



Perris Press Release

Contact: Joe Vargo, Perris Public Information Officer
Phone: 951-956-2120
jvargo@cityofperris.org

War on Graffiti Pays Big Dividends

The Perris City Council's war on graffiti continues paying big dividends.

The City, working with the Perris Police Department, this week announced the arrests of four high-profile graffiti taggers responsible for more than 700 incidents of vandalism in recent months.

The City is seeking more than \$240,000 in restitution from the taggers and their families.

"This is great news," said Perris City Councilman Al Landers. "This will definitely put the parents of taggers on notice. I hope they will pay more attention to what their kids are doing because taxpayers are having to pick up the bill."

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch said he spent Tuesday morning reading police reports about the arrests.

"I am really happy to hear it," Busch said. "We've been working very diligently to combat graffiti and our strategy is starting to pay off. I am happy the police caught them. I hope to see them prosecuted and the City receive some restitution."

City officials say graffiti removal is costly and siphons scarce resources from other worthwhile projects.

Public Works Manager Daryl Hartwill said the City spends \$260,000 annually just to remove graffiti, money that could otherwise pay for additional parks and recreation services or public works projects.

To combat graffiti, the City has worked with the Perris Police Department, which has created a team of officers who specialize in investigating incidents throughout the City. The City last year produced a video for its website and Channel 3 about the cost of graffiti and its impact on Perris' quality of life.

A system known as graffiti tracker lies at the heart of the City's anti-graffiti campaign. The system utilizes a high-tech camera, motion detectors and computers to photograph and identify would-be taggers. Once they are identified, police work with teachers to obtain the names of the vandals' parents and address and then pay them a call. Vandals are cited or arrested and in some cases taken to Juvenile Hall.

The most recent arrests are not the first since Perris adopted the graffiti-tracker system. Last year, the City identified more than 25 major taggers responsible for 429 incidents of vandalism with a cost of \$500,000.

The latest round of arrests, which took place in the last 30 days, targeted taggers responsible for 84, 241, 131 and 247 incidents of graffiti – 703 in total. Since a typical tag costs about \$330 to remove, the City is seeking restitution from the four ranging from \$27,720 to \$81,510—a total of \$241,470.

City Councilman Mark Yarbrough said it's distressing that Perris spends so much money to remove graffiti. But the City's commitment to combating graffiti will continue.

"If we don't do it, graffiti will draw blight and criminal elements to our City," Yarbrough said. "It's a waste of a huge chunk of our resources but we will continue to fight it. I sincerely hope the people who deface property will be made to pay for it, either through community service or restitution."

Perris City Councilwoman Rita Rogers said graffiti "does nothing but cause problems for our community" and added that she is glad that police are continuing their vigilance against taggers.

"We are committed to doing whatever it takes to keep graffiti in our City to a minimum," Rogers said.

Cameron said he supports events like the chili cook-off/car show because they bring together civic-minded residents determined to make a difference in their communities. He belongs to a car club that helped rehabilitate historic Evergreen Cemetery in Riverside.

"Perris is a nice friendly community," Cameron said.

At the end of a long day of cooking and tasting chili, a panel of judges announced the overall winner. Charlie Blosfield, of

"Fired-up Chili," took top honors. A former competitor in the world championships, Blosfield will participate in the 2011 championships in New Hampshire in the fall.