

# Aptos seeks action against juvenile crime

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A plan aimed at reducing juvenile crime in Aptos by having more activities for youth, a juvenile probation officer on campus, and more attention from sheriff's deputies is being formulated by a group of residents.

Organization of the group, called the Aptos Community Alliance, was prompted by a sharp increase in crime during December and January, when schools were out of session. The group includes representatives from homeowners' associations, schools and the Aptos Chamber of Commerce.

The proposal, subject to approval by the Board of Supervisors, would include these programs:

- Having a juvenile probation officer who would go back and forth between Aptos and Watsonville high schools. The probation officer would not have a regular case load, but would deal mainly with youths perceived to be at risk of getting into trouble. "We want to do prevention services," said Judy Cox, division director at Juvenile Hall. The program is based on one that has worked well in San Diego, she said.

- An extra deputy for Aptos during the day to focus on youth issues. The deputy "would work closely with the probation officer"

in following up on cases, said Sheriff's Lt. Mark Tracy, who worked on the proposal with Chief Deputy Wally Walker.

- Opening a drop-in center at Aptos Junior High after school and an open gym on Friday and Saturday nights at Aptos High School.

Aptos currently has no recreation programs geared for teenagers, said Clark Beattie, public services administrator for the county Parks and Recreation Department.

The county plans to have the gyms and swimming pools at Santa Cruz and Harbor high schools on designated nights this summer, Beattie said. The county wants to start the Aptos programs in September, he said, adding that he hopes to get some ideas for Aptos from the summer programs.

These are critical services. We're not asking for fluff," said Aptos High School principal Ron Severson.

Severson said the Alliance plans to present its proposal to the Board of Supervisors before budget hearings in June.

The recreation program and the extra probation officer are already included in the proposed budgets of those departments.

Midcounty Supervisor Walt Symons called the proposal "a wonderful idea. It represents thousands of people in Aptos."