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## PRESS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Preventing Gangs and Their Activity**

**Lincoln, CA, Feb. 23, 2009** — As part of the Lincoln Police Department's three point approach to keeping our community one of the safest in the region, the department is continuing efforts in the areas of *Prevention, Intervention, and Suppression* of crime. One of our top *Prevention* efforts currently under way is in the area of gang activity.

The Lincoln Police Department has a ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY when it comes to gangs and any such activity. Here are some tips for parents, grandparents, brothers, and sisters to share with their family about gangs. We also welcome any questions about gangs, and we are always willing to talk one on one with kids about the real dangers of gangs.

### **Common Myths about Gangs**

#### **My gang will protect me, and I will feel safe.**

Wrong! While you may believe that joining a gang will protect you from bullies or other gang members, being in a gang greatly increases your chances to be a target for rival gang members. You are far more likely to be injured or killed if you are in a gang. Many former gang members report that they had to change their lives dramatically as a gang member. They could no longer wear clothing they used to wear. They got into fights while attending school with rival gang members, and ended up dropping out of school. They felt unsafe going out of their neighborhoods, and they couldn't ever be sure where rivals might confront them. Even if they got out of gangs, their rivals didn't forget them. They still had many enemies who might hurt or kill them.

#### **Other people will respect me more if I am in a gang.**

Wrong! Respect in many gangs really means fear. If you join a gang, you will constantly have to commit crimes in order to keep other gang members afraid of you. At any age, respect is something you can earn by getting an education and accomplishing goals in your life. Respect in the gang culture will go away the first time you fail

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to hurt someone who insults you or puts you down. That kind of respect isn't real, and it doesn't last.

**Joining a gang means I'll have lots of friends.**

You will have friends, but you'll also make lots of enemies--the members of rival gangs. Also, your friends who haven't joined the gang may stop wanting to be around you. Your gang may not approve if you have friends or date people outside the gang. They may question and test your loyalty, and insist that you hang out only with them.

**My gang will be just like a family.**

Wrong! Real families don't force people to commit crimes to get respect and love. Real families accept you and love you for who and what you are. Even if your family is having problems, being in a gang will not solve them--it will only make things worse. If you join a gang, your family members may become targets for rival gangs. Joining a gang will only increase the number of fights you have with your parents. You will eventually get into trouble with the law, and your parents and family members will be hurt and disappointed. You will set a bad example for your brothers and sisters. You will not find the kind of love you're looking for from a gang.

**I'll make lots of money if I'm in a gang.**

Most gang members make very little money being part of a gang. Those who do, usually end up doing time. Plus, if you're in a gang, it's far more likely that you'll drop out of school because of problems with rival gang members. Getting your education is the key to making money--not joining a gang.

**I can never get out of my gang.**

Wrong! Gang members decide to leave the gang lifestyle every day in cities around the U.S. It is a myth that the only way to leave a gang is by dying. Most gang members who leave are able to live normal lives, going to school and working just like everyone else. However, in some cases, getting out of a gang isn't easy, and you may have to leave your home, school or community in order to be safe. It IS easier to get into a gang than to get out of one, but you can choose to leave the gang life today.

**The best option of all is to stay out of gangs in the first place.**

Written by Michelle Arciaga  
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