

NET Television Documentary Investigates Nebraska's Gang Problem

LINCOLN, Neb. (Nov. 2, 2011) -- Five thousand or more gang members live in Nebraska's large cities and small towns. They're involved in homicide, drug dealing and theft, as well as other crimes. They form hundreds of gangs with numerous ethnic and geographic influences. NET News investigates Nebraska's gangs, their members and the fight against them in the new documentary "Gang Fight: Nebraska," airing Friday, Nov. 18, at 7 p.m. CT on NET1/HD.

In addition to the television program, the multimedia "Gang Fight: Nebraska" project includes radio stories and extensive web content. The four-part "Gang Fight: Nebraska" radio news series airs as the daily NET News "Signature Story" Tuesday, Nov. 15, through Friday, Nov. 18, at 6:30 and 8:30 a.m. CT and 4:30 p.m. CT on NET Radio. These radio stories will offer more detail about the scope of Nebraska's gang problem, profile a Christian-centered gym in Omaha that is an alternative to gangs, report on rural gang growth and examine alternative solutions for dealing with gang activity.

The program website (netNebraska.org/gangfight) features more than 30 minutes of additional video content, including expanded interviews with experts, as well as links to information about gangs and gang activities around the state. Visitors can stream video and audio from the documentary and radio stories, as well as find links to statistics, reports and other information.

NET News producer/reporter Mike Tobias examines gang involvement and activity from a variety of perspectives in "Gang Fight: Nebraska." He includes the personal story of teenager Luis Rodriguez, a successful amateur boxer drawn into a South Omaha gang at an early age. Tobias also tells the story of Rodriguez's coach, Servando Perales, a former gang member and drug dealer who reformed in prison. Perales returned to the South Omaha neighborhood he once roamed as a criminal to become a minister and open a Christian-centered gym, Victory Boxing Club, in hopes of keeping youth away from gangs.

"If you don't have a good structured home, where your parents are constantly monitoring who you're with and what you're doing, it's so easy to get caught up in the gangs," Perales said.

In "Gang Fight: Nebraska," Tobias also talks with law enforcement officers and other experts about the levels of gang activity throughout Nebraska, which is described as "slow growing." Although homicides and gun violence get the most media attention, Tobias reports that gangs in Omaha and across Nebraska are also involved in drug dealing, prostitution, theft, assault and entrepreneurial crimes such as identity and credit card theft.

In addition to examining the gang problem in Nebraska's cities, Tobias studies the growth of gangs in Nebraska's rural communities. He travels to Columbus to see how that community deals with its gang problems. "I think all of us who are in communities our size don't believe that's going to happen here. But it is happening here, and it's not just Columbus. It is across the state," Columbus businessman Mike Fleming said. Fleming is a longtime Columbus resident who helped start Time-4-Change, Columbus' coordinated effort to fight gangs.

"Gang Fight: Nebraska" also examines other approaches to dealing with gangs, including the role of law enforcement, churches and community organizations.

"Gang Fight Nebraska" repeats on NET2 World on Saturday, Nov. 19, at 7 and 10 p.m. CT and Wednesday, Nov. 23, at 6 p.m. CT. It repeats on NET1/HD Sunday, Nov. 20, at 10:30 p.m. CT; Tuesday, Nov. 22, at 11 p.m. CT; on NET1/HD; Thursday, Nov. 24, at 10 p.m. CT; and Friday, Nov. 25, at 7:30 p.m. CT.

NET1, NET-HD and NET2 World are part of NET Television. NET Television is a service of NET. For more information about NET Television programming, visit netNebraska.org and click on television.