

Residents' apathy GL thwarts investigation

"We want to help the community. This is our job. But we need cooperation," said a frustrated I.L. Joseph DiLeonardi, commanding officer of the gang crimes north unit.

By press time Monday, no one had responded to an appeal from DiLeonardi in last week's NEWS calling for witnesses to volunteer information on the stabbing Saturday, Aug. 4, of Edward Rizzo, 17, of N. Springfield.

Rizzo was stabbed in the lower back when he was pulled to the ground during a fight involving several youths at the annual parish fun fair at St. Stanislaus B & M church, 5252 Belden.

The fight reportedly involved members of the Joustlers and Gaylords street gangs, but Rizzo was not a gang member, according to the police.

The Humboldt Park youth was hospitalized in serious condition at St. Anne's hospital after the stabbing, but he recovered and was released Friday, Aug. 10.

Two prime suspects, arrested two weeks ago in the Saturday night stabbing had to be released because witnesses were unable to identify them. The suspects had been taken into custody because they fit descriptions provided to police by the witnesses.

Parents of witnesses have refused to allow their children to provide information to the police, according to DiLeonardi.

"People in the lily-white neighborhoods of the Northwest side think the gangs will just go away if they keep quiet," he said.

DiLeonardi explained that residents of such areas that have had relatively little crime in the past — often the

doing their jobs, but in the Rizzo case, "We are at a dead end to the extent that we have no cooperation from witnesses' mothers and fathers."

Northwest side residents should cooperate in this investigation, DiLeonardi said, before the gangs become entrenched in the area.

"When we have a mother and a father telling their kid not to help the police, then what kind of society are we living in?" he asked. "Not one phone call" was made in response to his plea for aid in the investigation of the Rizzo stabbing, DiLeonardi said.

The gang crimes north unit is continuing the investigation in conjunction with the homicide division of area five.

Persons who may have information on the stabbing have been asked to call the gang unit at 744-5409 or 486-3606.

The church carnival at which the incident took place was to have ended Monday, Aug. 13, but the Rev. Anthony Laskowski, pastor of St. Stans, closed the fund-raising event Saturday, Aug. 4, after he received reports that the gangs "wanted to level off on the ball field on Sunday."

"The primary reason for the cancellation of the St. Stanislaus B & M fun fair this year was the preservation of the safety of the members of the entire parish family and guests," Laskowski wrote in the parish bulletin.

"Because of serious misbehavior and unruliness of a certain irresponsible and crude element of our society, it was prudently judged that this very important parish social cease before its scheduled time," he said.

The church is looking into alternative means of raising money for their school

Neighborhood safety **GL**

A 17-year-old Northwest side boy was seriously injured in a gang fight at a local church carnival. And although the carnival, an annual end-of-the-summer event, was as well attended as usual, no one saw anything happen.

At least, now the police can't find anyone who will say they witnessed the fight, much less the stabbing of the high school youth.

Police investigating the incident made an appeal in the last several issues of this paper for witnesses to volunteer information on the stabbing. And three weeks after the incident haven't received a single telephone call. Not one call.

We know people in the community, even those who weren't there that particular Saturday are talking about it. If only because the carnival organizers closed down the operation ten days ahead of schedule. We're pretty sure, too, that many are talking about the incident because they and their children witnessed it. Most of them unfortunately are not talking to the police.

The investigators, therefore, are being frustrated in their attempts to clear up this incident—and more important in their attempts to prevent another one from occurring.

Although the injured teen was not a gang member, other youths involved were. Police have watched gangs in other areas of the city grow bolder and bolder as they threaten, harass and terrorize a neighborhood. They attack and rob community residents to prove their "power

away with, the more powerful they are," the gang leaders reason.

Witnesses, who refuse to aid police or encourage others to keep quiet, reinforce the gang logic and encourage their invasion into an area.

Ironically, those people who won't help police in this case and others like it, are the first to bemoan the rising crime rates and criticize the police for being negligent and uncooperative. Some even talk about "putting a cop on every corner."

In the sense, those "cops" should be they and their neighbors acting as community guardians. A neighborhood is only as safe as the residents make it. Petty thieves, burglars, vandals and gangs know in what areas they can operate with the least hassle.

We don't expect the guy next door to tangle with an armed robber or investigate strange noises in a nearby drug store after closing hours. But we do expect and think neighbors should demand that the police receive the help they need whether it's the description of someone tampering with a car or wielding a knife at a carnival. Police welcome such aid and credit local residents in other sections of the city with contributing to the decrease or elimination of gang-related incidents of crime, incidents of crime.

Again we urge anyone who has information about the carnival stabbing to call the gang unit at 744-5446 or 486-3666. We hope others will remember to contact the police at other times when they can be of help to the investigators.