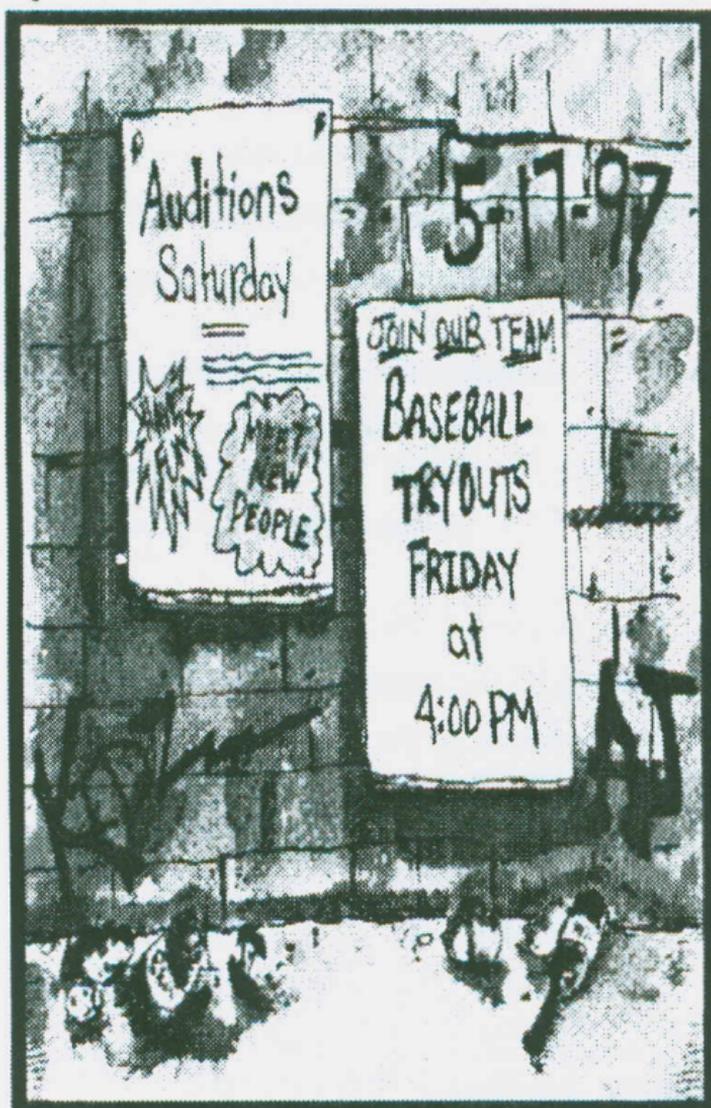


THE WRITING
ON THE WALL

GANGS



KNOW THE FACTS

What is a gang? A gang is considered to be a group of people, that identify with each other by adopting a gang name, symbols, signs, colors, clothing, or tattoos. Gang members vary in age, however gang recruitment normally occurs during early adolescence. A gang exhibits anti-social and criminal behavior. Members of gangs may engage in drug or alcohol abuse and a variety of other illegal activities. They use graffiti to mark their territory and send messages.

Why Kids Join Gangs

- Gangs provide a sense of camaraderie, friendship and family.
- Kids can experience success and confidence in gang life while experiencing failure at home.
- Respect, fear and recognition are gained by joining a gang.
- A feeling of hopelessness exists, there is nothing better to do.
- The gang provides a sense of security and protection.
- The belief that gang life leads to money and power (especially for an individual without skills or job opportunities).
- The excitement of the lifestyle.
- Family tradition.

Who is at Risk?

Children who have low self esteem or depression are commonly at risk for gang recruitment. They are easily persuaded and are looking for a sense of belonging. Other risk factors include juveniles who distrust adults, who abuse drugs or alcohol, and children who are naive. Unfortunately, they don't recognize the destructive behavior that links them together.

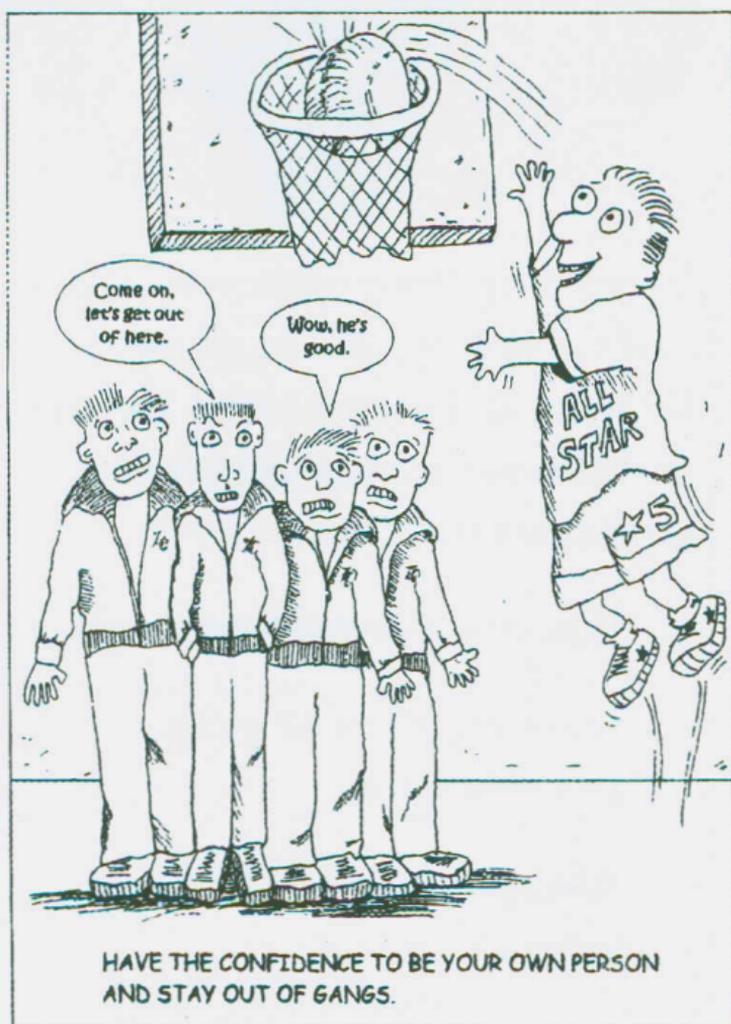
What Parents Can Do

- ◆ Increase awareness of your child's belongings, clothes, and room. Know who their friends are and where they "hang out."
- ◆ Talk to your child or teenager. Get answers to your questions about their behavior and discuss the consequences of being in a gang.
- ◆ Contact your local law enforcement agency or juvenile probation department. They may have a crime prevention or gang specialist who can give you up-to-date information.
- ◆ Call community-based organizations. Many have experience with gang problems and can give you valuable guidance.
- ◆ Report and immediately remove any graffiti in your neighborhood or local school grounds.
- ◆ Take action - this is the most important thing you can do as an individual, a group, or as an organization.
- ◆ *Don't ignore the signs of gang activity.*

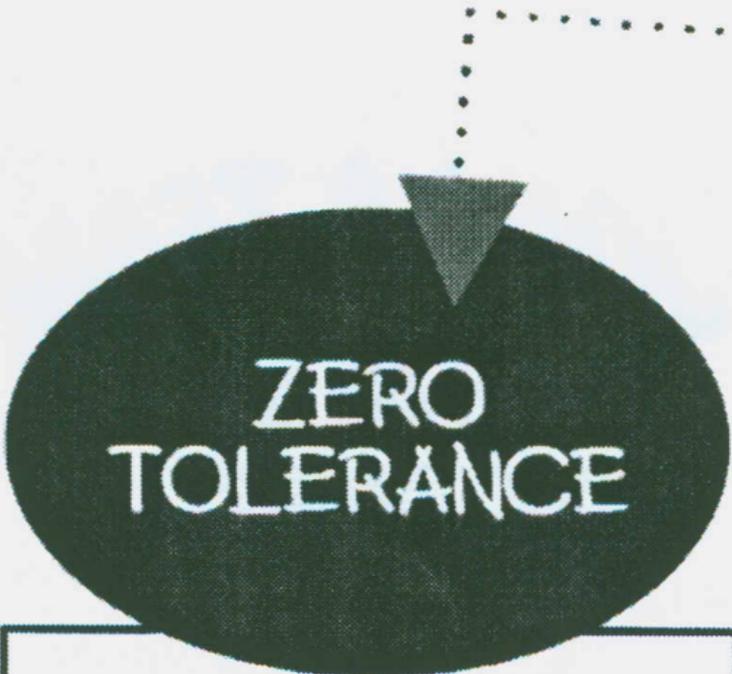
Working For Solutions

Many people recognize that solutions to gang problems cannot be found through law enforcement alone. Family, church, schools, and the community involvement are crucial components in the battle against gang violence. Children need to know they can have a better future. Children need to know that someone cares about them and has an interest in what they do. If you suspect your child or a friend is a member of a gang, talk to them, listen to them and most important, never give up on them!

JOIN A TEAM NOT A GANG



Respect Yourself
Be an Individual
Set Goals
Have Hobbies
and
Interests



ZERO TOLERANCE

Identifying the problem is only half the battle. Teens need families and community to help end the violence. Parents and guardians need to:

- **Educate themselves on gangs.**
- **Look for signs of gang membership.**
- **Always communicate with your children.**
- **Know where your children are at all times.**
- **Know your child's friends.**
- **Keep your children involved in school activities, sports and other positive programs.**

**EDUCATION • COMMUNITY •
ENFORCEMENT...
A NECESSARY PARTNERSHIP
IN
THE NEW MILLENIUM**



**MIDDLESEX COUNTY
BOARD OF CHOSEN FREEHOLDERS**



**COUNTY OF MIDDLESEX
PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE**
25 KIRKPATRICK ST. - 3RD FLOOR
NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J. 08901
732-745-3300