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Graffiti paints Pickering

Parents should tell
kids it's a crime: police

By Kristen Calis
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PICKERING — After many moves and finally ending up back in her hometown, Linda Cook was shocked to see the large amount of vandalism and graffiti in Pickering's Bay Ridges neighbourhood.

"There has to be something we can do," she said. "I don't want to be victimized in this community. I don't want to be afraid to walk through the community I grew up in."

Ms. Cook brought up vandalism at Mayor Dave Ryan's Ward 2 Town Hall meeting last week, an issue Ward 2 Regional Councillor Bill McLean has been tackling for the past couple of months.

"It's like a cancer going through the neighbourhood," he said.

Coun. McLean has received about a dozen complaints regarding graffiti in the past couple of months. Even when walking down the street, residents approach him with their concerns. When showing homes in otherwise safe and clean neighbourhoods, prospective buyers will simply say they're not interested if they spot graffiti.

"They don't look at this as an annoyance," he said. "They look at it as a safety concern."

Police are aware of the increase in graffiti, said Durham Regional Police spokesman Sergeant Paul

McCurbin. DRPS asks that people wash the graffiti off immediately to help stop it from continuing.

"It takes away from the beauty of the community, but it almost gives approval for more mischief to be added," he said.

Police do ask that graffiti be reported and left as is if it seems worthy for the police to investigate. For example, if there was graffiti on a small business targeting the owner, the police should be called. DRPS should also be called if a resident has just seen someone commit the crime and can identify the culprit. This may help the police track them down immediately.

Coun. McLean's involvement began about three months ago when anti-Semitic graffiti was reported at David Farr Memorial Park. But the swastika on its own is not considered by the Criminal Code of Canada to be anti-Semitic, Sgt. McCurbin said. The symbol used as an emblem of the Nazi party was originally an ancient symbol for good luck or peace, and drawing it is not a crime according to the Code, he explained. The Code does consider promoting genocide a hate crime, for example. DRPS' main concern is keeping the mischief from taking place period.

At the meeting, residents asked if the graffiti is gang related. Mayor Ryan suggested most graffiti in Pickering is basically kids "trying

WEARING HER PRIDE ON HER ARM



Photo by Adrian Veczan

PICKERING — Six-year-old Dallas Poynter receives a tattoo and beach ball from Ontario Power Generation's Laura Miller at the Pickering Canada Day festivities at Kinsmen Park.

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