



**San Fernando Valley Coalition on Gangs  
Operations Valley-Bureau  
Los Angeles Police Department**

The San Fernando Valley Coalition on Gangs (the Coalition) is a multi-disciplinary partnership focused on prevention, intervention and suppression of gang activity in the San Fernando Valley. It is the intent of this proposal to demonstrate a project that touches on all of the program goals identified by the 2008 James Q. Wilson Award.

The mission of the Coalition is to reduce fear of crime and strengthen neighborhood cohesion, reduce violent gang crime and gang membership, empower the community through education and increased awareness and provide a partnered approach to address issues that promote and enhance lifestyle changes.

Early in 2006, the San Fernando Valley Coalition on Gangs identified the Canoga Park community as showing a radical increase in gang crime. There were particular concerns over the fact that there was a high level of recruitment of young teens.

While LAPD and other law enforcement agencies focused on more intensive suppression, LAPD also understood that this, alone, would not resolve gang violence. A greater emphasis needed to be placed on prevention and intervention through partnering with other agencies in the community.

The initial task was to utilize existing resources to increase after school programs, thereby providing youth with more positive alternatives to gang activity. Through community outreach, better communication and collaboration, an existing after school teen drop-in program was expanded and Friday Night Extreme Teens was created. The program includes safe, structured activities on Friday nights, with participation from police, recreation staff and local community service clubs and church members. The program consists of coed sports, followed by dances, speakers or other recreational activities. Youth in the program are busy every weekend, until the park closes at 10PM.

There are presently 125 youth signed up for the program, which runs all year long, and the program has is now being replicated at parks in other communities. Most importantly, youth crime has dropped in Canoga Park.



## **Background Information**

The San Fernando Valley section of the City of Los Angeles has grown to support the recognition of Los Angeles as being the gang capital of the world. The gang population, and resultant gang crime, has literally exploded during the last decade. This area has a population of 1.27 million people and encompasses 221.8 square miles. The area has changed over the last two decades from a suburban community, primarily Caucasian, to an urban area with great ethnic and economic diversity. Pockets of poverty exist in areas that are densely populated and the crime rate and gang membership has risen.

The demographic changes have been accompanied by a rising concern among Valley residents about crime. Although there is still the perception that it is safer than the rest of Los Angeles, the San Fernando Valley is home to seventy eight known gangs, over 200 tagger gangs and 15,000 gang members that are known to law enforcement.

In 2001, the San Fernando Valley Coalition on Gangs (the Coalition) was formed through the leadership of the Los Angeles Police Department. The Coalition encompasses an area policed by six police stations of the Los Angeles Police Department. This is not a police organization, but a community based effort to address the rising gang crime concerns in the City of Los Angeles. Prior to the creation of the Coalition in 2001, 65% of all homicides in the San Fernando Valley were gang related and all gang-related crimes were climbing. The police department, along with other governmental agencies, was challenged by informal and less than effective coordination with other community resources. Similarly, parks, schools, faith community, community based organizations (CBO) and non-profit organizations did not largely coordinate efforts or communicate.

The Coalition brought police together with the political and judicial bodies, members of the school district, various law enforcement agencies, service providers, and neighborhood councils. Faith based institutions and businesses from all over the Valley, community based organizations and non-profit organizations were assembled to discuss rising gang crime and gang membership under the umbrella of gang prevention, intervention and suppression. This effort has enabled the Los Angeles Police Department to be wholly involved in a community policing effort and has provided a networking and problem solving opportunity for all of the other members of the Coalition. Working together, the Coalition developed a strategic plan for addressing gang violence in the San Fernando Valley.

Members also created a resource directory that was produced and distributed to schools, parks and law enforcement agencies to provide a source for referrals of at-risk youth and their families. A marketing technique was devised which included informational brochures, a billboard campaign, public events, a website and public service announcements. This effort to identify, coordinate and facilitate the deployment of resources available in this section of Los Angeles was an incredible success that resulted in many peripheral efforts and partnerships. Each of the resources was further challenged by the communities due to their enhanced visibility in the community, and due to enhanced partnerships with other resources and organizations.

Members of the Coalition continue to meet on a monthly basis to discuss recent trends in gang crime, as well as possible strategies to address those trends. Gang awareness, partnerships and coordination of efforts is certainly a paramount asset of the Coalition.

### **Selecting the Project**

During 2006 and 2007, LAPD Gang Statistics indicated that there was a spike in gang-related Part 1 crimes in the community of Canoga Park causing the Canoga Park Alabama Street (CPA) gang to be listed as one of Los Angeles' Top 10 Most Violent Street Gangs. The gang has an estimated 400 active members, within 4.65 square miles. Aggravating this issue was a concern that the CPA gang was becoming involved in brown on black racial hate crimes.

Canoga Park is 50% Latino, 28% white, 15% Asian and 4% Black. The CPA gang had been virtually the exclusive in the community for more than three generations since the 1930's. They had also been exclusively a Mexican gang until recent years when other Latin Americans began to move into the area. More recently, there has been movement of African Americans from the inner city to the Canoga Park area. Many of the "shot callers" were out of prison and actively recruiting young teens as gang members. Largely due to racial conflicts in custodial environments, members of CPA engaged in random shootings of African Americans at an alarming rate.

Based on statistical information, members of the Coalition made the decision to reach out to Canoga Park in a multi-faceted approach to positively effect the quickly growing violent gang crime problem in this community. The plan addressed:

- Coordinate and facilitate a multi faceted approach to strategically addressing the rising gang crime, inclusive of hate crime, by the CPA gang
- Create community awareness of the gang problems
- Identify community stakeholders
- Develop a sense of accountability by all stakeholders
- Partner and facilitate all available resources with a strategic, directed approach
- Expand the Coalition by recruiting members of the community and enlisting their assistance in providing or creating intervention and prevention programs
- Identify unfilled needs
- Institutionalize a Canoga Park council on youth
- Intensely suppress gang activity by law enforcement agencies
- Engage Parolees and Probationers as to their court mandated conditions

## **Analysis Techniques**

The Los Angeles Police Department has incredible analytical, assessment and presentation capabilities in regards to identifying and tracking crimes in the City of Los Angeles. As a partner of the San Fernando Valley Coalition on Gangs, the police department committed to supporting their efforts with real time and historical crime data. In addition, the police department has provided access to expanded crime data and crime analysis capabilities shared with other local, state and federal government databases that provided the ability to track crime trends, series and patterns. Included in this proposal are graphs that display some of these capabilities in a specific presentation of crime trends in the Canoga Park area attached to this specific project. Finally, the Los Angeles Police Department deploys gang experts on the streets of Los Angeles. The experience and knowledge of these experts was provided to the Coalition. The Lieutenant in charge of all gang operations across the six police stations that encompass the area adopted by the Coalition is a predominant gang expert for the Los Angeles Police Department and sits on the Steering Committee / Board of Directors for the Coalition. Access to this level of statistical and subject matter expert / intelligence information has been the foundation for the Coalitions direction, decisions and leadership.

As to the Canoga Park Project, it was these resources and assets that allowed the Los Angeles Police Department to identify the Canoga Park Alabama Street gang as one of Los Angeles' Top 10 Most Violent Street Gangs. The deployment of gang experts on the streets of Los Angeles developed incredible intelligence in regards to gang leadership and liaisons with other street gangs.

Partners within the Coalition have also added valuable analysis tools in the form of intelligence gathering. Non-profit organizations addressing gang crime prevention and intervention work directly with gang at-risk youth, along with hardened criminal gang members. This experience and the relationships developed have proven to be an invaluable source of information in regards to current gang leadership, gang wars and liaisons, and future expectations.

## **Solutions**

As to suppression efforts in the Canoga Park Project, partnering with other law enforcement agencies such as Probation, Parole, FBI, DEA, ATF, City Attorney and District Attorney, the LAPD was able to arrest 180 out of 200 gang members for violations connected to a civil gang injunction against CPA. Essentially, all of the "shot callers" were put in jail. By April 2007, robberies by CPA had dropped to zero and aggravated assaults had dropped to two.

At the same time as the enforcement efforts were going on, the Coalition reached out to the Canoga Park community through an ongoing series of Town Hall meetings. The purpose of the meetings were to provide for gang and crime awareness, an awareness of resources available to resolve the concerns, and to prescribe a sense of personal and organizational accountability over and above that historically held by law enforcement. Through a personal presentation, the Coalition created a slide show of the gang related crime effect on Canoga Park, with statistical support information.

The Coalition presented compelling reasons for the schools, businesses, service organizations and faith based institutions to partner with the Coalition and get personally involved in Canoga Park and help the police resolve this blight on their community. The Coalition, in essence, put boots to the ground and inserted into a gang-affected community and enlisted the aid and support of the involved stakeholders to fix the problem.

The result was that partnerships were forged between competing non-profit interests; between schools and parks; between law enforcement agencies; between political interests.... and gained the attention of the nation. A model of cooperation and compassion in which stakeholders were enlisted within their own communities to have an effect on the quality of life where they live, go to school, and do business. The Coalition, as a leader, prompted a community to take action and resolve the crime and quality of life issues that had plagued them for years.

The Canoga Park Project model is now being extended to other gang-affected communities in Los Angeles. The model has gained nationwide attention and created hope in our communities. The belief that a community must come together in partnership with government and private efforts to rid itself of crime and blight was supported in this effort.

### **After School Activities**

Lanark Park in the City of Los Angeles had long ago been taken over by gangs, primarily by the Canoga Park Alabama gang (CPA). Those living in the communities surrounding the park were well schooled that they were not welcome to share the park with CPA. With the successes enjoyed by the Canoga Park Project, the Coalition committed to returning the park to the community.

An effort titled "Extreme Teens" was developed in which the park was returned to the community.

The Coalition committed to assisting the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks to expand upon their CLASS PARKS program that served teens in City parks. A partnership of Coalition members, along with community agencies and governmental organizations were able to expand the CLASS PARKS after school program to include weekend evening activities and draw additional teens to the park, giving them a positive alternative to gang activity on the weekends.

The LAPD provided security and encouragement to community members to return to the park, while other partners provided services directed to youth such as music, food, dance, mentoring and other services. Other partners in this program were the City Attorney, the Canoga Park Neighborhood Council, neighboring apartment owners and managers, Optimists, Kiwanis, Explorer Scouts, Guadalupe Community Center, Communities in Schools, Jeopardy Program, Shepherd of the Hills Church and local teens.

Another effort in this Canoga Park neighborhood that was developed as a result of the partnerships developed with the Canoga Park Project and Extreme teens was the ability of the Los Angeles Police Department to partner with the Los Angeles Unified School District.

Together, they place an LAPD sponsored gang at-risk after school prevention program, the Jeopardy program, on the campus of Canoga Park High School. Although the police department hosts this program in each of the six police stations, this was the first such partnership to bring this effort on to a high school campus.

The Jeopardy program is structured to specifically identify gang at-risk youth and bring them into this after school program to provide the following program elements:

- Mentoring
- Counseling
- Tutoring and Homework Assistance
- Conflict Resolution and Anger Management
- Socialization
- Recreation
- Parenting Classes

The Jeopardy program provides support and assistance to the entire family structure with the goal of providing alternatives to gang membership, while enhancing education and coping skills.

Many of the Coalition partners in the non-profit field provide for after school activities and support services. Some of the partners target specific populations such as gang at-risk or substance abuse, while others provide for general recreational activities, character support, or faith based support.

## **Race Relations**

The Canoga Park Race Relations committee is bringing awareness of self-interaction with people of different backgrounds. There are three phases with the first being a series of speakers. Lanark Recreation Center, Columbus Middle School and Canoga Park High have selected a total of thirty youth to participate in the program. Meetings are held, after school, during weekdays at alternating locations. Thus far, there have been three motivational speakers, who have covered issues from trust to gang violence. According to committee members the youth have actively participated in the discussions with the speakers. Phase 2 of this project, which is still in the planning stages, is a more intense group with parent involvement. Phase 3 will be a trip to the Holocaust Museum in West Los Angeles. The Department of Recreation and Parks, LA City Human Relations Commission, the Office of the Mayor and Canoga Park High School are involved in this collaboration.

## **Employment**

This committee is creating a database of employers who are willing to hire at -risk youth. A website is being developed and job postings will be available. Involved in this committee are representatives from Canoga Park High School, Employment Development Department, Communities in Schools and the Canoga Park Business Improvement District.

## **Results**

Based on gang statistics, the San Fernando Valley Coalition on Gangs targeted the community of Canoga Park as the top hot spot of gang activity in the Valley. Through intensive suppression by the Los Angeles Police Department and its law enforcement partners, 180 arrests were made, effectively taking the most influential members of the gang off the street, significantly reducing the number of violent crimes.

Police cannot solve the problems connected with violent gang crime alone. The Coalition's outreach efforts not only made the community members aware of the gang problems but resulted in an awareness that they needed to be part of the solution, as well. A level of communication was created that had not previously existed. The local schools, which had previously isolated themselves from other entities in the community, are now partnering with the Department of Recreation and Parks, the LAPD and many of the local community based organizations. After school and weekend activities have been created through the partnerships that were developed in the series of meetings led by the Coalition and more than 150 youth are now involved in positive alternatives to gang activity. An effort has begun to address the issues of racial tension between Latinos and Blacks. The business community has begun an employment initiative for youth and young adults.

Based on the leadership provided by the Coalition, the community has become more aware of the problems facing their young people and has begun to mobilize to find solutions.

It has taken intensive efforts by the many partnering agencies in the Coalition to bring the community together but natural leaders have arisen and more prevention and intervention strategies for unmet needs will be implemented.

## **Institutionalization**

The positive results of this project are maintainable over an extended period of time. By involving the major stakeholders in the community and allowing them to communicate with each other, a youth council has been created. Representatives from the Canoga Park area are now partners in the Coalition.

Friday Night Extreme Teens has been replicated and will soon be implemented in a third community.

The intensive focus by the members of the San Fernando Valley Coalition on Gangs can be and is being replicated in other communities.

# LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT



**WILLIAM J. BRATTON**  
Chief of Police

P. O. Box 30158  
Los Angeles, Calif. 90030  
Telephone: (213) 847-1998  
TDD: (877) 275-5273  
Ref #: 11.2

**ANTONIO R. VILLARAIGOSA**  
Mayor

May 30, 2008

Mr. Rob T. Guerette  
School of Criminal Justice  
Florida International University  
University Park, PCA 366B  
11200 S.W. 8<sup>th</sup> Street  
Miami, Florida 33199

Dear Mr. Guerette:

The Los Angeles Police Department is pleased to participate in The 2008 Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing.

Enclosed are the following nominations for consideration:

- San Fernando Valley Coalition on Gangs, Operations-Valley Bureau

Should you have any questions, please contact Sergeant Gena Brooks, Community Policing Unit, Office of Operations, at (213) 473-4530.

Very truly yours,

**WILLIAM J. BRATTON**  
Chief of Police

**WILLIAM SCOTT, Captain**  
Special Assistant  
Office of Operations

Enclosures