

Gangs in the Poconos

topic for CTCPC forum

By Pattie Hughes

Are there gangs in the Poconos? Opinions vary from no gangs at all to a fear the area is being taken over. The answer lies in the middle of these two extremes and this will be the topic of a Gang Forum on June 26.

The Gang Forum is being hosted by the Coolbaugh Township Community Partnership Commission. The event will take place on Thursday, June 26 from 7 until 9 p.m. at Coolbaugh Township Fire Hall Station 1 on Laurel Drive. All area residents are encouraged to attend.

Guest speakers include Pocono Mountain School District Superintendent, Dwight Pfennig, Pocono Mountain Regional Police officers Dan Smelas and Dan Jones, and Monroe County Probation officer Brian Holley.

According to CTCPC Chairperson Clare Colgan, the purpose of the event is informational. Topics such as what to look for, how to recognize gang activity, and what to do in the event you come in contact with a gang will be discussed.

Coolbaugh Township Supervisor and liaison to the CTCPC Robert Zito said, "From my perspective, it's not because we perceive it as a great problem, but it's about being proactive."

Pocono Mountain Regional Police Chief Harry Lewis agrees, saying gang related crime is present in the area, but not more than the department can handle.

Zito described this as one of several events planned for the next seven to eight months. "The Board of Supervisors decided last year they wanted the CTCP to be more of a community outreach group than it has been in the past four years."

Colgan, the only Pocono native on the seven-member commission, described the CTCP as, "a varied group of civic minded people who care about the community and want to engage the residents."

The CTCP meets on the third Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at the Municipal Center on Route 611 in Coolbaugh Township. The meetings are open to all residents of the township. Zito said, "We encourage people to come and see what the group is trying to accomplish. We welcome input."

Another upcoming event being sponsored by the CTCP is a parade and ceremony to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of Tobyhanna Railroad Station. The ceremony will be held on June 29 at the station.