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Providing Training to Professionals and the Community on Gang Issues

## "Is There a Gang Member in the House"

by **Travis Anderson**

*Messenger-Post Publications, Wednesday, April 21, 1999*

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While there are few signs of true gang activity in the suburbs, nationally known gang expert Lisa Taylor-Austin said that doesn't mean people should turn a blind eye to the possibility. Many people believe gang violence only exists in urban settings." she said. "However, the suburbs are most at risk, since many organized gangs are now recruiting from middle-class neighborhoods. Caucasian youth are being heavily recruited now. Places like the ones we live in here are excellent recruiting grounds for organized gangs."

Taylor-Austin who travels around the country to testify in gang-related court cases, said there are gangs operating in the City of Rochester. They include representatives of national gangs like the Latin Kings and Jamaican Posse. Most of the gangs in this area, though, are "homegrown," or local, gangs, she said.

She said parents should be wary if their child starts hanging out with a totally different crowd, has a weapon, gets a tattoo, or uses hand signs that differ from American Sign Language. All of these characteristics are part of the gang culture.

She also advises parents to be on the lookout for a child who will predominantly wear one color of clothing and, at the same time, refuse to wear a certain color. By themselves, she said, those characteristics are not cause for concern. But together, they should send up a red flag.

Taylor-Austin warned that gang members don't always have poor grades in school. She discourages parents from using that as an indicator, because she has seen a lot of gang members who have good grades."



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