Now another tool for fighting crime

By Steve Marantz
Globe Staff

The problems of youth are the problems of everybody. That is the philosophy underlying a new crime prevention program targeted at youth in the Greater Fields Corner area.

The effort, announced yesterday, is funded by $112,000 in grants from private foundations and a corporation. It is being coordinated by the Dorchester Youth Collaborative, a neighborhood group with private and public funding that tries to help young people.

The program is called "Ties," because its goal is to bring together a wide range of organizations — such as the Boston Police Department and the Percival Street Friends and Neighbors Assn., as well as individuals.

"The public perception has always been that the police can prevent crime alone," said Boston Police Comr. Joseph M. Jordan, who spoke at the press conference announcing the program. "Nothing is further from the truth. But we can do a lot working with the community."

"We're trying to get to the young people before they get to the courts," said Joan Almeida, president of Percival Street Friends and Neighbors.

Emmett Folgert, a collaborative supervisor, said the new program will include, among other things, youth clubs like the one he started two years ago in the Mission Hill area of Roxbury.

"We had four goals," said Folgert. "No arrests, no dropouts, no teenage pregnancy and no alcoholic and substance abuse. We offered the kids something they wanted — a basketball team. It's worked out pretty well. We haven't had an arrest in 18 months." The club included 17 members of black, white and Hispanic background.

Along with the clubs, the program will try to mediate disputes between youth and community residents and set up crime watches, crime hotlines, and youth security patrols. It will also offer work programs, in which Ties will supplement salaries paid youth by employers, parent support groups, and crises intervention, Hal Phillips, collaborative project director, said.

"Our exact program won't be determined until we complete a needs assessment within the community," said Phillips. "It's vital that we draw people from the community into the program. We want to get their ideas."

Phillips said Ties will try to involve the community's elderly, businesses, courts, police, schools and neighborhood associations. For instance, older residents may be asked to man a crime hotline. "It would be something they would be suited for," said Phillips. "People might feel more comfortable calling community people than police.

"In the past, when people have been fearful of the bad, bad kids, they haven't had any options besides calling the police or the courts," said Phillips. "Ties will give them another option."

Funding for the Ties program includes a $60,000 grant from the Eisenhower Foundation, as well as $52,000 worth of local grants from the Boston Committee, Hyams Trust, Shaw Foundation, Vingo Trust, Polaroid Foundation, Boston Globe Foundation, and State Street Bank and Trust Co. The funding is sufficient for Ties' first year, and the anticipated renewal of grants from the seven local contributors would fund a second year, according to Dan Jaffe, executive director of the collaborative.

Lynn Curtis, Eisenhower Foundation president, said that the foundation has funded similar programs in Baltimore, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, New York City, Newark and Cleveland.

Mark Alves, 19, a collaborative volunteer worker, said that the Ties program would help troubled youth with backgrounds like his own.

"I was a bad kid until Dan [Jaffe] and a few others showed me some things," said Alves. "Now I want to work and make the neighborhood better. Instead of forgetting kids, we show 'em things. Like that there are other things besides fighting and stealing and running in the streets. I have a younger brother and sister and I don't want them to go through what I did. I was down and depressed, and all I needed was to reach up for something."