

The Providence Journal

Cianci names Conn. man to work with youth gangs

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PROVIDENCE — Mayor Vincent A. Cianci Jr. has appointed Houmpheng Phengsomphone of West Hartford, Conn., as director of the Southeast Asian Youth Gang Substance Abuse Prevention Project, which will begin at a ceremony next week.

The mayor said that Phengsomphone was chosen by a multi-agency selection committee.

Phengsomphone has experience as a state career counselor in Connecticut and as a case manager for U.S. Catholic Charities and the International Institute of Connecticut,

and has worked with Southeast Asian organizations.

He has a bachelor's degree from New Hampshire College's School of Human Services.

The project, to cost \$5.3 million over five years, is intended to reduce gang activity and improve job skills. Providence's Southeast Asian community is the country's fastest growing, Cianci said.

One goal in the first year will be to convert gangs into "socially acceptable youth clubs," Cianci said.

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The project also will conduct a summer academy, provide a dropout prevention service, establish a parental association and publish a newsletter.

The opening ceremony will be held on March 1 at 3 p.m. at the YMCA, 160 Broad St.