

Lauded for efforts

Gang members recognized

Sixteen Los Angeles gang members have been honored with Certificates of Achievement from the Concerned Businessmen's Association of America for their participation in graffiti cleanup and peace-making efforts.

Presented by Mayor Tom Bradley, the awards to the West Side Chapter of the 18th Street Gang were accepted by Steve Varela, gang spokesman.

Under the guidance and direction of the CBAA, the gang cleanup efforts began last Aug. 13 with the painting-over of 24 graffiti-covered buildings in a two-block area at Sixth Street and South Burlington Avenue. City Attorney Ira Reiner thanked the painters for setting a good example for other young people.

On Dec. 18 the volunteers staged a three-day candlelight "Vigil of Peace" which culminated in the unveiling of a memorial mural dedicated to the young people killed in gang violence and blessed by two Catholic priests.

Bearing the caption, "Set a good example, it is in your power to point the way to a less dangerous and happy life," the mural was designed and painted by the gang members themselves. The caption is a quote from a booklet, "The Way to Happiness," distributed by the CBAA to the gang members involved in the anti-graffiti project.

Varela in accepting the awards on behalf of the 16 honorees quoted them as having stated: "We want to show the community we do care; we can change if given the chance. We want and need jobs like everyone else, some of us."

Varela is completing his educational training through a scholarship granted by the CBAA's Business Buddy Scholarship program.

Also recognized in the day's ceremonies were two of the firms supplying the scholarships: Mini-Computer Business Applications, Inc. and Rockwell International.

Also recognized were the two firms, National Paint and Sinclair Paint Companies, which provided the

paint used in the clean-up campaign. Accepting the awards on behalf of the participating companies and members of CBAA was Barbara Ayash, the organization's executive director.