

A Message from Santee's Human Relations Advisory Board

WIPING OUT GRAFFITI & GANG-RELATED ACTIVITY

Graffiti is not an art – it is a crime. It is also a public nuisance and "quality of life" issue for Santee residents and other surrounding communities. The presence of graffiti can be harmful and destructive to the rights and values of property owners and the total community. It promotes blight and deterioration, reflects badly on the community, and can be detrimental to the general welfare. More notably, graffiti has been used as a forum for gang-related activity and can lead to an increase in crime. Therefore, the City of Santee takes a very active approach to wiping out graffiti.

Graffiti is defined as any unauthorized inscription, word, figure or design that is marked, etched, scratched, drawn, painted or pasted upon any surface on public or private property. It is illegal for any person to intentionally place graffiti upon private or public property. With some exclusions, it is also illegal for any minor under the age of eighteen to have graffiti paraphernalia – such as an aerosol paint container, felt tip marker, paint stick, or etching tool – in their possession while on public property.

Marking of property without permission is graffiti, regardless of the content. The City of Santee strictly enforces the law and prosecutes persons who engage in the defacement of public or private property. The City of Santee also has an aggressive policy for removing graffiti. Graffiti that includes gang related writings, racial slurs or hate symbols is especially noted by the City and the Santee Sheriff's Department. Reports are taken on each of these cases and the writings are documented. Through this documentation, the Sheriff's gang unit can track potential gang activity. This documentation can also assist the



Sheriff in making arrests and prosecuting responsible participants.

Graffiti writers typically put up their writings for one reason – to be seen. If graffiti is not painted over quickly it can attract more graffiti, which is why the City of Santee takes a proactive approach to wiping it out:

- **No graffiti is tolerated**
- **Citizens can report graffiti by calling the Graffiti Hotline at (619) 258-4100 ext.188.**
- **Gang or hate-related graffiti is documented and may be used as evidence for prosecution**
- **Graffiti is removed or painted over within 24 hours when possible**
- **The City assists residents in removing graffiti from private property at no expense to the property owner**
- **Rewards can be offered for information leading to the identity of a person who willfully defaces or damages property**

Please help the City of Santee wipe out graffiti and gang-related activity by calling the City's **Graffiti Hotline at (619) 258-4100 ext.188.**