

# Community leaders

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Although suppression is the best way to deal with committed, lifetime gang members, intervention and prevention are the optimum methods for reaching less active participants, he said.

Crouch said gangs were a relatively small national problem in the 1950s and 60s and blamed the increase, which began in the mid-70s, on the loss of opportunities and resources in the inner cities.

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*-Dr. Ben Crouch, associate dean of Texas A&M University's College of Liberal Arts*

shifts," he said.

Mark Ricketson and Hugh Wallace of the Bryan Police Department's Street Crime Apprehension Team (SCAT) said Bryan has seen a decline in profit-motivated gangs, but turf-based gangs, which are harder to detect, are on the rise.

Wallace said gang prevention should begin in the schools.

"There's no easy solution, but if we can prevent one person from joining a gang it's worth it."

Sgt. Dan Jones of the College Station Police Department said the potential for gang violence is high because armed, rival groups are congregating in the same areas, namely apartment complexes, motels, shopping centers and schools.

College Station is particularly vulnerable to property crime because of the number of residential areas and high numbers of college students leaving town during breaks, Jones said.

"Something could happen at any time," he said, "If everyone can work together, we can get the

gang problem beat."

While the percentage of the crime increase is alarming, the real numbers are not that large, said Ernie Wentrcek, director of juvenile services for Brazos County.

Wentrcek outlined programs used to reform gang members and eliminate potential problems saying it is important to get started at "a stage early enough to turn the tide before we're swallowed up."

Ronnie Jackson, a director of alternative programs for the Bryan Independent School District, said if people really want to know what the situation in the schools is, they need to ask their children.

"There's a lot out there that kids are exposed to," he said.

He told the audience that students often feel that adults are apathetic to the problem, and are getting involved only for "media hype." Jackson said children also say adults would rather "get back to going to church and playing golf."

Paul Hatch, of the College Station Independent School District, compared gangs to cancer saying it doesn't take a whole lot of it in

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*-Hugh Wallace  
Bryan Police  
SCAT member*

the body to ruin a person.

Hatch said what used to be harmless activity may not be so anymore and emphasized that although there is a problem, there is also hope.

"Most kids are making the right decision," he said. "This is a moral question."

Father Victor Robles emphasized the need for the community to come together and said it's important to teach respect for the individual and for authority.

Robles quoted former statesman Adlai Stevenson, "Peace making is more difficult than making war."

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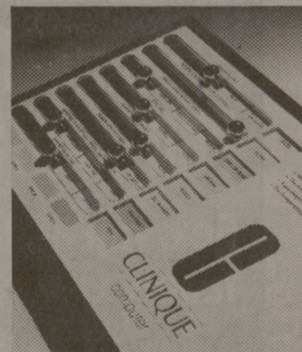
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