Crime in Montbello: 'You kind of get used to it'

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DENVER - On Thursday night, Denver's Police Gang Unit investigated a deadly shooting on the northeast side of the city.

Four people were shot in two different locations in the Montbello neighborhood resulting in one fatality.

Cesar Gallardo, 13, heard the shooting Wednesday.

"I heard like eight bullets," he said. When he walked around to his front yard, "I saw all these people like walking around."

Gallardo told 9NEWS something to spur a reflection of crime in that neighborhood.

"You kind of get used to it after a while," he said. "But it kind of affects your life."

"They do sometimes get used to it," Dr. Eric Sigel, a pediatrician at Children's Hospital Colorado said.

Sigel is part of a $6.5 million University of Colorado-Boulder study and effort to reduce youth violence in the Montbello neighborhood.

"Montbello is in the upper one-third of violent crime in the city of Denver," he said.

Thirty thousand people live in the area. It is also where Lynn Narvaez is raising her children.

"A lot of people call it 'Mont-ghetto,'" she said. "You cannot even let your kids here in the front of the house because then you don't know what can happen."

She says she feels unsafe in an area that has had marks of violence for years.

"The people do [graffiti] on the fence," she said. "My big concern is that it's somebody in the neighborhood. It's somebody who is watching us."
Statistics from the Denver Police Department show crime has actually gone down in the Montbello neighborhood since January 2010.

While there is not a reduction in every category, aggravated assault is down 4.7 percent.

Forcible sex offenses are down nearly 50 percent (48.9 percent).

Criminal mischief/damage crimes are down 30.1 percent.

"It takes a real whole culture change," Dr. Sigel said.

Change is happening, he said. The CU-Boulder study he's helping coordinate tries to identify kids who could be victims of crime they wouldn't otherwise report.

"That's one of the things we're going to be doing in Montbello, is implementing screening in the healthcare setting, both in school based clinics, as well as Montbello Family Health Center," Sigel said.

While statistics point to a crime reduction, those working to reduce crime in Montbello point to Wednesday's potential gang shooting and say there's more work to do.

"There's not a quick fix," Sigel said.

The CU-Boulder study is a five-year project funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Starting this year, a community board will begin to implement more evidence based strategies and programs to reduce crime.