

Presentation details local gang activity

BY DIONI L. WISE
STAFF WRITER

"I'm a Southside crip with a c life of a tray."

That confession of gang membership recently was written by a C. W. Stanford Middle School student on a test paper.

Residents learned about that and other gang-related codes and activity in the community at the East Chapel Hill High School auditorium Sunday afternoon.

"If we don't get behind this problem as a community, as police enforcement, this problem will increase," Chapel Hill police officer Mitch McKinney said.

McKinney, the town's gang intelligence officer, provided history of well-known gangs and outlined ways to deter gang-related activity.

He said eight police-identified, hybrid gangs reside in Chapel Hill. A hybrid gang, according to McKinney's definition, is a gang that loosely follows a traditional structure but incorporates ideology and mannerisms unique to that gang.

McKinney said gangs are being formed by local residents, while some older gangs, from Orange and the surrounding counties, are recruiting from within the community.

Linda Carver, of Carrboro, was one of more than 20 people who sat in the 562-capacity auditorium.

"I'm just really concerned because I have grandchildren, and I'm concerned about what's around in my neighborhood," she said.

Carver said that she has seen several graffiti tags around Carrboro but that at the time it didn't cause her alarm.

"I didn't know it was gang-related activity," Carver said.

McKinney said that residents should educate themselves on gang hand signals and graffiti tags



Chapel Hill Police Officer Mitch McKinney discusses local gang activity against the backdrop of a fictional gang of Sesame Street characters.

by surfing the Internet and that parents should be involved in their children's lives and notice extreme, gang-like behavior.

He also advised audience members to call the police department about graffiti and other gang-related activity in their neighborhoods.

"Don't just look at it and just say, 'Well, I don't want to get involved,'" McKinney said. "We have a responsibility as a community to all do our part to try to get ahead of this issue."

Jerry Whortan, executive director of the Chapel Hill-Carrboro YMCA, which co-sponsored the presentation, said his organization is committed to serving children at risk for joining gangs.

The YMCA hosts "Middle School Madness" to allow local teens to play sports and dance to music in a safe area for a \$5 entrance fee. "These children are dying for

something to do," he said.

Miguel Figueroa, a member of Chapel Hill-Carrboro Sunrise Rotary Club, said the presentation made him realize there is a problem that the community needs to solve.

"I really believe that if we all provide our grain of salt, we could ... improve this outlook."

Whortan agreed with Figueroa. "The problem is either solved or lost by the involvement of the community."

"This is too good a community for issues like this not to be solved."

Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.

Libraries to examine digitizing documents

BY BLAIR BYRUM
STAFF WRITER

Librarians and curators have just received a new tool to keep history up to date.

Judith Panitch, director of library communications, announced last Thursday that the University library has been awarded a \$216,000 grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

The grant, which will be distributed over two years, will investigate ways to perform large-scale digitization of manuscript collections.

Laura Brown, an associate librarian in the manuscripts department, will become director of the project, said Tim West, director of the Southern Historical Collection.

West said archival collections contain items such as maps that are challenging to digitize because of their shape and fragility.

"There's always going to be quite a bit of custom work that goes into it," he said, adding that finding equipment capable of such varied digitization is one aim of the grant.

Richard Szary, director of the Wilson Library, said another goal is to determine which materials are most needed in an online format.

The library system is holding an invitational conference in April 2008 to collect ideas from librarians, technologists and curators about how the grant money can be used most effectively.

West said the size and importance of the UNC libraries' collections made the University an ideal place to conduct digitization research.

"Scholars don't have any place else to look for this material but here," he said.

Szary said the University already puts vast resources into its collections of historical documents — many of which are contained in Wilson Library.

"I think we have to find ways of making them easier to use whether it's in the digital format or whether it's in the original format," he said.

"We're in that process now of thinking very carefully about how to make the collections in Wilson a lot more usable and a lot more visible."

Sarah Michalak, associate provost for University libraries, said she wants students to view Wilson as more than a vault for rare valuables.

"We want to do things in Wilson Library to make it clear that people are welcome," she said, adding that digitization is one way to accomplish that.

She cited the library's collection of historical letters as an example.

Written by UNC undergraduate

ates, the letters date from 1795 to the beginning of the Civil War.

They are echoes, she said, of what students today might write home about — complaints about the living conditions, the academic workload and problems with girls.

Librarians recently have made those letters available online at docsouth.unc.edu.

"When we digitize something that's antique, it doesn't mean we get less use of the library, it usually means we get more use of the library," Michalak said.

She said the University library system already has started to convert many books to an electronic medium.

"One of our overall goals is to acquire as much academic, high-quality electronic information for our users that we possibly can," Michalak said.

"Everybody wants things to be electronic. It's just easier." Michalak said the library continually strives to modernize and improve.

"We tend to be influenced by the past," she said. "We're going to try to change our services a little bit."

Contact the University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.

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