

CITY OF SULTAN  
AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

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Agenda Item : C-6  
Date: August 28, 2008  
SUBJECT: Acceptance of Graffiti Abatement Grant



CONTACT PERSON: Donna Murphy Grants and Economic Development Coordinator

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**ISSUE:**

Authorize Mayor Eslick to accept the \$12,000 grant offered to the City of Sultan from the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs to fund a multi jurisdictional grant to purchase a self contained, housed on a trailer hot water pressure washer for volunteers in Sultan, Gold Bar and Index to remove graffiti. An Interlocal Agreement for use of the equipment between Sultan, Gold Bar and Index will be prepared.

**SUMMARY STATEMENT:**

On July 31, 2008 the City of Sultan filed an application with the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs requesting a \$12,000 multi jurisdictional grant to purchase a self contained, hot water pressure washer for volunteers and City staff to remove graffiti. Attachment B

On August 15, 2008 Mayor Eslick received a letter from the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs announcing the award of the grant. Attachment A

**MATCH REQUIREMENTS:** There is no match requirement with this grant program

**PROJECT TIMELINE:** This project should be in full operation by October 1, 2008

**Recommended Motion:**

I move to authorize Mayor Eslick to accept the \$12,000 grant offered to the City of Sultan from the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs and negotiate an Interlocal Agreement between Sultan, Gold Bar and Index for use of the Graffiti Abatement equipment.

# WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF SHERIFFS & POLICE CHIEFS

3060 Willamette Drive NE Lacey, WA 98516 ~ Phone: (360) 486-2380 ~ Fax: (360) 486-2381 ~ Website: www.waspc.org

Serving the Law Enforcement Community and the Citizens of Washington



August 15, 2008

Mayor Carolyn Eslick  
City of Sultan  
PO Box 1199  
Sultan, WA 98294

Dear Mayor Eslick:

I am pleased to inform you that the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs' Gangs and Graffiti Allocation Committee has approved an award of \$12,000.00 to the City of Sultan for gang related graffiti and tagging abatement.

The grant award is effective August 15, 2008 and expires on June 30, 2009. Costs will be paid on a reimbursement basis. Appropriate invoices and receipts are to be submitted no more than once each month. You will be reimbursed for actual expenses only up to the limit of the award.

Enclosed is an award agreement. This agreement is to be signed and returned to the WASPC. No funds will be reimbursed until the signed agreement is received. Expenditures prior to the award effective date or after the grant expiration date are not authorized and will not be reimbursed. In addition, the grant award requires a quarterly report on activities covered by this grant. The report form is attached.

Congratulations on your grant award approval. While this award is less than what you requested we are encouraged by your willingness to work within the funding limits set during this process. There are many avenues for donated supplies in most communities. For example, Home Depot is an excellent source for free paint from their returned and mis-mixed supplies. Other communities are using their local hazardous waste disposal sites for used paint that can be mixed into a general paint color. We also encourage you to seek additional funding when future grant openings are announced. We look forward to seeing positive outcomes from your local efforts in gang related graffiti and tagging abatement.

If you choose to not accept this award, please notify us immediately.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 360-486-2419, or via e-mail at [dlarsen@waspc.org](mailto:dlarsen@waspc.org).

Sincerely,

Dawn Larsen, Director of Projects  
Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs

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# WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF SHERIFFS & POLICE CHIEFS

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## REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

### Graffiti/Tagging Abatement Grant

#### **Introduction:**

Approximately \$200,000 of state funding has been allocated to “assist law enforcement agencies in the support of graffiti and tagging abatement programs located in local communities”. The Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs will enter into agreements with local agencies to address graffiti and tagging abatement efforts. Grant applicants are encouraged to utilize multijurisdictional efforts.

#### Funds may be used for:

- purchase of abatement materials such as paint and painting equipment, graffiti repellant coatings, cleaning and sandblasting equipment, etc;
- salary costs for a coordinator focusing on graffiti and tagging abatement activities including prioritizing efforts, volunteer and community service coordination, soliciting materials from local businesses or landfill hazardous waste sites;
- coordination of community clean-up events;
- operation of a hot line where citizens can report graffiti;
- local artists to turn high graffiti areas to murals;
- seed money for match for community efforts;
- additional ideas.

Law enforcement agencies will need to collect and provide performance data quarterly for use in evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of the grant program in graffiti and tagging abatement.

#### **Funding distribution:**

The Graffiti and Tagging Abatement Program is a statewide effort. A committee of WASPC members and ad hoc invitees reviewed a variety of proposals for funding distribution. The goal is to disburse the funds as broadly as possible.

The Request for Qualifications will be reviewed by the allocation committee. Agencies will be notified of awards no later than August 31, 2008. Funded agencies will be asked to submit reimbursement for services and data reports quarterly. Final data reports will be due July 15, 2009.

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**Application requirements:**

1. Applications must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, July 31, 2008.
2. Faxed or electronic copy will be accepted; however a signed original application must be sent to the WASPC office.
3. Applications received after the deadline may not be funded.
4. Applications must be signed by Authorized Official.
5. Direct Inquiries to:

**Dawn Larsen, Director of Projects**  
**Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs**  
**360-486-2419, [dlarsen@waspc.org](mailto:dlarsen@waspc.org)**

6. Please deliver or mail original signed copy of application to:

**Dawn Larsen, Director of Projects**  
**Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs**  
**3060 Willamette Dr. NE**  
**Lacey, WA 98516**

Send electronic copy via e-mail attachment to: [dlarsen@waspc.org](mailto:dlarsen@waspc.org)

**To receive funding the application must:**

1. Demonstrate that a significant gang problem exists in the jurisdiction or jurisdictions receiving the grant;
2. Specify how the funds will be used to reduce, dispose or eliminate any current or ongoing gang related tagging or graffiti within the grant period;
3. Identify how local citizens and business owners in the community will benefit from the proposed activities being presented;
4. Coordinate activities with other appropriate agencies.
5. Include a plan on how data will be gathered to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of the project.

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**Grant Agency:**            **Name of Agency:**    City of Sultan  
                                         **Address:**                    PO Box 1199  
                                         **City, State Zip:**        Sultan, WA 98294

**For the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2008 – Ending June 30, 2009**

**Grant Program:**  **Graffiti and Tagging Abatement**

**Funding Amount Request: \$12,061 (This Request Represents 3 communities in East Snohomish County: Sultan, Gold Bar, and Index)**

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Please provide a detailed summary of how funds will be spent to meet the requirements of the grant. (limit five pages)

**This is a Multi-Jurisdictional Application from 3 Cities in East Snohomish County:**

- 1) City of Sultan
- 2) City of Gold Bar
- 3) Town of Index

East Snohomish County has been experiencing increased gang activity that involves graffiti tagging of public and private property. The Cities of Sultan and Gold Bar have developed strong Block Watch Programs with subcommittees formed to clean up Graffiti. These volunteers have been using their own pressure washers, paint supplies and vehicles to regularly clean up the tagging in the community.

Gang activity in East Snohomish County has been discussed at the following City Council and Chamber meetings:

- 1) Sky Valley Chamber of Commerce Board Minutes - May 14, 2008

"Mayor Eslick addressed this problem and reported the police have apprehended 3 groups of perpetrators, the bridge and pump station are in the process of being cleaned up and the surveillance is working! The culprits who tagged City Hall were identified."

- 2) Sky Valley Chamber of Commerce Board Minutes - April 9, 2008

"Various businesses and City structures were hit with gang tagging recently. The Chamber will urge the City to adopt the County Ordinance regarding this, requiring them to paint over tagging on their building within 48 hours."

- 3) Sky Valley Chamber of Commerce Board Meeting - March 12, 2008

"Tagging is getting out of hand. Dave will get paint supplies so that concerned citizens can respond by covering up graffiti as it is spotted. Our district has twice the normal levels of bullying and gang populations are thriving."

- 4) City of Gold Bar Council Meeting - April 15, 2008

"Mr. England would like to talk to the Mayor and Council on how to collaborate and manage graffiti on businesses. Ray has some pictures of graffiti on the back of the storage."

- 5) City of Gold Bar Council Meeting - April 1, 2008

"Councilmember Croshaw noticed graffiti and it was major. Councilmember Turner stated that the Brown Pride Soldiers (gang) in Sultan are tagging. We need to stop talking and act upon it."

Sultan Interim Police Chief Rick Hawkins commented that the gang, Brown Pride Soldiers have been identified in the graffiti tagging in Sultan and Gold Bar.

Sultan School District has experienced over \$4,000 in graffiti tagging since January 2008. Damage to local businesses and private property owners has far exceeded that of the School

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**District.**

**Attached to this application is additional documentation of the gang related activities occurring in Sultan, Gold Bar, Index and East Snohomish County:**

- \* Email - Snohomish County Sheriff Gang Taskforce Unit, Steve Haley confirming gang activity in East County.**
- \* Monroe Monitor - "Graffiti Suspect from Gold Bar"**
- \* Seattle Times Article - "Gang at Work"**
- \* Seattle Times Article - "Small Towns Aren't Too Small for Gangs."**
- \* Sky Valley Chamber of Commerce Meeting Minutes relating to gang activity**
- \* City of Gold Bar Council Minutes relating to gang activity**
- \* Photos of Graffiti Tagging in Sultan**
- \* Photos of Graffiti Tagging in Gold Bar**

**If funded, this grant will purchase the needed self contained pressure washer and necessary supplies for the volunteers in Sultan, Gold Bar and Index to continue elimination of the graffiti and tagging caused by gang members in East Snohomish County.**

**THIS GRANT REQUEST WILL SERVE 3 INCORPORATED CITIES IN EAST SNOHOMISH COUNTY AND THE SURROUNDING AREAS.**

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**Grant Funds will be used to Purchase:**

<b>1 Pressure Washing Unit - Self Contained on Trailer</b>	<b>\$8,000</b>
<b>1 Rotating Nozzle</b>	<b>\$ 110</b>
<b>Wall Washer</b>	<b>\$ 90</b>
<b>100' Garden Hose</b>	<b>\$ 100</b>
<b>1 Airless Sprayer</b>	<b>\$2,000</b>
<b>1 Hitch</b>	<b>\$ 200</b>
<b>Install Hitch</b>	<b>\$ 200</b>
<b>Install Electrical on vehicle &amp; trailer</b>	<b>\$ 150</b>
<b>4 Safety Vests @ \$20 each</b>	<b>\$ 80</b>
<b>4 Face Shields @ \$13 each</b>	<b>\$ 52</b>
<b>1 Box Ear Protection - 200/\$20</b>	<b>\$ 20</b>
<b>1 Gallon "Tag Away" Cleaner</b>	<b>\$ 56</b>
<b>1 Gallon "Taginator" Cleaner</b>	<b>\$ 58</b>
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$11,116</b>
<b>Tax 8.5%</b>	<b>\$ 945</b>
<b>TOTAL REQUEST</b>	<b>\$12,061</b>

**\*Please Note that this request represents 3 communities in East Snohomish County:**

- 1) Sultan**
- 2) Gold Bar**
- 3) Index**

**The equipment will be mounted on a vehicle designated for volunteers and the graffiti tagging will be removed by community volunteers.**

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Describe how data will be gathered to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of the project. (limit one page)

Law Enforcement Agencies responsible for the region, Sultan, Gold Bar, and Index will produce documentation of Graffiti Calls prior to receipt of, and one year following the Graffiti Abatement Grant. This documentation will measure the effectiveness and efficiency of the project.

Who is responsible to ensure all reporting requirements are met?

The City of Sultan is the lead agency and will assure all reporting requirements are met.

To the best of my knowledge and belief, all data in this application is true and correct. The document has been duly authorized by the chief executive of the applicant and the applicant will comply with the attached assurances and the terms of the grant contract.

Name of Authorized Official: Carolyn Eslick

Date: July 23, 2008

Signature of Authorized Official: \_\_\_\_\_

*Carolyn Eslick*

Title: Mayor

Phone: 425.327.2093

WASPC USE ONLY:

Executive Director: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Received: \_\_\_\_\_

WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION OF SHERIFFS & POLICE CHIEFS

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

WASPC requires that three persons be designated to the positions of Authorized Official, Project Director and Financial Officer for the purposes of administering a grant. The Project Director and the Financial Officer may not be the same person, but under extenuating circumstances, one person may otherwise fill two positions.

**Applicant Agency:** City of Sultan

**PROJECT MANAGER**

<b>Murphy</b>	<b>Donna</b>	<b>Grants &amp; Economic Dev. Coord.</b>		
<b>Last Name</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Title</b>		
<b>PO Box 1199</b>		<b>Sultan</b>	<b>WA</b>	<b>98294</b>
<b>Business Mailing Address</b>		<b>City</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Zip</b>
<b>360.793.2231</b>	<b>360.793.3344</b>	<b>donna.murphy@ci.sultan.wa.us</b>		
<b>Telephone</b>	<b>Fax</b>	<b>Email</b>		

**FINANCIAL OFFICER/GRANT ADMIN.**

<b>Koenig</b>	<b>Laura</b>	<b>Assistant Finance Director</b>		
<b>Last Name</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Title</b>		
<b>PO Box 1199</b>		<b>Sultan</b>	<b>WA</b>	<b>98294</b>
<b>Business Mailing Address</b>		<b>City</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Zip</b>
<b>360.793.2231</b>	<b>360.793.3344</b>	<b>laura.koenig@ci.sultan.wa.us</b>		
<b>Telephone</b>	<b>Fax</b>	<b>Email</b>		

**THE AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL IS THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, OR DESIGNEE OF THE AGENCY.**

<b>Eslick</b>	<b>Carolyn</b>	<b>Mayor</b>		
<b>Last Name</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Title</b>		
<b>PO Box 1199</b>		<b>Sultan</b>	<b>WA</b>	<b>98294</b>
<b>Business Mailing Address</b>		<b>City</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Zip</b>
<b>425.327.2093</b>	<b>360.793.3344</b>	<b>carolyneslick1@msn.com</b>		
<b>Telephone</b>	<b>Fax</b>	<b>Email</b>		

**Donna Murphy**

**From:** GoldBarBW@aol.com  
**Sent:** Sunday, July 27, 2008 8:53 AM  
**To:** donna.murphy@ci.sultan.wa.us; mary\_cf@comcast.net; rick.hawkins@snoco.org;  
barry.ruchty@snoco.org; Daniel.Johnson@snoco.org  
**Subject:** East Precinct partners

The Sheriff's Office will be hosting a Precinct Partnership Meeting on Wednesday, July 30th at 7:00 p.m. Location will be Gold Bar City Hall.

Our guest speaker will be Detective Steve Haley to discuss gang activity and graffiti problems in East County. Steve is with the Sheriff's Crime Analysis and Intelligence Unit (CAIU), and really knows his stuff. It should make for invigorating conversation!

Please invite all interested Neighborhood Block Watch members – particularly your captains.

Also – if you hear from folks in unincorporated areas who are looking for Neighborhood Watch orientation and support, have them contact me at neighborhoodwatch@snoco.org. We'll get them set up.

We're planning to have the Sheriff's Office graffiti van up and running by mid-July, so if we can offer an assist with that, let me know. Ray – I know you have some spots in Gold Bar. We can set up a time to send the van your direction.

Thanks, and have a great weekend.  
Ann Plunkett  
Director of Community Partnerships  
Snohomish County Sheriff's Office  
425-388-3253 office  
425-754-5345 mobile

---

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**Donna Murphy**

**From:** Dave Wood [DWood@voaww.org]  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 17, 2008 12:22 PM  
**To:** donna.murphy@ci.sultan.wa.us  
**Subject:** Gangs

Donna,



Attached is a picture of Graffiti we painted over under the Hwy 2 bridge in June. I forwarded this picture to Det. Steve Haley, Snohomish County Sheriff Gang Taskforce unit, and he reports that this is gang related. On top of the white letters there is listed the members of the gang (in blank) at that time as well as a reference to 4:20 forever (marijuana).

I also worked with Debbie Copple to paint over graffiti in the Gazebo. The last time we painted - Early June - there were the words "Crips Forever" in two places and other Crips wording in light blue ink.

As I mentioned on the he phone, I attended and class at Everett Community College yesterday - Det Haley was there and gave an update on current gangs in Snohomish County. Of the 10 identifiable gangs listed by the Snohomish County Sheriff's department is "The Gold Bar Crips". This gang started about three years ago as the "Gold Bar Gangsters" They then became the "Gold Bar Crips" and then the "Gold Bar Cruise" and now just the "Crips". They are the gang that took over Turk Trail and started charging students \$.50 to use the trail. One who did not pay was beat up pretty badly and now the trail is closed. There have been a few attacks by this group in Gold Bar as well as in Sultan.

Steve Haley could give you specific data on intelligence. Rick Hawkins could give you details on the attack at Turk Trail. I saw several kids at Shindig wearing "Crips" colors and signs - such as rags hanging out of left side back pockets and or waist bands. We also have the BPS in Town - Brown Pride Solders - an Hispanic Gang. They have been pretty well behaved except for a lot of Graffiti in Gold Bar and some in Sultan.

Dave Wood  
Director - Sky Valley Services  
Volunteers of America Western Washington  
701 1st St Sultan, WA 98203  
(360) 793-2400 - Office  
(206) 948-1368 - Cell

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Vol. 118, No. 30, July 22, 2008

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## Graffiti suspect may have caused \$15,000 in damage

By POLLY KEARY, Editor

A young man that police believe may be responsible for up to \$15,000 in graffiti-related property damage in Monroe has been arrested.

Nicholas Pearson, 19, of Gold Bar, was arrested Thursday, July 19 at about 2 a.m. after police observed suspicious activity in the 19500 block of U.S. 2.

A police officer on routine patrol observed a suspicious male in a parking lot, and when he investigated, the young man ran from the scene.

A large truck nearby was freshly painted with graffiti.

Additional officers responded. A search of the area revealed other fresh graffiti marks on several nearby buildings.

Police located four subjects, one of whom had matching paint on his hands.

Pearson was booked into the Snohomish County Jail. Also arrested was a 16-year-old boy from Gold Bar, who was booked into the Denny Youth Center in Everett. Both were charged with Malicious Mischief 1, a Class B Felony.

A 17-year-old Sultan youth was released to his parents, and charges are pending.

Released without charges was a 15-year-old Sultan girl.

Police have linked the case to other recent graffiti cases throughout the city. Damages could total as much as \$15,000. More charges could be filed, police said.

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THIS GRAFFITI on a Monroe building is believed to be the work of a Gold Bar man, who may also be responsible for thousands of dollars in graffiti damage to other buildings and vehicles in the area. The man and a suspected juvenile accomplice were arrested Thursday.

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Tuesday, September 24, 1991 - Page updated at 12:00 AM

E-mail article Print view

# Sultan Police Say Gang Is At Work

By Kate Shatzkin

SULTAN - They were just the trouble-making kids in town, occasionally butting heads with the cops, until they plunked down their dollars for a bunch of Raiders caps at the Hoot Owl Mini-Mart and became the "Black Hats Posse."

Since then, police in Sultan, 24 miles east of Everett on Highway 2, say this ragged band of 13- to 18-year-olds has graduated from loitering and public drunkenness to assault, burglary and possession of weapons used to intimidate anyone who gets in their way. Police Chief Karl Gilje said the group now takes up at least 70 percent of his two full-time officers' time. About half of 25 incidents involving the "gang" or associates in the past year have been felonies.

The youths say the police have unfairly labeled them a gang. Officers counter that the teens show enough hand signs, affinity for graffiti and knowledge of weapons to concern the rest of Sultan's 2,236 residents.

Worried by the violent gang activity that has taken over pockets of Tacoma and Seattle, Gilje isn't willing to let the teenagers' crimes slide.

"The Crips didn't start 8,000 strong. But they got bigger because they got away with it," said Sultan police Officer Richard Hibbs, who as the swing-shift patrolman is most in contact with the group.

Unlike the California gangs that spawned drug-selling, gun-toting gangsters in this area, the Sultan "gang" is a loose-knit informal version. Drug-dealing so far is not a major part of the

picture, and the gang clothing and moniker fluctuate, from "Black Hats Posse" to "The Brotherhood."

Hibbs said the group originally started to protect its members from upperclassmen in school. Most of the boys, and several girls they associate with, come from homes with single parents, substance abuse and poverty.

Police say the group's activity has quieted in past weeks since several alleged ringleaders of the group were arrested and sent to the Denney Youth Center in Everett in connection with a burglary at a home just outside the city limits in which a shotgun was stolen.

That's just one of a number of crimes Hibbs attributes to the "gang" or its associates. Others:

- Two unidentified white males 13 to 15 years old, wearing stocking caps, robbed the Sportsman's Inn restaurant in June of \$1,800. They pointed a .38-caliber handgun at the clerk and demanded money, in Marlon Brando's Godfather accent. Police believe the crime was committed by gang associates from out of town.
- A 16-year-old member of the group punched a 54-year-old woman several times when she ordered him off her property.
- Several group members, armed with sharpened sticks and baseball bats, tried to burglarize a house. A resident was stabbed in the abdomen.
- Two teenagers stole a motorcycle from a police officer's back yard.

What's even more disturbing, Hibbs and Gilje say, is that the members have no qualms about threatening police officers or going to jail.

On an inner piling of the bridge over the swirling Sultan River is a spray-painted "hit list" with police officers' names, mostly misspelled. Each name is crossed out and accompanied by the words "Hit 1,"

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Most read Most e-mailed

1. School policy splits family's twin kindergarteners
2. Police identify suspect in fatal attack at traffic circle
3. Mother: Brian Keith Brown was trying to help

"Hit 2," and so on.

"Will they ever shoot an officer? Who knows. We'd never have believed we'd be at this point a year and a half ago," Gilje said.

The youngest troublemaker, 13 years old, has been found at 4 a.m. passed out in his own vomit after falling off his bike; other times, he was hunched over a gas can to inhale the fumes with his head covered by a towel. Now he is being held in the youth center on multiple charges of criminal trespassing and assault.

Chief Gilje has an American flag decal ironed on his uniform and waxes eloquent on the death of the American family unit. He says he wants to help the kids, but doesn't know how.

He will push for the school gym to be opened to weekend activities but says, "You could build Disneyland right in the middle of town and some of these kids would still be bad."

"They're all nice kids and they all have good potential," said Karen St. Clair, a clerk at the Hoot Owl, which has stopped selling the silver and black Raiders caps. "Their parents just don't care."

Carolynn Stiles, head counselor at Sultan High School, said the students known to associate with the group attend school regularly and don't cause problems. But school officials and police plan to meet soon with a gang specialist from the Snohomish County sheriff's office.

The Hoot Owl's large parking lot is the starting place of many a Black Hats fight, which then move to Reese Park across town.

The action at the Hoot Owl starts about 7 p.m. as cars circle the lot booming heavy-metal music.

On a recent night a 15-year-old boy described as one of the gang's leaders stepped out of a back seat, disengaging a laughing, weaving girl from his arms.

His eyes are bright blue, matching the Dodgers cap he wears. He's as skinny as a reed. The week before he squinted into the side-view mirror of a police car at his bloody eyebrow, split by another youth's blow in a fight over which one of them had sprayed gang graffiti, and grudgingly accepted a medic's help.

This is the boy Hibbs said twice made a trigger motion at Hibbs' forehead, saying: "What if I just went and shot you in the head? What would you do then?"

The boy says others are to blame for the "gang" rumor and that the police are just out to get him for "screwing up" a few years ago. "You get in fights with everyone - it's no big deal," he said. But he says he goes to school every day and wants to attend college on an athletic scholarship.

Some of the cops are OK, he says. They've lent him money before, and given him rides. He just doesn't like it when they "hassle" him.

"Everybody's bored. Everybody gets drunk and stoned," said one of the boy's friends, 18. "You find something else for us to do and we'll do it."

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Surgery 

Wednesday, April 2, 2008 - Page updated at 12:01 PM  
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**Even small towns aren't too small for gangs**

By Christina Siderius  
 Times Snohomish County bureau

A voice quietly greets two teenage girls who show up late to Sultan Middle School on a recent Saturday night: "Do you have anything on you?"

The two adamantly shake their heads no, so Angie Freedman lets them inside.

Anyone from the ages of 11 to 18 can drop in at Safe Stop — provided they play by the rules, said program coordinator Freedman. Drugs and alcohol are obvious no-nos; gang colors and hand signs won't fly, either.

The goal of the program, run weekly by the Volunteers of America, is to keep youngsters — from the tough kids to the jocks — off the streets and out of trouble. Between 40 and 80 youths come each week from Sultan and nearby communities.

Freedman doubts she's changing kids' lives by offering a place to shoot hoops, eat chips and hang out for three hours a week, but she hopes she can alter the course of a Saturday evening.

Safe Stop staff member Dayna Netherton agrees.

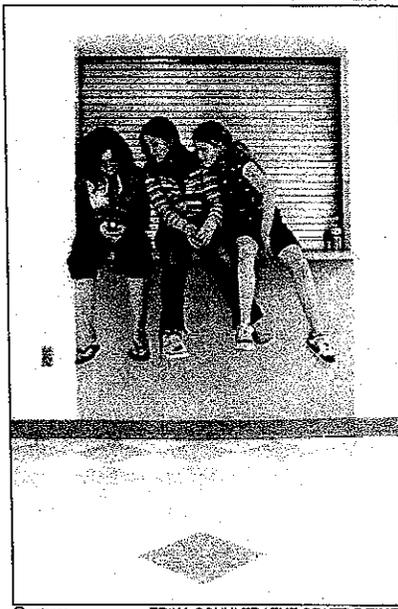
"Even if they are in here for 15 minutes, that's 15 minutes they are not on the corner," said the Sultan resident.

**More signs of activity**

Countywide, law enforcement says gang activity is increasing. In Sultan, officials say the small, former logging town east of Monroe is seeing more youths emulating gang members by wearing colors and symbols linked to gangs and spray-painting graffiti tags.

"There is gang-related activity in almost every community in the county. No area is necessarily immune from that," said Everett police Detective Kevin Fairchild, who specializes in gang issues and vice crimes.

Traditional signs of gangs — graffiti, property damage and small thefts — have escalated, though it is difficult to know how much of it is directly related to gangs, he said.



ERIKA SCHULTZ / THE SEATTLE TIMES  
 Christhelle Sentman, 11; Jazmen Griggs, 11; and Alexis Griggs, 9, talk about boyfriends and school at a Safe Stop gathering. The program serves many as simply a safe place for Sultan young people to hang out with friends on a Saturday night.

**Gang signs**

- The Everett Police Department tells parents the following warning signs may indicate their child may be involved in a gang:
  - Admits to hanging out with kids in gangs
  - Shows unusual interest in one or two colors of clothing, or a particular logo
  - Has unusual interest in gangster-influenced music, videos, movies or Web sites
  - Uses unusual hand signals to communicate with friends
  - Has tattoos or has drawings or symbols on books, clothes, walls
  - Comes home with unexplained physical injuries
  - Has unexplained cash, clothes or jewelry
  - Carries a weapon
  - Has been in trouble with police
  - Exhibits negative changes in behavior
- Who is considered high risk for entry into gangs?

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While the bulk of activity is in Everett and its surrounding areas, there are more than a dozen active gangs operating elsewhere around the county, said Fairchild. Washington state law defines a "gang" as a group of three or more people that has identifiable leadership and regularly conspires and acts for criminal purposes.

Gov. Christine Gregoire on Monday signed legislation designed to deal with the rising gang presence across the state. The measure will provide grants to communities to help deal with gang activity, including some graffiti. It also will create a database to help law enforcement track gang members and activity and adds to the jail time for a gang-related crime.

Rick Hawkins, a sheriff's deputy filling in as Sultan's interim police chief, said he is aware of two groups that identify themselves as gangs in Sultan.

"They're not at the level of those in other areas of the county," he said, noting "wannabe" gangsters are the most pervasive at this point. "Are some involved in criminal activity? I believe so."

Many of the teens who attend Safe Stop claim gang activity is happening in their schools and behind empty buildings — several talk matter-of-factly about gang fights and recruitment.

As Safe Stop — held only on Saturdays — winds down for the night, two young attendees head for the door, telling Freedman they're going to a party.

"Don't be dumb," she says.

#### Right time to act

Sultan City Administrator Deborah Knight said giving kids a positive outlet, like what is offered at Safe Stop, is a way to curb gang rumblings — "nip it in the bud" — before things intensify.

"The community is concerned, and we want to address it at this level, and to ensure it doesn't escalate into something more serious," said Knight.

Young people who live in the rural community say there's not enough to do on weekends, particularly at night.

Boredom is a major driver getting teens to show up at Safe Stop, where they can use the gym, play Twister or video games, and chat from 7-10 p.m. Some attend because they don't want to be at home watching TV, while others say it's a refuge from troubled friends.

Safe Stop was started a decade ago by the Police Department to keep kids out of trouble, according to former Sultan Police Chief Fred Walser. Vandalism and problems on the street declined on weekend nights as a result.

"We had a place where kids could go to burn energy," he said. Volunteers of America stepped in to run the program when it became too tough to find enough people to chaperone the youths.

The program, which costs about \$8,500 a year and is partly funded by the city and a grant from the county, was modeled after the now-defunct Neutral Zone in Mountlake Terrace. That program became popular in the 1990s, when the county saw a swell in gang-related activity.

The Neutral Zone provided at-risk youths a place to hang out on weekend evenings but was plagued by dwindling resources. It disbanded last summer.

"We knew very well that gangs were on the rise in our area. ... We knew that when we closed The Zone," said former Neutral Zone director Rose Sloan. "There was nothing we could do about it."

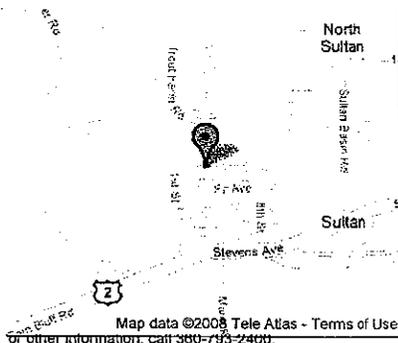
The Rev. Richard Gibson, former board president for The Zone, said there were still 50 to 80 kids coming to the program when it closed.

"It was an excellent program," he said. "I've often thought, 'What are those kids doing now?'"

#### At a disadvantage

In Snohomish County, there are fewer programs and resources for gang intervention and prevention than in King and Pierce counties, said Fairchild.

"I would like to see programs that help kids get out of gangs. We really don't have a lot of those



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assets," he said.

Those involved in gangs in Snohomish County are typically 15 to 19 years old and of a range of ethnic and racial backgrounds. Many are looking for respect and a sense of belonging, said Fairchild.

Recruitment typically occurs at the middle-school or high-school levels, but it can start as early as fourth or fifth grade, in schools, at malls or anywhere large groups gather, he said.

Although Safe Stop director Dave Wood says it's difficult to attract volunteers on Saturday nights to run the program — they have to undergo background checks — he is hoping to expand Safe Stop into Gold Bar and Skykomish.

"Some gangs are coming to the smaller communities because it's easier and there's not as much pressure," he said, noting that smaller areas lack the anti-gang ordinances, police manpower and alternative activities for young people in larger cities. "People here don't exactly know what to do.

"My whole concern is to grab this now," he said.

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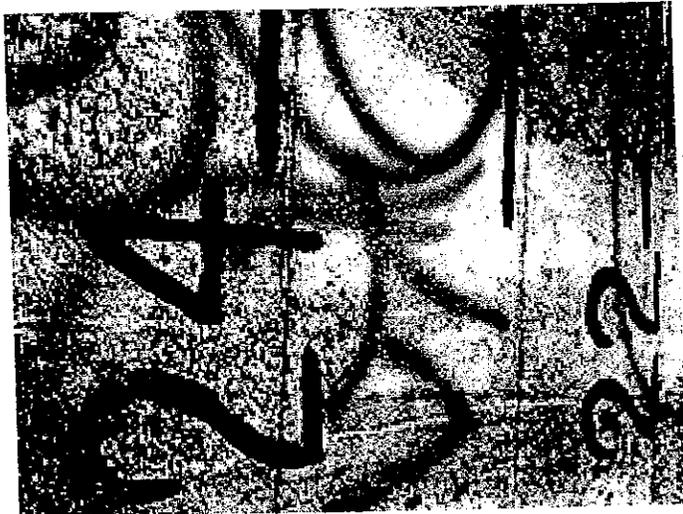
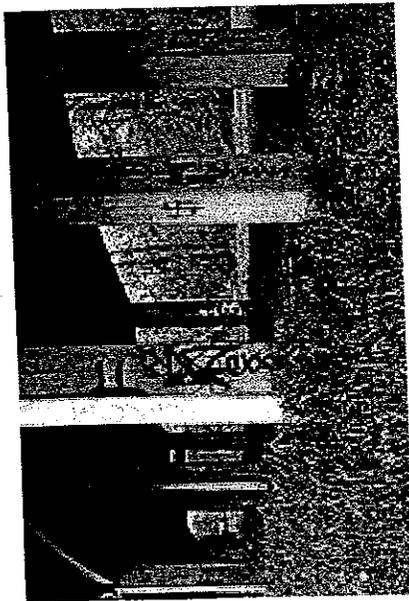
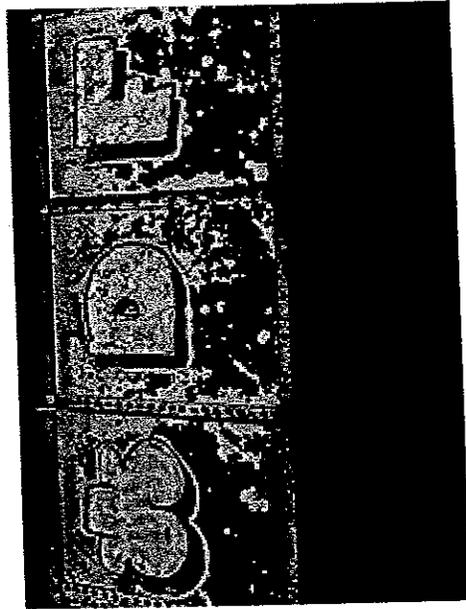
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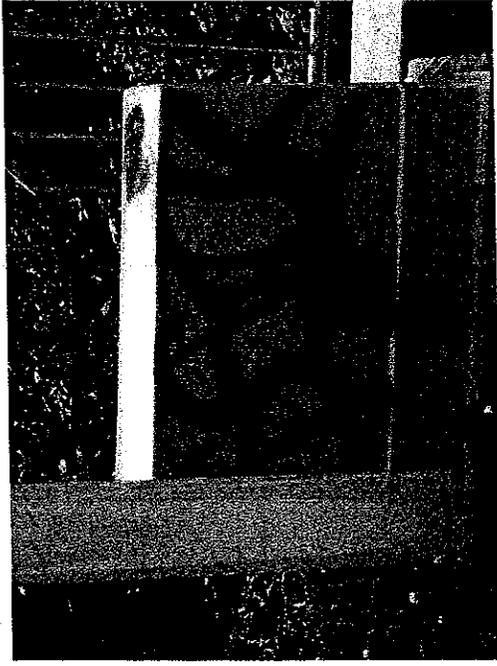
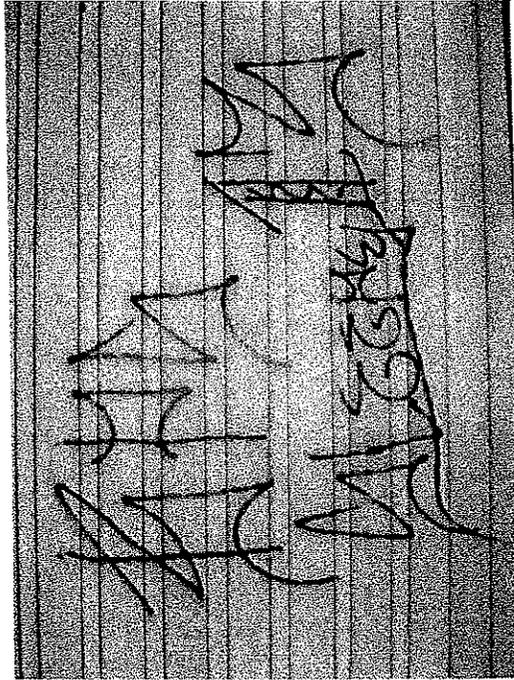
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