

# Local

✓ CF YOUTH RP 1/31/92 p. 9

## Parents get together to oppose police tactics

### Castroville group says kids are being harassed

By LARAMIE TREVINO  
STAFF WRITER

The bevy of boisterous Castroville mothers is paying rapt attention to the stain-remover salesman, who happened by as they were gathering to discuss the grimmer subject of their errant youngsters.

They indulge him further, believing he arrived with one of the guests. Soon the price of the product is revealed, as well as the salesman's lack of affiliation with anyone present. He is bid cheerful farewells as the twice-monthly meeting of parents of at-risk youth comes to order once again.

Since fall, up to a dozen parents, mostly women, gather at the home of Polly Jimenez, an English teacher at North Monterey County High School and local civic leader. The parents got together soon after reports began surfacing about what some parents considered to be too much police attention paid to local youngsters.

The group got together to share information, frustrations and a game plan for combating what they call unnecessary harassment by authorities.

"Most of the time these parents come just to vent their feelings," Jimenez said last night, following an hour-and-a-half session.

Talk included updates on the progress of students experiencing academic difficulties and a report of a youth chased into a field by an officer.

"Write down everything that happens," Jimenez urges. She stresses the importance of documenting incidents so that she can have concrete information to present to Monterey County Sheriff Norman Hicks.

"I really think the police think they are providing us with a service," Jimenez declares as she moves the night's loose agenda along. "We've just got to let them know they are going about it the wrong way."

Soon discussion turns to the bad rap given Castroville by authorities, who once threw out the figure 60 when estimating the number of gang members inhabiting the town.

Out-of-towners ask residents if the artichoke festival is still put on, given the dangerous conditions downtown, one mother tells the group.

Sally Torres, a school bus driver, gestures wildly with her hands, her voice rising as she defends the homeboys.

The exchange of grievances becomes angry when the subject of a certain document that sheriff's deputies have been circulating in the community comes up.

For about a year now, the office of the District Attorney has distributed forms to notify parents that their children are hanging around with the wrong people "and they may want to keep an eye on them," said Chris Harter, a deputy district attorney.

In a memorandum format, the narrative informs readers that the North Side Castro Gang is a criminal street gang engaging in a pattern of activity involving crimes.

At the bottom of the form is a space where the named youngster can sign his name. Authorities can also note if the youth refused to sign. The youth is given a copy and the district attorney's office keeps one on file.



Mike McCollum

Polly Jimenez, center, in chair, has opened her home to an informal group of Castroville parents.

Harter said the youngsters have to fit a number of criteria, such as their name appearing in graffiti or the wearing of gang colors, before they are presented with the form, a record-keeping tool authorities can call on if the individuals ever appear in court.

To many of the mothers, this translates into their children being picked on.

"They want these boys to say they are gang members," said Sally Torres.

Soon, the parents' group will come up with a name, and later, some specific objectives.

"Our goal right now is just to have a network of parents," Jimenez said. This way, if one parent sees another's child up to something, the parent will know who to tell about it.

Already there's a bake sale planned for Feb. 8 and a car wash scheduled Feb. 22. Parents want to raise some money so they can offer local young-

sters some healthy diversions.

For starters, they're arranging for the San Jose office of Victory Outreach to present a play of social and spiritual value April 25 at the Castroville Community Center.

Ray Torres, a Watsonville car salesman and Little League coach for nearly two decades, pointed out how unruly youths are often kicked out of the community center while, he said, "we're trying to get the troublemakers into the center."

He also recounted how some years back, when he was on the board of the North County Recreation and Parks Department, he was leaving the center after a night meeting and a female colleague asked him to walk her outside so the "riffraff" congregated in the parking lot wouldn't rape her.

Torres laughed, recalling it was his own son and some of his cousins to whom the woman was referring.