

Area Youth Gang Activities Zoom

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Membership in area youth gangs has increased by 400 percent in the past year and new violence between rival factions is probably on its way, a Sheriff's Department report said today.

In one of the first reports on youth gang violence in the area, sheriff's officials said there has been an upsurge in gang membership and violence in the past year.

At least one group — the Northside Locos in Watsonville — has a membership of 120 youths. Two new gangs have recently sprung up in the Santa Cruz area, the report said.

"Never has there been juvenile gang activity with such intensity and organization as presently," said the report. "... this gang activity parallels that being experienced in many urban areas."

The report comes in the wake of increasing violence by youth gangs in both Watsonville and Santa Cruz.

Last week, violence erupted at the County Fair when members of the Northside Locos brawled with carnival workers

and at least three people were stabbed during the incident.

That gang was formed in 1974 by two youths who called themselves "Spider" and "Flaco," the report said.

Later, the pair were convicted of murder and sentenced to the California Youth Authority. The gang died out, then came back in 1979.

Members of the gang are initiated through a process that is known as "jumping in."

According to the reports, when a possible new member is identified, three to five gang members "jump" him and beat him up. His ability to survive this beating dictates his acceptance by the gang.

Once a youth is a gang member, there is no permissible way to leave, according to the sheriff's report. The gang centers on "respect" which is obtained by the attempted murder or murder of individuals who are in disfavor with the group.

The Northside Locos also has two offshoots. Las Monas (the dolls) is the female counterpart of the Northside Locos

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