

## From the desk of Officer Marshall Morehead

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### **Gangs = Family?**

Anyone who's spent any real time around me has undoubtedly heard me talk about how blessed my life has been. Though no one would ever confuse me with a "rich person" monetarily; I am wealthy by other standards. It wasn't until I was into and out of high school that I really started to see that everyone didn't grow up like me. And by that I mean; parents that loved me, who had me in church every time the door cracked open, made sure that I was doing my school work and were positive role models. These things, that I took for granted, were blessings that I never realized other people didn't have. Being the middle of three sons to a bi vocational minister and a school teacher meant that we didn't exactly get everything we wanted (Preachers and schoolteachers don't usually make it onto Forbes list of most wealthy people). And even though I didn't know you could get clothes off the rack, I just thought they came "new" from my older brother's closet to mine, we always had all of our needs provided for (Food, clothes, shelter and more). I know it doesn't sound like much, but really what more could I have asked for?

Over my years in Law Enforcement I have devoted much attention to the problems of gangs. From my first Gang classes I attended while a member of the Street Crimes Unit at Walterboro PD to the extensive training I received while working as a School Resource Officer and Gang Task Force member at CCSO I have learned one thing. A gang is a family substitute plain and simple! Children gravitate towards a gang because they feel like they have no one else to love them. They think its right, only because they've never had the real deal to compare it to. They will allow others to beat, manipulate, bully and use them for their own gains simply because they have never experienced and don't know what real love is.

If that was all we were dealing with I would just pity them. Unfortunately there's much more to it than the how and the why. What the real problem is comes next. It's not the how you became a gang member that puts bullets into the air headed in unknown directions. It's not the why you became a gang member that puts unintended children in the hospital. It's the what. As in what do I do now that I have become a gang member? I have tried to leave all the youth I have encountered, from the teams that I have coached to the kids I have taught in school and Church, with one thought. You are ultimately the only person who is responsible for the decisions you make. People can attempt to influence you. People can attempt to make you react a certain way, but when it's all said and done you are responsible for you.

So how do we fix this? It's simple. Love each other. Respect each other. Communicate with each other. Try to see things from each other's point of view. Never pass up a chance to be a positive role model to your younger siblings and friends. I do believe that the concept is really that simple. Putting it into practice, now that's the trick. If that seems like an insurmountable task, just remember what my Sensei would tell us if we were overwhelmed while trying to learn a complicated martial arts technique. He would ask "How do you eat an elephant?" And the answer of course is "One bite at a time" Thank you again for your time and for helping us to better serve you.