

Gangs in city discussed at community forum with Jackson police

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Gang activity in any community is a serious issue, and the [Jackson Police Department](#) is looking to residents and community members to help combat the problem.

Although no numbers are available on how many gangs there are in the community, police Detective Gary Schuette told about 60 people at a presentation Monday he compares gangs to a cancerous cell in the body.

"If you leave it untreated, it is only going to grow and get worse," Schuette said at the Carnegie branch of the Jackson District Library. "(Gangs are) like a cancer to our community."

The police presentation and community forum were intended to enlighten area residents on gangs.

The No. 1 activity for gangs is drug dealing, Schuette said. Other crimes gangs are involved with include robberies, burglary, fraud, organized retail fraud, auto theft, arson, assault and homicide, he said.

Police Chief Matt Heins said he hoped to convey information about gangs to the community during the meeting and work to open the lines of communication with the public.

"It is a community issue," Heins said. "It requires all of us to work together to deal with this problem."

Sandy Jimenez of Jackson attended the meeting and hoped to get information on how she could help children in her neighborhood.

"I try to be involved in my community every day," she said. "I try and build relationships with the neighborhood kids."

Schuette urged parents to watch for signs of gang activities.

"It is important to attack the issue head-on so it doesn't rise to the next level and the next," he said.

Warning signs a child might be involved in a gang included:

- Using hand signals to communicate with friends.
- Gang symbols on tattoos, books, clothes or walls.
- Unexplained physical injuries.
- Unexplained cash or goods such as clothing or jewelry.

Parents should also talk to children about the dangers and consequences of gang involvement.

Schuette said it is also important that residents call 911 and provide as much detail as possible if they notice illegal activities in their neighborhoods.

Attendees at the meeting asked how they could cooperate with the police and still remain anonymous. When they call 911, they should let the dispatcher know they do not want an officer to come to their door

or call while at the scene, Heins said.

Residents can also utilize the Jackson County TIP line by calling 787-0212 or call the department directly at 788-4100.