

## Chico State University police detail growing violence near campus

By GREG WELTER - Staff Writer

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CHICO -- In an e-mail to students Thursday, Chico State University Police Chief Eric Reichel said he is gravely concerned about three violent incidents near campus last weekend, all involving weapons.

One, in which a man pulled a gun on a bouncer at Franky's restaurant early Saturday morning and threatened to shoot him, was well-covered in local media.

Two others, however, passed with little notice, and Reichel said they also had the potential to produce serious injuries.

Earlier on Saturday, two males were reportedly walking on Nord Avenue and firing a handgun. It's unknown if they were shooting toward buildings or cars. No injuries were reported, and police were unable to locate the firearm when they contacted the suspects.

Early Sunday morning, two males were walking across the Chico High School campus from the downtown area when they were approached by four males.

A fight ensued and the two males suffered stab wounds. They left the area and sought attention at Enloe Medical Center.

Reichel said the rise in violence near campus

doesn't bode well for the upcoming three-day Halloween celebration.

"We're very concerned," said Reichel. He noted that even if Halloween doesn't produce large crowds in the downtown and campus areas, the potential for isolated violence remains.

Reichel said he is also concerned about an increase in violent gang-related activity over the last month, including assaults and drive-by shootings.

Neighborhoods around

Chico State have long been attractive to gangs, and Reichel said officers have identified several verified members of criminal street gangs in the area around West Fifth and Ivy streets recently.

"They're attracted to the same bars and open parties as other people in their age group, even if they aren't students," he said.

Reichel said his department and Chico police have a good working relationship when it comes to incidents on the fringes of the campus.

He noted quick and decisive action by Chico police prevented the incident in the parking lot at Franky's Saturday morning from likely turning deadly.

How to protect yourself:

In light of serious violence near Chico State University last weekend, campus police Chief Eric Reichel offered the following tips for staying safe:

- \* Stay alert when you are out.
- \* Don't be quick to engage in a confrontation; you never know if the other individual has a weapon.

\* Always travel in groups.

\* If you are hosting a function, don't allow individuals you don't know to attend, and keep the function manageable.

\* If you have a cell phone, keep it with you, make sure it is charged, and have 9-1-1 programmed on speed dial.

\* If you are going out, let someone know where you will be, even if you plan to visit more than one location.

\* Avoid getting involved if a group of individuals begins challenging, arguing or fighting with another group of individuals.

\* Look for and avoid individuals displaying hand signs to another group of individuals, yelling threats to another group, or "flying colors" (all members wearing similar colors, bandanas, cloth belts, etc.).