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PALO ALTO, Calif. -- U.S. Rep. Anna Eshoo announced today that the City of East Palo Alto has been awarded a \$145,894 grant from the Department of Justice to expand its Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T) program to all 1,600 4th through 8th grade students in the East Palo Alto School District.

"This grant represents help and hope for our children and our community," said Eshoo, D-Palo Alto. "We must keep our children from falling prey to gangs and gang violence. These critical funds will help more children make better choices and resist the false allure of gang life."

The East Palo Alto School District adopted the G.R.E.A.T. program last year as a pilot project for 200 students. The program trains police officers to teach students life skills, gang awareness, and anti-violence techniques. During the 13-week curriculum, students develop values and practice behaviors that enable them to avoid destructive activities.

The grant will pay for officer overtime, training, materials, student field trips, and a summer component at the San Francisco 49ers Academy and the Boys and Girls Club.

Academy Executive Director Michele Sharkey said officers also benefit from the program because it "connects them with the young people they serve and protect. It builds relationships."

"If we're going to have a permanent effect on gangs and violence, then we have to focus on our youths," said East Palo Alto Police Chief Ronald L. Davis. "G.R.E.A.T provides positive alternatives to youths. To me, this is how you reduce crime."

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