

# 9 LIVES

*News and Notes from District 9 Councilwoman Judy Montero*

## CALL TO ACTION: STAMP OUT GRAFFITI!!

SPRING IS A TIME FOR NEW beginnings; a time to enjoy the outdoors and the beautiful weather. Unfortunately, spring also brings out the taggers and an increase of graffiti vandalism.

When my team meets with constituents, there is a lack of understanding of what services the city provides and what the community can do. One neighbor said she knew who was tagging, but she thought if she reported it her family would be in jeopardy.



Anonymous tips to the graffiti hotline are the answer. My goal is education and empowerment; helping members of the community understand how to collaborate with the city to build partnerships toward a sustainable graffiti-free zone.

Neighborhoods can find solutions for graffiti when communities work with each other and the city of Denver. This is what we can do together:

- Free removal: If you see graffiti in your neighborhood – on your own property or anywhere else – report it to the Graffiti Hotline, (720) 865-7867, and city crews will remove it free of charge
- Free paint: To remove tags yourself, call the Hotline and request free paint. Store it in your garage and share it with neighbors.

Last year, City Council passed a graffiti ordinance addressing quicker removal of graffiti. The ordinance now requires graffiti to be cleaned 48 hours after notification for non-residential property and 72 hours after notification for residential property. Previously, residents and businesses had 10 days after notification to clean up graffiti. Experts suggest that the longer graffiti sits, the more likely it is to attract more graffiti.

To that end, Denver just added another graffiti abatement truck to its fleet. Further, the Task Force's work last year resulted in recommendations for prevention, abatement and enforcement - 13 comprehensive recommendations in all. The spring/summer of 2008 will be the first real test of these recommendations.

These are some of the things the city is doing to help neighborhoods. What can neighborhoods do to help the city? See the "WHAT CAN I DO?" box (next page).

I continue to be concerned about graffiti. If you look at the February graffiti abatement map, it shows that the City continues to clean up the most graffiti in District 9. I believe this has a lot to do with our community being more active and reporting graffiti vandalism. This is extremely important. I can't stress enough the need for the community to participate in the fight against graffiti. The community cannot rely on the City alone. The most successful anti-graffiti models (see [www.graffitihurts.org](http://www.graffitihurts.org) for examples) have a strong commitment from the community toward ending the problem.

For example, since San Jose adopted its anti-graffiti program in 1999, graffiti has steadily and significantly declined, largely due to the help of over 3000 community volunteers, according to San Jose's Director of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services. The recommendations made by Denver's graffiti task force mirror many of the practices in the San Jose model, but they are tailored to fit Denver's unique character. I think Denver can experience similar success if we pull together to find solutions to graffiti vandalism. Will we still see graffiti? Of course. But I believe when both the community and the City step up our efforts, we will make a noticeable reduction in graffiti vandalism.

# NEIGHBORHOOD SUCCESS STORY: GOING AFTER GRAFFITI IN GLOBEVILLE

“I just got really tired of complaining about graffiti,” says Margaret Escamilla, “so I decided to stand up and do something about it.”

Escamilla, who has been a Globeville resident for nearly 40 years, has been battling graffiti since the 1970s, when she and her husband were raising their kids here. “If anybody should be angry or discouraged, it should be me,” she says. “But I’m not.”

Instead, she’s been helping her neighborhood get organized against graffiti. And you know what? Globeville is winning.

“We’re seeing less and less graffiti,” she says. “We’re not only keeping our neighborhood clean, we’re also helping the city.”

The turning point came 5 years ago, when Escamilla went to a community-corrections facility in Globeville and asked if the residents could fulfill their service obligations by painting over graffiti. The community-corrections volunteers are assigned to designated areas that cover several square blocks. They check their areas routinely and erase any tags they encounter.

“They need the community service, and we need the help,” explains Escamilla. “They’re helping us, and we’re helping them.”

Local homeowners noticed the community-corrections workers and began adding their own efforts. One Globeville neighbor keeps an eye on all the electrical boxes and paints over any tags that he finds. Another person looks after the street signs.

Escamilla also maintains a paint bank in her garage, so neighbors can obtain paint quickly and conveniently to paint over graffiti. The paint is supplied for free by Partners Against Graffiti.

She also makes sure that everyone in the neighborhood has filed an authorization form with the city. The form has to be on file or municipal graffiti scrubbers can’t legally remove tags from your property

“I’m so proud of my volunteers,” Escamilla says. “They’re the ones who are actually making this work. I’ve got community members coming to me to volunteer now. Once the word gets out, and people see that their neighbors are trying to make a difference, you will have more volunteers than you need.”



## SEND IN THIS FORM!

The enclosed authorization form gives city crews permission to remove graffiti from your property. You must file a signed copy of this form with the city in order to take advantage of the city’s free graffiti-removal service.

To date, only a fraction of the city’s property owners have filed an authorization form. This one has prepaid postage — just fill it in and drop it in the mail. It’s a fast, easy way for you to help the city wipe out graffiti!

# GRAFFITI AS PUBLIC ART: ARGO PARK

The Globeville Pool / Argo Park (Logan St. at East 47th Ave.) is home to a new piece of public art. Titled “The New Worlds of the Globeville Pool,” this series of aerosol murals was created by Your Name in Graffiti (YNIG).

YNIG was founded in 2006 to create an understanding and appreciation of graffiti/aerosol art techniques. The crew paints personalized graffiti items on commission. They enjoy educating the public about urban art while providing young artists a positive outlet to express their talents and develop as professional artists.



YNIG developed a weekly graffiti art program for the Globeville neighborhood and worked with kids of all ages during 2007/2008, instructing them how to understand, execute and appreciate urban art. The YNIG team is excited to be the first team of aerosol artists commissioned by the City of Denver for a public art project and considers it an honor to have their artwork featured in Globeville.

Judy and the Denver Office of Cultural Affairs (DOCA) hosted a sneak preview of this ambitious work in the middle of March, while the artwork was being created. YNIG team members Keith White (“Wiser”), “Lemon,” “Kanz,” and “Dread” explained their distinctive techniques to visitors as they worked on the project.

These aerosol murals cover both the interior and exterior walls of the pool building. Exterior walls

depict Aztec sculptures and motifs wrapping around the building. Murals inside the pool area depict whimsical ocean scenes.

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Globeville Recreation Center’s Julia Martinez-Bezjak describes the Graffiti Mural Art class as a way to positively create graffiti art. As a part of graffiti prevention, the Globeville Rec Center offers a weekly art class to children. The class not only teaches techniques of graffiti muralists, it also promotes positive behavior in communities. As part of the program, students have participated in cleaning up graffiti in the Globeville neighborhood.

“It’s tight,” rave the kids when they talk about the mural in the gymnasium.

# WHAT CAN I DO TO STOP GRAFFITI?

## BEFORE YOU'RE TAGGED

1. **Sign your authorization form.** There's one enclosed with in this newsletter, with prepaid postage. You must sign one of these and file it with the city before city crews can legally remove graffiti from your property. Authorization forms are also available online at [www.denvergov.org/Graffiti](http://www.denvergov.org/Graffiti), or request one via the Hotline at (720) 865-7867.

2. **Establish a neighborhood paint bank.** Partners Against Graffiti provides Denver residents with free paint to paint over graffiti. Designate one household on your block to bank some paint, so that all neighbors have quick and easy access to it—just in case.

3. **Organize rapid-response teams or adopt-a-block volunteers.** Assign volunteers to take responsibility for one block or one alley. Have them watch for graffiti and immediately report or paint over any tags they encounter.

## AFTER YOU'RE TAGGED

1. **Report it to the city via the Hotline.** The number's (720) 865-7867. If your authorization form is on file, a crew will come right out and get rid of the graffiti, free of charge.

2. **Paint over it yourself.** If you've banked some free paint and can afford the time, paint over the graffiti yourself. You'll get it down faster that way, and taggers will leave your property alone if they know their tags won't stay there.

## WHO SHOULD I CALL??

Keep these numbers handy. Any time you see graffiti in your neighborhood—whether it's on your property, or somebody else's—pick up the phone and take action.

- Graffiti Hotline  
(720) 865-7867
- Denver's 3-1-1 system
- Keep Denver Beautiful  
(720) 865-6800
- Council District 9  
(303) 458-8960