



Paper: Cincinnati Enquirer, The (OH)
Title: Cincinnati shares its plan to stop the violence
Date: October 31, 2007

Sitting in a London seminar, representatives from fabled Scotland Yard were asking how to reduce violence.

They were told the answer was in Cincinnati.

So, two Scotland Yard representatives - Commander Sue Akers and Emma Muir, the civilian police administrator for the London Metropolitan Police - are here this week to see what is being accomplished.

They are meeting with officials from Cincinnati police, hospitals, social services agencies and the Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence, or CIRV.

CIRV is Cincinnati's version of the Boston Gun project that helped lower Boston's homicide rate in the 1990s.

The Boston plan was developed by David Kennedy, director of the Center for Crime Prevention and Control at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City, who insisted the Scotland Yard representatives visit the Queen City to see how the Boston program has been adopted in Cincinnati - and improved.

In Cincinnati, officials "have improved relations with the community and police," said Dr. Victor Garcia, director of trauma at Children's Hospital Medical Center and part of CIRV.

The strategy here to reduce crime is three-pronged:

Have an iron fist when it comes to killings.

University of Cincinnati criminal justice professors have analyzed 2006 Cincinnati homicides and determined that 72 percent of them were group-related, committed by people "in posses, crews, who hang out together," said Greg Baker, Cincinnati's manager of police relations and the CIRV program manager, avoiding the term gangs.

That's why Cincinnati police, Hamilton County Sheriff's and prosecutors offices and federal prosecutors and law enforcement agencies are teaming to share information and the insistence that killers get the stiffest sentences possible - for them and their crew.

"We will not only arrest the perpetrator of the killing, but his entire group," Baker said.

Wrap that iron fist in a velvet glove.

The biggest difference in Cincinnati's version of the Boston plan is to attach social services programs to criminals.

That means getting them help - job training, substance abuse counseling, mental health treatment, etc. - to limit the possibility of criminals committing more crimes.

"We will offer an opportunity for you," Garcia said.

It also means providing outreach and street workers to connect them with those services.

Reverberate the message.

The program introduces to criminals community members who stress stopping the violence.

That includes mothers of dead victims, former convicts, elected officials, religious leaders - and even their families.

The goal of implementing the program, which began in April, was to reduce the number of homicides.

In 2006, Cincinnati set a record with 89 homicides.

Through Tuesday, Cincinnati had 57 homicides, on pace for 69 for 2007.

That would be a 24 percent decrease from last year.

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