circle — a community outreach group formed after Mynesha's death Nov. 13 — Boxer has agreed to make a \$1 million appropriations request to fund gang-prevention efforts in San Bernardino. That money would place 11 juvenile probation officers at public schools to work with kids on the verge of joining gangs.

In the meantime, the details of a Mynesha's Law are still being developed, and will include "the best ideas from the community and the best models to address the crisis of gang violence," said Boxer spokeswoman Natalie Ravitz.

In a written statement, Ravitz said Boxer hopes to include Mynesha's Law in her revamped Violence Against Children Act in the next few months. The bill, meant to combat violent crimes against children, will include tougher penalties, more support for local police agencies and help for victims.

Moving forward

San Bernardino Mayor Pat Morris said there are any number of possibilities for what Mynesha's Law could consist of.

It could put more police on the streets, or help first-time homebuyers who are looking to invest in the community. It could help fund community and recreation programs to keep kids busy during the time they are most likely to get into trouble — after school.

"First and foremost, I want to reduce gun violence," Morris said. "What we're seeing here is the use of handguns by young gangbangers to settle their disputes, and innocent people are being killed in the process."

Morris said one aspect of Mynesha's Law could be appointing a federal prosecutor to the county Gangs and Drugs Task Force, because federal law prohibits the transport and sale of guns. Federal prosecutions would mean tougher penalties.

"If you prosecute under federal law, there are much more serious consequences," Morris said. "In California, they get time off for good behavior and work time, so they can be out in half the time they are sentenced to."

"But federal court doesn't have that kind of deduction, and you do the time. Hard time."

A national policy that encouraged federal involvement in such task forces could also be addressed by Mynesha's Law.

Morris said he and his staff are compiling a list of San Bernardino's needs and working on more anti-gang initiatives, using among other things, information and strategies gleaned from Mynesha's Circle.

Watching with particular interest is Mynesha's mother, Roshatta Joseph, who has seen a community come together after her daughter's death in an apparent gang-related shooting.

Mynesha had gotten up from the dinner table to fix her stepfather a taco when bullets ripped through the walls and window of the Del Rosa neighborhood apartment, where the family had been staying. Seven men have been arrested in connection with the killing.

Since then, grass-roots efforts to deal with crime and violence have sprung up throughout the city. In January, Mynesha's Circle led a 1,000-person walk through the neighborhood where Mynesha was shot. The group is currently developing strategies for dealing with some of the core issues that lead to gang violence.

"Maybe she was God's angel and this is what he sent her here to do," she said. "Sometimes I'm happy, sometimes I'm not. I want to see justice done."

She said she wants to see the community "cleaned up," and if Mynesha's Law comes to pass, she hopes it will help provide youth programs in San Bernardino, "something to keep their minds occupied."

"That would be nice if (Mynesha's Law) could happen, honoring my baby," she said. "It won't be a closure, but it will be way to help other kids ... to make sure it doesn't happen to them. And to prevent other mothers from feeling like I'm feeling right now."

Bolstering police

Federal cuts have been deep, and many police departments have suffered, including Salinas'.

When a federal Safe Schools grant and COPS funding ended in 2002, the blue-collar community of 148,183 was left with few resources. Then the 2003 recession hit, causing unemployment and crime to rise as gangs from a nearby state prison took over the street gangs.

A series of shootings followed in September 2003 and continued into January 2004, contributing to 20 deaths, Salinas' highest murder rate in 15 years.

Caballero recalled the despair and hopelessness she felt.

"It was getting up in the morning and opening the newspaper and seeing all of the shootings," the mayor said. "It was having the chief call me at midnight to tell me there had been another senseless shooting." By April 2004, five more murders occurred, and the city was well on its way to reaching 20 again, prompting Caballero to seek help from Boxer. Legislation setting aside \$3.2 million in federal funding to fight gangs in Salinas was drafted. It was approved, and the city received the money a year later.

A task force including Monterey County sheriff's and probation officers, Salinas police and the Monterey County District Attorney's Office formed in April 2005. It wasted no time.

Gang members were identified. Salinas police hired four more officers. Patrols increased countywide. A 12-member team conducted probation and parole sweeps during high-crime hours like Friday and Saturday nights. Parole and probation violators were caught, and more arrests made. Fewer drive-by shootings, robberies, assaults.

GET INVOLVED

COMMUNITY CLEANUP

- **WHO:** Fontana residents
- **WHAT:** Community cleanup and recycling day in which residents can drop off furniture, appliances, trash, green waste, hazardous waste and tires. Commercial waste, explosives, medical waste, concrete and rubble won't be accepted. Residents should bring their refuse bill and show their driver's license.
- **WHEN:** 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. April 8
- **WHERE:** West Valley Material Recovery Facility, 13373 Napa St.
- **INFORMATION:** (909) 350-6760

SCHOOL BELL FORUM

- **WHO:** San Bernardino City Unified School District
- **WHAT:** School Bell Forum, the second of four forums to address school safety and student achievement and standardized testing.
- **WHEN:** 6 p.m. April 12
- **WHERE:** Thompson Elementary School, 7401 Church Ave., Highland
- **INFORMATION:** (909) 381-1250

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and murders occurred.

The program was working. Between April and December 2005, there were two more homicides. Since January, there has been more than a 40 percent decrease in murders from last year. The neighboring cities of Soledad and Seaside are joining the task force, Caballero said.

Morris is heartened by Salinas' success. He wants to see the same thing happen in San Bernardino, but notes that the Police Department has lost about 20 officer positions since the federally funded COPS program was cut.

It's possible that Mynesh's Law could help pay for more police officers, Morris would also like to see San Bernardino have its own special anti-gang unit.

Kent Paxton, director of The Children's Network for San Bernardino County and a member of Mynesh's Circle, said public safety should be a top priority. While federal funding is key, Paxton said it shouldn't be a one-shot deal.

Judi Penman, a San Bernardino City Unified School Board trustee, said she'd like to see federal support for the city's graffiti task force, which has been cut in recent years, and stronger partnerships among law enforcement, educators, city officials and the community.

Improving housing

Another aspect of Mynesh's Law might include improved housing through programs to help first-time San Bernardino homeowners with their down payments, the idea being to strengthen pride in ownership.

It's an idea that local business owner Linda Hernandez Williams supports, calling it "a good thing."

"It would bring up the property values and make them invested in the community," she said.

After a riot by angry concertgoers that ended in roughly half a million

dollars in damages to South E Street businesses earlier this month, Hernandez Williams drove through the area and surveyed the damage, glass from broken windows glittering on the sidewalk.

Thousands of concertgoers were angered when police shut down a punk-rock show at the National Orange Show Events Center, and some trashed local businesses. Her business was not damaged in the fray, but the drive she took left Hernandez Williams, the owner of Halverson's Photography, shaken and angry.

It also reminded her of the investment she has made in San Bernardino, an investment not all residents share.

"I was thinking, 'How could they do this to our city?'" she said. "I just kept thinking if that had happened to my place, I would be devastated."

A first-time business owner, Hernandez Williams moved her studio from Colton to San Bernardino last year because she wanted to invest in the city. But she admits she doesn't always feel safe because of the gangs and thinks having more San Bernardino residents who own homes would change that.

"Sometimes we feel safe here and sometimes we don't," she said. "When you're driving around and see the gang graffiti and the unkept houses, it makes you feel like you are not living in a beautiful city."

Economic downturn

An economic downturn hit San Bernardino hard over the last two decades. Jobs became scarce. By the mid-1990s, many homes north of downtown and east of Interstate 215 fell into foreclosure.

A study of local cities in the mid-1990s showed a strong correlation between calls for police service and rental homes, said Redlands-based economist John Husing, who studies San Bernardino and Riverside counties.

In a city where landlords are all too often absent, blight has spread. Less than half of the homes in San Bernardino are occupied by their owners, the lowest level of any major city in both counties, Husing said.

Morris said replacing low-cost rental housing with home equity would bring pride in ownership, an effective way to fight crime. Homeowners are more likely to watch out for crime in their neighborhoods.

"Once a person is invested in the community and they have their future tied up in it — they are invested in that community," he said. "Not just passing through."

A community benefits

Santos Pineda was holding a Bible study at home with friends last year when bullets ripped through during a drive-by shooting.

Pineda, a former gang member, was struck twice by bullets fired by one gang and meant for rival gang members living nearby.

Pineda, a project coordinator for the nonprofit gang-intervention program Los Padrinos, survived. Despite his wounds, Pineda believes the situation in San Bernardino is not beyond hope.

He thinks federal funding for after-school programs, job training and community-based gang-intervention programs like his can change things.

"I've seen it work here," Pineda said. "I know what money can do to help some of these kids. But the money runs out, and what can we do?"

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"And it all started with intervention programs like this one."

Morris said San Bernardino needs more recreation programs for families and children. He lauded community and faith-based organizations that have stepped up to help.

"We are terribly understaffed in our parks-and-recreation and after-school programs," Morris said. "We need more recreational centers. We have only one Boys and Girls Club in a city of 200,000, and this is critical function for at-risk kids on the Westside. We need a Boys and Girls Club downtown and in the Del Rosa area."

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By Andrew Silva
Staff Writer

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It's unclear what form that law may take, perhaps funding for school or social programs to keep young people from falling into the deadly gang lifestyle.

And earlier this week, local officials asked for \$1 million to expand a school anti-gang program.

Contact writer Andrew Silva at (909) 385-3889 or via e-mail at andrew.silva@btsun.com.

OPERATION PHOENIX PILOT PROGRAM

Neighborhood ripe for change



Photos by Gabriel Acosta/Staff photographer

Graffiti is visible on a battered Neighborhood Watch sign at 13th Street and Wall Avenue in San Bernardino on Tuesday. The neighborhood will be the testing area for Mayor Pat Morris' Operation Phoenix plan against crime.



"You don't give up on a community just because it's low-income," says Roseann Siganoff, 40, right, of San Bernardino on Tuesday. Siganoff has lived on Wall Avenue for 17 years. Her neighborhood is in the area Mayor Pat Morris hopes to change with his Operation Phoenix plan.

INSIDE

MULTIPURPOSE SPACE

Mayor Pat Morris remains optimistic school, city can come to an agreement about shared room. Page A4

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SPEAK UP

Join The Sun's online forum. Visit the Troubled Town Blog.

CATCH UP

Read more about possible solutions to crime and violence in San Bernardino.

By Selicia Kennedy-Ross
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — When Sophia Garcia takes her 1-year-old daughter out for a walk in her stroller through her neighborhood near 14th Street and Lugo Avenue, she also takes her own 5-year-old sister, Sarah. She takes something else with her, too — a heavy golf club hidden in the baby's stroller.

Just in case.

Like many residents in the area, Sophia, 16, worries for the children's safety and her own. She recalls hearing gunshots almost every night of the four years that she has lived here.

So she takes no chances, and takes the putter instead. "We don't go out a lot," Sophia said. "But we need to sometimes. It's good for them."

"My mom wants to move but we're in the housing program and they just put you anywhere."

But the neighborhood — a 20-block area bounded by 16th Street on the north, Waterman Avenue on the east, Base Line on the south and Sierra Way on the western edge — is on the brink of change. It will be the testing

ground for Mayor Pat Morris' anti-crime plan, Operation Phoenix, which is still being developed. But it may be the key to turning the area back into a place where mothers and babies can stroll safely.

San Bernardino's fight against crime has intensified since the death of 11-year-old Mynasha Crenshaw, who was killed Nov. 13 when bullets pierced the Del Rosa-area apartment she was living in during what police have said was a gang-related shooting.

Police say the 20-block rectangular area targeted for Operation Phoenix is high in crime and blight, notorious for drug and gang activity. A place where aggravated assault, robbery and burglary run rampant.

Police Chief Michael Billdt commented only briefly about the new plan, calling it a "work in progress."

"We're doing an assessment and then taking a look at those issues," he said. "But we're still working on it."

The police have identified the area as one of the most at-risk — if not the most at-risk area of the city — based on crime statistics



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A young man stands outside Fame Liquor Store at Base Line and Sierra Way in San Bernardino on Tuesday. The establishment is within the 20-block area that will be the testing ground for Mayor Pat Morris' new anti-crime plan, Operation Phoenix, which is still being developed.

Gabriel Acosta/Staff photographer

Focus of anti-crime pilot program

area," Morris said. "We're working with professors from Cal State (San Bernardino) to help us start an assessment and evaluation of our proposed team and program."

But the mayor also cautioned that Operation Phoenix was "weeks away from hitting the ground."

"Bringing San Bernardino up to the highest levels, that would be our highest desire," he said. "There are good people in that area of our city who are doing their best to maintain jobs and homes and support their families in a safe environment. We hope to work with all those good residents to help them make their neighborhoods as safe as possible."

Area businesses have suffered, too.

At one gas station, large signs clearly display warnings against loitering, trespassing and open containers.

But manager Aurora Vasquez admits that crime has plagued the area and also affects the gas station.

The small grocery area inside the station is clean with its swept floors and shiny cases filled with smallboy beer cans and 40-ounce malt liquors. But outside behind the store, the smell of urine is pungent.

Prostitution takes place be-
hind the station despite the secu-

At 13th and Wall Avenue, the battered Neighborhood Watch sign covered in graffiti tells all.

"I've seen this area get cleaned up and go down again," said Roseann Siganoff, 40, who has been raising her eight children in a little house on Wall for the past 17 years.

"I wish we had a Neighborhood Watch," she said, looking toward the battered sign. "I'd be the first one to organize it."

She is frustrated by the prostitution and the drugs, the lack of stop signs and streetlights, and the stabbing that took place down the street. She recalls running an errand with her daughter and grandson at a nearby gas station on Base Line and being frightened when two men began arguing in the parking lot and waving a gun.

An alley behind Belle Street is littered with discarded mattresses, cast-off furniture and trash. Shoes, hung by their laces, dangle from the electrical wires.

Siganoff desperately hopes that Morris' plan will bring more police patrols.

"They may call this a (ghetto) neighborhood," she said. "But we have the right to have something done here."

"You don't give up on a community just because it's low-income."



Staff graphic

call them they'd come readily."

Vetere said she hopes Morris' plan will bring about a positive change and help restore her neighborhood to the one she once knew.

Morris said Tuesday his vision for Operation Phoenix is to create "a safer community," and residents might even be surveyed to find out what their needs are.

"We will be analyzing all aspects of the quality of life in that

GET INVOLVED

COMMUNITY CLEANUP

■ **WHO:** Assemblyman Joe Baca Jr., D-Rialto, LaSalle Medical Associates and other businesses and agencies.

■ **WHAT:** Second annual Día de los Niños/National Children's Day featuring free asthma screenings and asthma information, along with safety seat inspections, child fingerprinting and face painting, free children's haircuts and other giveaways.

WHEN: Noon to 3 p.m. Sunday

■ **WHERE:** Fiesta Village Family Fun Park, 1405 E. Washington Ave., Colton

■ INFORMATION: (909) 388-1413

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compiled over a period of several months and years, Morris said. "We're still working on assessing and evaluating this area," the mayor said earlier this week. "We have to engage the people of that community, to ensure our strategies reflect their needs."

But to the residents of the area, living with crime is a fact of life. Many don't even know the mayor's name. And most are skeptical, unsure the mayor's plan will change anything.

Some even say they are harassed by the city's code-enforcement officers for peeling paint and overgrown lawns while crime goes unpunished.

Near 13th and Belle streets, Martha Vetere has watched her neighborhood change over the last four decades from rows of neat little houses to a blighted area.

She watches the drug deals go down in the street and at run-down apartments. She even surprised a burglar stealing tools from her garage.

One morning, the woman opened her back door to find a man sleeping on her porch. She called police, who didn't arrive until 30 minutes later. By then, the man was gone.

"I understand they can't be everywhere," she said of the police. "But you think when you

FROM THE CIRCLE TO THE SENATE

Making Mynesha's Law

Civic leaders
work on little
girl's legacy

By Selicia Kennedy-Ross
Staff Writer

Anja Caballero reached her breaking point in 2004, the year Salinas had a record 20 homicides.

The Central California coast city had become infested with criminals, pinned under the yoke of gangs from a nearby state



MYNESHA'S CIRCLE

How to help

Those with suggestions for Mynesha's Law may call the San Bernardino Mayor's Office at (909) 384-5133.

prison, plagued with murders, drive-bys and assaults.

"We felt like a city under siege," said Caballero, the mayor of Salinas. "We just couldn't get control of the situation

beyond the resources we had. Even with extra officers on the street we couldn't get a handle on it."

Caballero turned to Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif. The two worked with Salinas and Monterey County officials to draft legislation asking for federal money to help the embattled city.

A year later, 350 miles away, an 11-year-old San Bernardino



MYNESHA'S CIRCLE WALK FOR CHANGE



NEIGHBORHOOD PATROLS

BOXER VISITS COMMUNITY LEADERS

Sun file photos

See MYNESHA / Page A4

Mynesha

continued from page A1

girl was shot to death in the apartment she was staying in — galvanizing a community that, like Salinas, had finally seen and heard enough.

Enter Boxer again, with an offer of federal legislation in honor of that little girl, Mynesha Crenshaw, and a challenge to the community to help define what specifically "Mynesha's Law" could consist of.

Since making her offer last week to leaders of Mynesha's Circle — a community outreach group formed after Mynesha's death Nov. 13 — Boxer has agreed to make a \$1 million appropriations request to fund gang-prevention efforts in San Bernardino. That money would place 11 juvenile probation officers at public schools to work with kids on the verge of joining gangs.

In the meantime, the details of a Mynesha's Law are still being developed, and will include "the best ideas from the community and the best models to address the crisis of gang violence," said Boxer spokeswoman Natalie Ravitz.

In a written statement, Ravitz said Boxer hopes to include Mynesha's Law in her revamped Violence Against Children Act in the next few months. The bill, meant to combat violent crimes against children, will include tougher penalties, more support for local police agencies and help for victims.

Moving forward

San Bernardino Mayor Pat Morris said there are any number of possibilities for what Mynesha's Law could consist of.

It could put more police on the streets, or help first-time homebuyers who are looking to invest in the community. It could help fund community and recreation programs to keep kids busy during the time they are most likely to get into trouble — after school.

"First and foremost, I want to reduce gun violence," Morris said. "What we're seeing here is the use of handguns by young gangbangers to settle their disputes, and innocent people are being killed in the process."

Morris said one aspect of Mynesha's Law could be appointing a federal prosecutor to the county Gangs and Drugs Task Force, because federal law prohibits the transport and sale of guns. Federal prosecutions would mean tougher penalties.

"If you prosecute under federal law, there are much more serious consequences," Morris said. "In California, they get time off for good behavior and work time, so they can be out in half the time they are sentenced to."

"But federal court doesn't have that kind of deduction, and you do the time. Hard time."

A national policy that encouraged federal involvement in such task forces could also be addressed by Mynesha's Law.

Morris said he and his staff are compiling a list of San Bernardino's needs and working on more anti-gang initiatives, using among other things, information and strategies gleaned from Mynesha's Circle.

Watching with particular interest is Mynesha's mother, Roshatta Joseph, who has seen a community come together after her daughter's death in an apparent gang-related shooting.

Mynesha had gotten up from the dinner table to fix her stepfather a taco when bullets ripped through the walls and window of the Del Rosa neighborhood apartment, where the family had been staying. Seven men have been arrested in connection with the killing.

Since then, grass-roots efforts to deal with crime and violence have sprung up throughout the city. In January, Mynesha's Circle led a 1,000-person walk through the neighborhood where Mynesha was shot. The group is currently developing strategies for dealing with some of the core issues that lead to gang violence.

"Maybe she was God's angel and this is what he sent her here to do," she said. "Sometimes I'm happy, sometimes I'm not. I want to see justice done."

She said she wants to see the community "cleaned up," and if Mynesha's Law comes to pass, she hopes it will help provide youth programs in San Bernardino, "something to keep their minds occupied."

"That would be nice if (Mynesha's Law) could happen, honoring my baby," she said. "It won't be a closure, but it will be way to help other kids ... to make sure it doesn't happen to them. And to prevent other mothers from feeling like I'm feeling right now."

Bolstering police

Federal cuts have been deep, and many police departments have suffered, including Salinas.

When a federal Safe Schools grant and COPS funding ended in 2002, the blue-collar community of 148,183 was left with few resources. Then the 2003 recession hit, causing unemployment and crime to rise as gangs from a nearby state prison took over the street gangs.

A series of shootings followed in September 2003 and continued into January 2004, contributing to 20 deaths, Salinas' highest murder rate in 15 years.

Caballero recalled the despair and hopelessness she felt.

"It was getting up in the morning and opening the newspaper and seeing all of the shootings," the mayor said. "It was having the chief call me at midnight to tell me there had been another senseless shooting." By April 2004, five more murders occurred, and the city was well on its way to reaching 20 again, prompting Caballero to seek help from Boxer. Legislation setting aside \$3.2 million in federal funding to fight gangs in Salinas was drafted. It was approved, and the city received the money a year later.

A task force including Monterey County sheriff's and probation officers, Salinas police and the Monterey County District Attorney's Office formed in April 2005. It wasted no time.

Gang members were identified. Salinas police hired four more officers. Patrols increased countywide. A 12-member team conducted probation and parole sweeps during high-crime hours like Friday and Saturday nights. Parole and probation violators were caught, and more arrests made. Fewer drive-by shootings, robberies, assaults

GET INVOLVED

COMMUNITY CLEANUP

- **WHO:** Salinas residents
- **WHAT:** Community cleanup and recycling day in which residents can drop off furniture, appliances, trash, green waste, hazardous waste and tires. Commercial waste, explosives, medical waste, concrete and rubble won't be accepted. Residents should bring their refuse bill and show their driver's license.
- **WHEN:** 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. April 8
- **WHERE:** West Valley Material Recovery Facility, 13373 Napa St.
- **INFORMATION:** (909) 350-6760

SCHOOL BELL FORUM

- **WHO:** San Bernardino City Unified School District
- **WHAT:** School Bell Forum, the second of four forums to address school safety and student achievement and standardized testing.
- **WHEN:** 6 p.m. April 12
- **WHERE:** Thompson Elementary School, 7401 Church Ave., Highland
- **INFORMATION:** (909) 381-1250

Have a story you'd like your neighbors to know about? Let us know. Call (909) 350-3877 or e-mail citydesk@sbstan.com.

and murders occurred.

The program was working. Between April and December 2005, there were two more homicides. Since January, there has been more than a 50 percent decrease in murders from last year. The neighboring cities of Soledad and Seaside are joining the task force, Caballero said.

Morris is heartened by Salinas' success. He wants to see the same thing happen in San Bernardino, but notes that the Police Department has lost about 20 officer positions since the federally funded CORP program was cut.

It's possible that Myneshia's Law could help pay for more police officers, Morris would also like to see San Bernardino have its own special anti-gang unit.

Kent Paxton, director of The Children's Network, for San Bernardino County and a member of Myneshia's Circle, said public safety should be a top priority. While federal funding is key, Paxton said it shouldn't be a one-shot deal.

Judi Penman, a San Bernardino City Unified school board trustee, said she'd like to see federal support for the city's graffiti task force, which has been cut in recent years, and stronger partnerships among law enforcement, educators, city officials and the community.

Improving housing

Another aspect of Myneshia's Law might include improved housing through programs to help first-time San Bernardino homeowners with their down payments, the idea being to strengthen pride in ownership.

It's an idea that local business owner Linda Hernandez, Williams' supervisor, calling it "a good thing."

"It would bring up the property values and make them invested in the community," she said.

After a riot by angry concertgoers that ended in roughly half a million

dollars in damages to South E Street businesses earlier this month, Hernandez Williams drove through the area and surveyed the damage, glass from broken windows glittering on the sidewalk.

Thousands of concertgoers were angered when police shut down a punk-rock show at the National Orange Show Events Center, and some trashed local businesses. Her business was not damaged in the fray, but the drive she took left Hernandez Williams, the owner of Halverson's Photography, shaken and angry.

It also reminded her of the investment she has made in San Bernardino, an investment not all residents share.

"I was thinking, 'How could they do this to our city?'" she said. "I just kept thinking if that had happened to my place, I would be devastated."

A first-time business owner, Hernandez Williams moved her studio from Colton to San Bernardino last year because she wanted to invest in the city. But she admits she doesn't always feel safe because of the gangs and thinks having more San Bernardino residents who own homes would change that.

"Sometimes we feel safe here and sometimes we don't," she said. "When you're driving around and see the gang graffiti and the 'unkempt houses' it makes you feel like you are not living in a beautiful city."

Economic downturn

An economic downturn hit San Bernardino hard over the last two decades. Jobs became scarce. By the mid-1990s, many homes north of downtown and east of Interstate 215 fell into foreclosure.

A study of local cities in the mid-1990s showed a strong correlation between calls for police service and rental homes, said Redlands-based economist John Husing, who studies San Bernardino and Riverside counties.

In a city where landlords are all too often absent, blight has spread. Less than half of the homes in San Bernardino are occupied by their owners, the lowest level of any major city in both counties, Husing said.

Morris said replacing low-cost rental housing with home equity would bring pride in ownership, an effective way to fight crime. Homeowners are more likely to watch out for crime in their neighborhoods.

"Once a person is invested in the community and they have their future tied up in it — they are invested in that community," he said. "Not just passing through."

A community benefits

Santos Pineda was holding a Bible study at home with friends last year when bullets ripped through during a drive-by shooting.

Pineda, a former gang member, was struck twice by bullets fired by one gang and meant for rival gang members living nearby.

Pineda, a project coordinator for the nonprofit gang-intervention program Los Padrinos, survived. Despite his wounds, Pineda believes the situation in San Bernardino is not beyond hope.

He thinks federal funding for after-school programs, job training and community-based gang-intervention programs like his can change things.

"I've seen it work here," Pineda said. "I know what money can do to help some of these kids. But the money runs out, and what can we do?"

At a time when reductions in federal funding have placed social programs on the chopping block, it is exactly those programs that the community is clamoring for. And exactly the kind of need that Myneshia's Law could help address.

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—For Culture

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Contact writer Andrew Silva at (909) 388-3883 or via e-mail at andrew.silva@sbsun.com.

Mynesha's legacy

Boxer introduces bill in slain girl's name

Apr. 28, 2006
SB SUN

Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., discusses Mynesha's Law with reporters from California in Washington on Thursday.

Lauren Burke
For The Sun



A spotlight on potential solutions to crime in our community. For more, visit www.sbsun.com.

By Lisa Friedman
and George Watson
Staff Writers

WASHINGTON — Sen. Barbara Boxer on Thursday introduced sweeping gang-prevention legislation in the name of 11-year-old Mynesha Crenshaw, slain last fall in an apparent gang-related shooting in San Bernardino.

Clutching a poster-sized photograph of the pigtailed girl, the California Democrat said Mynesha's death underscores the need for a comprehensive approach to ending gang violence.

"She became a symbol for the city of the injustice and the tragedy of this kind of thing," Boxer said.

Under the bill, a community could request federal assistance by declaring itself a "high-intensity gang activity area." If eligible, that community would then be among those first in line for a range of federal mentoring, after-school and violence-prevention funding.

The program would be overseen by a newly created federal task force made up of the departments of Justice, Education, Labor, Health and Human Services, and Housing and Urban Development.

The bill, dubbed Mynesha's Law, is the latest effort spurred from Mynesha's slaying in November. The killing galvanized the community against the onslaught of crime, leading to the creation of a community-action group — Mynesha's Circle — that continues to seek solutions to the city's crime problems.

The issue also played a pivotal role in San Bernardino's mayoral race, leading to the February election of Pat Morris, who campaigned on a multi-tiered effort to tackle crime and revitalize the city.

See MYNESHA / Page A4

Mynesha

continued from page A1

Boxer's bill is one of more than a dozen competing measures aimed at addressing gang violence. The ones moving through Congress the fastest, however, focus more on prosecution than prevention.

A bill by Rep. Randy Forbes, R-Va., that passed the House in March, for example, creates a statute to prosecute criminal gangs that makes it easier to impose the death penalty and prosecute suspects older than 16 as adults.

Meanwhile, Sen. Diane Feinstein, D-Calif., and Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, have a bill that authorizes more money for prevention while also creating new prosecutorial tools.

Aides said Boxer is examining various vehicles moving through the Senate for one that may be able to incorporate her bill and also plans to include it as part of a separate bill called the Violence Against Children Act. That bill,

which Boxer first introduced in 2003 with Sen. Joe Biden, D-Del., has languished in committee.

"It feels like a lot of funding sources are being reduced right now for prevention and intervention," said Barbara Weiss, acting director of the Violence Prevention Coalition of Greater Los Angeles. "Some of the neighborhoods most impacted have the fewest programs."

San Bernardino Police Chief Michael Billdt said assistance from the federal government is welcome.

Using preventive measures mirrors what the Police Department is doing by working with other departments to try and intervene before a crime happens, he said.

Second Ward Councilman Dennis Baxter said the bill, if it passes, will bring new hope to the area.

"I would love to see this bill pass and some federal dollars come down so we could get the stranglehold of the gangs out of San Bernardino," Baxter said. "We need a lot of help."

District Attorney Michael A. Ramos

knew few details of the bill Thursday but said any federal help would be greatly appreciated.

"I'm going to support whatever (Boxer) does, even if it doesn't have any money for suppression in it," Ramos said.

Ramos said he preferred finding ways to keep people from committing crimes so he never has to prosecute.

"And why do I say that?" Ramos asked. "If you prevent it, it means there is no victim."

Assistant Sheriff Rod Hoops echoed Ramos' comments but added that he wished some federal dollars were coming for efforts to suppress crime.

Regardless, Hoops, who serves on Mynesha's Circle in Sheriff Gary Penrod's stead, said any help will be accepted with open arms.

Boxer is also separately seeking \$1 million to implement a San Bernardino Gang Free Schools Program to fund additional probation officers and gang resistance training for about 57,000 students, as well as \$3 million to renovate the Boys & Girls Club of San

Bernardino. Arturo Delgado, superintendent of the San Bernardino City Unified School District, said paying for probation officers has been difficult because of tight budgets. In the past, the district had to scrape together funds to fill those jobs, he said.

"They make sure the students are in attendance, that they are abiding by school rules, and if they aren't, there is somebody there to pay special attention," Delgado said.

But the main difference between her bill and the others, Boxer said, is that communities most suffering from gang violence will take charge by asking for the help they need.

"To come forward isn't easy," Boxer said. "No community would do this unless they really had to. It gives more power to the community."

Weiss agreed. "Community involvement has been shown and demonstrated to have the biggest effect," she said. "That's how you keep these programs sustained, by fostering a sense of community

ownership." Baxter was excited about the prospect of a renovated Boys & Girls Club. He added that he hopes a second community center gets built on San Bernardino's east side.

"That's something I think we'll be working on," Baxter said, adding that the club did not have to be a Boys & Girls Club. A community center could serve the same purpose.

Ramos, who works with the Boys & Girls Club in Redlands, praised the efforts behind community center-based programs.

"We need to do a better job in the beginning getting to these kids earlier," Ramos said. Facilities like the club, he said, are perfect for that.

"That is the age the fifth-, sixth-graders, middle schoolers, where we can grab these kids and really make a difference."

Contact Lisa Friedman at (202) 662-8731 or via e-mail at lisa.friedman@langnews.com.

Contact staff writer George Watson at (909) 396-3884 or via e-mail at george.watson@sham.com.

GET INVOLVED

COMMUNITY ACTION

■ **WHO:** Mythesha's Circle

■ **WHAT:** A meeting to discuss the strategic plan for Mythesha's Circle, a community action group aimed at reducing violent crime in San Bernardino.

■ **WHEN:** 8 a.m. May 13

■ **WHERE:** The Church of God Prophecy, 3030 Del Rosa Ave., San Bernardino

TEEN FEST

■ **WHO:** Fontana teenagers

■ **WHAT:** An information fair with booths on the dangers of drug abuse, how to get a summer job and make good college and career choices; also skateboarding and freestyle bike demonstrations

■ **WHEN:** 10 a.m. Saturday

■ **WHERE:** Jack Bulik Pavilion, 16581 Filbert Ave., Fontana

■ **INFORMATION:** (909) 428-8360, ext. 222

BREATHING EASIER

■ **WHO:** Assemblyman Joe Baca Jr., D-Rialto, LaSalle Medical Associates and other businesses and agencies

■ **WHAT:** Second annual Día de los Niños/National Children's Day featuring free asthma screenings and asthma information, along with safety-seat inspections, child fingerprinting and face painting, free children's haircuts and other giveaways.

■ **WHEN:** Noon to 3 p.m. Sunday

■ **WHERE:** Fiesta Village Family Fun Park, 1405 E. Washington Ave., Colton

■ **INFORMATION:** (909) 388-1413

Have an event you'd like your neighbors to know about? Let us know. Call (909) 386-3877 or e-mail citydesk@sbsun.com.

High hopes at SB site



Sabrina Young, 5, walks past a broken drinking fountain at the Boys & Girls Club of San Bernardino. Al Cuizon/For The Sun

Boys & Girls Club sees huge possibilities

By George Watson
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — The tour through the Boys & Girls Club straddles a line somewhere between hope and harsh reality.

Open a door and see a group of children from low-income families playing on a foosball or air-hockey table. Peer through an interior window and see kids surfing the Internet or taking school classes.

But look at the walls and see broken emergency lights hanging by a wire. Or inspect the floors and see the tattered carpets covered with stains and years of grimy buildup. Or check out the racquetball court that has become the only storage facility.

On this early Thursday afternoon, though, hope was winning the day. The feeling stemmed from news that Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., was requesting \$3 million from the Senate Appropriations Committee for the club's 30-year-old facility.

"The possibilities are huge," said Clifford Hackney, the chief professional officer for the club who has worked there for eight years. "The money would go a long way. It's easier to go to the community, the businesses, and say we need to start a capital-fund drive."

Hackney wants to renovate the current facility and build a second floor atop it. The plan has been floating

around for a long time. About three years ago, club officials received an estimate of about \$5 million to do the job.

But construction costs have grown since then, Hackney said, so he was unsure how much it would cost to render his dreams a reality.

He knows his best chance comes now, about a year after Boxer toured the club. Normally, people walk through the 25,000-square-foot facility in about 10 minutes, Hackney said.

The senator spent an hour. Hackney said it was clear she was moved by the needs of the club. She wanted to see every facet of the operation, he said.

Boxer was unavailable for comment Thursday. A spokeswoman expressed optimism but suggested caution at the same time.

"Senator Boxer asked for a high number of \$3 million because she wanted to send a signal to the committee about how important this is to her," said Natalie Ravitz. "She will fight with every fiber for the community, but I just want to impress upon you that this is going to be an uphill battle."

Much needs to be done to improve the club operation, which reached a maxed-out point years ago. More than 2,600 children have access to the club. About 1,900 of them have paid a membership fee.

The San Bernardino club is fairly unique because it offers much more than the gymnasium and pool normally

found at Boys & Girls Clubs.

Children can attend in between regular school sessions. They can use computers or attend counseling and therapy sessions. Troubled middle-school students have a last chance through the club's educational academy, created through a partnership between the city and county.

Parents can learn English as long as they sign up to tutor afterward. And in some cases, gang members have given up their affiliations for steady jobs as a lifeguards.

But the needs are never-ending, Hackney said.

"Teens arrive and share the rec room with kids half their age," he said. "They need their own space. I want to build a teen center."

Depending on funding, Hackney also wants to rebuild the stage area in the gymnasium. He wants to make a full-scale performing-arts program, with music and drama, because so many school districts have cut their own programs.

"There's a lot of talent in this community, but kids don't have an outlet," Hackney said.

So for now, the club will wait to learn their fate from Congress. Club officials have been doing it for decades, Hackney said, and they will keep waiting while keeping the club operating at its fullest until help arrives.

Mynesha's Circle outlines goals

Group drafts anti-violence strategy

By Megan Blaney
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — A six-part plan to reduce violence and create community partnerships to address the problem at its core will be presented May 13 at the next meeting of Mynesha's Circle.

The draft plan was put together by members of the circle, a community-outreach effort created after the Nov. 13 slaying of 11-year-old Mynesha Crenshaw in an apparent gang-related shooting.

The meeting is designed to solicit broader community input.

The meeting will begin at 8 a.m. at the Church of God of Prophecy, 3030 Del Rosa Ave. The public is invited, although seating is limited to the church's capacity of about 150.

The meeting also kick starts a new phase for Mynesha's Circle, which was formed by The Sun and a group of concerned citizens to brainstorm ideas for cleaning up the city's streets.

Those discussions evolved more recently into a formal strategic-planning process led by Kent Paxton, San Bernardino

See CIRCLE / Page A4

NEXT MEETING

When: 8 a.m. May 13

Where: Church of God of Prophecy,
3030 Del Rosa Ave.

A spotlight on potential solutions to crime in our community. For more, visit www.sbsun.com.

MYNESHA'S CIRCLE | SIX GOALS

The members of Mynesha's Circle have created a draft strategic plan to reduce violence in San Bernardino. The plan is based on community input and has been narrowed to six desired outcomes, outlined below. Details of these initiatives will be presented in The Sun in the days leading up to the May 13 public meeting of Mynesha's Circle.

- 1 Reduce incidence of violent crime, including murder, and gang and drug violence.
- 2 Reduce the number of people living in poverty.
- 3 Reduce child abuse and neglect, substance abuse and juvenile arrests.
- 4 Create a healthy business environment.
- 5 Improve the quality of life.
- 6 Sustain Mynesha's Circle.

Source: Mynesha's Circle draft Strategic Plan

Circle

continued from page A1

County Children's Network officer, who is on loan temporarily from the county.

With the plan drafted, one possibility is to shift full-time management of Mynesha's Circle to a nonprofit agency that can carry out the group's objectives and work with local government and community

agencies.

Creating this kind of formal community-based partnership is among the recommendations of the draft strategic plan.

Arrowhead United Way is interested and will be working with Paxton and others to determine its role in the partnership.

Doug Rowand, president of Arrowhead United Way, said Mynesha's Circle and the strategic plan hold great promise.

"There was quite a variety of people, which was the goal on this, to get not just key commu-

nity leaders but people from all parts of the community," he said. "It's all about improving life in the community."

The May 13 meeting will be held a few blocks from where Mynesha was killed while having dinner with her family. Police say gang members shot through the walls and windows of the apartment in an act of retaliation for an earlier shooting.

Her death triggered a communitywide outcry for safer streets and prompted Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., to introduce

federal anti-gang legislation in Mynesha's name.

Paxton, who will continue to facilitate Mynesha Circle meetings during the transition, said he is personally invested but sees a more formal partnership led by a full-time manager as an important next step.

"I want to see it work. It's going to take somebody who knows the community and who the community trusts," he said.

Contact writer Megan Blaney at (909) 386-3828 or via e-mail at megan.blaney@sbsun.com.

PASTOR PURSUING BASKETBALL SANCTUARY



Gabriel Acosta/Staff photographer

Albert Jackson, 13, practices while he waits for a pickup basketball game to begin at First Church of the Nazarene in San Bernardino on Tuesday. The church's pastor, the Rev. David Rhone, wants to transform its community center into a gym for local children.

Church has plan for youth

By Selicia Kennedy-Ross
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — By 6 o'clock, the sun is setting, its golden glow falling on the near-empty basketball courts at First Church of the Nazarene.

The courts, at 15th Street and Sierra Way, never stay empty for long, especially when the

weather is perfect for a game of pickup basketball.

By 6:15 p.m., about three dozen young men from the neighborhood have arrived, and three games start.

The church is the only place within a mile that provides a basketball court open to the neighborhood, said the Rev. David Rhone, pastor of First Nazarene. The only rule the church enforces:

Players must wait to start their games until 6:15 p.m., once the church day care and preschool have closed.

There are no community centers nearby, Rhone said. No parks. No playgrounds.

He says he's trying to change that. He plans to create a youth basketball league for elementary-

See **CHURCH** / Page A4

SB SUN May 4, 2005

Church

continued from page A1

school children. Part of the plan is to convert the church's community center into a basketball gym for neighborhood children. The 80-foot-by-44-foot building is too small for an adult-size facility, but the perfect size for a youth-league gym and a place for the younger children to go after school, he said.

"I have volunteer coaches ready, and I have connections at other churches to get a league going," Rhone said. "And I can get an electronic scoreboard from a soda company. What I need is money."

The dream is not inexpensive: The total cost of converting the church building into a gym, including a new durable plastic floor, is about \$75,000, he said.

The neighborhood, part of a 20-block area bound by 16th Street on the north, Waterman Avenue on the east, Base Line on the south and Sierra Way on the west, is poised for change. It will be the testing ground for Mayor Pat Morris' new anti-crime plan, Operation Phoenix, which is still under development.

Police say the rectangle-shaped neighborhood is high in crime and blight and notorious for drug and gang activity. It's a place where crimes such as aggravated assault, robbery and burglary are common.

Rhone has taken Morris' crime-fighting plan to heart, which the mayor has said is likely to include a greater police presence and more youth programs in the area.

Morris has also said he wants to help Rhone. With no open space or parks nearby, there is little for children to do besides sit and watch the drug deals go down, Morris said.

San Bernardino's fight against crime has gained momentum since the death of 11-year-old Mynessa Crenshaw, who was killed Nov. 13 when bullets pierced the apartment she was living in during what police have said was a gang-related shooting.

Morris has said San Bernardino needs more community centers and recreational programs for families and children because the city's recreation department is "terribly understaffed." He lauded community and faith-based organizations, like First Nazarene, for stepping up to help.

Morris also reiterated the need for after-school programs that keep children busy between 2 and 6 p.m. Violent crimes committed by juveniles spike during those hours, according to a 2004 report by the child-advocacy group Fight Crime: Invest in Kids.

Children are also more likely to drink, smoke or take drugs, and engage in risky sexual behavior during that time, according to a 1999 study by the U.S. justice and education departments.

"That's exactly why I want to do this," Rhone said. "I'm not willing to stand by and watch another generation of children get thrown away. And that's exactly what's happening when they're forced into the street with the drugs, the gangbangers, the prostitutes."

Many of the young men playing basketball at the church range in age from 12 to 22. Many say they would have appreciated an option like the one Rhone is proposing.

"I think that would be good, real good," said 22-year-old T.J. Amerson. "My little brother has to take his girlfriend's little



brothers all the way to Hernández (Community Center) downtown."

La'Vonte Henderson is 12. He has played at the church nearly every day for the past year, and enthusiastically supports the idea of a youth league. But he's afraid he'll be too old for it by the time it opens.

"I come up here to take my mind off everything and to not be bored," La'Vonte said. "I concentrate on sports and basketball."

He said he tries to forget negative things like the gunfire he typically hears and tries to shield his 5-year-old brother from on the weekends.

"I tell him to come here and to stay down," La'Vonte said, matter-of-factly. "We always get down to make sure nothing happens."

Playing basketball at the church is safer than playing elsewhere, said Don Collins, 15. Less drama, he said.

Still, it remains an uneasy truce between the players and the church. Although most players respect the 6:15 p.m. rule, there are times when the church's burly day-care supervisor, David Prince, has had to ask some of the players to wait until the children and parents leave campus.

Opening a youth gym would enable the church to give youths a refuge before 6:15 p.m., because the school children would be on another side of the campus, Rhone said.

The church, which has been on the property since 1950, has changed along with the neighborhood. The original church now serves as the community center that Rhone hopes to convert into the gym. The current sanctuary was built in 1961.

Despite its age, the A-frame structure has retained much of its grandeur with 88 multicolored stained-glass column windows.

As Rhone walks past the windows, through a prism of rainbow-colored light, it is clear that not everyone respects the sanctuary. He passes several broken panes, some patched to repair damage from rocks thrown at the windows. The church has also been the target of several break-ins.

Rhone has a long-standing relationship with the church. His father was also a pastor at First Nazarene and helped establish the parochial school there, Valley Christian Academy. Rhone was the first student enrolled.

"School was my father's dream," he said. "The basketball program is mine."

Contact writer Selicia Kennedy-Ross at (909) 388-3885 or via e-mail at selicia.kennedy@sbsun.com.

GET INVOLVED

MINDING MENTAL HEALTH

■ **WHO:** San Bernardino County Mental Health Services Act team

■ **WHAT:** The free "Mind Your Health" event to promote wellness and recovery will feature an art exhibit, Native American flute music, a martial-arts demonstration, food, face painting and informational vendors. Four bicycles will be raffled off.

■ **WHEN:** 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday

■ **WHERE:** Carousel Mall, 295 Carousel Mall, San Bernardino

■ **INFORMATION:** Call Lynn Neuenswander at the county Department of Behavioral Health at (909) 387-7710.

PREVENTING PROSTATE CANCER

■ **WHO:** The Man Talk Project

■ **WHAT:** A presentation about prostate cancer and how it disproportionately affects black men. Educational information will be provided.

■ **WHEN:** 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. Saturday

■ **WHERE:** North Fontana Church, 7186 Cypress Ave.

■ **INFORMATION:** For more, call Monette Rayford at (909) 620-9161.

HELP THE COMMUNITY VOTE

■ **WHO:** San Bernardino County Registrar of Voters

■ **WHAT:** The county needs volunteers, especially bilingual residents, to staff polling places for the June primary election. Poll workers receive a stipend up to \$135 for the day, with an additional bonus for those who speak both Spanish and English.

■ **WHEN:** Voting begins June 6. A two-hour training class before the election is required.

■ **WHERE:** Central Courthouse, 351 N. Arrowhead Ave., San Bernardino

■ **INFORMATION:** Those interested in working the polls can call the Registrar of Voters Office at (909) 387-8300 or (800) 881-8683.

Have an event you'd like your neighbors to know about? Let us know. Call (909) 388-3877 or e-mail chyldek@sbsun.com.

Mynisha fund urged

Mayor pledges \$20,000 to move anti-crime group forward

By Andrew Silva
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — To move Mynisha's Circle from the talking and planning phase to doing something tangible, Mayor Pat Morris on Saturday proposed creating a fund to pay for programs that would be selected by group members.

Mynisha's Circle, made up of city and county leaders, community activists, police officials and regular citizens, formed after the Nov. 13 killing of 11-year-old Mynisha Crenshaw in an apparent gang-related shooting as she and her family were eating dinner.

To focus community anger and frustration over the girl's death, the group was formed to seek solutions to the city's violent crime, gangs and poverty, and their root causes.

More than 100 people attended Saturday morning's meeting of Mynisha's Circle at the Church of God of Prophecy on Del Rosa Avenue, just a few blocks from where Mynisha was killed.

At the end of the three-hour meeting, Morris pledged \$20,000 from the Mayor's Office to get the fund started. Sun Publisher Bob Balzer said the newspaper



Gabriel Acosta/Staff photographer

Mynisha Crenshaw's grandmother, Anita Venson, back left, family friend Dolores Nesbit and Mynisha's mother, Roshatta Joseph, listen to the Rev. Raymond Turner, foreground, on Saturday during a strategic-planning meeting for Mynisha's Circle at the Church of Prophecy in San Bernardino. It was the first time family members attended a Mynisha's Circle meeting.

would offer money as well as office space, phones and computers for the effort.

Morris said he hopes to get donations from other officials, institutions and ordinary people. His initial goal is to raise more than \$100,000 and perhaps use the Community Foundation serving San Bernardino and Riverside counties to hang on to the money.

At some point, Mynisha's Circle will have to formally incorpo-

Circle

continued from page A1

rate or operate under the umbrella of another non-profit group such as the Community Foundation, Morris said.

Once there is a good chunk of money saved up, the foundation could seek proposals from local non-profit groups to put programs in place. An advisory council of Mynisha's Circle members would select the programs to be funded.

"I would like to see the foundation put out ... requests for proposals in the city, asking them to submit their best ideas ... and then launching from that base of resources and enthusiasm," Morris said.

The Rev. Reginald Beamon said the emphasis should continue to be on what people can do themselves.

"Once we raise \$100,000 ... where's it going to go? A lot of times it doesn't get to the people who

need it most," he said.

For example, he said, volunteers could remodel community centers without spending much money.

"It has to be driven by people. We don't just need money; we need people," Beamon said.

Trudy Freidel, president of the San Bernardino Clergy Association, agreed.

"No matter how much money we have, people are our greatest resource," she said.

Getting something tangible going is important to maintain the momentum and enthusiasm of the group, Morris said after the meeting.

"The launch is going to be the critical part of this. A well-launched program means the possibility of sustaining (these efforts) is good," he said.

Also last week, Morris and city staffers began work on a 20-block area bounded by 16th Street, Base Line, Sierra Way and Waterman Avenue as the first neighborhood for the mayor's Operation Phoenix, a broad anti-crime program.

Operation Phoenix focuses on services and programs from government organizations, including the city, the county, the school district and colleges,



MYNISHA'S CIRCLE: SIX OUTCOMES

Members of Mynisha's Circle — a community group formed in memory of an 11-year-old girl killed in what police say was a gang-related shooting — have developed a strategic plan to make San Bernardino safer. The plan has six goals, and the group, which includes city residents, city and county officials, and Mayor Pat Morris, hosted a public forum Saturday. The goals are:

A spotlight on potential solutions to crime in our community. For more, visit www.sbsun.com.

1. Reduce incidents of violent crime, including murder and gang and drug violence.
2. Reduce the number of people living in poverty.
3. Reduce child abuse and neglect, substance abuse, and juvenile arrests.
4. Create a healthy business environment.
5. Improve the quality of life.
6. Sustain Mynisha's Circle.

SBSUN.COM: Read the full plan online.

WWW.SBSUN.COM

SPEAK UP

Join our online forum by visiting the Troubled Town Blog.

GALLERIES

More photos from the Mynisha's Circle meeting and from the neighborhood under annexation consideration.

Morris said, whereas Mynisha's Circle is more of a grass-roots effort.

"This is based on enthusiasm for retaking communities, and people themselves taking control of their lives," he said.

The meeting Saturday was meant to flesh out the six main goals outlined in the group's strategic plan to make San Bernardino safer, including reducing crime, poverty, child abuse and juvenile crime, along with creating a healthy business climate and improving the quality of life in San Bernardino. The sixth goal is to sustain Mynisha's Circle.

The group broke up into six rooms to discuss the goals in greater detail.

A few common themes emerged.

Whether talking about economic opportunity, crime or quality of life, there needs to be additional activities for young people after school. And both parents and their children need to learn about opportunities for college or vocational training.

Many children in fifth and sixth grade don't think college is possible and their parents don't encourage them because they don't want to see their children

disappointed, said Gary Madden of the Inland Empire United Way during the breakout session on reducing poverty.

Young people need mentors to show them the benefits of education, others said.

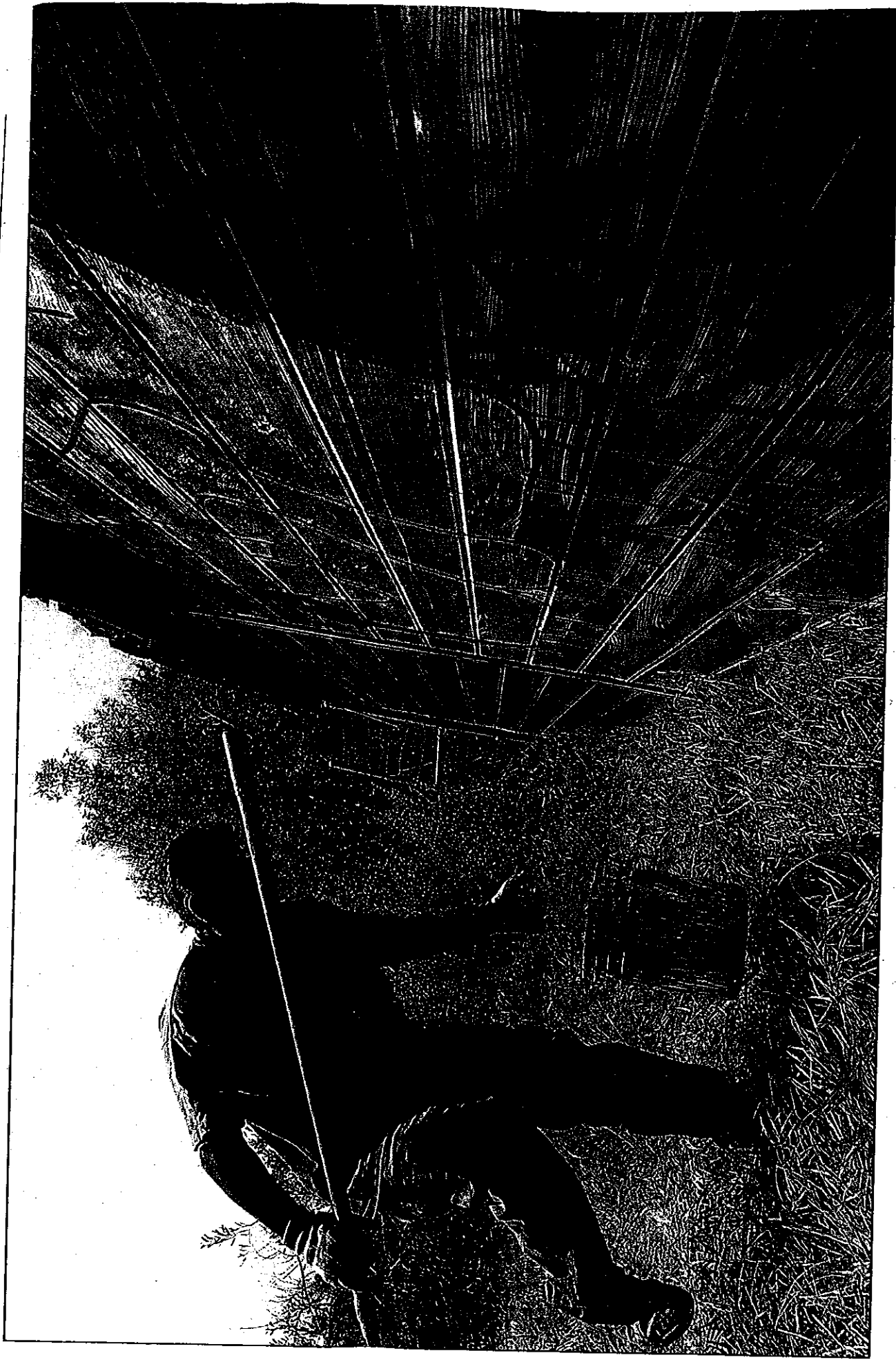
Many parents have no idea how to provide a normal, stable home life, and they should be trained, encouraged and supported, said Victoria Stephan in the session on reducing child abuse and juvenile crime.

In a time of limited money and resources, Morris supports joint efforts by school districts and the city, such as using schools for community centers.

Mynisha's grandparents, who attended one of the group's meetings for the first time Saturday, said they were impressed by the enthusiasm for change.

"It's a lifting of my heart and spirit to know my granddaughter's death was not in vain," said Anita Venson, Mynisha's grandmother. "It's a great effort. I feel like it's a beginning of something greater. I think it's already affecting the community. When they read it in the paper, they see there is hope."

Contact writer Andrew Silva at (909) 386-3889 or via e-mail at andrew.silva@sbsun.com.



Paul Lujan of Los Padrinos gets ready to paint over graffiti Friday on a fence at Park Avenue and Date Street, a part of the Del Rosa area in a San Bernardino County pocket. San Bernardino is planning to annex 99 acres in the area.

Gabriel Acosta/Staff photographer

5/14/06

SB to take over mean streets

Mynisha slaying leads to 99-acre annexation

By Megan Blaney
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — The annexation of 99 acres and about 2,400 residents of a blighted Del Rosa neighborhood is expected to move forward Wednesday.

The area borders Citrus Street, where 11-year-old Mynisha Crenshaw was slain Nov. 13 in what police are calling a gang-related shooting. The killing of the girl outraged residents and put greater focus on safety in the area.

The City Council initiated the annexation in January in response to the community outcry. Officials hope to quell crime there and in neighboring areas by bringing the land into its jurisdiction. The Local Agency Formation Commission's approval of the annexation is expected Wednesday because, under state law, the proposal meets all the requirements.

The area has vacant parcels, single-family homes and a few gas stations and convenience stores. Graffiti marks walls, and

buildings. The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department responded to more than 2,000 calls for service in the area in 2004 and 2005. There were 224 calls for service in April alone.

"That area has significant crime issues that bleed out into the rest of the city," 4th Ward Councilman Neil Derry said. "Even though there will be a temporary increased cost, it will provide overarching benefits in years to come."

Police Chief Michael Billdt said the annexation "makes good sense."

"That county pocket is surrounded by the city limits," he said. "There will be some increased calls of service, but from a service-delivery perspective, we believe it will be better for the city."

Evelyn Alexander, president of the Del Rosa Neighborhood Action Group, said her organization has not taken a stand on the annexation because some residents support it and others don't. But, speaking as a resident, she said annexation would

be good for the area. County standards are often more lax than the city's, and Alexander said the area will benefit from having to comply with city codes.

The area "has been the subject of media coverage, increased law-enforcement activity and concerns of elected officials following the tragic death of Mynisha Crenshaw," according to a Lafco staff report.

Although the staff report credited the sustained focus on the area for sparking the annexation, Alexander said media coverage of the neighborhood has been unnecessarily negative.

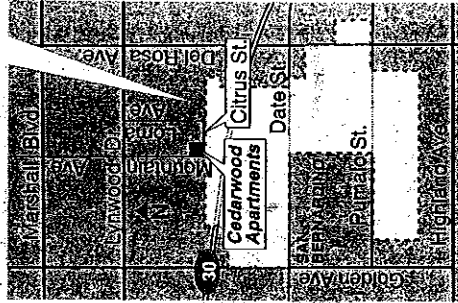
"It hurts Del Rosa," she said. "It makes a big difference. I've heard it has hurt some property sales. It's frightening, I guess."

Former Mayor Judith Valles and Mayor Pat Morris support the annexation. On April 11, the county Board of Supervisors approved the transfer of property taxes from the county pocket to the city upon the completion of the annexation.

A recent change in state law al-

Del Rosa annexation

The slaying of 11-year-old Mynisha Crenshaw, who was shot to death in the Cedarwood Apartments, has prompted the city of San Bernardino to annex 99 troubled acres of the Del Rosa area in the city's north end.



Staff graphic

lows the city to annex the land without approval from property owners or voters because it is substantially surrounded by the city and is less than 150 acres.

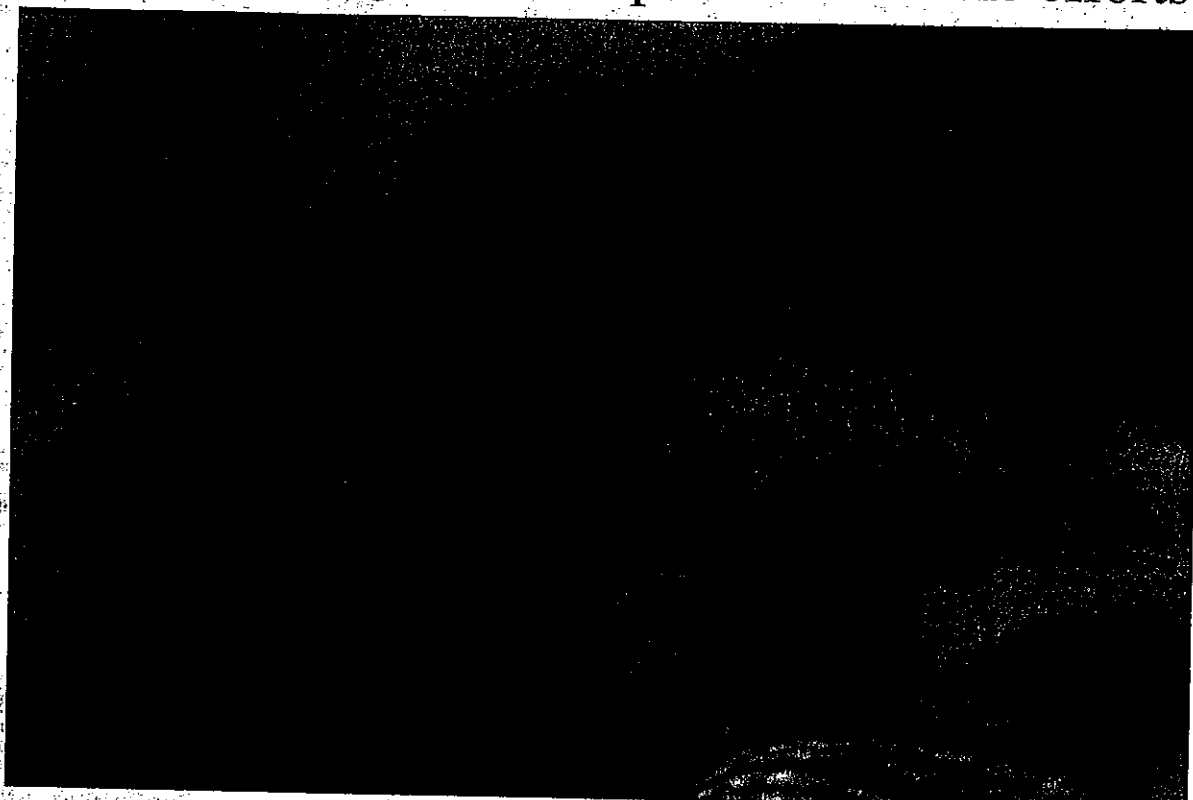
Contact writer Megan Blaney at (909) 386-3828 or via e-mail at megan.blaney@sbsun.com.

May 15, 2006

90c

Juvenile jeopardy

Staffing shortage cuts deep into anti-crime efforts



A student at the Juvenile Probation Day Reporting Center in San Bernardino rests his head on his hand during a gang-aversion class on Thursday. Photos by Al Cutor/For The Sun

By Selicia Kennedy-Ross
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — Stocked with Charles Dickens' classics and homework assignments on the board, the room where Javier Donahoe teaches his course looks more like a high-school English class than a place to learn how to steer clear of gangs.

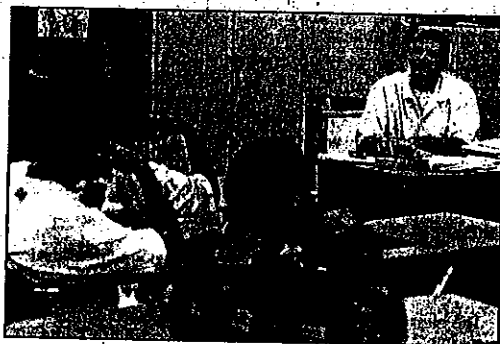
Donahoe, 25, starts his class off casually, joking with the half-dozen boys slouching in the desks. All are young and Latino, with loose clothing and cropped hair.

"How's school going — you staying awake in class?" Donahoe asks one boy, eliciting laughter from the small group.

Did you talk to your boss about a bigger raise, he asks another.

Classes like the one Donahoe teaches at the San Bernardino County Probation Department's Day Reporting Center is an example of the range of services the center offers.

Although Donahoe's class isn't likely to be affected by a critical shortage of probation/corrections officers, others, such as classes to encourage parenting skills, anger management and discourage crime, like



gun violence and petty theft, could be jeopardized if the shortage isn't alleviated soon.

The county Probation Department is especially short-staffed at Juvenile Hall, said Michelle Scray, deputy chief of the agency.

Right now, the department needs 18 full-time pro-

bation/corrections officers and 16 "floater-type" positions.

Scray said the department has started an intensive recruiting effort to fill the vacant positions. But rather

See PROGRAMS / Page A5



A spotlight on potential solutions to crime in our community. For more, visit www.sbsun.com.

MYNISHA'S CIRCLE

LEFT: Javier Donahoe, right, a teacher at the Juvenile Probation Day Reporting Center in San Bernardino, discusses the outcome of the May 1 demonstrations by the Latino community.

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Al Cuizon/For The Sun

Javier Donahoe, left, a teacher at the Juvenile Probation Day Reporting Center in San Bernardino, pats down students before class on Thursday.

Programs

continued from page A1

than placing current staff on significant overtime, Scray said, probation officials have put a hold on the department's external programs and some of its services.

For two months, all corrections officers will cover only internal shifts to fill in for the vacant positions, she said.

The problem plagued the department for more than a year before officials decided to pull officers from external and treatment-program duties, said Dan Bautista, division director of the Day Reporting Center.

"We aren't offering our full spectrum of services right now," Bautista said.

So far, most of the center's classes, like the class that discourages petty theft, have survived. Another class teaching responsible driving skills has not.

But should the anti-theft instructor — who is a probation/corrections officer — encounter a schedule change, the center would no longer have anyone qualified to teach that class, said Cynthia Prater-Buren, supervising probation officer.

Other classes could be put on hold if there are no instructors available to teach them, but probation officials remain upbeat.

"I'm hoping it won't come to that," Prater-Buren said.

The classes, some of which cost between \$25 and \$50, are open to the public, such as parents who are having disciplinary problems with their children, not just youths in the juvenile court system, Prater-Buren said. They can be referred through schools, the Probation Department and social workers, she said.

The center's enrollment is also down now that there aren't enough probation/corrections officers available to pass out the brochures advertising the center's services at juvenile traffic court or the schools.

"For a while, people were calling to find out if we were closing," Prater-Buren said.

Although the day center is stretching its resources, if the shortage isn't alleviated at least somewhat by June, the classes could be in jeopardy.

Some programs, like Roosevelt Lett's Bridges program, have been put on hiatus indefinitely due to the probation staff shortage and a lack of state funding.

Lett said he is fighting to save his program, not for himself, but for the hundreds of youngsters it helps.

Lett hopes to revive the Bridges program, which was put on hold in early April after the Probation Department said the program no longer was eligible for federal funding.

Bridges, when fully funded, allowed the Probation Department to transport hundreds of at-risk youths to the Fountain of Life center in Devore, where they received mentoring and direction in performing community-service duties.

Lett is the chief executive officer of Fountain of Life. "We recognize the value of the Bridges program,"

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said Scray, "but our first priority has to be the care and custody and safety of the minors we have detained."

Bridges served about 300 young people a month.

"You don't cut a program that is successful," Lett said. "Now the kids have to go out and look for people to hire them. And who's hiring them? Are they mentoring them — giving them development? If we are just using these kids as a labor tool, then it's just about punishment, and they aren't learning anything."

An evaluation of federal-funding guidelines forced the Probation Department to determine the Bridges program did not qualify, Scray said.

"We realized the program was no longer eligible under the clarifications," she said.

Lett said he plans to lobby Mayor Pat Morris for funds to help reinstate the program, at least for a year.

Morris said his "door is always open," but he is confident the Probation Department had fully evaluated the program before making its decision.

Scray said once the department resolves its staffing issues, the Bridges program will be re-evaluated. An external work program of some sort is a necessary part of the department's operation, she said.

"We will take a look at the Bridges program again," she said. "We won't be able to restore it to what it was, but we can possibly restore it in part. Either way, we will have something. Maybe it won't be called Bridges, and it may not look exactly the same, but we will have something."

But addressing the probation staff shortage is not as easy as it seems.

Bautista said the shortage mirrors national and statewide law-enforcement trends, which show some law-enforcement officers leaving the field for more lucrative positions in the private sector.

While the Probation Department receives many applicants, the tough screening process can be difficult to pass, said Anesa Cronin, a supervising probation officer who oversees recruitment.

"The screening can be stringent," Cronin said. "But it's not as difficult as other law-enforcement positions. We're not so much about scaling walls as we are about report writing and documentation."

"Our agility needs are different."

Contact writer Selicia Kennedy-Ross at (909) 386-3885 or via e-mail at selicia.kennedy@sbsun.com.

Horror on Home Avenue

Youth slain, three others wounded in San Bernardino drive-by

By George Watson,
Guy McCarthy
and Joe Neilson
Staff Writers

SAN BERNARDINO — Children and adults sprinted for cover, shrieking as some ducked in the grass, only to watch as a shooter trained his weapon from high to low, trying to pick off prone bodies.

The flurry of shots flashing from the silver sedan seemed indiscriminate.

In the end, it was 14-year-old Jarred Mitchell, 14, who fell, slain in the barrage. Three others were also hit in the rapid-fire drive-by attack on the normally peaceful West Home Avenue neighborhood around 8:30 p.m. Monday.

"It was, pop, pop, pop, pop," said Jarred's Reynolds, 18, who lives in the neighborhood. "If it wasn't an automatic gun, it was another shooter."

And in this case, another young life lost in a city struggling to make its streets safer.

The death of 11-year-old Myisha Crenshaw in November kicked off an increased focus on fighting crime that has galvanized the community.

After Myisha was shot to death, apparently by gang members, the community rallied for a new war on crime. Residents and community leaders, including The Sun, founded Myisha's Circle to help effect change. Since then, Mayor Pat Morris has launched his anti-crime plan. Operation Phoenix and Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., has introduced Myisha's Law, which would send federal money to communities with gang problems.

San Bernardino police Sgt. Mike Desrochers said investigators are certain the Monday shooting is gang-related but could not confirm reports that a homegrown San Bernardino group known as the 18th Street Gang had a hand in the shooting.

"We can't state who (the gang) is because we don't know," he said. "We do have a person of interest, and that person is an 18th Street gang member."

This gang is not part of the better-known Los Angeles-based gang that moved into Colton. This gang is smaller with black members.

Morris said the shooting is a blow to the city.

"It's a terrible tragedy for the family and for this city," he said, adding that the homicide was an example of the kind of violence that naturally stems from having

See DRIVE-BY / Page A4

continued from page A1

"handguns on the streets in the hands of young people who are angry."

Councilman Rikke Van Johnson, whose 6th Ward includes the area where the shooting happened, said it was not the most violent area.

"Unfortunately, you have a proliferation of gangs in a very small vicinity, and that bleeds into the safe neighborhoods," he said.

Shattered peace

As night fell on the 1700 block of West Home Avenue on Monday, there was no indication of the impending violence.

A group of kids gathered in a friend's driveway, dancing to beats in their heads, busting moves to entertain each other as twilight fell.

"We always be dancing out here, having fun," said Maria, a 13-year-old girl who was cooking porkchops Monday night and watching her 8-year-old sister, Jessica.

Outside, the youngsters' routine evening took its initial downturn when someone noticed a silver sedan making several passes up and down the street.

At the same time, Reynolds approached the house where her 9-year-old sister played with a friend. The two live down the street.

A boy outside also noticed the sedan and pointed it out to Reynolds.

"I said, 'Come on, now, nobody's worried about you,'" she said.

A second later, gunshots shattered the night. Reynolds bent down and ran for the house, a one-story white structure. Someone yelled at her to get down and jumped on her, forcing her to the ground. She felt blood trickle down her chin from scraping it as she fell.

"I didn't think the shooter was going to stop," Reynolds said. "They started shooting at people on the ground. You could see shooting from up high and the bullets moved down."

Eventually, the bullets stopped flying, and the car disappeared.

Reynolds stood and continued toward the door. Children emerged from the house, and she ordered them back inside and into a back room.

Someone asked if she had been shot.

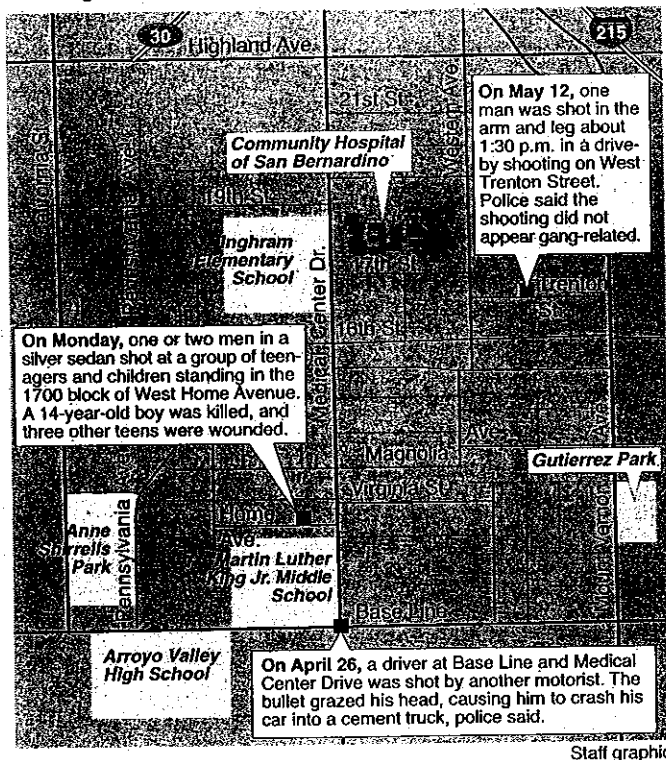
"I looked down and saw my leg was bleeding," Reynolds said, pointing to a wound on her left thigh now covered with gauze and a light-brown athletic bandage wrap.

Her pants were torn. She pushed around the wound to see if a bullet had lodged in her flesh. But she realized it had only grazed her. She looked outside and saw police officers had already arrived.

She saw the 14-year-old boy lying on the ground, bleeding his life away. Paramedics attended to him. Also hit were two boys, ages 16 and 17.

Neighborhood shootings

In the past month, there have been at least three shootings, two non-fatal and one fatal, in one square mile of the city bound by Mount Vernon Avenue to the east, California Street to the west, Base Line to the south and Highland Avenue to the north. Police do not believe the shootings are related.



Staff graphic

Their injuries were not believed to be life-threatening.

Reynolds came upon her teenage cousin. Something looked different.

And then she realized it: A bullet had blown one of her cousin's braids off her head. But the girl was fine otherwise.

Eight-year-old Jessica was home with her sister Maria watching a cheerleading movie when the shots rang out. The girls ran outside.

"It was three people on the ground, shot," Maria said. "People was running from down the street, towards the boy who was in the street, my play brother. We yelled at Jessica to go back inside. She don't need to see all that."

Several people gathered around Jarred. Someone shouted, "C'mon Jarred, make it, make it!"

Maria could see gunshot wounds to his head, arm and back.

"Somewhere in the back of his neck, there was a lot of blood," she said.

Jarred wobbled his head back and forth. His arm shifted as friends implored him to hold on.

"He dozed off in the street, and they tried to bring him back," Maria said. "But he died when they was taking him

to the hospital."

The West Home Avenue neighborhood quickly pulled together for Jarred's family.

Down the road a bit on Medical Center Drive and Union Street, the sidewalk and parking lot outside the Westside Food and Liquor corner market on Tuesday was crowded with 70 to 100 of Jarred's friends and neighbors holding a car wash to raise money for the family.

Girls yelled "Car wash!" as others wiped down cars in the small parking lot.

Many wore photographs of Jarred around their necks.

At-risk neighborhood

Residents of West Home Avenue say their neighborhood is no haven for mayhem. It is not a high-density, impoverished apartment complex or a gang stronghold — areas that are more typically the sites of such crimes.

A roughly even mix of black and Latino residents live in the one-story single-family homes lining the street.

Their street has been a quiet, friendly enclave for decades, they say.

Police have a different view.

The neighborhood is included in one of the at-risk areas

identified by Police Chief Michael Billdt earlier this year, where police patrol is stepped up due to the threat of crime.

Lt. Diane Holmes, the district commander for the area where the shooting occurred, met with officers Monday night and put together a plan for directed patrols in the neighborhood, said Lt. Mark Garcia.

In the last month, there have been two nonfatal shootings in the nearby area, but police do not believe those shootings are connected to Monday's.

The shooting is believed to be gang-related, but a motive behind the shooting and who the intended target or targets were unclear, Garcia said.

"It's still early in the investigation. Hopefully we'll be able to put a lot of it together," Garcia said.

Lingering questions

Maria sat Tuesday afternoon in a narrow band of shade next to the driveway where the shooting happened. Jessica sat next to her. Maria looked down at the pavement between her slipped feet.

"It was gangbanging," she said. "The person who pulled that trigger don't like nobody over here."

Jessica glanced at plastic letters police had used to mark the spots where gunfire had scarred the walls of the home's exterior. The letters ran through the alphabet to the letter 'R.'

"Are you going to fix the ABCs?" she asked a visitor. "Are the police going to fix the bullet holes?"

A woman who said her 18-year-old daughter was caught in the crossfire but survived without injury said she is fed up with the bad image gang-bangers bring to the neighborhood.

"I'm born and raised here on the Westside 44 years, and these here are the Magnolia Estates," she said. "If the kids want to come out and dance, why these little dudes want to come and kill someone?"

"That 14-year-old was one of my baby's friends. I know how that boy's mom is right now. Feel me?"

Staff writers Selicia Kennedy-Ross, Robert Rogers, Kelly Rayburn, Megan Blaney and Andrew Silva contributed to this report.

Contact writer George Watson at



LaFonzo Rachal Carter/Staff photographer

James Reynolds, 18, of San Bernardino talks about Jarred Mitchell, who was killed on Monday night on West Home Avenue in a shooting that left Reynolds and two others wounded. A bullet grazed Reynolds' left thigh.

ON SBSUN.COM

GALLERY: A boy's life

An avid dancer, 14-year-old Jarred Mitchell also enjoyed sports.

GALLERY: A grandmother's grief

Jarred Mitchell's grandmother tries to grasp her grandson's death.

GALLERY: A school shaken

Counselors at Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School prepare for a day of grief.

GALLERY: At the scene

Police search for evidence; residents cope with the aftermath of violence.

VIDEO: The neighborhood reacts

The story from West Home Avenue, including reaction from neighbors and friends of Jarred Mitchell.

AUDIO: A look ahead

The Sun editor Steve Lambert discusses what this latest outburst of violence means for the community, and where San Bernardino is headed next in its efforts to combat crime.

ART BEAT: sbsun.com/artbeat

Art speaks to the heart, the soul of a community. Share your images with The Sun's online art beat section.

Family mourns shooting victim

By Selicia Kennedy-Ross
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — Jarred Mitchell almost made it out of middle school.

He was 14. Playstation 2 was king, and eighth-grade girls were a mystery.

He dreamed of becoming a professional basketball player or a police officer.

He was thinking about the big graduation dance next week. His grandmother was even renting a tuxedo for him — he would have gone for a fitting this weekend.

But as he stood talking with friends and practicing his dance moves on West Home Avenue on Monday night, gunmen sprayed the street with bullets. While others scrambled for cover, Jarred fell under the barrage of bullets and lay bleeding on the street.

At 9:42 p.m. at Arrowhead Regional Medical Center in Colton, the teen family and friends called "a sweet, friendly boy" gasped his last breath.

Like many 14-year-old boys, Jarred loved hanging out with his friends and playing Playstation 2 — especially NBA games. He grew up an avid basketball and football player.

He liked to joke — even when no one else thought his quips were funny, said his cousin, Janise Slaughter, 15.



Eric Reed/Staff Photographer

Meredith Mitchell looks at photos of her grandson, Jarred Mitchell, on Tuesday with Jarred's sister, Jinell Wright, and cousin Janise Slaughter beside her. Jarred, 14, was killed in a drive-by shooting on West Home Avenue in San Bernardino on Monday night.

REMEMBERING JARRED



A candlelight vigil will be held tonight in the neighborhood where Jarred Mitchell was killed. Marchers will gather about 8 p.m. in the 1700 block of West Home Avenue in San Bernardino, north of Base Line and Medical Center Drive.

See FAMILY / Page A4

SB Sun
May 24, 2006

Family

continued from page A1

One of his jokes turned out to be darkly prophetic. Jarred would double over saying, "I'm shot," and then laugh, said his brother, Joshua Wright, 11.

He had a unique sense of fashion and usually paid careful attention to his wardrobe, Janise said. On one occasion, he even donned a tight-fitting girl's shirt covered in hearts.

"He'd put on anything — just to be different," Janise said. "He was a chocolate teddy bear."

He loved pepperoni pizza, music by Lil' Wayne and hip-hop dancing. If there was one thing Jarred loved to do, it was dance, family members said.

He never missed a chance to show off his skills at school dances and "battles," informal street dance contests; said another cousin, Jamill Slaughter, 12.

Until a growth spurt in the past year, Jarred was frustrated by his height. Since the fall, adolescence had been kind to him, adding six inches to his 4-foot-11-inch frame.

His size never impeded him, though, said the Rev. Reginald Beamon, who mentored Jarred and his older brother, Jeremy Mitchell.

He couldn't wait until he was tall enough to ride the theme park roller coasters with height requirements, said Jarred's grandmother, Meredith Mitchell.

His charm overcame any problems his stature created with girls, the family said. He had already lined up a date for the graduation dance.

Jarred's death has left his family and friends broken.

Family members called him a "sweet, outgoing boy." School officials and football coaches called him "a quiet leader."

For Meredith Mitchell, better known in the neighborhood as "Nana," her grandson's killing is her worst nightmare realized.

As she watched the city become more violent, Meredith Mitchell said she's lived with the fear that she would someday lose one of her grandchildren to street violence.

"I was afraid sooner or later this would happen to one of the kids," she said. "We're not immune — none of us is immune. It's happening all over the city."

"I just wish they would stop. They need to quit."

Jarred's 10-year-old sister, Jinell Wright, and brother, Joshua Wright, miss him.

He was a good big brother, they said. He took care of them.

Students at his school, Martin

Luther King Jr. Middle School, wandered around campus aimlessly Tuesday.

Many scotch-taped pictures of Jarred to their clothing. Some had even milled around the hospital waiting room the night before, hoping for good news.

Grief counselors from the district did their best to address the students' emotional wounds and dry their tears.

"We used to play around together and play basketball," said one boy, who had taped a snapshot of himself and Jarred playing video games to his red oversized T-shirt.

Jarred wasn't perfect. He had been in his share of trouble — fighting in school had even earned him 19 days in Juvenile Hall.

"He had his teenage problems," Meredith Mitchell said. "But he was not a gangbanger. He was staying out of trouble." In many ways, Jarred was a typical at-risk youth from a troubled neighborhood, school officials said.

"He's very similar to a lot of kids over here," said Steve Everett, director of an after-school tutoring and flag-football program Jarred was involved in. "Just trying to stay alive."

"Any time you live in a society such as this neighborhood, you're an at-risk youth, and either you make it or you don't," Everett said. "Very few people make it out because everything around you is the complete opposite of where you are supposed to be going. The negative hollas in your face, and the positive is just a quiet whisper."

But this year, something had changed for Jarred. He had become a quiet, strong leader. He was trying to make better choices for himself, Everett said.

Just a few days before his death, Jarred stayed out of an altercation among a group of kids who were his friends, Everett said.

He could have gotten involved, but he didn't.

"The principal asked him why he didn't get involved, and Jarred said he was trying to stay out of trouble," Everett said. "He made a conscious effort, and what he said was echoed by his behavior."

Jarred almost made it out of middle school. His death has inspired school staff to try harder to make sure others do, said King Principal James Espinoza.

"The teachers are heartbroken, but they're not defeated," Espinoza said. "This reaffirms our mission to save kids."

Contact writer Selicia Kennedy-Ross at (909) 386-3885 or via e-mail at selicia.kennedy@sbsun.com.

At risk: a city's future

Leaders commit to safer streets

By Megan Blaney
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — Too many of the city's children grow up fearing bullets instead of bad grades.

They abound in this city of 200,000 — riding bikes, playing ball against the wall and dancing in the streets.

And they are afraid.

"We worry about shootings," was 12-year-old Jashel McMillian's prophetic comment Monday during a school assembly at Del Vallejo Middle School. "Although we don't really think it could happen to us, it probably could."

Hours later, 14-year-old Jarred Mitchell died in a shooting that wounded several others, left friends and relatives reeling and brought new urgency to efforts to make the city safer for its children.

As San Bernardino's next generation grows up amid flying bullets, leaders from all levels of government, as well as the community, are trying to effect a fundamental change in a city that has ranked among the nation's most dangerous for the past two years.

Community efforts to weed out violence started with the gang-related shooting death of 11-year-old Mynisha Crenshaw, who was struck by a bullet during a family dinner in November. Mynisha's Circle, a community group, was formed in her honor. It has the company and support of law enforcement and Mayor Pat Morris.

Morris' own crime-fighting initiative, Operation Phoenix, is taking root in the city, as the City Council searches for funding for 40 more police officers. Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., has introduced Mynisha's Law in memory of the 11-year-old. If enacted, it would free up federal dollars to communities with gang problems.

In the meantime, community members are working to fight the gang problem at the grass roots.

James Espinoza, principal of Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School, where Jarred attended school, said the school is often the only haven some children have.

"Some of the parents of our students have them practice for a drive-by (shooting)," Espinoza said. "They practice getting under the

“
Although we don't really think it could happen to us, it probably could.”

JASHEL McMILLIAN

12, Del Vallejo Middle School student

window line.”

Gary Underwood, chief of police for San Bernardino City Unified School District, said parents must also enforce curfews at night for their children.

"The lack of parental supervision is problematic," Underwood said. "It's tragic. Children don't belong out on the streets."

Attracted by lower rents in the Inland Empire, gangs invaded the area as rents skyrocketed in Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Police Department began cracking down.

There are more than 300 gangs with about 16,000 members in San Bernardino County. Their influence, especially on young impressionable children, cannot be underestimated.

With family members in gangs or in jail, regular drive-bys in their neighborhoods and drug dealing an acceptable income generator, many children grow up closer to crime than law and order.

A few hours before Jarred was shot on West Home Avenue, a group of children from Del Rosa's Del Vallejo Middle School spoke frankly about living in a neighborhood where shootings are fairly frequent. Fifteen of the 23 seventh graders knew someone in a gang, and several boys and girls had been asked to join.

The walls at the Del Vallejo Middle School are decorated with hand-drawn anti-drug posters, and the children speak out firmly against gangs and drugs. Still, some of their family members belong to gangs or do drugs. Espinoza said for this reason schools must be sanctuaries for children.

"We try to be part of the light to push back the darkness," he said.

Contact writer Megan Blaney at (909) 386-3828 or via e-mail at

3 more charged in shooting

THURSDAY | MAY 25, 2006

Defendants in Mynisha case increase to 10

By Joe Nelson
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — Three more suspects were charged Wednesday in connection with the gang-related shooting of 11-year-old Mynisha Crenshaw, bringing the total number of defendants to 10.

Alonzo Monk, 24, Baybra Morrison, aka

Baybra Edwards, 32, and Khaalis Batch Atkins, 29, were each charged with murder, attempted murder, and conspiracy to commit a crime for the Nov. 13 shooting at the Cedarwood Apartments in east San Bernardino. The shooting killed Mynisha and wounded her sister, who was 14 at the time.

Authorities said the defendants, all documented members of the San Bernardino

Crips-affiliated gang Pimps, Players, Hustlers and Gangsters, were retaliating for the earlier slaying of fellow gang member Barry Jones, 24.

The charges include special allegations of using a gun to cause great bodily injury or death and committing a crime for the benefit

See **MYNISHA** / Page A5

Mynisha

continued from page A1

of a street gang.

Mynisha's death came on the crest of a deadly wave of gang crime that galvanized the community to demand a stop to the violence.

The shootings spurred a collaborative effort among community residents, city officials and The Sun, which established Mynisha's Circle to help effect change. Since then, Mayor Pat Morris has launched his anti-crime plan, Operation Phoenix, and Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., has introduced Mynisha's Law, which would send federal money to communities with gang problems.

Monk was taken into custody by San Bernardino homicide detectives Monday at the California Institute for Men in Chino, where he was being released after spending five months behind bars for a parole violation in December. The violation was for making criminal threats and receiving stolen property, said Lt. Tim Shirlock, spokesman for the Chino prison.

Monk was convicted in 2004 for burglary and discharging a firearm at an unoccupied vehicle. He was sentenced to two years in prison, according to state Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation records.

San Bernardino detectives were anticipating Monk's release from prison Monday. They contacted prison officials last week to negotiate the transfer of custody, Shirlock said.

"When we did parole him (Monk), they were waiting right there, arrested him and took him," he said.

Monk is expected to be arraigned today in San Bernardino Superior Court. Morrison and Atkins remain in custody in other prisons for parole violations and are expected to be brought to San Bernardino County to face trial, said prosecutor Cheryl Kersey, who supervises the District Attorney Office's gang and career-criminal unit. She declined further comment, citing a gag order that precludes prosecutors and police from speaking to the media about the case.

Also charged in connection with Mynisha's death are Sidikiba Greenwood, 35, Patrick Lair, 28, Michael Barnett Jr., 19, Sinque Morrison, 30, Tyshon Harris and Harold Phillips, 23.

Shawn Davis, 19, pleaded guilty May 16 to attempted-murder and voluntary-manslaughter charges with a special allegation for street-gang activity. Under a deal with prosecutors, Davis is expected to cooperate with authorities in the case against the remaining defendants. He faces up to 11 years in prison. The others face life in prison.

During a preliminary hearing on Feb. 23, San Bernardino police Detective Gary Robertson testified that he interviewed Monk while he was in prison and pumped him for information about Mynisha's death.

On Nov. 9, Monk drove his aunt's car, with Sinque Morrison and Jones, to the apartment complex where Jones was killed that night. Monk identified both men as PPHG members and said other people were involved in the shooting that killed Jones, Robertson testified.

Robertson also said Monk told him he was at the car wash where the gang reportedly hatched the plan for retribution against the Rollin' 60s Crips, a rival gang believed to be responsible for Jones' death.

Contact writer Joe Nelson at (909) 386-3887 or via e-mail at joe.nelson@sbsun.com.

Neighbors

A COMMUNITY REMEMBERS

unite to mourn child 5/25/06

By Yazmin Alvarez
Staff Writer



Jarred Mitchell,
14, was killed Monday
night in a shooting
that left three others
wounded.

SAN BERNARDINO — A neighborhood torn apart by a drive-by shooting gathered by candlelight Wednesday in front of a white picket fence marked by four bullet holes.

Near this spot two days earlier, 14-year-old Jarred Mitchell was gunned down while dancing with friends in a driveway on West Home Avenue in what police believe was a gang-related shooting. Three other youths were wounded when a gunman sprayed bullets into the group.

In the soft glow Wednesday, more than 400 family members, friends, neighbors and community leaders gathered to mourn Jarred.

"I just look around and see all of

66

I'm determined not to lose another one of my children."

TOMMY WRIGHT

Jarred Mitchell's father

you young people here helping me mourn the loss of my son," said Jarred's father, Tommy Wright, 51. "I can't even explain how it feels to see you guys out here."

Wright, who lives in San Diego, said he planned to return home to start a "crusade" against the violence that claimed his son's life.

"I'm determined not to lose another

one of my children," he said.

Before Wright spoke to the crowd, the Rev. Reginald Beamon opened the vigil with a prayer. Mourners lit candles as Beamon spoke. Some broke into tears as the evening wore on.

"Whenever you see violence in the community, it's a tragedy," said Dan Flores, a representative of 5th District county Supervisor Josie Gonzales. "But more so when it's children. It really hits home."

Students from Jarred's school, Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School, attached 8-by-10 photographs of the boy to their shirts Wednesday night.

"I can't believe he's gone," said Da'Jonna Webb, 11, who said she

See VIGIL / Page A4

RIGHT: Jarred Mitchell's cousins Mishalai Griffin, left, and Sabrina Kilgore, center, comfort each other Wednesday during a candlelight vigil for Jarred in the 1700 block of West Home Avenue in San Bernardino. Jarred, 14, was shot and killed and three others were wounded during a drive-by shooting earlier this week.

Jennifer Cappuccio
Staff photographer

5/26/06



Vigil

continued from page A1

was Jarred's girlfriend. "The only thing that's getting me by is to think that he's in a better place."

Before the vigil, Beamon, who led the vigil Wednesday, said he had known Jarred for years. He began mentoring the boy when he was in sixth grade, he said.

"Jarred was like family to me. His Nana is my Nana. He was

looking to do good. Everybody loved the popular young man," he said. "Family, his friends, everyone in the neighborhood and his teachers. You could clearly see that by the evidence of the 30 to 40 people who showed up at the hospital that night."

In response to recent acts of violence — there has been a spate of shootings over the past month, Beamon said — he wants to establish a neighborhood "alliance" that would result in youths approaching adult neigh-

bors to report developments in the area that might harm residents.

"The people in the community and in any neighborhood should not have to be living in fear anymore. We have to figure out a way to take the community back," Beamon said. "We are going to take it back and do what we can to make it a safe place for our kids to grow up. That's what needs to happen, and I'm committed to doing that."

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Jennifer Cappuccio/Staff photographer

Toyon Gonzalez, a friend of Jarred Mitchell's, weeps Wednesday during a candlelight vigil near where Jarred was killed in a drive-by shooting on Monday.

5/25/06

SB crime remains council's hot topic

City leaders back Morris, look for money

By Kelly Rayburn
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — Days after 14-year-old Jarred Mitchell died in a drive-by shooting, the clamor is building again for the city to confront its crime problem.

Despite widespread community outcry following the November death of 11-year-old Mynisha Crenshaw and the election of a mayor who put fighting crime at the top of his agenda, the city's homicide rate this year is in line with its tally in 2005, the year it ranked as one of the nation's most dangerous cities.

The message coming from many on the City Council is a familiar one: We're on the right track, but it takes patience — and it takes money.

"I think we'll see some massive changes," said 2nd Ward Councilman Dennis Baxter. "But changes take some time, and it doesn't happen in 24 hours."

Baxter, who took office in March, has praised Mayor Pat Morris for keeping his campaign promises to confront crime head on. Baxter's ward includes the 20-block area that is the testing ground for Morris' anti-crime plan, Operation Phoenix.

He said the city is headed in the right direction with its implementation of Operation Phoenix and its move toward hiring more police officers.

Much has changed about the city's attack on crime since Mynisha's death.

Morris was elected mayor, replacing Judith Valles. Police Chief Michael Billdt replaced Garrett Zimmon, who left for reported medical reasons. Billdt instituted a new policing strategy to tackle crime in five hot spots in the city.

A majority of the council said they stood behind Morris and Billdt's plans.

Even Wendy McCammack, the 7th Ward councilwoman who campaigned for Morris's opponent, City Attorney James F. Penman, said she was behind the mayor and police chief in their anti-crime programs.

"Absolutely," she said.

One key question remains for McCammack and others on the council: funding.

McCammack said she would continue pushing her colleagues to get serious about developing a plan for long-term financial stability.

She said the ambitious list of goals set by the council this week carries a high price tag.

Priorities that topped the list included adding police officers, focusing on job creation and business recruitment; and moving forward with downtown-redevelopment projects.

There are short-term monetary questions, too.

"Obviously the P.D. wants to have additional officers," said Billdt, noting that the exact number is up to the mayor and council.

Although Morris has said he would like to eventually add 40 officers to the department, City Manager Fred Wilson said the current plan is to add up to 14 in the upcoming fiscal year, depending on how much

Third Ward Councilman Gordon McGinnis, referring to Monday's shooting, said additional officers might give police an edge on detecting suspicious behavior by people who are preparing to commit a crime.

But he remains skeptical that there's much money to work with. A police officer costs the city roughly \$100,000 a year.

"I'm willing to have a look at the budget and see what's what," he said. "I'm not willing to forgo everything else in the city" to hire more officers.

The council member who places the lowest emphasis on hiring more officers is 6th Ward Councilman Rikke Van Johnson, who represents the area where Jarred was killed.

He said more pressing needs include creating jobs, expanding after-school and recreational programs and improving road conditions.

"We're focusing on crime, which is a good thing," he said. "However, I do not think we're being proactive enough about it because we're not focusing on the young people, not investing in them. . . . Sometimes you can throw a lot of resources at crime, but you don't get at the root problem."

Fourth Ward Councilman Neil Derry disagreed, saying an increased police presence is crucial to lowering crime. He credited increased patrols for a decline in crime in the area around the San Manuel Indian Bingo and Casino.

He said the city must root out inefficiencies elsewhere in its operations to help pay for more officers.

He called on his colleagues to agree ahead of time to implement the findings of a proposed outside review of city government. Fifth Ward Councilman Chas Kelley is also calling on the city to figure out funding for its anti-crime programs, saying it should meet to identify specific funding available for its various goals.

"People feel good about what they want to do," Kelley said, explaining why he thought such a discussion was needed. "But too often in government, it's 'We're working on it, we're getting there and we've hired a consultant.'"

Contact writer Kelly Rayburn at (909) 386-3882 or via e-mail at kelly.rayburn@sbsun.com.

COUNCIL VOICES

Another child was killed on the streets of San Bernardino on Monday when Jarred Mitchell, 14, was hit with gunfire. City Council members on Wednesday discussed their top priorities, including efforts to reduce crime. This is some of what they said:

"We don't have an army. We have a Police Department, and we're trying to hire more officers."



1st Ward Councilwoman **Esther Estrada**, on the difficulty of stopping crime.

"I think we'll see some massive changes. But changes take some time, and it doesn't happen in 24 hours."

2nd Ward Councilman **Dennis Baxter**, on the need to have patience with anti-crime programs.

"We're aggressively going to find money in the budget to hire more police officers to do more patrols . . . If you have more officers on patrol then you may be able to stop suspicious-looking vehicles."



3rd Ward Councilman **Gordon McGinnis**, referring to Monday's drive-by shooting.

"We need those 40 police officers tomorrow, not three years from now."



4th Ward Councilman **Neil Derry**, referring to Mayor Pat Morris' plan to eventually add 40 officers to the Police Department. Earlier this year, Derry and Councilman Chas Kelley said the city should spend a surplus to immediately hire more officers.

5/25/06

"People feel good about what they want to do, but too often in government, it's 'We're working on it, we're getting there and we've hired a consultant.'"



5th Ward Councilman **Chas Kelley**, saying the council should meet to identify funding sources for a list of goals it recently set, tops on which is hiring more police officers.

"We're focusing on crime, which is a good thing. However, I do not think we're being proactive enough about it because we're not focusing on the young people, not investing in them."



6th Ward Councilman **Rikke Van Johnson**, who, in a recent survey, listed job creation, expanding after-school and recreational programs and improving road conditions among the priorities he considered more pressing than hiring additional officers.

"As a councilwoman, I'm not sure I can do anything more than support the mayor and police chief in their efforts, which to me translates to (ensuring) they have the appropriate funding, the responsible funding."



7th Ward Councilwoman **Wendy McCammack**, saying the city should work out a plan for long-term financial stability, especially given an ambitious list of goals the council set earlier this week.

Family: Jarred shot at before

Boy said to be target of gang

By George Watson
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — A 14-year-old boy slain Monday in a drive-by shooting had dodged bullets only a few days earlier, a relative said Wednesday.

Someone targeted Jarred Mitchell on Friday and squeezed off at least a few rounds at him, said a relative who asked to remain unidentified for fear of reprisal.

The relative also said the shooter in both attacks is believed to be a male in his late teens who is part of the 18th Street Gang, a small San Bernardino outfit of criminals. Similar beliefs were echoed by many neighborhood teens Tuesday and Wednesday.

The earlier drive-by shooting occurred on West Home Avenue, the same street where Jarred was killed Monday evening and three others, ages 16, 17 and 18, were wounded. Jarred lived a few blocks away.

"I don't know why he came back there," the relative said. "I'd heard someone called him and asked him to come over. It just doesn't make sense he died. He was only 14.

"But out here, this stuff happens all the time."

Authorities continued their investigation Wednesday. The work includes determining how many shooters — police believe there were one or two — were in the silver sedan that had passed up and down West Home Avenue before spraying rounds into a crowd of children and young adults about 8:30 p.m.

Since November, when 11-year-old Mynisha Crenshaw was slain and spurring community action, at least three other children have been killed in an apparent gang-retaliation hits.

San Bernardino police officials declined to say whether there was any connection to the 18th Street Gang.

But several sources have said the gang is believed to be involved.

The 18th Street Gang is a small contingent of black members, authorities said. They have no ties to

5/25/06



Eric Reed/Staff photographer

Jarred Mitchell's sister, Jinell Wright, and cousin Janise Slaughter hold a picture of Jarred Mitchell, 14, who was shot and killed Monday night on West Home Avenue in San Bernardino.

Gang

continued from page A1

the 18th Street gang in Los Angeles — which is Latino-based and considered to have more than 20,000 members.

"These guys are indigenous to San Bernardino," said Lt. Ernie Lemos, a police spokesman. "They are relatively small."

The gang in Los Angeles was born in the 1960s in the notorious Rampart area and has quickly spread across major cities throughout the United States.

The fact that the San Bernardino members took the name of the Los Angeles gang came as a surprise to a top gang expert.

"That wouldn't make any sense," said Wes McBride, president of the California Gang Investigators Association.

But for some reason — perhaps as simple as West 18th Street being the area where police believe the gang is based — that's exactly what happened.

Paul Callanan, San Bernardino County supervising probation

"I don't know why he came back there. I'd heard someone called him and asked him to come over. It just doesn't make sense he died. He was only 14. But out here, this stuff happens all the time."

A relative of Jarred Mitchell

officer, said he knew little of the gang.

"They just started popping up over the past few years," Callanan said. "We haven't really been looking at them."

West 18th Street is an aging roadway that drivers could almost miss by simply blinking. It's less than two-tenths of a mile long running east to west.

"It's pretty quiet here," said an elderly woman who has lived in her home for four decades and refused to be identified. "It was pretty bad a few years back. But not anymore."

To drive from there to West Home Avenue, taking a series of turns, is about eight-tenths of a mile.

West Home Avenue had been an equally quiet street — until the past few weeks.

A 36-year-old corrections officer who lives down the street from the scene of Monday's shooting said her neighborhood is home to people who are proud of their houses and property.

But gunfire on West Home Avenue has become all too common, she said Tuesday. She did not want her name published for fear of reprisal.

"They had a shooting two weeks ago at the corner on Flores Street," she said. "But the police never showed up. I know they never came because the boys came back the next morning to pick up the shell casings."

Staff writer Guy McCarthy contributed to this report.

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No unwritten 'code of honor' protects children

Thursday, May 25, 2006

Expert: Gang members shoot for revenge without caution

By Guy McCarthy
Staff Writer

Once off limits, children appear to be fair game on streets where gangbangers roam under a more brutal code of understanding: Persecute snitches and exact revenge.

"It's never OK to shoot at kids or kill somebody's baby," said Dynnesha Thompson, 18, who lives around the corner from where 14-year-old Jarred Mitchell was killed and three others wounded in a drive-by shooting Monday on West Home Avenue in San Bernardino.

"But people out here don't care. We see death nearly every day. It's sad, but some of us don't even cry. We go to funerals like it's nothing. My best friend was 16 when he died."

On Wednesday, Thompson was wearing a red, long-sleeve shirt adorned with a larger-than-life color portrait of DeMar-

cus Brooks, 16, who was killed in December 2003 after a suspected gang member shot him and his father at Waterman Discount Mall.

"Best Friends Forever," her shirt read. "Two Hearts with One Beat. Dy Dy and Lil Doe Doe."

DeMarcus and Jarred are part of a growing list of young people being killed — deliberately or not — in gang violence.

In November, 11-year-old Mynisha Crenshaw was killed in an apparent act of gang retaliation at the Cedarwood Apartments in San Bernardino. Two months later, Glyn Fergerson Jr., 17, was killed and two others were wounded in a drive-by shooting on North Ramona Avenue.

Although the details of these cases are different, revenge and retaliation appear now to trump all else — including old, unwritten codes forbidding the killing of children.

"Out here the code basically is, if

you're a snitch, it could lead to anything," Thompson said. "It could lead to killing, beatings, anything. There's a boy on the Internet, MySpace. I met him at Arroyo High. There's stuff on the Internet about him wanted dead for snitching."

Anthony Parker, 36, stepfather of one of the children who was wounded in Monday's drive-by, said the street code is what it is — and it's flawed.

"There is a code of the street," Parker said. "You don't turn around and tell on nobody or snitch. If you're in a gang, you don't do that. Snitches don't get no respect."

"But the guy who kills a kid doesn't deserve any more respect than a snitch," said Parker, who moved to San Bernardino 25 years ago from East St. Louis. "The new generation is just breeding killers."

Anyone who believes there is any code of honor among gangbangers to avoid shooting children is "high on denial," said Wes McBride, a retired veteran gang

investigator in Los Angeles County. He is also president of the California Gang Investigators Association, which he helped found in 1977.

"If there was any code like that, the old *veteranos* may adhere to it," said McBride, 64, who worked 28 years for the Los Angeles County sheriff's gang unit.

"But the youngsters haven't cared for decades," McBride said. "I interviewed probably a hundred gangbangers who shot into parties or at people's porches. I never met anyone who was sorry for what he did. He was sorry he got caught, but he wasn't sorry for killing anyone."

Shooters often rationalize that their victims are to blame for getting in the way of a known street dispute, McBride said.

"They say, 'They knew we were fighting, they shouldn't be out there. They knew we were at war,'" McBride said. "Gang members don't have problem-solving techniques except to kill the problem."

McBride said he has given lectures

several times at gang investigators' seminars in San Bernardino County.

"Some of the problem is the gang members from L.A. who come with that L.A. attitude — bold, coldblooded, brutal," McBride said. "These are multigenerational gangs, raised in violence, no compassion. It's beat out of them early in life. There's nothing new there. The public gets so used to the violence they forget about it."

Denial is part of any gang's ethic, McBride said. Denying that they have thugs among them, and denying the hypocrisy of their code.

"It's naive to think today's gangs respect the lives of children more than anyone else," McBride said. "You'd expect that from someone who's never been around gangs, or they're stuck on the Hollywood stories."

"But gangs are killing their communities just as sure as their bullets are killing people."

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SB SUN

May 26, 2006

Friday, May 26, 2006

Confronting causes of crime

By Robert Rogers
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — On West Home Avenue, six kids cautiously treaded toward a dark blood stain in the street, the macabre marker of the spot where classmate Jarred Mitchell lay dying after being shot in a drive-by Monday.

"That's where he was laying, right there," Dementris Davis said, pointing out the blood spot to five classmates with whom he walks home after school. "Just like that, he's gone."

The brazen drive-by that killed 14-year-old Jarred and wounded three others has renewed the urgency among community leaders to find solutions to crime and means to address its causes. These efforts have been a focus in the city since the Nov. 13 shooting death of 11-year-old Mynisha Crenshaw.

"To truly develop a safe and productive environment for all kids in west San Bernardino, if that's really the priority, it's going to take more investment on this part of the city," said James Espinoza, principal of Martin Luther King Jr. Middle

INSIDE

■ **SUSPECT IN COURT** Arroyo Valley High School student Jeffrey Monk did not enter a plea in the Mynisha Crenshaw shooting case. | A6

■ **SHOOTING** Man, teen shot at apartment complex. Both expected to survive. | A6

School, where Jarred was a student.

King Middle School has after-school programs, including flag football and Children's After School Program for Success, or CAPS, but they don't stretch into the perilous evening hours.

The city has plans to aggressively combat crime, starting with Mayor Pat Morris' Operation Phoenix, a multipronged crime-fighting strategy that focuses on suppressing and preventing crime. He is piloting his plan in a 20-block testing ground northeast of downtown — which does not include Home Avenue.

Under the "Prevention" heading of Morris' plan, after-school program expansion, police activities leagues and an

See CAUSES / Page A4

Causes

continued from page A1

increase of youth sports programs are listed as goals.

Meanwhile, city leaders lure developers and businesses downtown and have approved downtown redevelopment projects. The problem is they have no direct effect on the far west neighborhood where Jarred was killed, said City Councilman Rikke Van Johnson.

"The last major positive change was the opening of Arroyo Valley High School (in 2001)," Johnson said.

It's during those hours between 4 and 10 p.m., experts say, that teens find paths to drugs and gangs that come to dictate their lives. And for kids in this area, south of Muscoy and west of Interstate 215, nights are treacherous.

Jobs tough to come by

The labor market for kids and young adults in the area is tight and competitive, said Eric Nilsson, a labor economist at Cal State San Bernardino.

Nilsson said that poor kids in local urban communities are more likely to opt for peddling drugs or hatching rip-off schemes than flipping burgers.

"Fundamentally, people get jobs to earn money, and the better the pay the more people want the job," Nilsson said.

"But the reverse is also true, and is at work. The worse the pay the less interest, and today the real wages for entry-level jobs are very low and have been declining since the 1970s," Nilsson said.

"It's not that these kids are lazier; reasonable people respond to incentives, and there's little incentive for young poor people to try and compete for these entry-level jobs."

But there is hope on the horizon. The coming completion of the stretch of the Interstate 210 extension that will cut through the community promises more commerce — and more job opportunities.

"The freeway will change the paradigm of the community," Johnson said.

Fighting hopelessness

Three Arroyo Valley High School students hurled a racquetball against the huge white wall of Community Medical Plaza, the repetitive plop of rubber against concrete echoing in the parking lot.

This is where Arroyo freshman Terrance Barfield passes time with two buddies while waiting to catch a bus to Muscoy.

"When football season is out at school, there ain't much to do," 14-year-old Terrance said.

"We're just bored."

But the answer to the riddle of the gang culture and the poverty that fed into the barrage of bullets that ripped this community Monday isn't as simple as more after-school programs, better jobs or more police, said Cal State San Bernardino sociologist James Fenelon.

"What you're battling in these communities is something more, a sense of hopelessness, a lack of confidence in these youth in who they can be," Fenelon said.

Fenelon said the pervasive sense of fate and dim futures are not only primers for youth and gang violence, but may be reinforced by Jarred's slaying.

Back on Home Avenue, boys not yet old enough to shave and girls with pig-tails pulled pictures of Jarred from backpacks while standing inches away from his dried, sun-baked blood.

"This is him, it's like he was just here," said Dementris, 14, while holding a black-and-white photograph of Jarred.

Dementris and his friends stare at the bloodstained pavement for a few more seconds. They all say they knew someone killed by violence before Jarred.

Fenelon, who has done extensive field work and research alongside nonprofits in west San Bernardino, said the best way to infuse hope and energy in the community is by channeling public funds into community-based organizations.

"Money and support are noticeably absent from the grass-roots organizations best-positioned to help communities develop," Fenelon said.

As the council weighs how to best budget its money, hiring more police officers was ranked as a top priority.

Only one member of the City Council, Johnson, listed hiring more police as a secondary budget priority in a recent pre-budget survey.

Johnson said he would like to see a Police Athletic League center installed on the Westside. Johnson said such a center would both provide after-school programs and mend frayed relations.

"The trust level between the community and police in that area is very low," Johnson said.

There are no PAL centers in the city, but a goal of creating a police-sponsored activities league is listed in Operation Phoenix.

Power of family lost

Mending the fissures in the community requires healing in homes and families, said James Cephas, a youth director at the Sixteenth Street Seventh-day Adventist Church just a couple of blocks north of where Jarred was gunned down.

"The family as a unit has lost strength in this community," Cephas said.

Cephas said that splintered families behind front doors and inadequate community leadership beyond them has created a power vacuum. Local gangs have assumed primacy. Cephas said neighborhood leaders are more powerful than City Hall. They have the ability to connect with gang leaders to reach kids — and city officials and police do not, he said.

"The way things are now, it is very hard to compete with gangs for influence over youth here," Cephas said. "Kids come up without respect or structure in a community with no vocational training, very poor job prospects, and in the absence of strong families and community leadership and resources, the gangs are the most appealing options to kids."

"Talented boys and girls wind up selling drugs and turning to prostitution."

Preparing to say goodbye

By Selcia Kennedy-Ross
Staff Writer

Space Three, Section 325, Garden of Remembrance.

This is where Michelle Mitchell will bid goodbye to her 14-year-old son, Jarred Mitchell. — this cool, grassy spot at Montecito Memorial Park & Mortuary.

It is here that he will remain 14 forever.

Jarred was talking with friends on West Home Avenue and practicing his dance moves Monday night when gunmen sprayed the street with bullets. Suddenly, the sweet boy who loved basketball and hanging out with his friends was gone.

Now Mitchell and her mother, Meredith Mitchell, accompanied by the Rev. Reginald Beamon, must complete a task that few parents ever think they will have to — the arrangements for her child's funeral.

The trio makes its way to

See JARRED / Page A6



Jarred Mitchell, 14, was killed Monday night in a shooting that left three others wounded.

Jarred was talking with friends on West Home Avenue and practicing his dance moves Monday night when gunmen sprayed the street with bullets. Suddenly, the sweet boy who loved basketball and hanging out with his friends was gone.

Now Mitchell and her mother, Meredith Mitchell, accompanied by the Rev. Reginald Beamon, must complete a task that few parents ever think they will have to — the arrangements for her child's funeral.

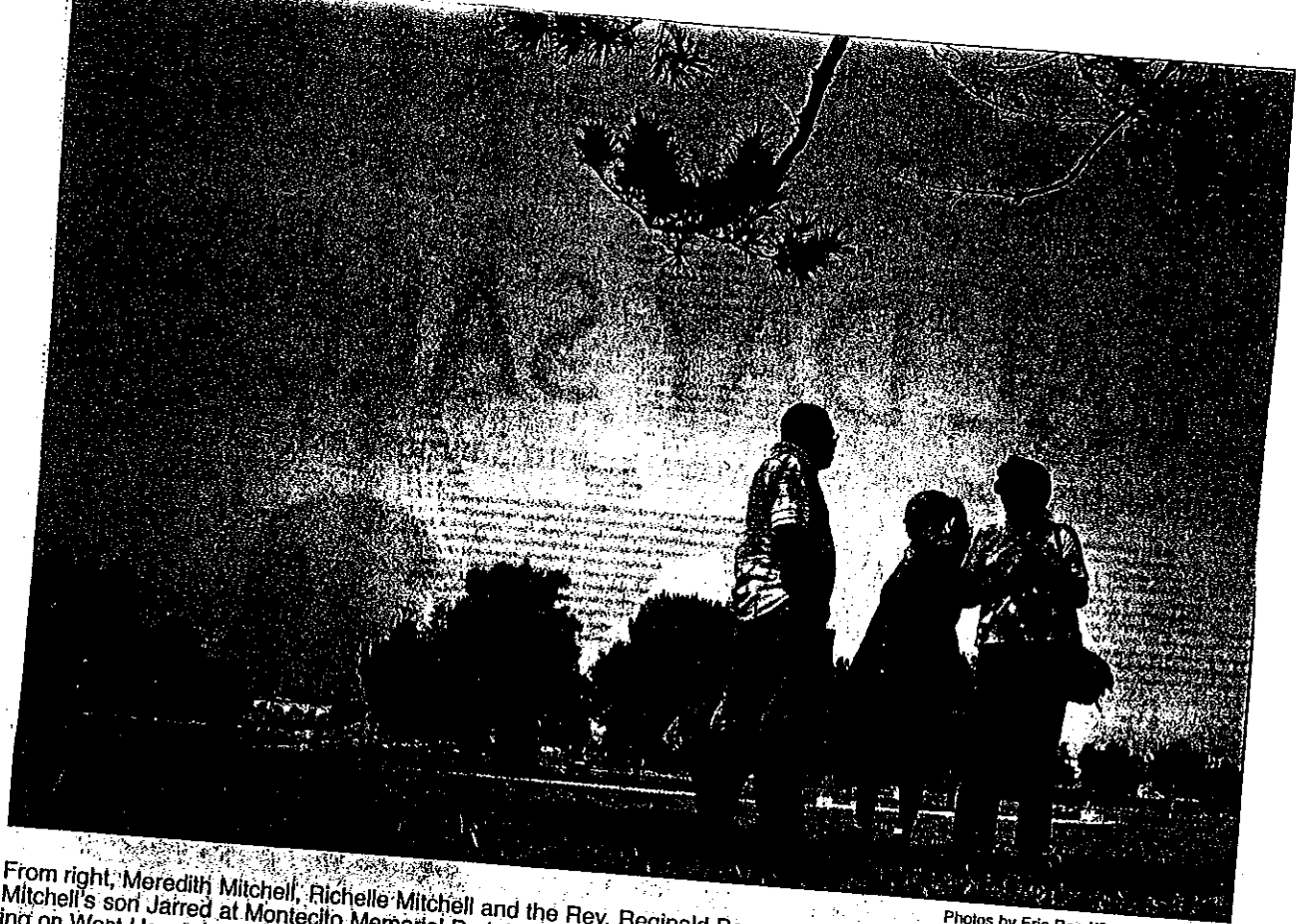
The trio makes its way to

See JARRED / Page A6



Michelle Mitchell, right, and her mother Meredith Mitchell, second from right, get help from the Rev. Reginald Beamon and counselor Natalie Bradley as they pick out a coffin for Jarred Mitchell's son Jarred on Thursday at Simpson San Bernardino Mortuary.

SBSUN May 26, 2006



Photos by Eric Reed/Staff photographer

From right, Meredith Mitchell, Richelle Mitchell and the Rev. Reginald Beamon pick out a burial plot for Richelle Mitchell's son Jarred at Montecito Memorial Park in Colton on Thursday. Jarred was killed Monday in a drive-by shooting on West Home Avenue.

Jarred

continued from page A1

Simpson San Bernardino Mortuary, where Natalie Bradley assists them in making the arrangements.

Bradley escorts the family into a small office, where she discusses the funeral arrangements — the procession, the viewing and the care of Jarred's body.

Bradley prepares the death certificate.

His legal name: Jarred Lee vanne Mitchell.

Although Richelle Mitchell's tears flow constantly, she weeps silently. At times, she appears lost in a reverie.

His date of birth: March 29, 1992.

Her grief is so palpable, it fills the room. Every breath is labored, as if breathing is painful.

Place of birth: San Bernardino Community Hospital.

She emits a tiny, almost inaudible groan when she signs the paperwork releasing Jarred's body from the Coroner's Office into the care of Simpson San Bernardino Mortuary.

She picks out a casket for him, in a color called Clair Blue. She also chooses an interior panel that says "In God's Care."

"Because he's there already," she says.

Bradley's fingers fly over the keys of the adding machine as

she totals up the bill for the mortuary arrangements.

Tap. Tap. Tap.

Limousine for the family. Casket. Motorcycle escort.

Tap. Tap. Tap.

The mortuary bill comes to \$12,675.

Bradley gives Meredith Mitchell a list of what she will need to dress Jarred. T-shirt. Undershorts. Socks.

"They will have to buy a suit for him," Meredith Mitchell says.

The little group drives to Montecito Memorial Park & Mortuary, which overlooks Loma Linda.

The family is ushered into a plush waiting room, where soft music is playing. Here they are greeted by family counselor Verletta Pry, who helps them make final arrangements.

It's time for the task Richelle Mitchell has been dreading — selecting a plot for Jarred.

Pry suggests a section of the memorial park called the Garden of Remembrance, the same place where Jarred's great-grandfather was buried 10 years ago.

She picks a cool, shady spot beneath a pine tree. The hypnotic sound of automatic sprinklers can be heard nearby.

Three white pigeons walk and perch on the ground close to the family, unafraid.

"They're just here with us," Beamon says, looking at the birds. "That's not just something that just happens."

Richelle Mitchell has done the hardest thing now, she has

picked a final resting place for her son.

The son who dreamed of someday being a police officer or a professional basketball player.

Pry marks the spot with a tiny green flag.

Back at the office, Pry ticks off the list of questions she must ask the family.

Does Mitchell want to watch her son being lowered into the earth as part of the ceremony?

Her answer is quiet but resolute.

"No."

Then it's time to select a headstone. She chooses one with an etching of a white dove rising, its wings outstretched.

Pry recites the epitaph the family has chosen, which will read: "Beloved son, grandson and brother."

"And friend," Mitchell adds softly. "Friend to all."

Pry adds up the final total for the funeral arrangements on the ever-present calculator.

Headstone. Funeral service. Burial plot.

Tap. Tap. Tap.

Mitchell suffers through more paperwork and sighs heavily. Her mother, seated next to her, reaches over and gently touches her daughter's neck. It is Meredith Mitchell who provides the strength that her daughter so desperately needs.

Opening and closing the grave. Vault. Flower vase. Pry's fingers fly.

Tap. Tap. Tap.

The total for the burial arrangements at Montecito comes to \$7,671.

"Dirt is expensive," Beamon says.

"These kids doing this needs to understand all this ain't free," he says. "All this costs and if they don't have the means, it can become a burden to the family."

\$12,675.

That's how much it will cost for Jarred Mitchell's family to lay him to rest.

The San Bernardino County District Attorney's Office has a program that helps with burial expenses for victims of violent crime that will provide up to \$7,500.

Private donations, like the \$200 raised by kids at Martin Luther King Middle School where Jarred was a student, will help too.

But ultimately, the family will be responsible for the balance, which is likely to be at least a few thousand.

And payment is due 24 hours before the services take place early next week. The final paperwork is signed.

Richelle Mitchell does not react. She never makes a sound. She just closes her eyes as more tears stream down her face.

Contact writer Selicia Kennedy-Ross at (909) 386-3885 or via e-mail at selicia.kennedy@sbsun.com.

SBSUN JUN 10, 2006

A lesson plan for teens



Photos by Gabriel Acosta/Staff photographer

Kristian Davis, 18, left, and Terrieon Jones, 16, fill out a survey on the law Friday at the Youth Peace Summit at Bob Murphy County Community Day School in Rialto.

Summit offers tips on avoiding trouble

By Robert Rogers
Staff Writer

RIALTO — A bright kid and a jokester, 15-year-old Greg Peters struggled to answer a seven-question survey.

No. 4 was the easy one. It asked what to do if approached by an armed police officer.

"Put my hands up real slow. Don't make any fast moves," said Greg, a student at Bob Murphy County Community Day School, an alternative school in for children who have been in trouble.

Asked if he'd been approached by an armed officer, Greg said "yeah," with a nonchalant shrug.

He and about 90 others who had been turned out of their regular schools were at the school auditorium Friday morning for a mix of entertainment and education tailored to the challenges of their lives.

The presentation, billed as a Youth Peace Summit, drew teens into interactive dramatic performances. The event, sometimes criti-



Kim McGill of the Youth Justice Coalition speaks to young people at the Youth Peace Summit in Rialto about knowing their legal rights when dealing with law enforcement.

cal of law-enforcement agencies, featured a mix of young, streetwise speakers, hip-hop beats, jarring criminal-justice statistics and legal tips.

See SUMMIT / Page A4



A spotlight on potential solutions to crime in our community. For more, visit www.sbsun.com.

UPDATE: MYNISHA'S CIRCLE

Mynisha's Circle is a community outreach effort in memory of Mynisha Crenshaw, an 11-year-old San Bernardino girl killed in a gang-related shooting in November. The group has held town meetings, led a 1,000-person march through the neighborhood where Mynisha was killed and developed a six-part strategic plan to combat crime and gang violence at its roots. The effort also prompted Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., to introduce Mynisha's Law, which would provide anti-gang funding to targeted communities.

Organizational work is under way to establish the circle as a nonprofit organization that can help raise funds for and implement those strategies. The Community Foundation and Arrowhead United Way are among the nonprofit groups contributing to this effort. San Bernardino Mayor Pat Morris has pledged \$20,000 to this effort. Sun Publisher Bob Balzer has pledged \$10,000 and administrative help.

Other upcoming plans include a youth summit to discuss ways to keep young people out of gangs and working with grass-roots leaders on San Bernardino's Westside to renovate a youth center and bolster vocational training.



Photos by Gabriel Acosta/Staff photographer

Fifth District county Supervisor Josie Gonzales, right, presents student Joe Jordan, 17, with a Certificate of Recognition at the Youth Peace Summit at Bob Murphy County Community Day School in Rialto on Friday.

Summit

continued from page A1

Fifth District county Supervisor Josie Gonzales attended and presented one student, 17-year-old Joe Jordan, with the school's Student of the Year award.

Gonzales praised the new school — it opened last fall — as an effective program for students who've struggled elsewhere.

"These students have gone through a lot of pain," Gonzales said.

"We talk about changing our crime rate in this county ... well this is where it's got to happen. This is where the future is determined," she said, gesturing toward the crowd of students.

The two-hour program was laced with tips for kids to use when interacting with law enforcement and testimonials by Young Visionaries President Terrance Stone, a former gang member, who urged kids to shun gangs and drugs.

Civil rights also were discussed.

"How many of you guys know your Miranda Rights?" asked Kim McGill, a 25-year-old organizer with the Youth Justice Coalition, a Los Angeles-based nonprofit organization.

A smattering of teens raised their hands.

"It's better to keep your mouth shut," McGill said. "Things you say that seem totally innocent can wind up linking you to some crime."

McGill and others from the coalition also handed out educational material and pamphlets to the students.

One flier replete with statistics urged "Shut Down CYA." The troubled California Youth Authority has been under fire for the violence within its youth prison system. A newsletter encouraged community-based alternatives to "arrest, court, detention and prison."

A script passed out to the crowd dealt with four composite characters, each of whom become enmeshed with police over a relatively minor occurrence.

Youths volunteered to play roles of the hapless characters in the script. After performances, McGill discussed with the crowd the mistakes made and lessons learned.

In one scenario, Greg played the role of a fictional teenage boy who inexplicably runs from police and is caught and beaten with batons. Greg's character, following script, then divulges his gang affiliation and police drop him off alone in rival territory.

After the drama, the crowd was quizzed on what Greg's character did wrong.

The kids shouted out: "He ran." "He said he's in a gang." "He's black."

McGill discouraged the audience from admitting gang membership to authorities.

After the presentation, Stone said the presentation was not meant to be anti-police, but pro-child.

"These are real stories. These things happen to kids," Stone said. "We're not saying the police are bad guys, but we're saying that young people need to know their rights. We don't want kids to do anything to get arrested, but we don't want them to get sucked into the system if they don't deserve to be."

The five-acre school has about 200 students and 12 teachers. All the students are either on probation or have been expelled, Principal George Bowser said.

Student drawings and paintings displayed on the auditorium walls depicted the grim lives some have led. One showed a pink heart ablaze with the word "hurt" aside it. Another pictured a youth in a ball cap standing amid a field of tombstones.

Stone, 37, who rehabilitated himself after years of gangs, drugs and incarceration, wrapped up the performance by telling kids they have to evaluate what habits will take them forward and which will hold them back.

Bowser said Stone is the type of educator who can reach hardened youth.

"He's been where they are," Bowser said. "The kids know he's real, and that credibility can be the difference between being listened to or ignored."



LaFonzo Rachal Carter/Staff photographer

Six defendants accused in the shooting death of Mynisha Crenshaw appear in San Bernardino Superior Court along with their defense attorneys on Friday.

Mynisha defendants want trial moved

New prosecutor also requested

By Mike Cruz
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — Six men awaiting trial in the shooting death of Mynisha Crenshaw asked a Superior Court judge Friday to move their trial outside the city.

Some of the defendants would also like to see a new prosecutor in the case, requesting the state Attorney General's Office to intervene.

The change-of-venue motion, joined by attorneys representing the six defendants, was filed because of the high amount of publicity the case has received in San Bernardino, according to court documents.

The defendants want Judge Donna Gunnell Garza to move the trial out of San Bernardino or even out of the county, if necessary.

Four of the defendants also joined a motion to recuse the District Attorney's Office from prosecuting the case because of its affiliation with Mynisha's Circle, a community-action group formed after the girl's death in November to help end violence on the city's streets.

District Attorney Michael A. Ramos attended the first meeting of the group, but community prosecutor Mike Martinez has participated

in subsequent meetings in Ramos' place, said district attorney's spokeswoman Susan Mickey.

The motion also cites criminal threats against prosecutor Cheryl Kersey as an additional reason and requests the case be handled by the state Attorney General's Office.

Attorneys and parties in the case are subject to a court-imposed gag order that restricts them from commenting publicly.

The defendants in the case have been charged with murder, attempted murder, conspiracy and face special allegations for gang activity and use of a firearm in Mynisha's shooting death.

The 11-year-old girl was having dinner with her family on Nov. 13 when bullets pierced the walls of the Del Rosa area apartment near Mountain Avenue and Citrus Street.

Authorities have testified at earlier court hearings that the shooting was retaliation by members of the Pimps, Players, Hustlers and Gangsters, or PPHG, street gang against the Rollin' 60s Crips for the shooting death of one of their own, which occurred just days before.

Also on Friday, Garza continued a hearing to set trial dates because of the additional voluminous discovery given to defense attorneys and the new motions, drawing the ire of defense attorney Mark Drew, who represents defendant Sidikiba Greenwood.

"The court does find good cause to continue," Garza said.

Drew objected to the continuance "based upon the delays thus far." He said he may file a motion to dismiss if his client faces further delays.

Time has become an issue because some of the defendants have refused to waive their right to a speedy trial. Under state law, defendants have a right to a speedy trial within 60 days of arraignment, which passed May 7.

But defense attorneys in the case have received a large amount of discovery, which includes police interviews and other evidence, that needs to be reviewed to provide an adequate defense. Garza has already ruled that the defendants' right to an adequate defense trumps their right to a speedy trial.

Three of the defendants, Greenwood, Tyshon Harris and Sinque Morrison, reaffirmed on Friday that they would not waive their right to a speedy trial.

Garza continued the hearing to June 23 and said she would rule on the motions at that time. She also warned the defense attorneys not to start other trials after June 23.

Defendant Sinque Morrison had to be removed from the courtroom because of a disruption just before his attorney, Celia Torres, told the court that he requested a hearing to seek new representation.

Other defendants are: Michael Barnett Jr., Harold Phillips and Patrick Lair.

Contact writer Mike Cruz at (909) 386-3880 or via e-mail at mike.cruz@sbsun.com.

2 boys shot, 1 fatally

By Gina Tenorio
Staff Writer

MULTIMEDIA
www.sbsun.com

UPDATES: Go online for the latest information about Wednesday night's shooting in San Bernardino.

CRIME TIPS
Anyone with information about SB crimes should call the city's hot line: (909) 384-5656.

SAN BERNARDINO — A boy died and another was wounded Wednesday night after they were shot while playing basketball at a middle-school playground, police said.
Investigators offered few details late Wednesday, but said the boy who was killed appeared to be 10 to 12 years old. The other victim, estimated to be in his early teens, was shot in the arm, said San Bernardino police Lt. Scott Paterson.
The boys were part of a group playing basketball behind Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Middle

See SHOOTING / Page A4

Shooting

continued from page A1

School on Medical Center Drive, the site of a community meeting earlier this month whose goal was to spur neighborhood response to violence in the area.

About 8:30 p.m. Wednesday, another group approached the boys playing basketball and a fight broke out, Paterson said. Someone pulled a gun and started firing.

About 10 p.m., a dozen residents had gathered in a commercial center across the street from the school. Large sections of the sidewalk in front of the school, some spotted with blood, were blocked off.

The shooting came nearly one month after a 14-year-old boy was gunned down in the same neighborhood, about a block away from the school.

Jarred Mitchell was shot on May 22 while he was dancing with a group outside a friend's home in the 1700 block of West Home Avenue.

MULTIMEDIA

www.sbsun.com

BLOG: insidesocal.com/troubledtown

Join the discussion about issues and possible solutions to crime in San Bernardino.

CATCH UP: Read more about the issues and possible solutions to crime and violence in San Bernardino.

west of Medical Center Drive. Investigators have arrested a "person of interest" in the shooting, which they have described as gang-related.

On June 7, residents and community leaders gathered at the school to talk about what they could do to reduce violence in the neighborhood. They pledged to renovate a youth center and bolster vocational training in the community.

"This is sad. This is very sad," Councilman Rikke Van Johnson said about Wednesday night's shooting. He said he rushed to the school after he got a call about the incident.

"We had beaucoup police in the area," he added, "and you see that's not the answer."

SB SUN
JUN 22, 2006



Anthony

'This has to stop'

ANTHONY MICHAEL RAMIREZ | AGE 11

**On-campus
slaying stuns
community**

This whole thing just hit home so hard this evening, when my 13-year-old grandson and three of his friends said they were going over to Del Rosa Elementary to play basketball. My heart froze and my mind pictured cars driving by, bullets flying, blood spurting, etc. Yet, we can't keep our kids inside all summer, afraid to live. All we can do is teach them what to do if trouble starts and pray for their safety.

— A reader's e-mail Thursday night

By Megan Blaney,
Joe Nelson
and Kelly Rayburn
Staff Writers

SAN BERNARDINO — Striding onto the school basketball court, the boys had come to "ball." Shooting, soaring through the air above the backstop in the early twilight Wednesday, while two other boys watched from the bleachers.

Suddenly, the two boys got up, words were exchanged, and bullets started flying.

"It was like pah-pah-pah-pah-pah-pah-pop!" a witness said — a description, a story that has become all too familiar in and around San Bernardino. This time,

See SHOOTING / Page A4



Neighbors and friends of 11-year-old Anthony Michael Ramirez place items at his home's doorstep Thursday evening. Anthony was shot and killed on the basketball court at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School in San Bernardino on Wednesday evening.

Shooting

continued from page A1

an 11-year-old was dead and his brother wounded — leaving his family in tears and a city's people grasping for answers.

Anthony Michael Ramirez is San Bernardino's 31st homicide victim this year and the fifth under the age of 18.

He was gunned down by a suspected gang member — believed to be in his teens — on the basketball court behind Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School about 8:30 p.m. Wednesday.

Meredith Mitchell, grandmother of 14-year-old Jarred Mitchell, a King Middle School student who was slain while dancing with friends on nearby West Home Avenue last month, searched Thursday for an answer that wouldn't come.

"I just don't understand how something like this could have happened, especially after Jarred, I don't understand that," Mitchell said.

Initially, students and neighbors traded rumors that the slayings were racially motivated. The suspected shooter and his accomplice are believed to be black, and the victims are Latino.

But community activists Rev. Reginald Beamon and Danny Peace said race was not a factor in the shooting. The group of basketball players were made up of black and Latino young men. Beamon said the boys told him that the shooter opened fire randomly.

"This is no black or brown issue," Beamon said. "This isn't a racial thing. This little punk would probably kill anybody. He's just a bad shooter and happened to hit both (Latino) kids."

On Thursday, Mayor Pat Morris spoke with Anthony's father, who told the mayor, "Please bring the shooter to justice. It's just not fair what happened to my boy."

The mayor said the city was on the way to doing just that.

"We have the suspect identified," Morris said, without providing further details. "We are devoting every bit of our city's energy, most particularly that of the Police Department, to apprehending the shooter."

Morris said he would expand the broad-based type of anti-crime effort recently launched in an area northeast of downtown to four additional areas of the city, including the area where Anthony was shot.

He also stressed the need to hire 40 additional officers over the next 30 months, and said the city, one way or another, needed to identify the resources to do that.

For Rikke Van Johnson, the 6th Ward councilman who represents the area, more police officers can only do so much.

"Maybe if we had a club, these kids could go to play basketball," he said, "Maybe that wouldn't have happened. That's a maybe, I don't know."

Last moments

The evening began when the group of boys walked to the school together and noticed their two assailants sitting on the bleachers, said several of the boys who were present during Wednesday night's shooting but did not want to be identified out of fear for their safety.

When the two boys got up, one asked if the basketball-playing friends were gangbangers.

"I said, 'No, we're just ballin' up,'" said one of the witnesses, a 14-year-old. "He said, 'Is that right?' And I said 'That's right.' Then he looked at his homeboy and said, 'Is this fool from West-side Verdugo?'"

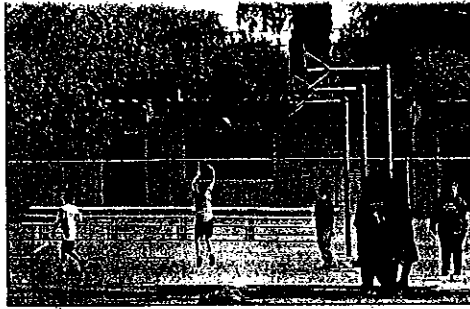
The two boys started walking off. But one of them stopped. He swiveled his body back toward the game, pulled out a gun and began "pulling the trigger really fast," a witness said. The friends scattered, running east to the front of the school and then north on North Medical Center Drive. The shooter and his accomplice ran west, across a track field and out the rear of the school, witnesses said.

"A guy with a shirt off said Anthony was on the ground. He said Anthony fell and hit his head hard on the ground," said a 12-year-old boy who witnessed the shooting. "And Joseph got shot in the hand."

Joseph is Anthony's 13-year-old brother. His 15-year-old brother was not struck by the gunfire.

One of the boys, who is a cousin of the slain Jarred Mitchell, said he and three others ran back to the street they live on and told their parents what happened.

Jarred's shooting was believed to be gang related and connected to tensions among rival gangs.



Brett K. Snow/Staff photographer

Students play basketball at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School in San Bernardino the day after Anthony Michael Ramirez, 11, was shot and killed Wednesday evening while playing basketball on campus.

referred to as "Magnolia Estates," named after Magnolia Avenue, which stretches east and west through the neighborhood.

Police on Thursday could not say whether Anthony's slaying is tied to the reported ongoing gang tensions in the neighborhood.

Fifteen-year-old Christyl Bonnell was standing outside her home on West Home Avenue when she heard the shots. She ran to the corner and saw a cluster of boys running toward her. She recognized one of them, Joseph Ramirez, who had crossed North Medical Center Drive and was running north toward Virginia Street.

"We got in the car, went over there and got him and took him home," said Christyl, whose sister was shot in the leg during the May 22 shooting on West Home Avenue that killed Jarred. She said Joseph had a T-shirt wrapped around his hand to stop the bleeding.

A citywide dragnet ensued Thursday in an attempt to identify suspects, police Lt. Mark Garcia said.

Linda Hill, the San Bernardino City Unified School District's spokeswoman, said the district brought out the Crisis Response Team for students and staff at Rio Vista Elementary and King Middle schools all day Thursday to provide support, counseling and intervention services.

Hill said the students were not on campus Wednesday evening as part of a program.

"Students should not be on our campus after hours," Hill said.

Remembering Anthony

Anthony Michael Ramirez was an all-star pitcher, the little man of the house, a loyal teammate, brother, son and friend. He was only 11 years old, but he meant so much to so many people.

The third youngest in a family with four children, Anthony was sought out by his three

brothers for direction when their father was out of town, neighbors said.

"He was never a follower, always a leader," said neighbor Phillip Rojas. "They'd listen to him or their mom."

The Ramirez family has gone to Moreno Valley to stay with relatives for a few days.

Cousins and aunts showed up Thursday afternoon with a memorial of religious candles and merchandise bearing the logo of the Oakland Raiders — Anthony's favorite team.

"He was only a baby. He didn't even have a full life," said Victoria Alvarez, Anthony's great-aunt. Standing outside the one-story, red-and-white home where Anthony and his family lived, Alvarez remembered the little boy who will never grow up.

"They weren't into no gangs or nothing. They were just innocent kids," she said. "That's why we can't believe this happened."

Jerry Ramirez, coach of Anthony's Little League team, The Nationals, showed up with his wife and father-in-law to support Anthony's family.

The coach said Anthony was "one good baseball player."

Little League is one of the only options for children to participate in organized activities in the area, the coach said.

His father-in-law Jack Quiroz agreed.

"If they would've had a game last night, he'd be alive today," Quiroz said. "He was a good little boy. He didn't deserve this, I'll tell you that."

Community response

Members of this community are wondering when the violence will be quelled.

The Rev. Raymond Turner, pastor at Temple Missionary Baptist for more than 15 years, did not know Anthony, but his church is a few blocks from King Middle School.

"It's disturbing. You can't seem to get a handle on what's happening," he said. "It's even more disturbing when someone comes up with a one-answer so-

And that answer, the presence of more police, fails to constitute a solution, he said.

"We've got more cops down on the Westside than we have down on D Street, so suppression is not the answer," he said.

Beamon said it will take a movement within the community to change the cycle of violence. He held a forum at King Middle School earlier this month with the goal of creating a multicultural alliance to keep youth off the streets.

"We have got to stop the killing," he said.

Back at the school Thursday, the scene was a mix of business as usual and grave concern.

Inside, Marlin Brown, president of the San Bernardino City Unified school board, watched from afar as the school conducted its annual awards assembly.

He'd gone to campus to lend his support to Principal James Espinoza and his staff. He left echoing the concerns voiced by so many others: "This has to stop."

Outside, a steady stream of parents — unaware of the shooting when the day began — came to pick up their children early.

"She's not coming back," said DeeDee Roman of her eighth-grade daughter who was waiting in the car. "This isn't the first shooting around here. They've got drive-bys, wrecks, police chases."

Myrene Xuniga wants her sixth-grader, Christina, to transfer to another school.

"I don't like it. I used to drop her off at the Burger King (on the corner) just to let her walk a little on her own, let her grow up a little. But the kids are always fighting."

Now, Xuniga drops Christina off right at the gates and shows up early to pick her up so the 11-year-old isn't waiting by herself.

Christina said she still likes King Middle School.

"Everyone fights," she said. "I don't feel like I have to be a part of it."

On a tree-lined street near the school, one of the boys who witnessed the shooting noticed Ramirez's family pulling up in front of his house. The oldest Ramirez brother got out, walked up to the boy and embraced him in a tight hug.

An anguished sob wailed out of him.

"I lost my baby brother!" Anthony's brother said, clutching the boy's shoulders tightly.

Anthony's mother got out of the car and embraced some of the boys and a mother of one of them. She asked them to be present for a graduation ceremony Tuesday at Rio Vista Elementary School, where Anthony was to have graduated.

"She just wanted the boys there to show support to Anthony," said Denise Chavira, mother of one of the boys.

Staff writer Selicia Kennedy-Ross contributed to this report.



Eric Reed/Staff photographer

Gregory Vallarta Jr., 12, is consoled by his father, Gregory Vallarta Sr., on Thursday about the loss of his friend, Anthony Michael Ramirez, fatally shot the previous evening on the basketball court at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School in San Bernardino.

A SUN EDITORIAL

Why all of us need to come together



This is why.

Why our front pages have been filled with stories of violence and murder.

Why we as a community need to come together.

Why all of us — regardless of income, age, race or stature — must confront the cold, brutal reality playing out on the streets, sidewalks, and, yes, even the playgrounds of our city.

On the first night of what promises to be a long, hot summer, San Bernardino registered its 31st homicide of the year. Tragically, horribly, but not altogether surprisingly, the victim was a child.

Another 11-year-old. Another life lost barely after it had begun.

That Anthony Michael Ramirez would be shot to death on the safe haven of a school basketball court only underlines the despair felt right now by so many in this community.

They've sacrificed their time, their money, in some cases their family lives to commit to a cause we can no longer brush aside.

Our neighborhoods are on fire. Our streets have become war zones. Our safety nets have

been cut open.

Mynisha Crenshaw, also 11, died Nov. 13 while getting up from the dinner table — bullets tearing through the walls and windows of her family's apartment.

A month ago, 14-year-old Jarred Mitchell was shot to death in a drive-by a block away from Wednesday night's killing.

Melanie Miers. Dustin Michael-Roy Nanny. Christopher Paul Ransom. Glyn Ferguson Jr.

Children. Babies, really.

All dead. All victims of a wave of violence we're either unable to control or refuse to do so.

We choose not to believe the former, which is why this newspaper has, and will continue, to keep this issue front and center.

Those who believe we're painting a bad picture of our city need to see that picture for what it is — a self-portrait drawn long ago. We're hanging it up for all to see in hopes that collectively, collaboratively, this community will make safe streets and safe neighborhoods the priority they must be.

A spotlight on potential solutions to crime in our community. For more, visit www.sbsun.com.



MYNISHA'S CIRCLE UPDATE

MyNisha's Circle is a community-outreach effort in memory of MyNisha Crenshaw, an 11-year-old San Bernardino girl killed in November in what authorities say was a gang-related shooting.

- Circle members are promoting upcoming month as the Summer of Youth to foster a more youth-friendly community. Plans include a State of Our Youth Summit and other events. To include your event in a master calendar to be published regularly in The Sun and the Black Voice News, e-mail information to beedy@msn.com.
- MyNisha's Law, introduced by Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., is in the hands of the Senate Judiciary Committee. The law would provide federal anti-gang assistance to targeted communities.
- Organizational work is under way to establish MyNisha's Circle as a nonprofit organization. San Bernardino Mayor Pat Morris has pledged \$20,000 to the circle as part of his Operation Phoenix anti-crime program. Sun Publisher Bob Balzer has pledged \$10,000.

GET INVOLVED

VOLUNTEER IN YOUR COMMUNITY

- **WHO:** Inland Empire United Way
- **WHAT:** Hands On Inland Empire, a new Web site that connects potential volunteers with local nonprofit agencies.
- **WHEN:** Ongoing
- **WHERE:** San Bernardino, Victorville, Redlands, Mentone, Loma Linda and Fontana.
- **INFORMATION:** www.handsoninlandempire.org; (909) 980-2857, ext. 227 or 228

TEE ONE UP FOR TEENS

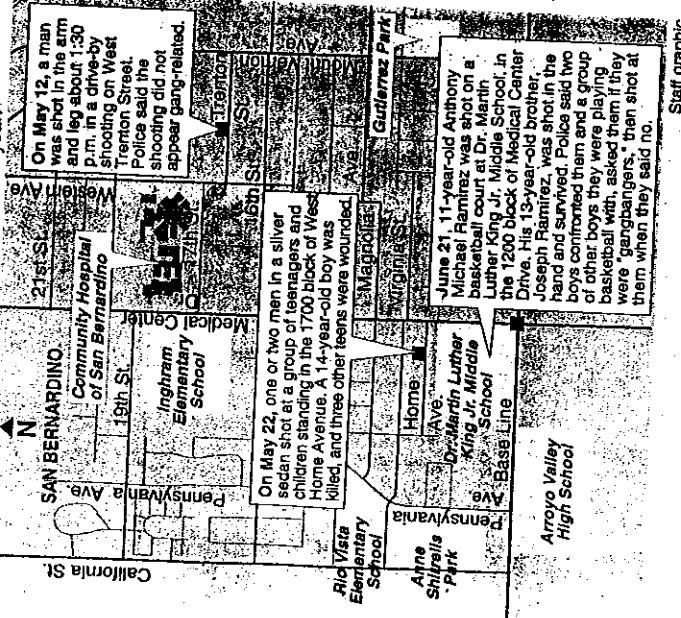
- **WHO:** Golfers who want to support a summer of camping and adventure for troubled teens.
- **WHAT:** A charity golf tournament to benefit Clear View Treatment Center's summer programs for 30 teenage boys now being treated for drug or alcohol problems. All registered golfers receive a pair of tournament shoes. Event also features raffles and prizes.
- **WHEN:** Deadline to register is July 7. Tournament is July 24.
- **WHERE:** Shandin Hills Golf Club, 3380 Little Mountain Drive, San Bernardino.
- **INFORMATION:** (909) 885-5757.

Have an event you'd like your neighbors to know about? Let us know. Call (909) 386-3877 or e-mail citydesk@sbsun.com.

Friday, June 23, 2006

Shooting at school

The Wednesday night fatal shooting of 11-year-old Anthony Michael Ramirez on a basketball court at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School made him the 31st homicide victim in San Bernardino this year. It was also the most recent shooting in the area this year.



Staff graphic

'OUR SCHOOLS ARE SAFE'

These "Emergency Parent Letters" were sent on San Bernardino City Unified School District letterhead and dated June 22.

Dear Parents and Guardians:

This letter is to inform you of a tragic incident that occurred the night of Wednesday, June 21. I want to provide you with accurate information to dispel any rumors you may have heard regarding this tragedy.

At about 8:30 p.m., two District students were shot while playing basketball on the King Middle School campus. One of the victims, a student at Rio Vista Elementary School, was fatally wounded. His brother, a King Middle School student, was hospitalized for a non-life-threatening injury.

Several law enforcement agencies, including the San Bernardino School Police Department and the San Bernardino City Police Department, responded to the school event, we are deeply concerned about the health and well-being of all students.

We firmly believe that our schools are safe. To reassure parents and students, administrators, teachers, staff and District personnel were on hand throughout (Thursday) to monitor the arrival and dismissal of students. The District's Crisis Team was also available to students throughout the day. In light of the circumstances, our school day proceeded without further incident. School will remain in session through the end of the school year on Tuesday, June 27.

We will share additional information regarding this tragedy as it becomes available. Thank you for your attention to this very serious matter.

Sincerely,

James Espinoza

Principal

Dear Parents and Guardians:

This letter is to inform you of a tragic incident that occurred the night of Wednesday, June 21, at King Middle School. I want to provide you with accurate information to dispel any rumors you may have heard regarding this incident. At about 8:30 p.m., two District students were shot while playing basketball on the King Middle School campus. One of the victims, a student at Rio Vista Elementary School, was fatally wounded. His brother, a King Middle School student, was hospitalized with a non-life-threatening injury.

While this incident was not related to a school event, we are deeply concerned about the health and well-being of all students. That is why we are reminding all parents that students are prohibited from being on campus after hours. While we firmly believe that all our schools are safe, the same does not apply to after hours, when school staff is not present.

Only students who are enrolled in a District-sponsored activity, such as Creative Before-And-After-School Programs (CAPS) or school-sponsored sports activities, should be on campus when classes are not in session. All other students are expected to return home upon the end of the school day.

We appreciate your help in ensuring that your children refrain from being at school outside of normal business hours. In addition, you may anonymously report information to the District's Students Against Weapons (SAW) hot line by calling (909) 386-6043.

Thank you for your attention to this very important matter.

Sincerely,

Arturo Delgado, Ed.D.

Superintendent



San Bernardino Mayor Pat Morris buries his face in his hands Thursday just before the start of a news conference regarding the shooting death of 11-year-old Anthony Michael Ramirez.

Al Cuizon/For The Sun

■ See video footage of the news conference online at sbsun.com.

More Phoenixes to rise

Mayor plans to expand anti-crime program to other areas

By Kelly Rayburn
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — In response to the shooting death of an 11-year-old boy, Mayor Pat Morris said Thursday he would take immediate steps toward replicating the type of anti-crime program launched this month in a 20-block area northeast of downtown.

Morris said he would be talking with city stakeholders, including people from the business and religious communities, over the next three days to develop a strategy toward implementing plans similar to his Operation Phoenix in four other areas of the city.

Those areas will include the Westside,

See PHOENIX / Page A6

SB SUN

JUN 23, 2006

Phoenix

continued from page A1

where Anthony Michael Ramirez, 11, was shot and killed Wednesday night while he was playing basketball at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School.

Another area will be the Del Rosa neighborhood where 11-year-old Mynisha Crenshaw was killed in November.

Morris said he would offer more details early next week on which areas would be targeted and the resources it will take.

Pushing forward with Operation Phoenix-style programs in other parts of the city would mark a turn in policy.

Operation Phoenix — which currently targets the 20-block area bounded by 16th Street and Base Line on the north and south and Sierra Way and Waterman Avenue on the west and east — started June 10.

Officials had planned to evaluate the program over the course of a year before deciding whether to duplicate it.

But Anthony's death marked the city's 31st homicide of the year, putting San Bernardino on pace to have more slayings than it did in 2005 when it saw a decade-high 58 homicides.

Morris' response: The city needs to do more, and it needs to be done fast.

"The scale and the scope of this ongoing tragedy demands that we expand our efforts beyond the target area known as Operation Phoenix," Morris said.

The mayor also said the city must dedicate itself to hiring 40 additional police officers over the next 2½ years, including the 14 that are slated to be added in the next fiscal year, which begins July 1.

Community leaders describe a crime challenge in San Bernardino that is deeply entrenched — one with no easy solution.

"If I had the answer ... we wouldn't have the shootings out there," said the Rev. Raymond Turner, pastor at Temple Missionary Baptist Church, a few blocks from King Middle School.

Turner said creating jobs

THE YOUNGEST VICTIMS

The death of 11-year-old Mynisha Crenshaw on Nov. 13 became a rallying point for San Bernardino in its war on crime. But children and teenagers have continued to die violent deaths in and around greater San Bernardino:

■ **MELANIE MIERS**, 16, killed outside a party in San Bernardino, Nov. 20.

■ **DUSTIN MICHAEL-ROY NAMANNY**, 14, shot at a friend's home in San Bernardino, Jan. 6.

■ **CHRISTOPHER PAUL RANSOM**, 15, shot to death inside a friend's apartment in San Bernardino, Jan. 9.

■ **GLYN FERGERSON JR.**, 17, killed in a drive-by shooting in San Bernardino, Jan. 28.

■ **JAMAL HAMPTON**, 17, shot to death as he sat in a car with friends in Muscoy, Feb. 1.

■ **JOSE OROZCO**, 17, shot to death in Highland, Feb. 9.

■ **RYANN MCGRIGG**, 18, stabbed to death in Rialto, March 15.

■ **GREGORY SMITH**, 17, shot to death in Rialto, April 22.

■ **JARRED MITCHELL**, 14, shot to death in a drive-by in San Bernardino, May 22.

■ **ANTHONY JOHNSON**, 17, shot to death in San Bernardino, June 9.

■ **ANTHONY MICHAEL RAMIREZ**, 11, shot to death while playing basketball at a middle school playground in San Bernardino, June 21.

alone is not the answer, and neither is hiring more police officers.

He said his neighborhood and others like it need a cultural shift, one in which residents are willing to work with authorities to solve crime.

"We have a society that says the snitch is worse than the murderer," he said.

Morris has said that a key to his Phoenix program is community buy-in — and so it will likely be to future efforts as well.

Sixth Ward Councilman Rikke Van Johnson, who represents the area where Anthony was killed, liked the idea of moving ahead with a Phoenix-style program there.

Seventh Ward Councilwoman Wendy McCammack, who represents the area where Mynisha was killed, said she was all for a heavier police presence in the neighborhood.

"I applaud (Morris') ambitious agenda with one minor concern," she said. "The original concern that I had regarding Operation Phoenix was that we (were) going to chase the criminal element into other parts of the city."

Morris, she said, assured her that wouldn't happen. But McCammack said she was a "little leery" of a new Phoenix-style effort without some hard data in place on the success of the original one.

Contact writer Kelly Rayburn at (909) 386-3882 or via e-mail at kelly.rayburn@sbsun.com



Al Culzon/For The Sun
San Bernardino police Detective Bob Sullivan follows a trail of blood on Medical Center Drive in front of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School after an 11-year-old boy was shot and killed while playing basketball Wednesday night.

Friday, June 23, 2006

Gunfire numbingly common by school

Custodian often hears sounds of violence

By Megan Blaney
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — Charles Baker has heard gunfire so many times while working at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School that it's hard to distinguish between each incident.

Two cases, though, stick firmly in his mind.

Baker, the school's night custodian, heard the shots when 14-year-old Jarred Mitchell was killed a block away outside a West Home Avenue house on May 22. He also heard the shots that rang out Wednesday night at the school's basketball court.

Baker had no idea someone was hit Wednesday until a bunch of boys came to him. Slung over the shoulder of one of the boys was Anthony Michael Ramirez, 11, who had been shot in the back.

"They said, 'Some fool shot at us,' and that they thought it was a pellet gun," Baker said.

He reached back to the middle-left side of his back to point out where Anthony was shot.

At first, he didn't think the wound was that serious. There wasn't a lot of blood, and Anthony was conscious and talking.

"But then I looked at his back, and the wound was big. It wasn't a pellet gun," Baker said.

Baker brought the boy into the school's media center and called the San Bernardino City Unified School District Police Department because he thought its officers might be closer and respond more quickly.

Anthony was moving and saying, "Don't touch me, don't touch me," Baker said. "He just kept repeating it."

Police and ambulances responded quickly, Baker said.

"There was so little blood," he said. "I didn't even have to clean up afterward."

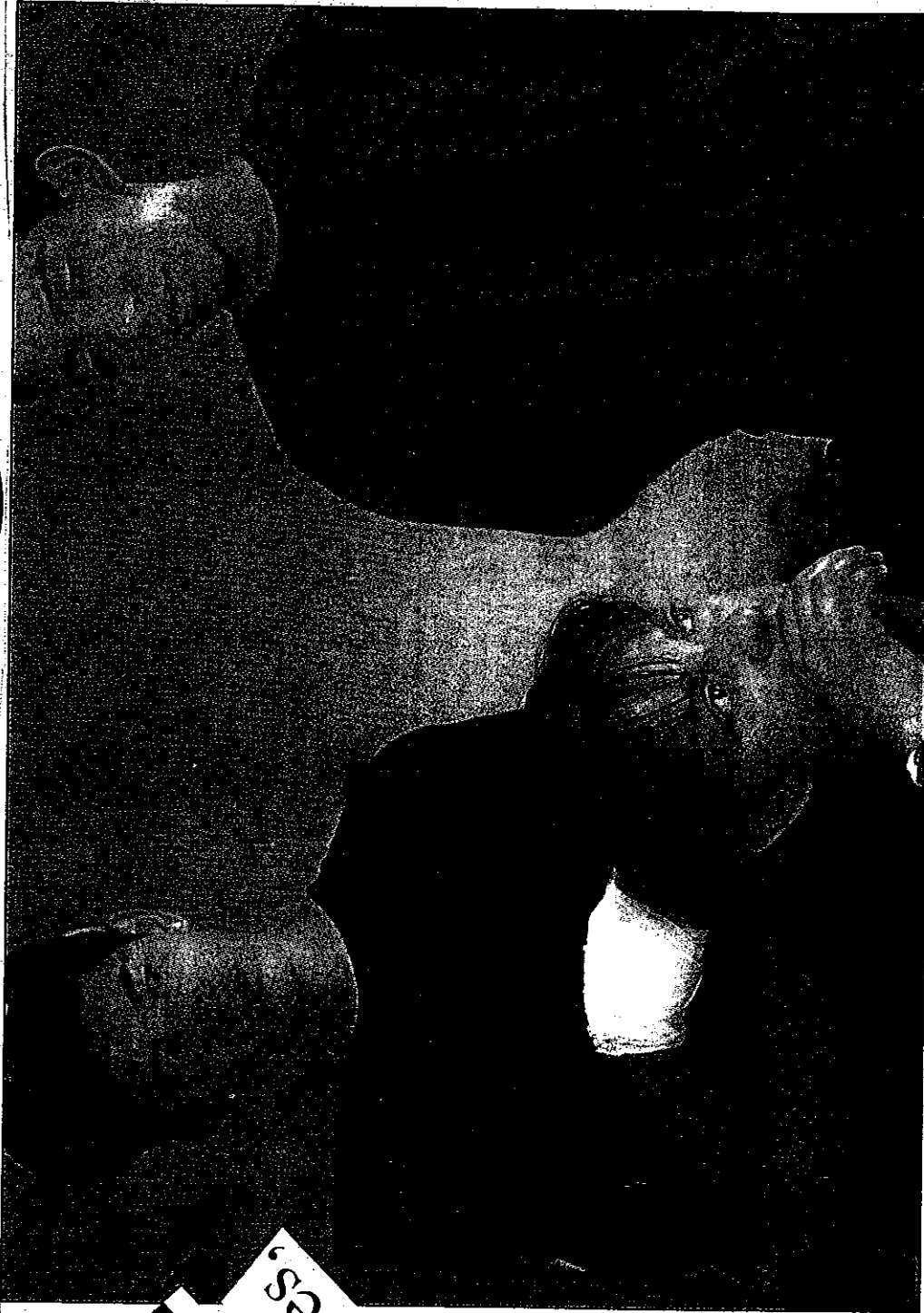
As Baker spoke Thursday about the previous night, students walked by and greeted him. It's not surprising that students would turn to the tall, stalwart custodian for help, Principal James Espinoza said.

"He's well-liked," he said. "The school, the teachers, the kids — everyone is very close."

Baker worries about the reappearance of guns in the neighborhood.

"In the early '90s, there were gunshots all the time. Then it was quiet," he said. "Now, we're seeing it up again."

MANHUNT



SATURDAY JUNE 24, 2006
Family grieves.

Joseph Ramirez, 13, left, and his brother, Henry Jr., 15, stand next to their mom, Michelle, as she talks about their brother Anthony on Friday at a relative's home. Joseph was shot in the hand during the shooting that killed Anthony on Wednesday night at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School in San Bernardino.

Jennifer Cappuccio/Staff photographer

SAN BERNARDINO — As a citywide manhunt continued Friday for a child killer, Mayor Pat Morris said police will be getting help from the outside.

Police identified 15-year-old James La-mont Bagsby as their suspect in the shoot-ing death of 11-year-old Anthony Michael Ramirez.

As Anthony and some friends played bas-ketball at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School on Wednesday night, two teenage boys approached and asked whether they were "gangbangers," police said.

When they said they weren't, one of the boys pulled a gun and started shooting. Anthony, shot in the back, was taken to Arrowhead Regional Medical Center in Colton, where he died at 9:08 p.m.

His 13-year-old brother, Joseph Ramirez, was shot in the hand and sur-vived. Police suspect Bagsby of being a gang member, but none of the boys play-ing basketball have gang ties, police said.

Bagsby is described as a 5-foot-5 black teen with black hair and brown eyes. He has "James Jr.," tattooed on his right arm and the names "Carolyn," "Tiana" and "Jaclyssa" tattooed on his chest, said Lt. Ernie Lemos of the San Bernardino Police Department. Another boy who was with the shooter has not been identified.

See MANHUNT / Page A4



A spotlight on potential solutions to crime in our community. For more, visit www.sbsun.com.

MYNISHA'S CIRCLE UPDATE: ROLE MODELS NEEDED

The shooting of 11-year-old Anthony Michael Ramirez is another vivid reminder of the need for community involvement in the war on crime.

While several efforts are under way to promote youth consciousness, e-mail discussions between members of Mynisha's Circle in recent days have centered on the need for more positive adult role models.

This will be the focus of the next general meeting of Mynisha's Circle at 6 p.m. Tuesday at The Sun, 2239 Gannett Parkway, San Bernardino.

Please RSVP Denise Varnado at (909) 386-3843 or via e-mail at denise.varnado@sbsun.com.

Mynisha's Circle is a community outreach effort created after the November shooting death of 11-year-old Mynisha Orenshaw. The circle promotes open discussion of crime and its contributing causes, and is open to the public.

MULTIMEDIA

www.sbsun.com

MOOD OF THE CITY:

Discouraged residents speak but about crime

VIDEO:

Footage of the investigation of Wednesday night's shooting and from the mayor's news conference on Thursday.

LETTERS:

See the letters on school safety from the principal of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School and from the school district's superintendent.

GALLERIES:

View photo coverage from the aftermath of Wednesday night's shooting.

HAVE INFORMATION?

Anyone with information about this incident is encouraged to call the

San Bernardino Police Department hot line at (909) 384-5656.

INSIDE | PAGE A4

TRIAL STAVING PUT

Mynisha suspects to be tried in San Bernardino

NO MORE AGE CODE

Next generation reigns on city's mean streets.

6/24/06

According to witnesses and police dispatch logs, the shooter and the boy he was with fled west across a track field after the shooting and out a hole in the perimeter fence.

A warrant was issued for Bagsby's arrest Friday af-ter the District Attorney's Office filed one count of murder, one count of attempted murder and nine counts of assault with a deadly weapon against him.

Lemos said Bagsby was identified as the suspect af-ter extensive interviewing of witnesses by Police De-partment homicide detectives and San Bernardino City Unified School District officers.

Bagsby might still be in the city.

"Typically, when you're 15 years old you usually don't have a lot of resources, so we suspect he's still in the area," Lemos said.

Police continued on Friday to heavily patrol the neighborhood where Anthony was slain and where 14-year-old Jarred Mitchell was killed a month earlier, on May 22, as he danced in a driveway with friends on West Home Avenue.

Residents and witnesses say ongoing tensions be-tween rival gangs 18th Street and Magnolia Estates are likely the primary factors that have fueled the recent deadly shootings in the neighborhood, but police have not confirmed if that's the case.

City Attorney James F. Penman, meanwhile, said his office was working to develop a truce among some of the city's gangs, although he wouldn't provide details about which gangs or how a truce might be reached.

Anthony's death was another sign of the ongoing high violence that has sent officials scrambling anew for solutions for a city whose crime problem makes it among the most-dangerous cities in the country.

The situation is so dire that one member of the City Council said he wouldn't mind seeing officers support-ed by the kind of security personnel that the military dispatches to war zones.

"Perhaps the National Guard troops that are moving (to the U.S.-Mexico border) can spend two weeks in our city," said 5th Ward Councilman Chas Kelley. "I'll put a welcome mat out for the National Guard to patrol our streets. We've got a crisis. It's an emergency."

Morris said earlier this week he would be articulat-ing new anti-crime strategies for the city next week.

The mayor launched his Operation Phoenix plan to clean up a 20-block area northeast of downtown June 10 but said more was needed to lower crime citywide.

Friday, he stressed that the ideas he intends to spell out next week will not be a departure from the Opera-tion Phoenix program, but rather a broad program to implement crime suppression, intervention and preven-tion strategies throughout San Bernardino. Morris said law-enforcement personnel from outside agencies would help pe he city soon.

He said a California Highway Patrol helicopter would provide air support over the weekend.

The City Council recently approved a contract to give the Police Department a helicopter for the first time in its history for a 90-day period, but Morris and Police Chief Michael Bilddt said there were still some details to be worked out before the chopper is ready to take flight.

Bilddt recently redeployed his officers so that rough-ly 25 additional officers are working the city streets from 4 p.m. until 2 a.m.

Bilddt said these hours are when San Bernardino sees 67 percent of its violent crime.

But Anthony's killing seems to make clear that po-lice presence alone won't do it.

Police had already been heavily patrolling the neigh-borhood where Anthony was killed as well as Delmann Heights, California Gardens, and Little Zion — all of which have a high density of gang members, said Lt. Diane Holmes, commander of the Police Department's Western District.

"I can tell you that the neighborhood is being thor-oughly saturated," Holmes said Friday, adding that heavy patrols will continue indefinitely until violent crime drops in her area of command.

Just before Wednesday night's shooting, Holmes said her officers arrested three people and seized an AR-15 assault rifle. Holmes declined to say how many officers will be patrolling in the neighborhood or what the plan of action is, saying it could tip off the very people her officers are trying to keep off the street and from committing crimes.

"They count cop cars. They've got Nextel phones, and they communicate," Holmes said.

She said she and her sergeant had driven by King Middle School several times within the course of the evening Wednesday.

"But the playground is not visible from the street, and even if it were, all you would see were boys play-ing basketball," Holmes said.

She said she agrees with local pastors Ray Turner and Reginald Beamon that the real solution to violent crime in the community has to start with the communi-ty.

The crux of the problem, she said, is reversing a cul-ture where youths feel that the only way to protect themselves is by joining a street gang.

"It's really a complex issue," said Holmes. "We have to change a culture where a kid wants to be a gang member, and how do you do that."

Anyone with information as to Bagsby's where-abouts is asked to call Detective Mike Vasilis at (909) 384-5636 or the police hot line at (909) 384-5656.

Anthony was 'peacekeeper'



Anthony

By Selicia Kennedy-Ross
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — At age 11, Anthony Michael Ramirez was just starting to leave childhood behind.

He still enjoyed cartoons such as "The

Simpsons" and "SpongeBob SquarePants," but was getting into shows like MTV's "Pimp My Ride" and "Yo Mama."

He wanted to marry Jessica Alba, but was shy about riding roller coasters with girls his age.

He was caught between being a little kid and growing up.

Less than a week before his fifth-grade graduation from Rio Vista Elementary School, Anthony was gunned

See **FAMILY** / Page A4

down Wednesday by a suspected gang member while playing basketball with his brothers and friends at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School.

His family is left to wonder why the boy they called "Ant-Man" is gone.

The third in a family of four boys, Anthony learned to share at an early age. He was a natural-born mediator, his family said.

"He was a peacekeeper," said Anthony's grandmother, Esther Esparza. "He always wanted his friends to be friends."

He would have graduated from Rio Vista on Tuesday. His mother, Michelle Ramirez, will walk in his place at the ceremony.

He was a fan of the Dodgers and hip-hop music, especially Tupac Shakur.

He liked strawberry-banana yogurt and playing in the backyard with his dog, Oakland, named after his favorite football team, the Oakland Raiders. He loved the fireworks on the Fourth of July, hiking with his father and his mother's lasagna. His favorite color was blue, the same color as the Dodgers and the same hue his family chose for his coffin.

Anthony loved sports, especially baseball and football, and he dreamed

of becoming a professional football player, his family said.

He pitched for a neighborhood Little League team called the Nationals, and even made the All-Star team. His teammates will carry his name and number on their uniforms at their final game and will honor Anthony with a tribute during the season's closing ceremonies.

He was looking forward to his graduation ceremony and the lazy summer afternoons of hiking and swimming at the beach that would follow.

Anthony spent his last summer with Esparza in Las Vegas at a time share. He enjoyed it so much he didn't want to go home, she said. Anthony loved Las Vegas, staying at big hotels, frolicking for hours in the lush resort-style swimming pools.

The active fifth-grader and his brothers were looking forward to their summer-vacation plans — a camping trip in Yosemite National Park. The 11-year-old did not fear nature but reveled in it, hiking trails enthusiastically, catching frogs and other small creatures. He had an affinity for animals.

"He was always catching something ... he'd come home with things in a jar," his mother said.

School was fun for Anthony, who was an excellent speller and who had done well in his studies this year, his parents said.

"He liked school," said his father, Henry Ramirez. "He was always getting up and getting ready for school without being told."

The day he died, Anthony had just come back from a school field trip to the Long Beach Aquarium where he saw exotic fish.

He was born Sept. 14, 1994, the third of four brothers — Henry Jr., 15, Joseph, 13, and Christopher, 9.

Even as a toddler, Michelle Ramirez said, Anthony was "always adventurous."

A good-natured baby, the only time her son would cry was when his father left the room, she said. "Wherever his father went he would go. He always said that if he couldn't be a pro football player, he wanted to work with his dad."

Henry Ramirez said he had planned to try to help coach his son's baseball team next season.

"He wanted me to try coaching next year," he said. "I wanted to do it because he wanted me to."

Anthony also delighted in spending time with his brothers, whom he called his "bubbas." He followed his older brothers to play basketball with neighborhood friends on the courts at the playground at King Middle School the night he died.

Around 8:30 p.m., two suspected gang members interrupted the game with gunfire. Out in the open, the boys scrambled for cover. Anthony was fatally shot.

As he lay on the blacktop dying, Anthony called out for his brothers. Joseph was shot in the hand, and his grief is painfully visible when he looks at pictures of his little brother, his tears flowing quietly but unhindered. *

Although Anthony was shorter than some boys his age, he was fiercely protective of his family, especially his mother.

"Whenever I said I was going to the store at night, he'd say: 'you aren't going alone,' — and he'd come with me," Michelle Ramirez said. "Or he wouldn't be home yet and I'd hear the helicopters outside and I'd get worried. But he would always call me and say: 'Mom, I'm OK, I'm at a friend's house.'"

Anthony had many friends as evidenced by the notes, flowers and stuffed animals left since the shooting at the makeshift memorial in front of his family's San Bernardino home. But it wasn't until his death that his parents realized just how many friends their son had.

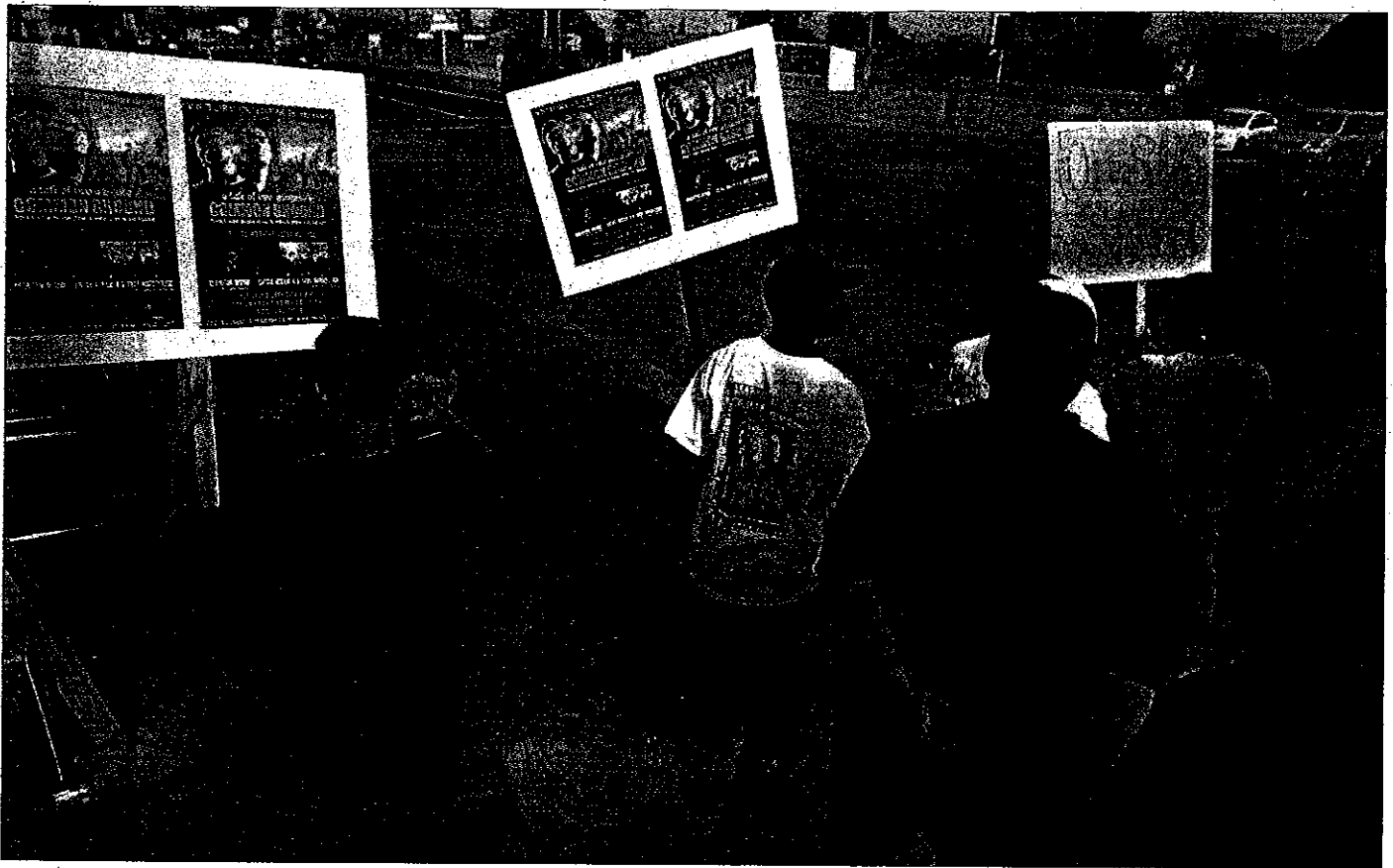
The family, which left their home to stay with relatives out of town, pulled up in front of their house Thursday night to retrieve some clothing.

That's when it happened. One by one, they started coming. Neighbors and friends. People of all colors and all ages coming out of their homes. They came on foot or on bicycles, some even riding on handlebars. All coming to comfort the family, offering hugs and words of support.

"I just saw all these little heads popping up," Michelle Ramirez said.

Anthony touched a lot of lives, said his aunt, Yvonne Serna.

"He was such a little, little kid with such a big, big heart."



Eric Reed/Staff photographer

Members of Victory Outreach Church hold signs Friday at Base Line and Medical Center Drive in San Bernardino after gathering at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School, where 11-year-old Anthony Michael Ramirez was fatally shot Wednesday night.

Group says 'enough is enough'

Protesters rally at site of boy's killing

By Nikki Cobb
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — About 30 fired-up youths gathered at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School on Friday afternoon to protest the violence that has ripped through the neighborhood and the city.

The protesters, from as far away as Las Vegas and Atlanta, had gathered to promote a movie produced by Victory Outreach Church.

The movie, "Common Ground: a Tale of Two Gangstas," tells the story of two rival youths overcoming their differences and forging a bond of peace.

Their aim, the marchers said, is to bring that peace to San Bernardino. James Mcatee of Atlanta said he made the trip to make his voice heard in the fight against violence.

"I heard all the violence going on down here and came to support the community," Mcatee said. "If everyone can come together in unity, we can stop it."

Marion Elwell, 16, of San Bernardino said she believes religion can be a unifying force. She said she's deeply troubled by what she reads in the newspapers about killings in the neighborhood.

"The spirit of San Bernardino is the spirit of darkness now," Marion said. "All the gang murders and stuff — it's the spirit of darkness."

The group will continue to gather and rally in different troubled spots throughout the city,

ABOUT THE GROUP

To learn more about Common Ground, call (909) 386-1070.

said David Tejas. He hopes their numbers will continue to grow as they spread their message of peace.

"Enough is enough," Tejas said. "This is going to bring the whole community together. This is a stepping stone for the solution."

Danny Gonzales, who organized the rally, said he hopes for a strong turnout for the movie, which will be shown at 6 p.m. July 14 and 15 at the National Orange Show Events Center.

He said the film has a positive message — one the community is hungry to hear.

"I want to target this community," he said, gesturing around the neighborhood. "I want to let people know there's an answer."

“

I heard all the violence going on down here and came to support the community. If everyone can come together in unity, we can stop it."

JAMES MCATEE
of Atlanta



Peace forum today at SB central library

Event part of series involving young people

By Kelly Rayburn
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — A forum designed for civic leaders to offer their ideas on what young people can do to make their communities safer is scheduled for today, amid continued bloodshed on the city's streets.

The event will be held from 10 a.m. to noon at the Norman F. Feldheym Central Library, 555 W. Sixth St. It is free and open to the public.

The forum, called Peace Fest 2006, is one of a series of recent events aimed at involving teens in creating safer living environments.

But the city continues to suffer. Anthony Michael Ramirez, 11, became the latest child homicide victim on Wednesday evening when he was shot and killed while playing basketball at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School.

Randall Lopez, who organized the forum before Anthony's death, said it was part of a larger effort to get teens doing something constructive with their lives before they turn to gangs, drugs or violence.

"If we don't find a way to get these kids involved, they're going to find a way to get themselves involved, and the outcome is going to be unpleasant," he said.

Lopez said he expects between 150 and 200 people at today's event.

Among those participating will be hip-hop artists AR-15 (Anti-Racist 15), Riverside-based artist Jason Jenkins, the Central City Lutheran Mission and All of Us or None, a group that supports more services for former prisoners.

Lopez said the candidates for lieutenant governor from both the Green and Libertarian parties would be present.

Alex Avila, cultural director at Central City Lutheran Mission, said he would be attending today's event, and that it is key to hear young people's ideas on how to keep communities safe.

Avila helped organize a demonstration for expanded youth services Monday in front of City Hall.

"Young people, in my opinion, already know what to do," he said. "They just need the money and resources."

Contact writer Kelly Rayburn at (909) 386-3882 or via e-mail at kelly.rayburn@sbsun.com.

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6/24/06

'Age don't matter' in gang life

By Robert Rogers
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — He is slightly built, heavily armed and ready to die.

At 16, Lorence is a veteran soldier who claims West Side Verdugo. He has no sympathy for the child who was shot to death Wednesday night on a school basketball court during a friendly game of hoops.

Little Lorence sat on his BMX bike nearby, wearing a Tupac Shakur T-shirt and cocksure smirk.

"I don't know why they shot them," Lorence said. "They wasn't in gangs. They was just like pretty boys."

But Lorence is in a gang.

He said he got "jumped in" at 13 or 14 and owns two guns, a .38 special and a Glock .380, either of which he likes to carry in his waistband.

He's not packing this day. Too many cops around the shooting scene, he said. Nor was he "strapped" about five months ago when he got blasted by some enemies in front of a liquor store on Base Line.

He proudly lifts his shirt sleeve to reveal shotgun pellet scars clustered on the back of his right arm. Lorence, who is Latino, uses a derogatory Spanish word to describe his would-be assassins, whom he considered recent Mexican immigrants.

In the eyes of the schools, the law and the sphere of public opinion, Lorence is a child. But in this borough, steeped in gang culture, he is a man.

Lorence is the fresh face of gangs.

In the deadly bedlam that has claimed the lives of six children city-wide and two this month in west San Bernardino, a loosely banded locale where simmering tensions are stoked into fiery gunfights by dirty looks and disrespect, the line between child and adult is blurred.

Kids shoot and get shot, beat and are beaten, struggle with what's left of the older generation for respect and manhood and money.

And in this rugged world, children's deaths are not always perceived as a tragic destruction of innocence.

"You gotta understand a different mentality out here," said "Do Dirty," a 42-year-old with a sun-beaten tattoo on his neck and a shock of white in his black hair. "To people not from here, these kids getting shot is terrible. But

here, people have seen kids as killers, shooting and getting shot at with grown men and other kids. Age don't matter."

But to Dirty, who said he's an ex-member of "The Projects," a Crips subsidiary that rules the dilapidated neighborhood south of Base Line off Medical Center Drive, it's the vacuum left by dead and jailed older gangsters that has helped create a youth killing field. He said only the churches can save this neighborhood now.

He offers street-side analysis while drinking purple Gatorade in front of the liquor store/market at West Ninth Street and North Medical Center Drive. He's wearing a blue shirt.

He's an endangered species, and he knows it.

"There ain't many like me left out here."

Word on these streets, cobbled together from scores of sidewalk interviews in different enclaves, is all fear and chaos. The older gangsters are dead or locked up. Leaders don't last. Pockets of violence flare spontaneously. Old beefs simmer and explode into new crime scenes.

Amid the chaos, outrage over children blown down by gunfire strikes a minor chord.

The gangs here include Magnolia Bloods on and around Home Avenue, where 14-year-old Jarred Mitchell was killed, The Projects just south of Base Line, California Gardens to the west and Delmann Heights, a Bloods offshoot, to the west, both black gangs. West Side Verdugo is just east and mostly Latino. Friction runs hot among all these groups, especially California Gardens and Magnolia Bloods, residents say.

Colors matter here, just like they did at the height of crack-cocaine-infused clashes between Bloods and Crips, red and blue, in Los Angeles in the 1980s. In The Projects, blue predominates, while just blocks north, red is conspicuously more prevalent.

They matter more than age.

"People have hearts, but there are a lot of young killers out here who have been putting in work since they were like this," said Jason Tyler, a 24-year-old who lives on the Magnolia Street that gives the neighborhood its name.

He holds his hand about 4 feet off the ground to describe the size of young "workers."

Heavily tattooed, he will say only he is gang "affiliated."

"These kids get started early, and the people around here know that.

They know that they could just as easily get shot by a 15-year-old as a 25-year-old."

There is a war, but it's not organized or waged over conventional squabbles like drugs and turf. It's intermittent, low-grade and deadly. Groups of twos and threes can trade tough looks, one boy can talk to another's girl, the fuse is lit, explosions roar and blood sprays.

And there's an intelligence beyond the government or the media.

"I read about what went down at the school with the kid, and in my mind I know there's more to those kids getting shot than what they say," Tyler said.

He said there may be a racial component. Anthony Michael Ramirez, the dead fifth-grader, and his 13-year-old brother, Joseph, are Latino. The suspects are black. Tyler said retaliation is likely.

"Black people are always targets," he said. "But with this, anybody from Verdugo at any time might come cap some black kid."

Like the post-Cold War world, threats are less clearly defined. The old paradigm of gangs is dead, said Bobby Vega, 47, who lives in West Side Verdugo territory and has worked in youth programs since the 1970s.

"The injunctions, the police crackdowns have scattered the gangs," Vega said. "The structure is destroyed. There are no leaders, no shot callers. Now it's just loose-knit groups of mostly kids running around claiming a certain neighborhood."

The idea of a gang truce to stop the violence is outdated, Vega said.

"Who are you going to have a truce with? There's no leadership left."

Back on Medical Center Drive, in The Projects area, liquor-store manager Joun Seder said the neighborhood is worse than anything he saw growing up in Syria before immigrating to the United States in 1987.

Customers, mostly kids, file in and out. One lopes in, his bloodshot eyes level as he walks, as if he's cruising in on a conveyor belt.

After fumbling around the pastry aisle, the blue-shirted boy approached the counter and plopped down a cinnamon roll.

"Are you confused? Are you high?" Seder said jokingly.

The boy said nothing. He looked 15 or 16. He drew out a roll of cash

as thick as a deck of cards, peeled off two singles and flicked them on the counter.

Outside, he shrugged his shoulders when asked about the recent shootings claiming the lives of two children not much younger than he.

"People get shot around here all the time," he drawled before whipping out a cell phone and walking off.

Seder sees customers all day every day. He grabbed a newspaper off his rack and put his finger on Jarred Mitchell's picture.

"This kid came in here like 10 times a day," Seder said, shaking his head. "He bought candy and soda. He was a kid."

Right near the door Seder keeps a slushy machine with two flavors, red and blue. His store sits in The Project, but is just a couple blocks from Magnolia Bloods area, where Jarred was killed.

But Jarred's death illuminated the chasm between geographic and cultural differences in the region. It spurred community action, including a meeting of church leaders at his school last month. It reverberated at City Hall, where he weighed in on the pressing need to address violence.

It was interpreted differently here, said James Cephas, a pastor at a Seventh-day Adventist Church near Home Avenue.

"Kids get shot, but there's not extra sadness among gangs because they're kids. They average deaths, but not any more so because of an age," Cephas said.

"These kids are younger and harder than ever."

Orlando Alexander is practically a graybeard at 19. He stands outside the West Home Avenue house just feet from where Jarred died in the street. He's wearing bright red slippers.

He said he's sad that kids who could have been his little brother are dying on these streets, but he can't let his guard down.

"A lot of what's going on here is kids. It's the older cats that are more laid back," Alexander said. "These kids are scared, they're trying to be hard, and a lot of times they're getting their drink on and their smoke on and they got guns. That's a dangerous combination."

Trial of Mynisha

defendants to stay put

6/24/06

By Mike Cruz
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — The trial will stay here for a group of suspected gang members held in the shooting death of 11-year-old Mynisha Crenshaw, a judge ruled Friday.

That trial could begin by July 10.

Superior Court Judge Donna Gunnell Garza denied a motion for a change of venue. Filed by the attorney representing defendant Patrick Lair, four other defendants joined in the motion.

Defense attorneys who supported the motion argued that the issues of pervasive media coverage and the defendants' right to a fair trial were already decided by Superior Court Judge Brian McCarville when he imposed a gag order several weeks ago.

"Essentially, my position is the court is already tied to its own findings," said attorney Daniel Mangan, who represents Lair.

Submitted along with the mo-

tion were search-engine results from Web sites for The Sun and Google revealing hundreds of articles that have been written about Mynisha's shooting death in November.

Also included were the strategic plan devised by the community group that grew out of the girl's death, Mynisha's Circle, as well as Mayor Pat Morris' Operation Phoenix anti-crime plan and the countywide strategic plan on gangs for 2005, according to court records.

But Garza determined the change-of-venue motion was a separate matter from the gag order.

The District Attorney's Office had also opposed moving the trial outside of the city or even the county.

"I agree there has been a lot of press, but I don't see that as rising to a level for a change of venue," prosecutor Cheryl Kersey told the judge.

Mynisha was killed Nov. 13 when several armed men opened

fire on a Del Rosa area apartment near Mountain Avenue and Citrus Street as the girl was eating dinner with her family, according to authorities.

The seven defendants in the case, all suspected by authorities to be members of the PPHG street gang, are charged with murder, attempted murder, conspiracy to commit murder, and special enhancements for using a firearm and street gang activity.

Police testified that the shooting was in retaliation for the fatal shooting of one of the PPHG's members, Barry Jones, four days earlier at an apartment complex just around the corner from where Mynisha was killed.

Garza also moved closer to setting a trial date and delayed a ruling on a motion to recuse the District Attorney's Office from prosecuting the case.

The judge set July 10 for a decision to move forward with the trial. Three of the defense attorneys said Friday they were ready for trial now.

"Someone is ready to proceed and go to trial in this matter on July 10," Garza said in court. "It is this court's intention to begin jury selection on July 11."

The date was set two weeks from Friday's court hearing to give prosecutors, who have announced several times they are ready for trial, more time to handle an unexpected illness in their office.

Kersey was assigned to fill in for prosecutor Rod Cortez during jury selection in a capital-murder case for defendant Louis Mitchell while Cortez recovers from an illness.

Defense attorneys in the Mynisha case objected to giving the prosecution additional time, calling it a double standard after the judge had set strict deadlines for the defense to be ready and not schedule themselves for other trials.

"We've been on hold or busting our humps to get things done during that time frame," said attorney Ed Congdon, who repre-

sents defendant Michael Barnett Jr.

Attorney Mark Drew, who represents Siddiba Greenwood, also objected to the continuance and told the court he has been ready for trial for months. But Kersey was adamant the fill-in assignment was beyond her control.

"I was assigned to pick up another case in progress when another (deputy) district attorney became ill," Kersey told the court.

The motion to recuse the District Attorney's Office from prosecuting the case was filed by Lair's attorney based on District Attorney Michael A. Ramos' participation in a Mynisha's Circle meeting and criminal threats received by Kersey.

If the judge grants the motion, prosecution would be handled by the state Attorney General's Office. Attorneys for two other defendants, Harold Phillips and Tyshon Harris, joined in the motion.

"Perhaps it is an excellent idea for an elected district attorney to

be a member of a dedicated community action group, Mynisha's Circle," Mangan wrote in the motion.

"Perhaps it is a good idea not to be aligned with the one founded as a community reaction to this case, named after the victim in this case, while the case is being prosecuted," Mangan wrote.

Prosecutors contended that the motion lacked evidence and affidavits from witnesses.

"Even if its shortcomings were overlooked, the declaration is inadmissible to the extent that it contains argument, conclusions and hearsay," Deputy District Attorney Brent Schultze wrote in response.

Other defendants in the case are Sinque Morrison and Sean Davis. Davis accepted a plea bargain that will give him a maximum of 11 years in state prison if he cooperates with prosecutors and testifies at the trial.

Three other defendants charged in Mynisha's death are named in a separate case.

Another boy shot dead



Daniel Perez, 11, center, who was 11-year-old Anthony Michael Ramirez's basketball coach, is being comforted by Anthony's mother, Michelle Ramirez, right, and his grandmother, Lianne Ramirez, Saturday during a car-wash fundraiser at Gutierrez Park in San Bernardino. Proceeds were to go for the funeral of Anthony, shot dead while playing basketball.

Jennifer Cappuccino/Salt photographer

Family, friends unite in funeral fundraiser

By Kelly Rayburn
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — Eleven-year-old Anthony Michael Ramirez was supposed to be the starting pitcher for his Little League All-Star team Wednesday, the day after he would have graduated from elementary school.

But he won't have the chance. A week before the All-Star game, Anthony was killed by a suspected gang member while playing a twilight game of pickup basketball at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School.

Adjacent to the Kiwanis/Knights of

Columbus Little League field on Saturday, a car wash was held to coincide with the closing ceremonies for the regular season and to help raise money for Anthony's funeral.

Family members said they were touched by the strong turnout. Thronges of people left donations in the empty water jugs used as collection receptacles throughout the morning and early afternoon.

But the ceremony was not complete. Anthony was missing.

The blazing midday sun beat down as coach Jerry Ramirez, who is not related to

A spotlight on potential solutions to crime in our community. For more, visit www.sbsun.com.



MYNISHA'S CIRCLE UPDATE: ROLE MODELS NEEDED

The shooting of 11-year-old Anthony Michael Ramirez is another vivid reminder of the need for community involvement in the war on crime.

While several efforts are under way to promote youth consciousness, e-mail discussions between members of MyNisha's Circle in recent days have centered on the need for more positive adult role models.

This will be the focus of the next general meeting of MyNisha's Circle at 6 p.m. Tuesday at The Sun, 2239 Genent Parkway, San Bernardino.

Please RSVP Denise Varnado at (909) 386-3843 or via e-mail at denise.varnado@sbsun.com.

MyNisha's Circle is a community outreach effort created after the November shooting death of 11-year-old MyNisha Cienfuegos. The circle promotes open discussion of crime and its contributing causes, and is open to the public.

See FUNDRAISER / Page A4

Fundraiser

continued from page A1^(*)

Anthony, handed out trophies and read the names of those who played on his Little League team called the Nationals.

"Number 24, Jerry," he said. "Number 7, Antonio. Number 2, Jacob. Number 13, Derek. Number 5, Jalen. Number 34, Janessa. Number 23, Joshua."

He paused.

"And we got Number 1 right here," he said. "Anthony."

The coach handed the trophy and a game ball from Anthony's final pitching outing to Michelle and Henry Ramirez, the boy's parents. "Thank you so much," said Michelle, weeping. Teammates, relatives and coaches remembered Anthony as a great kid and a team player — who sometimes got frustrated when umpires would call balls when he thought his pitches seemed to move right across the heart of the plate.

What was his go-to pitch? The heater?

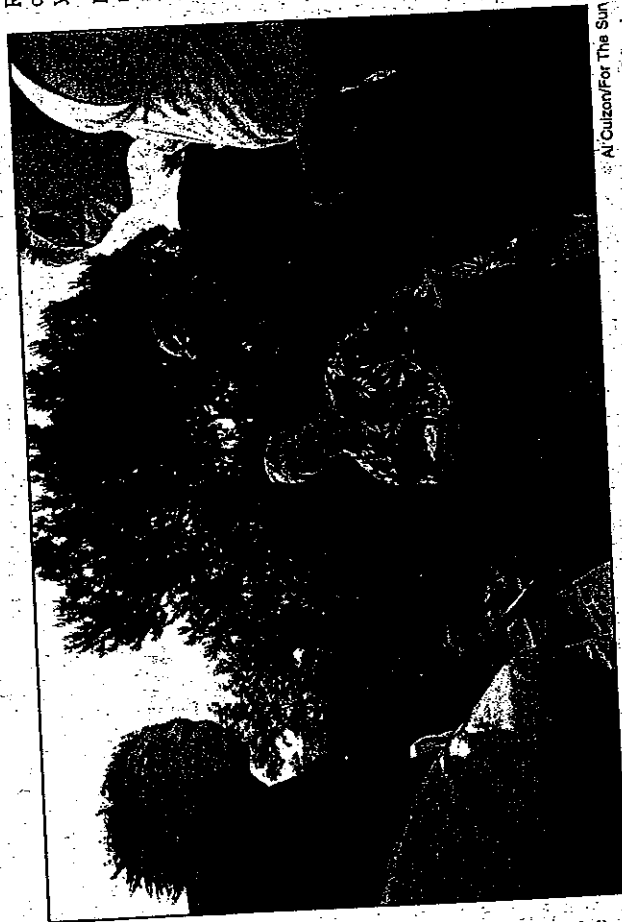
"No. The curve," said Jalen Amis, 10, the Nationals' third baseman and frequent cleanup hitter.

"Struck a lot of people out," remembered Anthony's 15-year-old brother, Henry Ramirez Jr. "Mmm hmm," Jalen later confirmed. "And he could hit, too."

Anthony's death was another tragedy for a city ripped apart by violence.

Police said they don't believe any of the children playing basketball at King Middle School on Wednesday evening are affiliated with gangs. The suspect, police believe, is.

They remained on the lookout Saturday for James Lamont Babsby, the 15-year-old they be-



Al Guizon/For The Sun

Joseph Ramirez, 13, and his mother, Michelle, speak with San Bernardino Mayor Pat Morris, center, and Councilman Rikke Van Johnson about Joseph's brother, Anthony, the 11-year-old killed Wednesday evening while playing basketball at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School.

this kind of outpouring of love from the community must be consoling for the young children, for the brothers of Anthony," he said.

Mayor Pat Morris told Anthony's father again Saturday that the city was doing all it could to find the suspect.

The mayor walked alone as he approached the car wash at the ballpark.

He had a solemn look on his face.

He said he came to offer condolences to the family and to make a donation.

And he liked what he saw.

"When great tragedies strike like this, to have

Ramirez, "it knocks our socks off . . . because our very best efforts were not sufficient to save your son's life."

Later, Henry Ramirez said it seemed Morris is doing his best to make San Bernardino safer, based on what he had seen on television and read in newspapers.

Still, he said he regretted moving to the five years ago.

"If I had known this would happen, I would never have moved here," he said.

Victoria Ramirez Alvarez, Anthony's great aunt, said proceeds from the car wash in Bernardino and another one in Riverside will go toward funeral costs and helping the immediate family move out of San Bernardino.

Henry Ramirez said Saturday's turnout heartwarming.

"I feel blessed," he said. "Blessed. I feel whelmed."

Anthony had a large family, and his relatives were out in force Saturday.

Beyond the right-field fence, Bl. Ramirez, another great-aunt, stood with R. Alvarado, 6, a cousin.

They were encouraging motorists into the wash. Ruben held a sign reading, "Stop killings of innocent children. We love you, Anthony and we miss you."

Dozens at Saturday's event sported T-shirts with the Nationals' logo and Anthony's number.

Carlos Luna, 31, of San Bernardino stayed awake past 3 a.m. Saturday night.

Nationals team mom Jackie Ramirez, 31, wife, had suggested the T-shirt idea to him. Luna did it as a gesture to the family.

On the back, the T-shirts read: "In memory of Anthony M. Ramirez: You ways be our Allstar."

Contact writer Kelly Rayburn at (909) 386-3882 or mail at kelly.rayburn@sbsun.com.



Al Cuizon/For The Sun

Derek Coleman consoles his sister, Lashonda Williams, after finding out one of her sons, Travelle Williams, 16, had been fatally shot in front of their apartment on East Orange Street in San Bernardino on Saturday.

16-year-old is 32nd slaying in SB this year

By Jeff Horwitz
and Joe Nelson
Staff Writers

MULTIMEDIA

www.sbsun.com

SAN BERNARDINO — A 16-year-old boy died after he was shot in an apparent dispute over a cell phone Saturday, three days after an 11-year-old boy was killed and his 13-year-old brother wounded in a playground shooting.

San Bernardino police said the 16-year-old, identified by family as Travelle Williams, was shot shortly after 6 p.m. Saturday in the 400 block of East Orange Street.

Three days earlier, Anthony Michael Ramirez and his brother, Joseph, were shot while playing basketball with friends at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School.

Police have identified a suspect in that case — 15-year-old James Lamont Bagsby. They consider him armed and dangerous.

"He's still out there," police Sgt. Ray Rocha said Saturday, adding that police planned to continue heavy patrols in and around the Westside neighborhood where Anthony was shot.

On the other side of town Satur-

MOOD OF THE CITY:
Discouraged residents
speak out about crime.

GALLERIES: View
photo coverage from the
aftermath of Wednesday
night's shooting death of
Anthony Michael Ramirez
and a gallery from the af-
termath of the Saturday
shooting death of Travelle
Williams.

HAVE INFORMATION?
Anyone with information
about this incident is en-
couraged to call the San
Bernardino Police Depart-
ment hot line at (909)
384-5656.

INSIDE | PAGE A4

SAFE HAVENS

Do they still exist in
San Bernardino?

Slaying

continued from page A1

day, Travelle's family said he was shot while waiting outside his apartment with his older brother and a friend. The three were locked out of the apartment, said Nina Coleman, Travelle's aunt.

She was driving to the apartment to let them in when a youth the boys knew approached. Travelle had quarreled with him the week before, she said.

"It was over a phone. (Travelle) spent the night at someone's house. A boy stole his phone," she added.

Travelle retrieved his phone, but the other boy said he'd get even, Coleman said.

That same boy approached Travelle and shot him Saturday, Coleman said.

"It was like he had no shame," she said.

Police confirmed the victim knew the shooter, but offered no other details in the case.

"We had an idea who the suspect might have been from the get-go," said Sgt. Scott Childs.

Police were called to the scene about 6:15 p.m., said Lt. Brian Boom. He said the victim was taken to St. Bernardine Medical Center, where he died.

There were few signs at the scene that a homicide had taken place. A jug of punch was still sitting on the front steps to Travelle's apartment.

Travelle, who performed for church groups and designed his own outfits, had only lived in the neighborhood a few months and stayed away from trouble, his aunt said.

"He wasn't that type," she said. "All he liked to do was get on MySpace and dance."



At OutlawFor 1.

Derek Coleman consoles his sister, Lashonda Williams, in front of her apartment in San Bernardino on Saturday after she learned that her son, Travelle Williams, 16, was slain. Three days earlier, Anthony Michael Ramirez, 11, was fatally shot and his brother, Joseph Ramirez, 13, was wounded while playing basketball with friends at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School.

Travelle is the city's 32nd homicide victim this year and the second under the age of 18 in less than a week.

About 8:30 p.m. Wednesday, as Anthony and his brother played basketball with friends, Babsby and another unidentified boy are believed to have

approached the group. One of them asked the ballplayers if they were "gangbangers," according to some of the boys who were playing basketball and witnessed the deadly shooting.

When some of the ballplayers said they were not gang members, the two boys started walking away. Then, one of them turned and fired a barrage of bullets into the group, hitting Anthony and Joseph.

Both boys were taken to Arrowhead Regional Medical Center in Colton, where Anthony died at 9:08 p.m. His brother

was treated for a gunshot wound to his right hand and re-leased. Police have not released a photo of Babsby, but he is described as a 5-foot-5, 160-pound black teen with black hair and brown eyes. He has "James Jr." tattooed on his right arm and the names "Carriana" and "Jaclyssa" tattooed on his chest.

Police believe Babsby is in San Bernardino. Anyone with information on either case may call (909) 565-1600.

Some now say no place safe in San Bernardino

Sunday, June 25, 2006

Area youth organizations often overlooked as havens, others say

By Andrea Bennett
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — In the hot summer months, children might flock to local backdrops for basketball, to parks to play with friends or into neighborhood streets to ride their bicycles and skateboards.

In San Bernardino, however, such carefree images of childhood are removed from the reality in which many youths live.

"I know this city like the back of my hand, and there isn't anywhere that is safe," said Santos Pineda, project coordinator for Los Padrinos in San Bernardino. "I have a young boy myself, and I don't trust him to go anywhere anymore. Things are happening all over this city, and you're scared even to go out in the streets now."

The shooting death of 11-year-old Anthony Michael Ramirez as he played basketball Wednesday evening at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School,

has forced many parents, community leaders and citizens to lament: Are there no safe havens for our children?

"It is a very sad situation when our young people don't have places to go safely. I feel sorry for them," said San Pawiak, senior pastor at San Bernardino Community Church. "I grew up in a basketball family in inner-city Chicago, and in my day — 40 years ago — day or night, we'd find some place to play ball, and it was safe. It's the blood-letting gang mentality that now controls our city."

Many youth organization leaders stress that supervised after-school programs at places like the YMCA and Boys & Girls clubs are safe zones often overlooked and underfunded.

"A lot of people don't know we are here," said Darrell Black, program director for the YMCA in San Bernardino. "We'd love to have another branch in the north end of the city, but it's hard. I'd love for us to be able to serve the whole city of San Bernardino."

or public places. Our sports are indoors because we know they're safe inside," Hackney said. "There are communities where kids can still go to the parks and play, but if you look at them, there is increased security and adults supervising. We've got to take back our parks and our streets."

Pawiak said a crucial element to making children safe is adults, and not enough of them are doing their part.

"The only answer is for people to give up their time. We require a huge volunteer force in our city willing to supervise our school lots and our parks," Pawiak said. "Unfortunately, volunteerism is a declining field and less and less people want to give of themselves."

Jim Morris, Mayor Pat Morris' son and chief of staff, said he believes there are still safe places for children, but that the city's focus should be broader.

"If we create specific safe havens, it essentially means everywhere else is not safe," he said. "We need the whole community to be safe."

He understands, however, that many

citizens are wondering where they can send their kids to play and recreate.

The shooting deaths of children like Anthony on a school basketball court, and Jarred Mitchell, 14, while dancing with his friends last month, are troubling.

"Is there no sanctuary left in the community? Are we that vulnerable? I think it's a little of yes and a lot of no," Morris said. "These are random acts because some people in the community engage in at-risk behavior and they are not connected to the social norms we know. We need to get an aggressive handle on those kids and young adults so this kind of violence does not happen."

"Our community ought to be a safe haven. The steps of a church need to be a safe haven and the playground at Martin Luther King needs to be a safe haven."

Staff writer Emily Lowell contributed to this report.

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THE SUN

San Bernardino County's Newspaper

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WY JUNE 27, 2006

Enough.

Traveil Williams

16 years old

Anthony Michael Ramirez

11 years old

June 21, 20

Anthony Johnson

17 years old

Jarred Mitchell

14 years old

Glyn Ferguson Jr.

17 years old

Christopher Paul Ranson

15 years old

Dustin Michael-Roy Namanny

14 years old

June 27, 2006

Melanie Miers

16 years old

Mynisha Crenshaw

11 years old

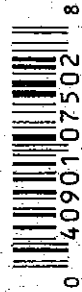
This community has had enough — of people dying, of children dying, of gangs and shootings and inhumanity beyond what words can describe.

Today, The Sun is turning over much of our newspaper to what we can do as a community to end the violence.

In the end, that's our most powerful weapon — community.

We want to hear from you.

If you have ideas, thoughts or suggestions on what all of us can do to make this a safer community, e-mail us at voice@sbsun.com.



Weather

Partly cloudy; chance of thunderstorms
High 96, Low 69
Air quality: Unhealthy
Page B8

THE SUN

San Bernardino County's Newspaper

WEDNESDAY | JUNE 27, 2006

WWW.SBSUN.COM

San Bernardino

Killings in SB take their toll

PAGE A3

A community attempts to fight the burgeoning violence on its streets

By Megan Blaney and Selicia Kennedy-Ross
Staff Writers

SAN BERNARDINO — By the time 11-year-old Anthony Michael Ramirez arrived at the hospital, his heart was empty.

The boy, who had been shot while playing basketball at a local middle school, had lost so much blood during the short trip to Arrowhead Regional Medical Center in Colton, that there was no chance that his life could be saved.

This year, there have been more victims, younger

victims with more severe injuries, said Dr. Dev Gnanadev, the hospital's medical director and chief of surgery.

"Why should these kids 15, 16 years old be walking around with guns?" he said. "Where are their parents, the churches, the community? ... What goes on with these children at home and in their neighborhoods? Too often the only support these children get is from the gangs."

These are the same questions community leaders have struggled to answer. The quest for these answers intensified following the recent spate of children being

shot in the city.

How does a community say, 'Enough?'

Anthony, 11, was shot to death while playing basketball at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School on Wednesday. Travel Williams, 16, was shot to death over a dispute about a cell phone on Saturday. And in Adelanto, 17-year-old Adrian Washington was shot to death outside his house during his birthday party on Sunday.

San Bernardino has for two years in a row been ranked as one of the country's 25 most dangerous cities,

See **ENOUGH** / Page A8

June 27, 2006



Al Cuizon/For The Sun

Jessica Nobles, 8, walks to her grandmother's home on West Home Avenue in San Bernardino. Because of several shootings in the neighborhood, many families are reluctant to let their children go outside. "I feel like it might happen to me," Jessica said.

Enough

continued from page A3

according to the Morgan Quitno Press, a publishing and ranking company. City and community leaders are fighting back against the violence, but the city's climbing tally of homicides in the first six months of this year is well on its way to rivaling or surpassing last year's total of 58.

Community members and city officials rose up in outrage in response to the shooting of 11-year-old Mynisha Crenshaw who died in a hail of gang bullets in November. Frustration is running high because of the recent violence, said Pastor Raymond Turner of the Temple Missionary Baptist Church in the city's Westside.

"We must prevent another generation of following that pattern of violence," Turner said. "But the last two killings were senseless. How do you prevent that?"

Combating violence in a community takes a multifaceted approach, said J. Robert Flores, director of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention — part of the U.S. Department of Justice.

"There has to be a real balance in terms of any effort to address public safety," Flores said. "There needs to be strong aggressive enforcement as well as a well-organized prevention approach."

Mayor Pat Morris launched an anti-crime plan dubbed Operation Phoenix. The testing area for the plan encompassed a 20-block area northeast of downtown, but after Anthony's slaying, Morris extended Operation Phoenix to include an additional four areas.

Morris said he has "no doubt" that once Operation Phoenix is fully implemented that it will make a profound difference in the quality of life in that area.

"We can and we will make a difference with our strategies," he said. "But we are a city of limited resources, and we're going to have to do this ourselves."

But that may take some time.

Carol Naughton

munity Foundation in Atlanta, knows change can be a long time in coming. Her work with the East Lake Meadows — once a crime-and-drug-infested housing project — helped transform it into a thriving new neighborhood. Naughton flew to San Bernardino in January to talk to leaders about effecting change.

"All these strategies have to be long term," she said. "If this has only been in place a month or two since the mayor was elected, then that's too short."

Work on East Lake Meadows started in 1994, and crime continued to be rampant for several years before a change could be distinguished.

"It can change, and I believe it will change," Turner said. "But not until those of us with resources come together and get a clear picture of the real problem, not just throw money at it."

"It's going to take more than just adding more police, more programs, more jobs. It will take a combination of those things. We need to come together and not worry about who gets credit for what and just pool our resources."

Engage the children

Seven of the 32 homicide victims this year have been children. Some of the suspects are also children.

At 12, Gabriela Rodriguez has already given up on her hometown.

"I wish I could move," she said, sitting on a low block wall outside Roosevelt Elementary with her mother, Teresa. "Anywhere else than here."

Gabriela has lived in San Bernardino all her life. But she says she was never afraid of the gangs or the shootings she'd heard about until she heard about Anthony's killing.

Children are not the only ones scarred by the recent violence.

Gnanadev said treating children is emotionally difficult. Adrian was flown to Arrowhead Regional after he was shot, but he lost too much blood before he arrived. Gnanadev was on duty, but there was no way to save the boy's life.

"It has been worse this year," he said. "The ones who die, they

That underscores the importance of reaching them before tragedy strikes, Flores said.

Children must feel engaged to their school, family and community, Flores said.

"They've got to be connected to at least two of these three factors. If so, the risk factors go down tremendously," Flores said.

Parents, teachers, after-school jobs, mentors — the possibilities to engage children are boundless.

The pitfalls are also plentiful — truancy, illegal ways to make money, gangs, absent parents.

Each effort of a multifaceted plan suffers without the other pieces, Flores said, and one of those components must be the private sector.

"The business community has really got to come to the table," he said. "Children need to know why they are going to school."

The message will be lost if children do not believe that excelling in school will benefit them later.

"If the only people offering jobs are pimps and gang members, then that's not necessarily a strange decision for a kid to make," Flores said.

Parenting and education

Only 12 percent of adults older than 25 in San Bernardino have a bachelor's degree, according to census results from 2000. Single mothers account for 14 percent of the city's households, and in many cases, grandparents take care of their grandchildren when the parents are absent or not strong authority figures.

These demographics can contribute to violent actions in children, said Eloise Anderson, a former director of The Program for the American Family at The Claremont Institute.

"The strongest link to violence is parents who were never married, (families in which) the father is not present, or there is divorce and substance abuse," she said. "As a result, you see violence, especially in the boys, when they are disconnected from their fathers."

The mayor said raising healthy children will have a lot

June 27, 2006

Tuesday, June 27, 2006

"Many of these youngsters dealing death with handguns are born into dysfunctional families," Morris said. "They are not taught values or respect for property or human life. That comes from good child raising."

A dearth of jobs, programs and parental figures creates a disconnect in children, Flores said.

"San Bernardino is not alone in its struggle. It really is a challenge," Flores said.

Far from yesterday

Inside the gym at the Rudy C. Hernandez Community Center, about 20 young men were playing a pickup basketball game recently, and a dozen more youngsters were cooling off from the overcast summer day in the pool outside.

But the turnout is nowhere near what it once was, said Juan Huntsman.

Huntsman has been coming to the community center since he was 13. He's 23 and a fixture here now.

His little brother, Anthony, dribbled a basketball nearby and is rarely out of Huntsman's sight these days since Anthony Ramirez was killed.

"I keep him with me a lot now," Huntsman said.

Huntsman said he is saddened watching the community where he grew up fall to gang violence, remembering what it once was.

"It's sad," he said. "People here trying to outdo L.A. — people want to show they're badasses. Everyone's got to have a gun."

Huntsman said it's more dangerous now than it was when he was growing up. He said playing sports at the center kept him out of trouble growing up and that more facilities like it are needed.

But the children can't play pingpong or pool anymore because the games are broken.

Although he recalls walking the city streets at night unafraid, something that takes extra caution and vigilance now, Huntsman said, the city is not beyond saving.

"Nah, it's not too late," he said. "It's never too late."

Staff writer Guy McCarthy contributed to this report.

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June 27, 2006

"Families"

Families of slain children speak out

Keeping youths out of gangs seen as vital

By Leonor Vivanco
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — It's a nightmare most parents cannot fathom. But they are forced to live it.

Their child's life has been snuffed out by a bullet, shattering their world.

Days, months, years later, they try to go about their daily lives, but the pain and heartache are etched on their faces. Voices choke. It's inescapable.

"We wake up every day thinking my son is going to come home," said Henry Ramirez. His son, Anthony Michael Ramirez, 11, was shot to



Meredith Mitchell looks at photos of her grandson Jarred at her home in San Bernardino the day after Jarred, 14, was killed in a drive-by shooting May 22. Jarred's sister Jinell Wright and cousin Janise Slaughter are also shown.

Sun file photo

See FAMILIES / Page A7

Fear reigns near school

Many children afraid to step out of homes

By Nikki Cobb
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — Gone are the days when corner lots rang out with the cries of kids playing stickball.

On West Home Avenue here Monday, basketball hoops hung from garages, unused. Even an inflatable swimming pool, filled

In the neighborhood around Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School, where shootings and violence have become commonplace, many parents don't dare let their kids play outside. And the kids don't want to go — they're afraid. Afraid of being shot like 11-year-old Anthony Ramirez, who died last week.

Most of the children encountered outside the school on Monday said they were no longer allowed to play outside, after the recent shootings. So they stay indoors, playing video games or playing catch in the hallways.

"If I walk home by myself, I'm scared somebody will come up and shoot me," said 12-year old Shawndale Johnson. "I'm just scared to do anything. I stay in the house all the time."

Aldre Williams, 13, echoed that sentiment. He said the violence "makes me feel bad, makes you not want to walk around the street."

Psychologists say the children are adapting the best they can — learning behaviors that, while abnormal to many, are sensible adaptations to their situation.

Greg Pfau, a San Bernardino marriage and family therapist, said it's not uncommon for children to get their values from their older brothers and sisters or from negative role models like drug

"Afraid"

And if their peer group doesn't value academic success, Pfau said, they'll absorb the values espoused by their friends.

Richard Rouledo, 12, said he studies hard, hoping to emulate the success of his father, a lawyer, and his mother, a doctor. He wants to be an architect.

Still, he said, his hard work at school comes with a price.

"It's not a good thing" to be an academic standout, he said. "People ask me for answers. And if I don't give them, they try to be really rude to you."

Pfau said, "Children learn a fear of strangers quickly."

"They're hyper-vigilant, always scanning, always trying to gauge whether they can trust a person or not."

Children also are quick to imitate behavior — even violent behavior.

Dr. Charles Shipley, a San Bernardino child psychologist, said when children have no tive role models, they model behavior of those that others respect.

"Teachers are not seen as role models. Education is not seen as

JUNE 27, 2006

Biggest solution isn't always best

By Emily Sachs
Staff Writer

Crime has returned in a big way to the Big Easy, and the solution is even more massive. The National Guard has been dispatched to patrol the streets in response to the shooting of five New Orleans teens this month.

Getting tough on crime gets attention, but going after the roots of crime in a methodical way gets results, according to crime experts around the country.

"From a policing standpoint, it's not so sexy at all, but that's reality," said Travis Pratt, associate professor and director of the criminal-justice program at Washington State University at Spokane.

In San Bernardino, where seven of the 34 homicides this year have been minors, the reaction should be methodical, experts say.

"It's a very complex problem, and most complex problems have an infinite set of wrong answers, like the National Guard," he said.

In Newark, N.J., and Philadelphia, for example, efforts to turn around their most troubled areas have resulted in gentrified town homes and condos.

When San Bernardino's trouble spots hit rock bottom, investors will pounce on the low prices, Pratt predicted.

In Oakland, to combat the unemployment that was being blamed for contributing to high crime, city leaders essentially gave away jobs cleaning graffiti off buses. With their newfound benefits and paychecks, the workers became some of the city's most ardent protectors.

"They actually had guys grab markers out of little kids' hands," said Jean O'Neil, research director for the National Crime Prevention Council in Washington, D.C.

Out-of-the-box thinking is most successful when it is combined with traditional policing, she said. Programs that focus on prevention, parenting and after-school programs for children as alternatives to gangs have all worked elsewhere.

The city also can harness the power of the people. Easily 85 percent to 90 percent of residents want the problem people out of the city, O'Neil said. But they are the least likely to say so out of fear.

"The job is to keep these people who have proven not to be good citizens under the kind of surveillance that makes them believe the price of doing wrong again is just not worth it," O'Neil said.

"If they don't think they'll be caught ... what would you do if you were them? Go right back to running your little empire."

Operation Phoenix, a concentrated 20-block enforcement of crime and code enforcement introduced by San Bernardino Mayor Pat Morris is a step in that direction.

But it is going to take time to study the results and the findings from the effort, said Larry Gaines, chairman of the criminal-justice program at Cal State San Bernardino. His suspicion is that San Bernardino is experiencing a concurrent spike

Crime takes a bite

It's not always easy to see who pays the bill, but each crime rips a chunk out of the public well-being, with fatal crimes taking the lion's share. The National Crime Prevention Council compiled these figures in an attempt to show the costs of crime in 2003. These are national averages based on — among other things — expenses to victims, lost revenue, and criminal justice and insurance costs.

CRIME	AVERAGE COST (Per crime)
FATAL CRIME	\$4,160,233
Rape, assault	4,136,300
Arson	3,862,200
DUI	4,482,200
CHILD ABUSE	84,000
Sexual	141,200
Physical	94,200
Emotional	38,100
RAPE/SEXUAL ASSAULT (Excluding child abuse)	122,400
ROBBERY/ ATTEMPTED ROBBERY	11,200
With injury	26,700
No injury	2,700

Staff graphic

in both homicides and gang activity.

"Essentially, we probably need to look at those homicides to get a better idea of those dynamics" behind them, Gaines said.

"You're talking about a substantial problem that has been developing over decades. There are a number of social problems that ... to a great extent the Police Department cannot solve."

Morgan Quitno Press, the same group that ranked San Bernardino the 18th-most dangerous city in the country, ranked Irvine — less than an hour away — one of the safest cities in the country, specifically for its very low rate of violent crime.

Irvine leaders credit a strong connection between community groups and residents, as well as long-standing efforts to prevent the factors that cause crime, in the form of community-oriented policing. "We were doing that before it even had a name," said Lt. Mike Hamel of the Irvine Police Department.

"I think that because our city has that kind of philosophy, we realize we can't address problems by ourselves," Hamel said. "We need the community."

Crime remains at the center of city's politics

By Kelly Rayburn
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — In a town of 200,000 that has seen more than a homicide a week, crime has dominated city politics — particularly in the last seven months.

Eleven-year-old Mynisha Crenshaw's death in November sparked a community to demand answers from their elected leaders about what was being done to keep the streets safe.

Crime ruled the debate in the subsequent mayoral campaign between Mayor Pat Morris and City Attorney James F. Penman.

It has remained the focus of Morris' first 16 weeks in office. And in a proposed spending plan that could come up for a vote this week, the city's most significant new expenditure is money to add 14 officers to the San Bernardino Police Department.

Despite such efforts, the crime wave continues.

When it comes to homicide, 2006 is another bad year. If the rate continues its pace, it would easily exceed the 58 in 2005, which was a decade high.

The homicide tally so far is 34.

Morris' comments on how long crime would remain at the top of the agenda: "We're going to have to stay focused on this for a good, long while to diminish this problem. There are no short-term fixes."

Morris was clearly moved by the apparently unprovoked shooting of 11-year-old Anthony Michael Ramirez as the boy played basketball at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School last week.

The day after the shooting, Morris said he would be soliciting ideas from community stakeholders, including business and religious leaders, about how to reduce crime. He said he would unveil a fresh anti-crime strategy later this week.

Already, the city has sought

help from the California Highway Patrol and San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department in patrolling its streets.

Morris said officers from those agencies would be on the streets by the end of the week.

In the meantime, Monday's Superior Court ruling that will probably doom an anti-illegal-immigration ballot measure was seen by some as a key step toward enabling city leaders to focus on more pressing needs.

Timothy Prince, a San Bernardino attorney and former mayoral candidate, said he has known Morris all his life and that he was certain the ruling made the mayor "very happy."

It would allow Morris, he said, to focus on the things he

should be doing, such as bolstering the police and fire departments. He said the ruling was especially welcome because it appeared to him, a former judge, to be the correct interpretation of the law.

But he added, "This was a very sad distraction for our city. We have serious issues in this city, predominantly revolving around public safety, but also in creating a positive image for our city ... to help create an economic renaissance."

The initiative, Morris said, did nothing to help the city with either of those issues.

With or without it, however, the public-safety challenge is huge.

Councilman Chas Kelley

went so far as to say he would not be opposed to the National Guard patrolling city streets.

One former member of the City Council, Betty Dean Anderson, has said the ongoing crime problem has persuaded her to run again for council after losing in 2003 to 6th District Councilman Rikke Van Johnson by fewer than 100 votes.

"We had crime," Anderson remembered of her eight years on the council, "but not at the level it is at now. This is an extreme crisis level."

She acknowledged the issue has been thrust to the center of politics. Asked if it would remain there, she said, "If it continues at this crisis level, of course."

The heart of the

For a community beset with violence, a

Staff Report

Tuesday, June 27, 2006

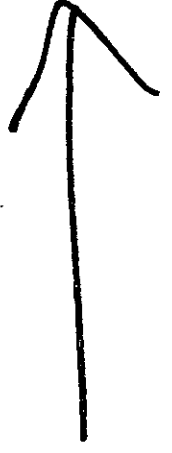
problem

comprehensive approach is needed



A spotlight on potential solutions to crime in our community. For more, visit www.sbsun.com.

MYNISHA'S CIRCLE UPDATE: ROLE MODELS NEEDED



For Ray Turner of Temple Missionary Baptist Church in San Bernardino, it's like taking Tylenol for a tumor. It might soothe the discomfort, but the problem hasn't gone away.

So goes the discussion in our community about how best to cure a crime cancer that seemingly grows with each passing week.

The dozens of lives lost to violence so far this year in San Bernardino and throughout the region underscore the challenge communities like ours face: addressing long-term needs while scrambling for short-term fixes.

Most experts agree that a three-pronged approach of prevention, intervention and suppression is the most effective way to achieve both immediate and lasting results.

Easier said than done. Mayor Pat Morris campaigned on such a platform last winter and has followed that up by initiating his suppression-heavy Operation Phoenix crime-fighting program and working with the county and grass-roots groups on longer-term prevention and intervention efforts. Yet the crime problem continues to grow.

This much is certain: No single solution can fix the problem. It requires collaboration, will and an understanding that many different pieces need to come together.

Here, then, is a category-by-category breakdown of short- and long-term ways to address crime and violence, based on information gathered from town meetings, communitywide strategic planning sessions and research by Sun reporters and editors over the past seven months.

Families and parenting

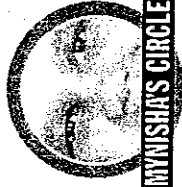
SHORT TERM: This is at or near the top of just about everyone's list. "Fix" parenting and you fix just about every other social ill. Although the problem can't be solved overnight, there are any number of short-term remedies. Neighborhood churches, which have a powerful draw in their communities, could open their doors to monthly parenting classes. An idea being advanced by former Councilwoman Betty Dean Anderson would create a grass-roots volunteer movement involving a handful of parents at one school. The program would then gradually expand to other parents and other schools. There are also intervention programs such as A Time for Change Foundation, which has helped more than 250 at-risk mothers — many of them parolees — since 2002.

LONG TERM: Money can't fix the problem, but it's a necessary component. Time for Change is seeking a \$150,000 federal grant to mentor 25 children of imprisoned parents. The idea is based on the fact that children whose parents are in jail are five to seven times more likely to end up in prison themselves. The San Bernardino County Children's Network gets about \$3 million a year in state and federal assistance but handled 50,000 referrals last year. Ultimately, said the network's executive director, Kent Paxton, the answer lies in partnerships between government and the community — to secure more funding and raise the level of awareness regarding the importance of parenting. Schools, businesses, churches, neighborhood groups and the media can all do a better job of emphasizing parenting skills. Turner, among others, said government needs to stop handcuffing parents by taking away their right to discipline children — that the line between enforcement of child abuse and allowing parents to be parents has been blurred.

Youth

SHORT TERM: Several efforts are under way this summer to focus on youth development and youth opportunities. These include various youth summits and rallies. Although the impact of these efforts is largely long-term, the more immediate message they send is critically important at a time when children are dying on our streets. Perhaps the biggest short-term opportunity lies in the abundance of existing programs and organizations focused on helping young people, including Time for Change, Casa de San Bernardino, Victory Outreach, Project Action, Malcolm X Academy, Central City Lutheran Mission and Los Padrinos Youth Services.

LONG TERM: Most believe the solution centers on better adult role models, particularly in those homes where parents aren't doing their jobs. Timothy Evans of the Unforgettables Foundation has floated the idea of a "dirty dozen" — a handful of anointed role models and go-to people in every neighborhood throughout the city. Grass-roots efforts such as these don't necessarily require money, just commit-



A spotlight on potential solutions to crime in our community. For more, visit www.sbsun.com.

MYNISHA'S CIRCLE UPDATE: ROLE MODELS NEEDED

The latest homicides in San Bernardino are vivid reminders of the need for community involvement in the war on crime.

While several efforts are under way to promote youth consciousness, e-mail discussions among members of Mynisha's Circle in recent days have centered on the need for more positive adult role models.

This will be the focus of the next general meeting of Mynisha's Circle at 6 p.m. today at The Sun, 2239 Gannett Parkway, San Bernardino.

Please R.S.V.P. to Denise Varnado at (909) 386-3843 or via e-mail at denise.varnado@sbsun.com.

Mynisha's Circle is a community-outreach effort created after the November shooting death of 11-year-old Mynisha Crenshaw. The circle promotes open discussion about crime and its contributing causes, and is open to the public.

The more formalized efforts, however, do need funding, and that will often come from the state and federal level. Last week, Rep. Joe Baca, D-Rialto, announced \$325,000 in funding for a development program at Cal State San Bernardino for at-risk youths, and more than \$200,000 for local Boys & Girls Clubs.

June 27, 2006



June 27, 2006

Funding

SHORT TERM: With the spotlight on crime, San Bernardino has a window of opportunity to secure funding it might otherwise not get. In addition to last week's announcement by Baca, Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., recently made a \$1 million appropriations request to fund local gang-prevention efforts. Boxer has also introduced Mynisha's Law — in memory of slain San Bernardino 11-year-old Mynisha Crenshaw — which would provide federal assistance to communities that show a willingness to aggressively confront gang violence.

LONG TERM: Securing long-term funding is no easy task. Most grants have only a two- to three-year life span and require the agencies to seek matching funds or to show proof of continued financing after the grant expires. Additionally, there is competition among the agencies and a growing philosophical debate over where that money should be used — toward law enforcement and more immediate fixes, or toward agencies. Increasingly, groups that partner with one another have the best chance of securing state and federal dollars.

Guns

SHORT TERM: The constitutional debate over gun control clouds any discussion over how best to keep guns out of the hands of criminals. More than 9,000 handguns were sold legally in San Bernardino County last year, and countless thousands illegally. Many nonprofit groups offer free gun locks to anyone who asks. Some communities have had modest results with gun exchanges and gun lotteries — offering rewards for those who turn in weapons.

LONG TERM: Unlike the United States, Canada does not constitutionally guarantee the right to bear arms, which has given the government more flexibility when it comes to controlling handguns and banning assault weapons. In 2004, Canada recorded only 175 gun-related homicides. At its current pace, San Bernardino alone will record more than 50 in 2006. That constitutional argument notwithstanding, numerous studies show that guns are a symptom of violence — gang violence in particular — and not the cause.

Gangs

SHORT TERM: Because gang violence is so deeply rooted in social, economic and cultural factors, any short-term attempt to fix the problem is, at most, a Band-Aid. Then there are the sheer numbers — an estimated 300 gangs and 15,000 gang members operate in the county, totals that have grown steadily over the years as poverty-stricken, gang-affiliated families migrate east from Los Angeles. San Bernardino and Riverside have used gang injunctions to try to keep gangs at bay — a tactic that has worked in other communities. There's also growing talk on the streets of the need for a gang summit and truce, but that would require the city to temporarily lift its injunctions.

LONG TERM: Experts worry that gang suppression only moves the problem from one community to the next. It's one of the arguments

against Morris' Operation Phoenix — that cleaning up one neighborhood puts another at risk. Long term, most agree, the approach must be regional in nature and focus on prevention and intervention. Boxer's appropriations request, for instance, would allow for 11 juvenile-probation officers to be teamed with public-school children at risk of joining gangs. Other intervention ideas include requiring students to wear school uniforms and setting and enforcing curfews. New York is taking a different approach — focusing on tougher law enforcement, but on a statewide level so that no one community is more at risk than others. The New York Commission of Investigation's recommendations include tougher penalties for gang crimes, criminalizing gang recruitment, creating a statewide gang database and allowing roving wiretaps to thwart the common practice among gang members to switch cell phones.

Drugs

SHORT TERM: That gangs proliferate because of drugs is somewhat of a myth. In fact, most San Bernardino gangs fall into the category of "street gangs" and are focused more on protecting their geographic turf than their drug trade. Nonetheless, gangs and drugs are closely aligned. Gang members are more likely to use drugs, and communities that effectively use drug sweeps are more likely to mitigate gang activity.

LONG TERM: Suppression alone will not make the problem go away. Long-term drug intervention and prevention is needed, but it will cost money. The federal government will spend about \$12 billion this year in the war against illegal drugs. By comparison, experts say the cost of drug and alcohol abuse to American society as a whole is somewhere between \$500 billion and \$1 trillion annually, when you factor in such things as crime, lost productivity and treatment.

Business

SHORT TERM: There's a direct correlation between violence and a community's economic climate. More jobs, fewer kids in trouble. Part of this rests with businesses, and with entrepreneurs willing to invest in the community. Equally important is the need to prepare young people for the working world — by giving them job skills and instilling work ethic. Several of this summer's youth summits are soliciting businesses' help by offering training and internships.

LONG TERM: The business climate has shifted, and with it, the job market. There is more exporting of jobs and less local manufacturing. This will require the labor force, and the schools that teach it, to adapt to the business community more than the other way around by developing different kinds of skills. The county schools' Alliance for Education and logistics-industry training at San Bernardino Valley College are among the efforts targeted in this direction.

June 27, 2006

Image

SHORT TERM: Confronting San Bernardino's problems has been a bitter pill for some, who feel it puts the city in a bad light. But by aggressively addressing the problems, through programs such as "Operation Phoenix," the city also stands to gain much-needed state and federal support. The current crisis also presents a challenge and an opportunity for the city to set aside its longstanding internal and political differences and unite in ways it hasn't in generations.

LONG TERM: Continued collaboration at the county, state, and federal level is a must. Morris enlisted the support of county Supervisor Josie Gonzales in getting Phoenix off the ground. Other communities have found success in building around architectural, geographic, cultural and historical assets. The Route 66 Rendezvous and the Western Regional Little League tournament bring thousands of people into the city each year. The San Manuel Indian Bingo and Casino brings in thousands a day. The Interstate 210 extension will bring in even more when it is completed in 2007. All are ongoing and long-term opportunities to showcase the city in a new light.

Value of life

SHORT TERM: The death of an 11-year-old boy on a school playground and a 16-year-old over a cell phone underscores a lost morality that many believe is at the heart of our problems. Parenting and media exposure are often cited as contributing causes. Politics, too. Community activists point to the bitter irony that a young woman cannot get her body pierced without parental approval but can get an abortion.

LONG TERM: Parenting, a focus on youth, reducing the number of guns on the streets, all of the above.

June 27, 2002

Religious leaders seek

Faithful asked to come together

By Stephen Wall
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — Local religious leaders struggled Monday to understand the latest wave of violence sweeping the city's troubled streets and vowed to work together to address the problem.

"The problem I struggle with as a religious leader is trying to identify the problem," said Pastor Raymond Turner

of Temple Missionary Baptist Church. "We know the end result is violence, but what is perpetuating that? There are no easy answers."

Turner's congregation has been deeply affected by deadly violence.

In December 2002, 15-year-old Tory Howe-Lynch was gunned down by a gang member outside the church after leaving choir practice.

Billy Edward Johnson, 24, was sentenced to 50 years to life in state prison

for the killing.

The church held prayer walks and candlelight vigils every Friday night for two years in response to the shooting.

"We were in the streets praying with people and talking with people," Turner said. "As a church, you name it, we've tried it. But we're not about to give up."

Turner said community and church leaders must unite in solving the problem. That hasn't always been so easy.

The religious community includes some of the most powerful leaders in San Bernardino, which over the years has led to rival clerical organizations that

vigilance, unity in city

quietly competed with one another.

"I think all the religious institutions have to give up some of their arrogance and isolation and work together," said Hillel Cohn, rabbi emeritus of Congregation Emanu El in San Bernardino. "It's not just the religious institutions. It's law enforcement and civic leaders. It's got to be a holistic approach."

Robert Fairley, pastor of New Hope Missionary Baptist Church, vowed to increase his efforts to help parents and young people.

"We recognize we have a lot of youth who are angry because they have grown

up alone because of absentee parents," Fairley said. "Parents are busy trying to make a living, and they're not giving their children the time they need. We're paying a price for the breakdown of the family and the breakdown of the home."

Added Turner: "We have created this monster we are trying to tame. But we don't want to use the medicine it's going to take to cure the problem. We have to talk about ethics and morality and the value of life. We're dealing with a society that doesn't value life."

Contact writer Stephen Wall at (909) 792-5661 or via e-mail at stephen.wall@sbsun.com.

COMMUNITY EVENTS CALENDAR

The following are community activities, classes, programs, services and events offered to the public.

CLASSES

■ **THE BOYS & GIRLS CLUB OF SAN BERNARDINO**, 1180 W. Ninth St., offers kids a variety of daily classes that include swimming, reading, tae kwon do, basketball, arts and crafts, and much more.

The club requires a \$7 annual membership. However, the club offers scholarships and other opportunities for those in need of financial assistance.

For more information, call (909) 888-6751.

■ **DELMANN HEIGHTS COMMUNITY CENTER**, 2969 N. Flores St., San Bernardino, offers a variety of classes daily, weekly and monthly including cooking, music, open mic sessions and more.

For details, call (909) 384-5417.

■ **THE RUDY C. HERNANDEZ COMMUNITY CENTER**, 222 N. Lugo Ave., offers a variety of activities throughout the week, including cooking classes and youth-club gatherings.

From July 7 to Aug. 30, camp will be held for children ages 8 to 14. Activities will include swimming, arts and crafts, and free lunch.

Also beginning July 7, the center will offer a summer lunch program for children 18 and younger from noon to 1 p.m. daily.

For more information, call (909) 384-5420.

■ From 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, the **NICHOLSON PARK COMMUNITY CENTER** offers a variety of games and classes, including a nutrition class held from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. Wednesdays and Skip Bo classes held every hour for children and adults.

The center is at 2750 W. Second St., San Bernardino. For more information, call (909) 874-3423.

■ **PEOPLE'S CHOICE INC.**, 1505 W. Highland Ave., offers anger-management courses, community-service resources and makes available basketball courts during business hours.

For more information, call (909) 887-3524.

PROGRAMS, MEETINGS, SERVICES

■ Inland Empire chapter of **PARENTS OF MURDERED CHILDREN** meets at 7 p.m. on the first Thursday of each month at Preciado Funeral Home, 923 W. Mill St., San Bernardino.

For more information call (909) 887-6164.

■ **LOS PADRINOS** graffiti removal and volunteer work, (909) 885-7066.

■ **VOLUNTEERS FOR AMERICA**, 720 S. E. St., San Bernardino, offers resources for parents of children under the age of 6 including shelter, medical, parenting classes in English and Spanish, and domestic-violence classes.

For more information, call (909) 888-4577.

EVENTS

■ Victory Outreach will host a live stage production of "A Tale of Two Gangstas: Common Ground" at 6 p.m. July 14 and July 15 at the National Orange Show Events Center, 689 S. E. St., San Bernardino.

For ticket information, call (909) 386-1070.

ACTIVITIES

■ **LYTLE CREEK COMMUNITY CENTER**, 380 S. K St., San Bernardino, offers game opportunities for kids from 1:30 to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday, and from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturdays. A variety of recreational activities throughout the day will include pool, PlayStation and much more.

The center is also home to cooking classes from 5 to 6 p.m. Wednesdays.

More information can be obtained by calling (909) 384-5424.

■ Activities at the **RUBEN CAMPOS COMMUNITY CENTER**, 1717 W. Fifth St., range from basketball to board games. Each week, the facility will host a different summer theme, from alohas to splash madness.

Activities will be held between 9 a.m. and 8 p.m.

For more information, call (909) 384-5421.

■ The **GONZALES AND LUQUE COMMUNITY CENTERS** welcome residents in or around Colton.

From 2 to 5 p.m. each day, the two centers play host to a variety of games, crafts, sporting activities and much more.

The Gonzales Community Center is located at 670 Colton Ave., and can be reached at (909) 370-6153. The Luque Community Center is at 292 E. O St. and can be reached at (909) 370-6153.

If you know of any other community events, centers or organizations, send inquiries to The Sun, 2239 Gannett Parkway, San Bernardino, CA 92407 or community.news@sbsun.com.

June 27, 2006

A truce to end bloodshed?

Pastors unite to broker cease-fire among gangs

By Robert Rogers
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — In a desperate but determined effort to quell raging gun violence, a Westside church and a local religious leader have joined forces and are moving to forge truces among the area's street gangs.

The road to a truce promises to be long and hard. Experts say the concept of negotiating peace in hostile neighborhoods is

complicated by scattered gangs, dead and imprisoned leadership, migration from the Los Angeles area and a younger, more volatile generation of members.

But most agree that if peace is to be brokered, it's on the religious community to make it happen.

"The issues driving gang violence in San Bernardino right now are very multifaceted," said Paul Callanan, a probation officer and the author of the county's strategic gang plan. "This is a different generation and different dynamic than that surrounding previous attempts at truces in the 1980s. But that said, the players in the best position to try are the local faith-

based communities, but even they're probably swinging in the dark."

Callanan said innumerable factors, including relatively recent gang migration, waning influence of older leaders and blurred lines between gangs and neighborhoods make the concept of truce a poor fit.

But the dynamics aren't deterring some local clergy. Although plans are sketchy and meetings with gang members have not yet occurred, church leaders said late Monday they were coordinating among one another before reaching out to the street.

There is also an element of secrecy,

See **TRUCE** / Page A8

Truce

continued from page A3

with organizers saying a bright spotlight on their efforts could damage trust they are trying to nurture.

"We've got to be careful when we expose everything to the public because (gang leaders) don't feel safe, but there are people in these gangs that want this to stop," said the Rev. Reginald Beamon, who said he's working with peace activists in the black community and is aligned with Victory Outreach as ambassadors for the Latino community.

Beamon said the goal is a pact between gangs to maintain six-month cease-fire city. He said a respite from bloodshed is vital to for-

Police are not involved, and they can't be, Beamon said.

Police Lt. Mark Garcia echoed Beamon's assessment. "To my knowledge, we are not involved with brokering any truces, but if the faith-based community wants to attempt it, we support it."

Beamon said he's identified seven different gangs to work with. Abraham Avila of Victory Outreach said Beamon attended the ministry's service Sunday and talked strategy with church leaders. Avila said Associate Pastor Ramon Ramos and others would work on crafting a "peace treaty" today.

"We're known in the community as the one who can

Rumors have swirled for more than a week that religious leaders might move to create a truce.

City Attorney James F. Penman confirmed last week his office had been contacted by community leaders regarding the possibility of assisting with a gang truce. He said that in the past, gang truces have benefited San Bernardino.

A truce between rival gangs in San Bernardino and Colton effectively reduced violence for a period of time during the late 1970s, Penman said. Penman is less optimistic that a truce between gangs would have the same effect.

Robert Flowers, 48, who grew up on the street by just his last name, is an original gang-

"The Projects," a gang neighborhood at Medical Center Drive and Ninth Street, Flowers urged the churches to stop the violence.

"When I was coming up, we got down with these," Flowers said, raising his fists into a boxer's pose. "Now there's all this gunplay. It's on the churches, they the only one's who have enough respect to get all these little guys to a meeting place."

Contact writer Robert Rogers at (909) 395-2222

June 27, 2006

MULTIMEDIA
www.sbsun.com

PODCASTS

Hear from people who are trying to make a positive difference in our community.

POLL RESULTS

A sampling of what sbsun.com visitors thought about crime and solving the crime problems in San Bernardino.

GALLERIES

The effects of the mayhem, as seen in photos and the faces of our neighbors.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Read more about what our readers have said about the issues raised in this sampling of letters to the editor.

BLOG: insidesocal.com/troubledtown

Join the discussion about issues and possible solutions to crime in San Bernardino.

INSIDE

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS: A call for a comprehensive approach | **A4**

TWO MORE KILLED: Boy finds parents slain in their apartment | **B1**

Tuesday, June 27, 2006

Teen fatally shot at his birthday party

By Joe Nelson
Staff Writer

ADELANTO — It was a celebration of life that ended in death — a teenage boy gunned down during a fight at his birthday party.

Adrian Washington died at Arrowhead Regional Medical Center in Colton after the shooting outside his home in the 15000 block of Fremont Drive about 12:10 a.m. Sunday, sheriff's officials said.

Sheriff's homicide detectives released a photo Monday of a suspect, 17-year-old DeAnthony George Wilson.

Adrian was celebrating his 17th birthday when a fight broke out outside the home involving several girls, sheriff's officials said Monday.

"There was a large group of people in the street, and there was a fight taking place when (Wilson) started shooting randomly at the crowd," sheriff's officials said.

iff's spokeswoman Cindy Beavers said.

Numerous witnesses identified Wilson as the shooter and said he was an acquaintance of Adrian's, according to a sheriff's news release.

Wilson is known to frequent San Bernardino and Moreno Valley and is a known member of San Bernardino's Fifth Street Home Town Crews gang. He is considered armed and dangerous.

Adrian was not believed to be

a gang member, Beavers said. "They have no reason to believe the victim had any gang ties at all," Beavers said.

Wilson is described as black, 5-foot-4 to 5-foot-6 and weighing between 125 and 160 pounds. He goes by the street names "Lil Pit," "Lil George" or "George." He has a tattoo on his right arm reading "GENEVA."

Anyone with information is asked to contact sheriff's Detective Robert Alexander at (909) 387-3579.

Fibromyalgia

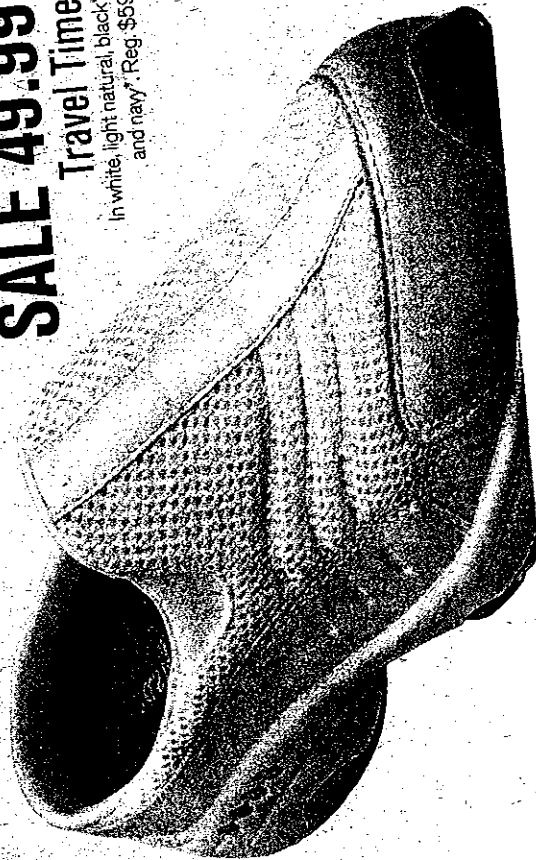
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Tuesday, June 27, 2006

More schools raise hopes for growth in kids' programs

By George Watson
Staff Writer

SAN BERNARDINO — The city should be able to greatly increase the number of programs it offers to children because of plans to build 20 new schools over the next decade, said a top school official.

More programs means more opportunities for San Bernardino's children to stay out of trouble and away from dangerous gang elements, said Marlin Brown, president of the San Bernardino City Unified School Board.

"One of the first things we can do is sit down and plan with the city," Brown said. "We should bring city and school department heads together, so if you are going to plan a park, we can figure out how can we back up a new school next to it."

The recent surge of violence that has swept through San Bernardino has caught the school board's attention, Brown said.

"Every board member that I have talked with, even if it's just passing through the hallways, is very concerned," Brown said.

"A lot of them are already involved personally, outside of the board. They are working with their community groups, church groups, that sort of thing."

As board members, Brown said, they can have a continued impact.

The first step is to continue working closely with Mayor Pat Morris, Brown said. Meetings have already been held since Morris' election earlier this year, and school officials hope to expand upon them.

Over the next eight years, Brown said, the school district plans to spend all of the \$500 million available to it for construction of 20 new schools.

New schools mean more gymnasiums, more fields and more community rooms that can be made available for adult-supervised programs for children, he said.

"We are really under the average for those kinds of programs and facilities in this city," Brown said.

The school district continues trolling for state and federal grants to help pay for new after-school, tutorial and day-care programs.

One such program is the state-funded after-school program used at some but not all of

the district's schools, said Arturo Delgado, the district's superintendent.

It keeps children occupied and out of trouble until 6 p.m., he said.

"It's a way of giving kids a place to be after school," Delgado said.

With several children having been slain in recent weeks and summer already under way, school officials are exploring how to immediately expand current summer-recreation programs, Delgado said.

"We need to be able to give kids something to do," he said.

In the upcoming year, Delgado said the district hopes to expand the number of forums held for parents. The district began holding forums after several fights last fall at Pacific High School, and they proved quite successful, Delgado said.

"We need to involve our parents more," Delgado said.

The superintendent said the school district can further emphasize its character-education program, which teaches children how to deal with stressful or difficult situations.

Contact writer George Watson at (909) 386-3884 or via e-mail at george.watson@sbsun.com.

June 27, 2006

Mentors give kids stability

By Emily Sachs
Staff Writer

The cost to be a mentor: \$0.

The estimated hourly value of a volunteer's time: \$17.55.

The impact of a mentor on a child: Priceless.

In San Bernardino County, there are thousands of children in need of someone to look up to, who will let them be children in a society that is forcing many of them to grow up frighteningly early.

"They've just got absolutely nothing to do but walk around and join a gang," said Jenna Colburn, executive director of Child Advocates of San Bernardino County, "or stand on a corner and get shot."

About 200 of the children are on a short list for a mentor through Colburn's agency.

Volunteers with more than 15 hours a month to give become mentors to the children. Those with less time become educational advocates and represent the child in parent-teacher meetings and monitor his or her academic and school experience.

Anyone who wants to make a true difference should give at least 18 months to it,

said J. Robert Flores, director of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention — part of the U.S. Department of Justice. Any less, and the experience could be detrimental.

"It emphasizes that a kid is not worthwhile to have someone stick with them," Flores said. "But if it's consistently done, then it becomes part of the message that's communicated of, 'Here's someone who cares enough to stick with you.'"

One of the teens in Colburn's program was recently moved from her group home to the Central Valley. There, she started failing school and doing badly personally. Then her mentor stepped in.

Her mentor wrote a passionate report to the judge, "that this is horrible... she has to have stability in her life," Colburn said.

The result is that the girl will be returning to the area.

"The judge was so thankful... No one knew what was happening to this girl," Colburn said.

Most mentors have no idea what impact they really have. They just know they are getting more out of it than they ever ex-

pected.

"Most people, the minute they (are assigned) a child, they're hooked," Colburn said. "It's an amazing program. I guarantee you, it's the best thing you'll ever do. You'll never regret it. There's nothing better to do with your time. And if it's not you, who else is there? There's no one who will do this for the children."

■ Child Advocates of San Bernardino County is seeking educational advocates and court advocates. A three-day training is required and volunteers must pass a background check. For information, call (909) 881-6760.

■ Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Los Angeles and the Inland Empire is looking for mentors to work with local youth. For information, visit www.bbbslaie.org or call (800) 207-7567.

■ The San Bernardino Parks, Recreation and Community Services mentoring program needs mentors to be paired with children. For information, call (909) 885-1847.

Staff writer Megan Blaney contributed to this report.

