

Watsonville and Santa Cruz Youth City Councils Youth Safety Surveys 2012/2013

Background

In response to the ideas, questions and concerns discussed at the Santa Cruz County Youth Violence Prevention Planning Summit on October 24, 2012, the Watsonville Youth City Council (WYCC) conducted two peer-to-peer youth safety surveys during the 2012/13 school year. The first survey was written and distributed in November 2012 by the youth leaders with support and guidance from their adult advisors. Seven hundred and ninety (790) Watsonville youth from six area high schools participated in the first survey, which consisted of 27 questions about youth safety in specific areas of the City, youth crime reporting, the comfort level of youth with law enforcement and gang influence.

The WYCC conducted a follow-up survey in early February 2013, which consisted of 34 questions designed to investigate why youth feel safe and unsafe, what keeps youth from reporting crime and what youth feel would be effective strategies to increase safety. Three hundred and forty six (346) Watsonville youth from five high schools participated.

Later that month, with the tragic and violent deaths of two Santa Cruz Police Officers, Watsonville Youth Mayor Alvaro Zamora sent condolences to the City of Santa Cruz. The WYCC reached out the youth of Santa Cruz calling for a Youth Safety Summit of youth from North and South Santa Cruz County.

Letter to the Editor: February 27, 2013: As mayor of the Watsonville Youth City Council and on behalf of the council members and the youth of Watsonville, my most sincere condolences go out to all of the affected family members, colleagues and community members of the officers in the recent tragedy. The loss of the two Santa Cruz police officers in the line of duty is the loss of two safeguards of tranquility.

In Watsonville, we have recently lost two teens through unnecessary violence. In such times of emotional hardship, it should be our priority to remain resilient and maintain our efforts in the pursuit of justice, community members and officers alike.

It is when such tragedies occur that we realize the duty of an officer is unlike any other, and that such duties are taken only by the most devoted members of the community. We praise and honor these officers for their commitment to peace.

The Watsonville Youth City Council would like to invite the youth from Santa Cruz to join us for a Youth Safety Summit at 5 p.m. Monday, March 11.

Youth from Santa Cruz responded and joined the Watsonville Youth City Council for an historic event: *The Youth Safety Summit*. The event was organized by and for youth from North and South Santa Cruz County. Twenty-two (22) youth from eight high schools engaged community members in a conversation about how violence affects youth. One participant from Costanoa High School summed up the essence of *The Youth Safety Summit* saying, "We need to stop participating in unsafe activities and become part of the solution, not part of the problem." Ten breakout groups

were formed and with youth leading the discussions, proposed solutions were then shared with the larger group. (See results below.)

Immediately following the Youth Safety Summit, 12 youth from Santa Cruz united to form the Santa Cruz Youth City Council (SCYCC). The newly formed council chose to investigate youth safety with a peer-to-peer methodology similar to and leveraging from the success in Watsonville. The Santa Cruz Youth City Council developed a 54-question survey and, using the same peer-to-peer distribution methods and many of the same questions were asked of youth in North County, the SCYCC gathered 850 youth responses from nine high schools. In addition to questions about public safety and crime reporting, the SCYCC survey integrated questions about personal safety including conduct at parties and parental involvement.

All three surveys were pre-screened and approved by Superintendents and Principals before distribution. The youth took the responsibility to conduct the surveys. For all three surveys a youth leader read the following introductions before the surveys were distributed:

The Santa Cruz/Watsonville Youth City Council would appreciate your honest, ANONYMOUS answers on this survey. We need your help so that youth can have a voice in the things that happen in the City of Santa Cruz/Watsonville.

The results of this survey will be presented at a Youth City Council meeting on (DATE) at City Hall. Your answers are anonymous - no one will know who you are or be able to identify you. You can skip any of the questions you'd like and you do not have to take this survey if you don't want to.

Please choose the answer that describes your personal experience most closely.

Thank you for participating!

Intention of Surveys

- Learn directly from youth and not make assumptions about what is generally true for youth
- Provide relevant peer-to-peer information for youth, parents, law enforcement, educators, and policy makers
- Improve the quality of life for youth in our cities
- Encourage participation in positive events and activities
- Learn more about what we need to know and address

Numbers of Youth Surveyed

- Watsonville Youth Safety Survey, November 2012 n=790
- Watsonville Youth Follow-up Safety Survey, February 2013 n=346
- Santa Cruz Youth Safety Survey, May 2013 n=850
- Total: +/- 1,800 youth surveyed (assuming some repeated survey respondents for WYCC #2)

Participating Schools

1. Alternative Family Education (SC)
2. Ark (SC)
3. Ceiba College Prep (W)
4. Costanoa High (SC)
5. Cypress High (SC)
6. Delta Charter School (SC)
7. Harbor High School (SC)
8. Georgiana Bruce Kirby (SC)
9. New School (W)
10. Pacific Coast Charter School (W)
11. Pacific Collegiate School (SC)
12. Pajaro Valley High School (W)
13. Renaissance High School (W)
14. Saint Francis High School (W)
15. Santa Cruz High School (SC)
16. Soquel High School (SC)
17. Watsonville High School (W)

Comparison Questions: Several questions were asked in both Watsonville and Santa Cruz in order to capture comparison data.

Have you been approached by a gang and invited to join?

Watsonville - 22%

Santa Cruz - 13%

Youth who indicated that they have a family member who belongs to a gang:

Watsonville - 41%

Santa Cruz - 13%

Youth who indicated that they have a friend who belongs to a gang:

Watsonville - 53%

Santa Cruz - 32%

Did you know you could report a crime anonymously by calling XXX-XX-XXXX?

Watsonville

Yes: 22%

No: 78%

Santa Cruz

Yes: 25%

No: 75%

Would you report a crime anonymously using an app/text on your cellphone?

Watsonville

Yes: 64%

No: 22%

Don't have cellphone: 14%

Santa Cruz

Yes: 76%

No: 24%

(Didn't ask about cell phone)

Have you ever been attacked/assaulted?

Watsonville

Yes: 17%

No: 83%

Santa Cruz

Yes: 13%

No: 87

What makes you feel the most unsafe in Santa Cruz/Watsonville?

Watsonville

- Gang Activity 58%
- Fear of being attacked/bullied: 10%
- Fear of being robbed: 9%
- Crime in news/media 9%

Santa Cruz

- Gang activity: 46%
- Fear of being attacked/bullied: 17%
- Fear of being robbed: 11%
- Hearing about crime: 26%

How safe do you feel at school (during the day)?

Watsonville

Safe or Pretty Safe 95%

Santa Cruz

Safe or Pretty Safe 97%

Do you think youth can make (City) a safer place to live?

Watsonville

Yes: 76%

Santa Cruz

Yes: 72%

In general my family has taught me to trust police:

Watsonville

True: 69%

Santa Cruz

True: 78%

Watsonville Highlights:

- More than 29% of youth surveyed said that they had witnessed a crime, but only 10% have reported a crime.
- Twenty-five percent (25%) of youth in Watsonville said they would ignore a crime and not report it even if they knew someone was going to get hurt.
- More than half (50.5%) would not report a crime of theft.
- Eighty-five percent (85%) percent of youth indicated that less gang activity around the plaza and parks would make them feel more safe.
- Twenty-one percent (21%) of youth say that fear of deportation prevents someone in their family from reporting a crime.
- Most youth in Watsonville feel unprepared to search for and apply for a job.

Santa Cruz Highlights:

- Seventy percent (70%) of youth have observed their friends participating in drinking alcohol.
- Eighty-eight percent (88%) of youth notice drug use while out in the City of Santa Cruz.
- Fifty-four students (7%) reported observing their friends participate in a sexual assault or abuse against another youth.
- Seventeen students (2%) admitted to committing a sexual assault against another youth.
- Seventy-four percent (74%) indicated that they would feel afraid if they witnessed sexual assault occurred at a party; 26% would feel a little afraid or not afraid at all.
- Youth were more afraid (75%) of witnessing fights with weapons than witnessing a sexual assault (74%).
- If they witnessed a sexual assault or abuse of another teen at a party, 38% of youth would either do nothing or leave without telling anyone; 8% would call a parent and 54% would call the police.
- If they witnessed a fight with a weapon at a party, 47% of youth would either do nothing or leave without telling anyone; 7% would call a parent and 45% would call the police.
- More than half (52%) of youth feel heightened fear about living in Santa Cruz from recent violent crimes.
- Thirty-one percent (31%) know a child who is being exposed to the gang lifestyle.
- Eighty-eight percent (88%) of youth reported that their parents know where they are on weekends most or pretty much all of the time. 12% indicated that their parents were either clueless or pretty unaware of their weekend activities.
- Sixty-eight percent (68%) of youth are upset that the gang lifestyle is being taught to younger children.
- Employment ranked #1 among desired after school activities with sports coming in 2nd.