

bellerose commonwealth civic association, inc.



action news

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We Can Fight Graffiti

By: Cory Bearak

At meetings of community organizations, including PTAs and civics, members continue to raise concerns about the proliferation of graffiti in the community. Indeed, despite increasing indignation citywide, graffiti is increasing throughout the five boroughs.

Individuals and various civic, parent and community organizations are seeking solutions to prevent the defacement of monuments and bridges and public and private structures. They recognize that graffiti, if left unaddressed, often symbolizes the beginning of a neighborhood's decay.

"We can curb graffiti through a concerted effort of citizens, members of the Police Department and other agencies and local officials to educate our young and enforce the law," explains City Councilman Sheldon

Leffler who has called for a city-wide anti-graffiti task force. The City Council already bans the sale of graffiti "tools of the trade", broad tipped "Magic Markers" and aerosol spray (paint) cans, to minors. Local Law 34 of 1985 also requires merchants to keep markers and spray paint in locked cabinets to prevent any theft of these graffiti tools.

Last summer then Mayor Koch announced an anti-graffiti program that does not go as far as Councilman Leffler's proposal. The Mayor's initiative includes a special police squad and police hotline (212 374-5914) to report acts of graffiti vandalism, as well as civic lawsuits against the parents of offenders. One such lawsuit sought \$2,500 in damages from graffiti vandal and his parents.

More can be done in our local schools - public, parochial or private. I'll raise this with my Community School Board and the Board of Education. Parents of children attending local paro-

chial or private schools and community members should also raise this issue with the administrators and boards of these schools.

Efforts can also be made through youth programs, often funded by government, to encourage our youth to be more responsive when it comes to graffiti.

Residents can bring incidents of graffiti vandalism to the attention of the proper city agencies for clean-up. Residents interested in working on a civic committee in this regard should urge their civics and PTAs to take up the cause where these groups are involved in fighting graffiti, join them and support their efforts. We Care About New York, Inc. (212 686-1001) has assisted community groups interested in setting up an anti-graffiti effort. If no effort exists in your neighborhood, please feel free to contact this writer for assistance.