

S. Lake Tahoe cops busy dealing with gangs

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Gang members are among us – in schools, at stores, in our neighborhoods. They get recruited at the elementary level and often don't leave until they're killed.

While these facts seemed to come as a surprise to many members of Soroptimist International South Lake Tahoe, the reality is gangs are nothing new to the Lake Tahoe Basin. Every year law enforcement tries to figure out how to get a handle on the situation, and how best to educate kids, parents and the public at large. And every year media writes about it.

There are 26 known gangs in South Lake Tahoe, with about a half dozen of those being inactive. And there are 159 documented members in those gangs. Sureño – aka Southside 13 in Tahoe, Norteño – aka Eastside Familia, Juggalos, OMG (Outlaw Motorcycle Gang), TNB (Trust NoBitch), and Cyclones are some of the more active gangs locally.



South Lake Tahoe police Sgt. Shannon Norrgard on Sept. 17 talks about local gangs. Photo/LTN

Blue, red, 13, 14, TNB, ESF – see those colors, numbers or letters and know it's gang related. Thirteen comes from M being the 13th letter in the alphabet. M is for Mexico and the Southerners. The letter N is the 14th letter and represents the Northerners.

South Lake Tahoe police Sgt. Shannon Norrgard and Detective Nick Carlquist gave an overview of the local gang situation to Soroptimist on Sept. 17 at Harveys.

One Soroptimist member talked about having just served on a jury that convicted Cesar Caro in the 2012 gang related shooting on Bonanza Street. He could get 25 years to life when he is sentenced in October.

Carlquist said there is a link between guns being easy to obtain in Nevada and marijuana accessible in California. The two are often traded without any money exchanging hands.

"Where there are gangs, there are weapons and where there are weapons, there are drugs," he said.

While there are a slew of crimes tied to gangs, in South Lake Tahoe assault with a deadly weapon and vandalism are the predominant issues.

In state Penal Code it doesn't use gang, but instead considers this behavior street terrorism.

"They will recruit anyone," Norrgard said.

She said the more a gang member is feared and can intimidate others, the more respect that person garners in the group. And gang members are both genders. Females are often the ones to carry the drugs and weapons.

The officers said without the community's help it's impossible to get the gang-bangers off the streets. People need to pay attention to what kids are wearing, scribbling on paper, tattooing on themselves; letting officials know about

graffiti; and having an awareness in neighborhoods, and when out and about. But they also cautioned not to intervene. Anonymous calls about suspected gang activity may be placed to Secret Witness at 530.541.6800.