

Haverhill Mayor Announces Gang Violence Task Force, Visits UTEC in Lowell



Mayor James J. Fiorentini will stress alternative ideas and strategies for addressing gang activity at the inaugural meeting of his Gang Violence Task Force. Fiorentini recently visited the nationally-acclaimed UTEC youth program in Lowell, and plans to take steps to bring a similar model to Haverhill.

UTEC offers jobs and educational opportunities to disconnected youth and those formerly incarcerated. The organization's "streetworkers" team provides gang peacemaking and intensive outreach in inner city neighborhoods. Program participants work an average of two years, often after getting out of jail, at UTEC's onsite café, catering restaurant, furniture-making shop or recycling facility in Lawrence.

"Unless we intend to lock up our young people forever for crimes like selling marijuana, we need to focus more on getting them out of gangs, giving them positive alternatives and addressing gang activity in more creative and comprehensive ways," Mayor Fiorentini said.