

Gang War Front Lines

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trend fell on deaf ears, until gang shootings broke out in the 1980s, which prompted a strong response from elected officials.

Gordly said the approach to addressing the issue has never been comprehensive, nor have they been sustained.

It's difficult to get a handle on how funding has fluctuated for gang prevention programs since they've been administered by different government agencies that have overlapping function and have been periodically reorganized.

Rob Ingram, the director of the Portland Office of Youth Violence Prevention, points to a gang outreach program the city instituted in 1990s as an example. It was based on a nationally-lauded program from Boston that could influence and decrease gang activity. It had a broad approach, according to Ingram, who said that it involved partnerships with law enforcement, schools, and probation officers.

However the local effort became a "victim of its own success," said Ingram. Policy makers thought the war was won, and funding was cut.

"Until the problem is up front and personal it doesn't seem like much for the electeds," said John Canda, program coordinator for the Brothers and Sisters Keepers, and a longtime gang outreach worker. He said that as long as body bags aren't in the news there is money for urban renewal and bike lanes, but not money for gang outreach.

With the economy tanking, and all bureaus of the city looking at across the board cuts there is less money to address the issue.

The Youth Violence Prevention office operates on \$400,000 a year, most of which is directed in the form of grants gang outreach organizations.

In February, Police Commissioner Dan Saltzman, terminated grants for six youth outreach agencies in order to redirect \$120,000 of this money to street-based gang outreach workers.

"There's going to be a huge piece missing," said Rebecca Black, the director and founder of Oregon Outreach, who lost \$20,000 for her program as a result of the funding shift.

Oregon Outreach provides an all day summer program for at-risk youth, which is now jeopardized. Funding for Ingram's of-

fice has been squeezed as money from the county dried up, and could be cut entirely this spring.

The police are also strained. Lt. Michael Lelof remembers the days when he could leave the Northeast Precinct and find a gang member in five minutes. Now they're spread out over three counties, with three different prosecutors, and three different police departments.

"It has complicated the work," said Lelof. "The game has changed."

Shortly after the spike in gang shooting, the Portland Police announced Operation Cool Down in mid January, which involved an increased police presence that was intended to stop retaliatory killings.

The police made arrests, and seized weapons, but Ingram said that rivalries are still active.

"If you put that many law enforcement agents on the street it's going to have an effect," he said.

Lelof said that it's crucial that police partner with members of the community to combat gang violence, but he worries that the level of violence will return to that of the 1990s.

Between 2001 and 2008, activation of the city's Gang Vi-



PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
Portland Office of Youth Violence Prevention Director Rob Ingram and Chef Tracy Bell of Trail's Food 4 the Soul discuss a gang-related drive-by shooting that erupted March 19 outside the restaurant at 300 N. Killingsworth St.

lence Response Team doubled. Lelof said a trend he's seeing is a second generation of gangsters.

"I'm now seeing their children," said Lelof of the gang members he busted years ago. He said he's also seeing gang members as young as 14.

Ingram attributes part of this to Measure 11. Passed in 1994, the law mandates tough sentences for violent crimes. According to statistics from the Oregon Department of Corrections, it has disproportionately

affected African Americans. Ingram said that it has created fatherless families, and now many people are getting out.

Everyone interviewed for this article said that the same pathologies contribute to gang violence: broken homes, a detachment from society, and wanting to belong to something.

Martin Gonzalez, a school board member and longtime community organizer, said that schools aren't culturally sensitive, and points to the city's

staggering achievement gap as evidence.

But Canda said he sees new venom in gang-affiliated youth he's never seen in his 20 years doing street-based outreach. He says the interaction is more hostile, with a genuine disregard for human life or any social norms.

Canda points to the shooting at a north Portland church late last year as an example.

"Attitudes have shifted," he said. "How does it compare? It's just as deadly"

Rental Fees Blindside Youth Sports

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lies, and didn't want to ask for more.

"I don't think that would be an option," she said.

Instead she's sought out the support of local businesses and individuals for donations, with varying success, and is going to start selling concessions at games.

Shawn Rogers, customer service supervisor for Portland Parks and Recreation, said that the popularity of sports, especially some of the more non-traditional sports like Ultimate

Frisbee, lacrosse and rugby, has increased demand on parks. He said that in 2005 he started receiving some complaints from other sport groups about not having adequate time on the field. Rogers said that the parks bureau reasoned that imposing an hourly rate on youth leagues would free up space.

Ginger Bradbury, a longtime participant in Portland Coed Soccer, said some youth leagues would book more time than needed.

"They would block out the fields and not use them," she said.

Bradbury said fields have always been cramped with people clamoring to use them, who added that her organization has limited their use for this reason.

According to the fee schedule, youth leagues are still charged less than adult leagues, but the bottom line is still higher fees. For instance, for a youth baseball team to use a field they would have to pay \$1.55 an hour. Last year it was only 33 cents.

In less affluent neighborhoods, determined by federal Housing and Urban Development guidelines, youth sports

teams will continue to get some pricing discounts.

According to Rogers, the new fee scheme was hammered out by the Sports Work Group—a volunteer organization composed of representatives from districts of all major groups who play sports on the fields.

Brain Ripley, a 37-year-old risk manager, has been a coach for North Portland Junior Baseball League for five years. He's seen camaraderie, self-respect, and discipline thrive in the kids he's coached, but recently received the straining fee schedules.

For years the league, which has about 125 kids, had practiced on fields owned by Portland Parks and Recreation and charged a flat fee of only \$363. But this year, the park system's hourly rate hit Ripley with a \$3,851 bill.

"I said 'that's got to be a typo,'" said Ripley of when he first saw the bill.

Even if his baseball league cut its hours in half it would still be five times higher than what they've typically paid, according to Ripley.

Ripley said he's had parents

lament that they may not be able to afford to pay the \$80 to \$125 fee charged by the league in these rough economic times. However, he stresses that he doesn't want to turn anyone away.

"We'll figure out something to make it work," he said.

Ripley's group had field reservations for nearly 37 hours a week, according to Rogers, who suspects that Ripley's group was high-balling its requested time and wasn't using it all.

"You have to make a decision what's adequate," said Rogers.

Dear Deanna!

My boyfriend will not tell me that he loves me. I have been with him for three years and he always tells me that his presence should answer the question. He has verbally said he loves me about five times. We've had our problems with cheating and break-ups but we're still together. I want to head in the direction of commitment but I need to address his feelings first. How do I find out his true feelings for me. --Adrienne; Columbia, S.C.

Dear Adrienne:

The things your boyfriend isn't saying speak the loudest. You've allowed this behavior in the relationship and at this point, there's a small chance he'll change. You have rights in this relationship and deserve to know his feelings and intentions. You need to be direct and tell him how you feel, what you want and your expectations on love and marriage. Be prepared if you don't get the answers you seek and you have to decide to stay or keep it moving.

Dear Deanna!

I met a guy that I thought was really interested in me. I helped him get employment at my company, helped with his bills and paid child support for him. As soon as things started looking up for him, our relationship changed. Things hit the fan when he got a promotion and moved into another department. He is now telling me that he's focused on improving his life instead of dating me. I heard that he's dating someone else in the company. What do I do? --Crying and Miserable; On-Line Reader

Dear Miserable:

You set yourself up by confusing help with being used and also giving up your money. You never should mix business with pleasure because it's a guaranteed recipe for pain. He used you to get ahead and you can see early on that he's leaving you behind. If you heard that he's

Ask Deanna!



dating someone on the job, it's probably true. You can't do anything other than move on, be glad that you got out early and pray for the new lady who will be his next sucker.

Dear Deanna!

I have a platonic relationship with a male friend of four years but my fiancé doesn't like it. He has begun making hints that I've slept with my friend and accusing me of lying to him. I've only known my fiancé for two years and if I had to choose between the two men, I would choose my friend. How can I convince my fiancé that we're only friends and that nothing is going on? This is becoming stressful because I love both men and want them in my life. Help? --Sharon; San Antonio, Texas

Dear Sharon:

Your future husband is jealous of your relationship with your male friend. It's your responsibility to find balance as you seek to have both relationships. Invite your husband to be part of the friendship so he can understand and be more open minded. Also be mindful of your platonic friendship to make sure you're not giving your fiancé reasons to complain. If things don't improve after the air is clear, you fiancé has issues you certainly need to explore.

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The Joyce Washington Memorial Scholarship Fund



(1937-1996) Publisher of The Portland Observer

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