

## Task force on girl gangs forms

By Robert S. Hong, Staff Writer

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PASADENA - Just like their male counterparts, teenage girls and young women gang members often join gangs because their siblings, or sometimes even their parents, are active gang members, Pasadena community activist Cheryl Hubbard said.

And sometimes young women gang members become objects of jealous rage - with deadly results, she said.

"A lot of the drive-bys that happen are because of, or over, girls in gangs," said Hubbard, whose heads an anti-gang program in Northwest Pasadena called "Moms on the Move" and also is a member of the city's Commission on the Status of Women.

Her involvement in both groups will no doubt come into play now that the commission has formed a new citywide task force to focus specifically on girls and young women in gangs - who they are, why they join, and how they can be helped.

It's not a new issue, and many local groups, including Moms on the Move, Girls in Gangs, Adelante Mujer Latina, Young African American Women and others, have been working

individually on what can be done about a growing numbers of girls and young women in gangs.

What is new, said Rita Gail Turner, the commission's chairwoman, is that this new effort will try to bring all these groups to a single table.

"We want to be a clearing house of information and services," Gail Turner said. "We're a village - when one of us makes it, we all make it."

While gang homicides were down markedly this year - from 10 gang-related deaths in 2007 - two gang-related shootings in 2008 involved female victims. On Aug. 19, 20-year-old Jennifer Ortega, was shot and killed by people believed to be gang members, police have said. And just this past Thanksgiving Day, a 26-year-old woman survived after being shot multiple times. Four alleged gang member have been charged in her attempted murder.

In that latter case, police have said they believe the victim's own involvement in gangs may have played a role.

Najeeba Syeed-Miller, a commission member who is also executive director of the Western Justice Center in Pasadena, said prevention and intervention programs need to be crafted specifically to meet the needs of teen girls and young women - those on the verge of joining gangs and those already in them.

Last week, Syeed-Miller and other members of the Commission on the Status of Women met to begin forming the framework of the new task

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force on girls in gangs.

"We want to engage different (groups) to integrate violence prevention into our work plans," she said. "Everyone here is connected to different parts of the community - we're connected with people in the community who are affected directly."

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