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Dr. Esperanza Zendejas, Superintendent

April 2, 2008

The Honorable Russell D. Scott
2007 Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
County of Monterey
240 Church Street
Salinas, CA 93901

Subject: Response to the 2007 Grand Jury Final Report

Dear Judge Scott:

Please accept the following information as the Alisal Union School District's response to the 2007 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury Final Report. The responses were approved by the City Council at their meeting on March 6, 2008.

Section 11 – Monterey County Gangs: Suppression, Intervention and Prevention

Findings

F 11.1 Suppression of gang activity in Monterey County is a vital tool in getting gang members off the streets.

RESPONSE: The Respondent agrees with this finding.

F 11.2 Even though many intervention programs exist in Monterey County, they are not always made easily available to children or families at risk.

RESPONSE: The Respondent agrees with this finding.

F 11.3 Prevention is the key to long-term control of gang activity.

RESPONSE: The Respondent agrees with this finding.

F 11.4 Competition for both intervention and suppression program dollars is keen.

RESPONSE: The Respondent agrees with this finding.

F 11.5 Gangs can be countered with citizen action groups such as Neighborhood Watch program.

RESPONSE: The Respondent agrees with this finding.

F 11.6 A community or neighborhood that is united to neutralize gangs and dedicated to working against violence will greatly hamper a gang's ability to flourish.

RESPONSE: The Respondent agrees with this finding.

F 11.7 Every member of the community has a responsibility to overcome gang intimidation and not give into the apathy that tacitly supports a gang's activities. To bring peace to the streets of the County, the cooperation of the citizen's of the County is necessary.

RESPONSE: The Respondent agrees with this finding.

F 11.8 Each member of the different law enforcement departments represented in the GTF uses equipment and techniques from their home department. Each member brings different expertise, and the task force continues to blend these skills together.

RESPONSE: The Respondent has no opinion on this finding.

F 11.9 Because of this diversity in methods, techniques and equipment, the GTF has had to learn on-the-job how to coordinate their own methods and techniques. The equipment is still dependent on their home officers' department.

RESPONSE: The Respondent agrees with this finding.

F 11.10 Not all the cars used by the GTF are equipped with Global Positioning Systems (GPS), making it difficult when they are driving through remote areas.

RESPONSE: The Respondent has no opinion on this finding.

F 11.11 Each car used by the GTF is equipped with the computer and interface from its jurisdiction. Different jurisdictions do not have the capability of computer interface with each other. Even though they are now the same unit, they must communicate by cell phone. This effect is magnified because Monterey County covers 131,708 square miles.

RESPONSE: The Respondent has no opinion on this finding.

F 11.12 Monterey County has some prevention and intervention programs. However, the County has failed to put effective programs in place. Until there are better programs, the GTF will be necessary.

RESPONSE: The Respondent has no opinion on this finding.

F 11.13 Placing youth into gang activity treatment programs is challenging and may have unintended consequences if not done correctly. Differentiation of a hard-core gang member from a sympathizer is of utmost importance. Keeping these populations separated in treatment programs is of utmost importance.

RESPONSE: The Respondent agrees with this finding.

F 11.14 Gang cultures exhibit a predatory nature. Many youth are sympathizers; people who are not officially a part of a gang but may wear gang colors, flash signs or imitate gang behavior. Hard-core gang members will relentlessly attempt to recruit gang sympathizers.

RESPONSE: The Respondent agrees with this finding.

F 11.15 Many gangs have membership going back three or four generations. Youth may know no other lifestyle than that of the gang.

RESPONSE: The Respondent agrees with this finding.

F 11.16 Violence in gangs is systemic and a way of life. Prevention and intervention are paramount to the suppression of gangs.

RESPONSE: The Respondent agrees with this finding.

F 11.17 Graffiti markings serve as a warning to others that the gang rules this part of a neighborhood. If not removed quickly, graffiti draws rivals into the area.

RESPONSE: The Respondent agrees with this finding.

F 11.18 Community leaders must stop competing among themselves for programs and funding and instead work together for resources to help both prevention and intervention.

RESPONSE: The Respondent agrees with this finding.

F 11.19 Part of the California "Gang Prevention Network" uses their city teams to participate in roundtable discussion with representatives from the office of the Governor and both United States Senators from California.

RESPONSE: The Respondent agrees with this finding.

F 11.20 Girls raised within a violent gang atmosphere may suffer greatly from low self-esteem. They grow up to believe that domestic violence is a normal way of life, or that they deserve to be abused. Passing this mentality from one generation to the next, violence becomes routine and accepted.

RESPONSE: The Respondent agrees with this finding.

F 11.21 The long-term solution to overcoming gangs is through a coordinated community effort that includes prevention and intervention as well as suppression. The County and Monterey County city governments with their associated law enforcement agencies cannot merely arrest their way out of increasing gang violence.

RESPONSE: The Respondent agrees with this finding.

Recommendations

R 11.1 The Board of Supervisors should bring together a network of municipal leaders, law enforcement officials, school administrators, community partners and representatives of faith based communities to create achievable solutions and alternatives to the gang lifestyle.

RESPONSE: The Respondent agrees with this recommendation.

R 11.2 The Board of Supervisors in conjunction with the Monterey County Office of Education, each school district within the County and non-profit organizations should include alternatives to violence in school curriculums.

RESPONSE: The Respondent agrees with this recommendation.

R 11.3 Each school district within the County should encourage after-school activities that are made available in all communities for all children including kids at risk.

RESPONSE: The Respondent agrees with this recommendation. The District conducts after-school programs and encourages development of programs through parent and community groups.

R 11.4 The Board of Supervisors should fund parental and family counseling programs and programs that teach youth alternatives to gang life. These programs should be made available at schools and through non-profit agencies.

RESPONSE: The Respondent agrees with this recommendation.

R 11.5 The Board of Supervisors and the city council of each city countywide should fund and promote park activities and youth groups as an alternative to gang activities.

RESPONSE: The Respondent agrees with this recommendation.

R 11.6 The Board of Supervisors should fund updated Internet Technology and interface for GTF use in both their office and cars.

RESPONSE: The Respondent has no opinion on this recommendation.

R 11.7 The Board of Supervisor should fund a Global Positioning System device (GPS) for every car used by the Monterey County Joint Gang Task Force.

RESPONSE: The Respondent has no opinion on this recommendation.

Conclusion

The above responses were approved by the Board of Trustees at their meeting of April 2, 2008. In the event that you need additional information, please contact Mr. Jim Koenig, Assistant Superintendent for Business Services, at 831-753-5700, extension 2033.

The Alisal Union School District appreciates the work of the Grand Jury and is grateful for the opportunity to respond.

Sincerely,



Dr. Esperanza Zendejas,
Superintendent