

# Belzer's tactics blasted

By PATRICIA R. ZIMMERMAN

The recent Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA) campaign against gangs has generated too much bad publicity, according to North East Action Team (NEAT) President Wayne Dereczynski.

He accuses LSNA President Mike Belzer of attempting to further his "political career" through emotionally explosive public meetings where citizens confront police officials.

The Gaylor's, a Northwest Side street gang, crashed two recent LSNA crime meetings.

Dereczynski, who was president of LSNA in 1975 and 1976, and NEAT members who gathered at the First Lutheran Church, 3500 W. Fullerton Ave., Tuesday, Aug. 9, to hear Shakespeare (14th) Police District Cmdr. William Hanhardt, claim that LSNA has consistently refused to grant their organization a new charter until they conform to the "rules." Dereczynski suspects east end residents of Logan Square of gerrymandering to gain a more liberal following.

"The invitation was submitted to Commander Hanhardt prior to all this publicity LSNA has received. At the June 5 Senate meeting, we began getting this meeting today together. NEAT is the oldest branch in the organization, but we're totally disregarded. The gang meetings were called and conducted without participation from this branch," Dereczynski said.

"For the last two to three weeks,

we've been plastered in the press and television and it is a black eye to our community. We've gotten more publicity from a few punks on street corners than from years of hard work in abandoned buildings," Dereczynski said.

Dereczynski added that his complaints were aimed at President Mike Belzer, and not at Anne Wucki, a Lawndale Avenue resident who identified a gang member at an LSNA meeting who allegedly assaulted a man in front of her house.

Because NEAT members suspect Logan Square is gaining a reputation as a hotbed of gang activity and crime, they fear a rash of panic peddling and property depreciation will follow.

Although the police department has responded positively to LSNA demands by increasing patrols and cracking down on negligent officers NEAT and Hanhardt agree that community problems can be solved more efficiently with phone calls from an organization's president.

"We'll fight our own problems. Commander Hanhardt has always come through when we've called him about various incidents or problems," Dereczynski pointed out.

Commander Hanhardt, an investigator for 19 years before he assumed his current post, reinforced Dereczynski's views:

"I would much rather deal with problems under LSNA right now, without a three-week interim for a

large public meeting. When Wayne was president, he would come in and discuss it (the problem). When Wayne called or any other LSNA member called about a problem, we would get a meeting with the individual affected," he said.

"Don't wait for a community meeting three to four weeks later. Call me as soon as you can. If our men are slow in responding, call me and I'll take care of it," Hanhardt urged.

He cited records showing 27 complaints against police officers in the last 37 days as evidence.

In addition, Hanhardt said that he planned an Aug. 12 meeting with Gaylor leaders to confront them with issues raised by residents in the last few weeks.

"Last week at Our Lady of Grace we thoroughly alienated those kids. We're not going about this the right way," he said.

Over 50 Gaylor's appeared at that LSNA crime meeting.

Hanhardt asserts that "the gang thing has really been blown out of proportion in the media."

Although the police department chief of patrol has increased Special Operations Group (SOG) patrol in areas frequented by gangs, Hanhardt feels that it is only a superficial answer to the problem.

"They are throwing in policemen not thoroughly familiar with our clientele. From 27 arrests, I received seven phone calls from parents claiming their kids are not gang

members," he pointed out.

"They can't tell the players without a scorecard — they don't know who's in a gang and who is just standing around"

Beat patrolmen regularly assigned to the 14th district recognize gang members more accurately, he said. He advocates educational and recreational programs emphasizing community involvement rather than mass arrests.

Sgt. William Howe, neighborhood relations officer, pointed out that the idea of a gang court was introduced by Hanhardt several years ago, before Ald. Richard McIl, 33rd, began pressing for one.

Even though the 14th district has over 250,000 residents and has expanded three square miles since 1976, the area experienced an overall 4.3 per cent decrease in crime in the last 10 months, Hanhardt said.

"Besides," he continued, "the 14th district leads the city in service calls — 13,959. The citywide average is only 9,000."

Hanhardt and Dereczynski urged citizens to get involved by calling police with complaints and suggestions.

"Get involved with your community — join groups like this, form block clubs, get to know your police officers, establish a rapport with them. That's how we will make this a better place to live," Hanhardt suggested.