

Gang problem lurks in Live Oak neighborhoods

GRAFFITI WAR LATEST ISSUE, COULD LEAD TO MORE VIOLENCE

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Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Bob Summers, who works for the Graffiti Removal Project, takes his pressure washer to a fence on Saturday.

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LIVE OAK — A fatal gang shooting on 17th Avenue in late January drew attention to a problem Live Oak residents have noticed for quite some time: gangs are rife in their neighborhoods.

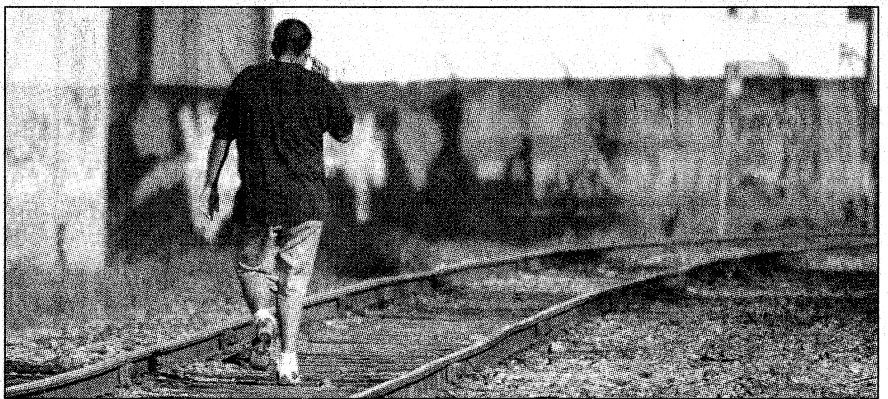
For the most part, the gangsters keep to themselves, but problems become apparent when they spray-paint tags on playgrounds and fences, break into cars or get into fist fights on street corners.

The late-afternoon January shooting in the middle of a busy street that left bullets embedded in a nearby house emphasized how scary it can get. To get away, the victim begged a passing motorist for a ride.

Although there's long been gang issues in Live Oak, a spate of violent incidents leading up to the shooting and a recent surge in graffiti connected to three separate gangs has law enforcement officials and residents concerned more violence could be on tap.

"I don't like it, that's for sure," said Brandon Fitzgerald, 24, who lives near the spot where Oscar Javier Jaquez, 17, is accused of shooting Servando Silonsochilt, 27, five times on Jan. 29. Silonsochilt died the next day.

After the shooting, the Sheriff's Office reported Jaquez had allegedly brandished the gun at a different man moments before he targeted Silonsochilt and detectives started probing past violent incidents in



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Graffiti lines a wall on a commercial building along the Union Pacific tracks in Live Oak.

the neighborhood that Jaquez and other young suspected gang members might be involved in.

"It's a real affront, a real vile thing to have someone capitalize on physical intimidation and that's what gangs do," sheriff's Sgt. Fred Plageman said.

Fitzgerald wasn't home when Silonsochilt, who was riding his bike on 17th Avenue, was gunned down, but the lifelong Live Oak resident said he's seen his share of gang crime.

"There was fight that broke out a couple

Getting gangs out of neighborhoods

- Call 911 to report fights and suspicious activity.
- Create or join a Neighborhood Watch program and ask a sheriff's deputy to attend a meeting.
- Report graffiti to deputies, then remove it. If you need help or want to assist others in erasing gang members' marks on the neighborhood, call the Graffiti Removal Project Hotline at 426-0462 or 772-7771.

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