



State crime forum hails Lowell's gangs strategy

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BOSTON -- Lowell's policing efforts were touted at yesterday's Boston conference where mayors, law-enforcement officials and community leaders from around the state gathered to share strategies for combating gangs and youth violence.

The audience of 200 at Roxbury Community College's Reggie Lewis Center heard of strategies such as expanding neighborhood patrols and early intervention practices during the brainstorming session. They also heard Lowell praised as a model by Jack McDevitt, an associate dean at Northeastern University's College of Criminal Justice.

"Lowell has had a huge decrease in gang violence," McDevitt said. "They worked with the Asian community."

Gerry Leone, recently elected as district attorney for Middlesex County, emphasized the importance of partnerships with federal law enforcement officials.

He recalled working with federal officials as a prosecutor in Roxbury during an earlier wave of gang violence in 1990.

"We wet-behind-the-ears prosecutors here in the city would feed the feds the cases and they would build bigger cases and better cases on these gang members," he said.

Senate President Robert Travaglini, D-Boston, spoke of getting legislation passed last year that provided \$11 million to establish Shannon Grants for communities to develop comprehensive strategies to reduce youth violence. The grants are named after the late Sen. Charles Shannon, D-Winchester, a former police officer.

"You got this funding because everything lined up properly," Travaglini said. "It was like a lunar eclipse."

Travaglini responded to an honor he received at the summit with dry humor.

"My sense is that you are giving me this award in the hopes that funding either continues or increases," he said. "If you demonstrate to us that this collaborative continues to work . . . I'll keep the dough coming."

Reached by phone, Sharon Hanson, director of research and development for the Lowell Police Department, said that Lowell had received Shannon Grants amounting to \$820,000 for a one-year period.

"It allows us to put extra patrols in areas that have experienced some problems," she said.

Lowell is also using grant money for a prevention program against school truancy.

Some of the money is being shared with community partners, like the Boys & Girls Club and the **Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps**, for youth programs, she said.