

# The Pueblo Chieftain

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Published: July 10, 2008

## Police and Sheriff team to fight gangs



CHIEFTAIN PHOTO/MIKE SWEENEY Pueblo County Sheriff Kirk Taylor, left, and Pueblo Police Chief Jim Billings answer questions at a press conference Wednesday announcing that funding that will impart be used for overtime to increase the number of officers to focus on Pueblo's gang problem.

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*Grant will help pay overtime, fund programs in crime battle.*

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By **NICK BONHAM**  
**THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN**

Leaders in law enforcement and local government stood together Wednesday to announce a community effort to combat rising gang and juvenile gun violence.

With city and county elected officials standing behind them, Sheriff Kirk Taylor and police Chief Jim Billings officially announced a collaborative effort to reduce gang activity and gun use at a press conference held at the Home of Heroes Plaza at the Pueblo Convention Center.

The Pueblo County Sheriff's Department and Pueblo Police Department have had detectives working together for about a month. They've been tasked with rounding up Pueblo's "Top 50," a list of known gang members wanted for assault and gun violations.

The two agencies announced the reception of two federal grants worth more than \$71,000 that will aid them in their campaign.

The majority of the grant will fund officer overtime, but some will be used for gang and gun prevention programs. "Basically, what we want to do is stand up here together and tell you that we are very well aware of the issues that face our community, and that we are committed to performing those duties and addressing those issues together as a community," Taylor said.

Photos of some of the most "dangerous" gang members were displayed on cardboard displays. The middle top photo was of Pete Anthony Archuleta, 22, who is wanted for the first-degree murder last week in the victim's East Side home.

As of late Wednesday, Archuleta and his alleged accomplice, Vincente Gregorio Montano, 30, still had not been apprehended. It's possible they're fleeing to Mexico.

Police ask that anyone with information of Archuleta and Montano's whereabouts to call Crime Stoppers, 542-7867.

Wednesday's press conference came within 24 hours of a gang-related shooting on the South Side. Police were still working to identify the suspects who shot 30-year-old Shon Burger outside his home in the 1000 block of Van Buren Street. Burger survived, but his medical condition was not known.

Police need help from the community during their campaign, which is funded through March. Citizens can report gang activity and tips on the Top 50 list by calling Crime Stoppers, where callers remain anonymous and can earn a cash reward for successful tips

"Although we have two legs of the stool here, we know we need a third leg to stand up the stool, and we are going to ask the community to assist us in this endeavor," Taylor said.

Said Billings: "We truly need the community's help in locating these people .Ê.Ê. all we need is a little bit of help and we can go a long way to solving our problems."

City Councilman Ray Aguilera has been an outspoken critic of the recent increase of street and gang violence throughout the community. He's advocating hiring more officers.

"As elected officials, our number one responsibility is public safety," Aguilera said. "Pueblo people and the children and our seniors have a right to live in the safety of their homes and community without fear of being attacked or violated."

City Council President Barbara Vidmar said a resolution is being drawn up that will increase police staffing levels. She said they hope to vote on it by the end of July.

"Every budget is tight," she said. "The need (for more officers) is great, and the men and women out there are exhausted and the violence levels are alarming. We have to figure out a way to support our police department at a higher level."