

# OVERVIEW

by Sergeant Bob Risedorph

**I**llegal drug use is bad. Street gangs are bad. Isn't this a simple enough explanation? Unfortunately, too many times this is where the discussion ends, not where it begins. As a society, we're all concerned with the dangerous effects of drug use and gang activity. Many of us are not informed, however, of how we can prevent these problems from becoming an issue within our families, schools and neighborhoods. Further, how can we stop these problems from escalating if, in fact, they are already apparent within our communities?

One good way to begin the fight against drugs and gangs is through communication and education. This special issue of The Deputy is intended to help school-aged children learn about the choices they have to make throughout their lives and educate parents, teachers, friends and relatives so they can give children honest and accurate information. As any teenager knows, choices are not always simple. As you will learn by reading this magazine, the topics of drugs and gangs are also difficult.

## We Must Save Our Ship

As a community, we're all in the same boat. The problems of crime, gangs and drugs are like holes in the hull, threatening the safety of our vessel. Some of us believe these holes are small, and we avoid putting our heads beneath the water to see the real damage. Although efforts are made to patch the holes, the sensation of water at our ankles is being felt throughout the ship. We may be continuing forward, but the boat has been taking on water for some time.

The men and women of the Sacramento County Deputy Sheriffs' Association deal with the problems associated with gangs and drugs on some level every day. While the county, state and federal governments have allocated large amounts of taxpay-

<b>The Devastating Reality</b>
<p>Heroin, marijuana, cocaine, methamphetamine, LSD, ecstasy and psilocybin are all illegal drugs that are available in Sacramento. Based on the following disturbing facts, it is painfully obvious these drugs are a problem on our streets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>In 1995, the Sacramento Sheriff's Department seized more marijuana than any other illegal drug, followed by methamphetamine, cocaine and heroin.</i></li><li>• <i>The amount of methamphetamine seized and the number of methamphetamine-related arrests outnumber the totals for heroin and cocaine combined.</i></li><li>• <i>In 1995, there were more methamphetamine-related deaths in Sacramento than in any other California county.</i></li><li>• <i>Drug labs, international drug trafficking groups, major marijuana cultivations and money laundering operations have all been identified in Sacramento.</i></li><li>• <i>Over 70 identified street gangs have operated in Sacramento.</i></li><li>• <i>Each year, gang members contribute to more than 100 homicides, countless shootings, robberies, assaults, thefts, burglaries, drug sales, and acts of vandalism and peace disturbance.</i></li></ul>

ers' dollars to try to impact these problems, they are nonetheless very difficult to eradicate. As the political, legal, social and ethical issues associated with gangs and drugs continue to be debated, more and more people are being hurt by the devastating fallout. We all know it must stop, and it must stop now.

## Awareness is Key

In the process of taking back our communities, law enforcement surprisingly should be the last resort. The first step in eliminating a continuing problem is

awareness. If you know someone you love is headed for trouble, you can and should do something about it. But first you need to have knowledge. You may think you know what a gang member is, but are you sure? You may believe you will recognize drug influences in your children, relatives and co-workers, but do you have doubts?

These are the facts. This is reality. As you read this magazine, you will learn about street gangs and street drugs. Some of you can use this information to make a difference, while others can use it to make the right choice. ★