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We Can Fight Graffiti by Corey Bearak

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

"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 Koch initiative included a special police squad and police hotline (212-374-5914) to report acts of graffiti vandalism, as well as civil lawsuits against the parents of offenders.

Local police precincts often have, in addition to sector patrol cars, "Conditions" cars that patrol parks, playgrounds and other possible trouble spots. These Conditions Units can be supplemented by "Quality of Life" cars provided by the Queens Borough Command.

In addition, each precinct has a Community Police Officer on Patrol Program (CPOP) which covers many locations throughout each precinct. CPOP officers, who can adjust their hours to meet specific neighborhood needs, work with the communities they patrol. Contact your local precinct for the telephone number of the CPOP supervisor and the name of the CPOP officer

patrolling near where you live.

Each precinct has community councils. Attend yours and make your concerns known. Precinct commanders respond to areas and concerns complained of at these meetings. If your civic or PTA has no representative at these meetings, consider volunteering to represent your local organization at these meetings. Call your local precinct's Community Affairs Officer to find out when the Precinct Council meets.

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 parochial or private schools and community members should also raise this issue with the administrations and boards of these schools. Efforts can also be made through youth programs, often funded by government, to encourage our youth to be more responsible when it comes to graffiti.

In the meantime, residents can bring incidents of graffiti vandalism to the attention of the proper City agencies for clean-up. The Department of General Services maintains most City owned buildings; the Department of Transportation maintains bridges and tunnels, streets, highway overpasses and abutment and street lights and traffic signals; the Department of Parks and Recreation has a unit devoted to cleaning and removing graffiti from monuments, statues, buildings and other structures under its jurisdiction. We Care About New York, Inc. (212-686-1001) has assisted community groups interested in setting up an anti-graffiti effort. 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.

If no effort exists in your neighborhood, please feel free to contact this writer for assistance.

Note: Mr. Bearak, an Attorney, serves on Community School Board 26 and is active in the North Bellerose and Lost Community Civic Associations.

ALL CSB
to Mr. Altman