

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PTA Council to Host “Gang Awareness”—
A Countywide Informational Session for Parents, Educators and the Community
following the Baltimore County PTA General Membership Meeting

To ensure Baltimore County parents and community members are educated about the emergence of gang activity in local communities, the PTA Council of Baltimore County will host a program on Gang Awareness immediately following its next general membership meeting.

On March 22, 2007 at Dumbarton Middle School, the PTA Council of Baltimore County will host an informational session on Gang Awareness, presented by Sgt. Jim Conaboy of the Baltimore County Police Gang Enforcement Team. The session will provide information on recognizing local gang activity, the warning signs of gang involvement, intervention tips and a description of how the police and Baltimore County Public Schools work together to ensure that each school has a safe learning environment.

“Many parents and community members lack the knowledge to properly monitor gang activity warning signs within their community, their schools and their children,” says Nancy Ostrow, first vice president of the PTA Council of Baltimore County. “We need to work as a team – parents, students, schools, community members and law enforcement – to ensure that our children, schools and communities are safe.”

There is evidence of gang activity throughout Baltimore County and Maryland. Although there may be a small percentage of youth involved in organized criminal gang activity, there are many more youths attempting to be “cool” by imitating the gang culture that is glorified in popular music and movies. In addition, many children may innocently exhibit a gang mentality when forming social cliques that deliberately exclude or target others.

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“Gang activity can affect any child, whether he chooses to join or not,” adds Ostrow. “A child’s innocent hand gesturing or clothing choices could place him or her in harm if misinterpreted by a gang member. In addition, he may become a victim of crimes, like cell phone theft committed as part of a gang member’s initiation rite.”

The event is free and open to the public, including **all Baltimore County PTA members, parents and community members**. Doors open at 7:00 p.m., and the General Membership Meeting begins at 7:30 p.m. The program will immediately follow. For additional information, contact firstvp@bcptacouncil.org.

The Baltimore County PTA Council is a key link between local PTAs and the Maryland and National PTAs. It was organized in 1950 under the authority of the Maryland PTA for the purpose of conference, leadership training and coordination of the efforts of local PTAs within Baltimore County. The PTA Council, which celebrated its 55th anniversary in October 2005, serves more than 40,000 members in 159 local PTAs.

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