



SHAUN GOLDEN/ SHERIFF

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NEWS RELEASE

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SHERIFF STRESSES GANG PREVENTION AND AWARENESS TO STUDENTS IN ASBURY PARK

Asbury Park: Monmouth County Sheriff Shaun Golden wants students of all ages to be aware of the risks and negative impacts that come along with joining a gang. The Monmouth County Correctional Institution's Gang Intelligence Unit travels to elementary, middle and high schools to provide students with a realistic look into a gang member's life and why becoming a part of a gang is a bad decision. On Thursday, Feb. 20, a program was presented to seventh and eighth grade students at Our Lady of Mount Carmel School in Asbury Park.

"Joining a gang is an enormous error in judgment, which can lead to jail, injury or even death," said Sheriff Shaun Golden. "Youths are being recruited at seven or eight years old. That's why gang prevention and awareness needs to start at an early age in an effort to reduce the impact street gangs have in our neighborhoods."

Each school gang presentation is tailored and modified for the students at the school at which the program will be conducted. Because members of MCCI's Gang Intelligence Unit deal with incarcerated gang members daily, the information they gain inside the jail is applied to school programs, since it reveals which gangs are prevalent in various areas throughout Monmouth County.

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Prior to the presentation at Our Lady of Mount Carmel School, the Gang Intelligence Unit, which is comprised of three corrections personnel, scouted the area to determine if there was a gang presence nearby.

They then shared the information of gang markings in the school area with faculty. They also made them aware of what to look for in an at risk student, which may include family issues, lack of knowledge about the dangers of gangs, peer pressure, sense of belonging and power, low self-esteem and the need for attention, friendship and protection.

During the presentation at Our Lady of Mount Carmel School, the different types of gangs were discussed and how a large percentage of all violent crimes are connected to gangs. The Gang Intelligence Unit displayed the clothes that correctional inmates wear, the food they eat and newspaper clippings of gang members who were sentenced to life in prison. The students were provided with pictures of gang members who were slashed, and a video illustrating the grim consequences gang members face from other gangs or even from members of their own gang.

“I’m grateful the Monmouth County Sheriff’s Office Correctional Division is able to provide such a valuable program to our students,” said Amanda Faulhaber, Our Lady of Mount Carmel School Counselor. “If we could influence one student from joining a gang or becoming associated with one, then we all did our jobs.”

According to the most recent New Jersey State Police Gang Survey, Monmouth County has the second highest number of gangs in the state, with 132 different gangs, just behind Essex County, with 166.

“Although violence is more prevalent to inner cities, gangs are not exclusive to those areas,” said Sheriff Golden. “Education and awareness may begin in schools but it can’t end there. Parents must be aware of the problem and communicate with their children about the consequences of belonging to a gang.”

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In addition to schools, the Monmouth County Gang Intelligence Unit conducts programs for judges and courtroom personnel, law enforcement agencies and the private sector.

For more information you can contact the Gang Intelligence Unit at (732) 431-7860 ext. 5760.

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