



VANDALISM IN A CAN: Graffiti, like this pink spray painted message on the walls of two Acton Mill Street businesses, is part of a rash of vandalism over Christmas. Various buildings in Prospect Park were also vandalized with the same symbol. — Frances Niblock photo



VANDALS HIT PARK: Halton police are investigating several incidents of Christmas vandalism after two downtown businesses and numerous locations in Prospect Park, including the Rotary bandshell, Agricultural Society construction site and the Boathouse, were defaced with spray painted graffiti. — Frances Niblock photo



BUSH STOMPED: No word if this lilac bush in front of St. Alban's Church will survive being trampled after Christmas. — Frances Niblock photo

Vandals wielding paint spray deface town...

Continued from page 1

shell, we sure hate to see this happen to a very valuable asset for the community," Beaton said, adding he'll contact the vinyl siding manufacturer to see how to remove the yellow paint.

The interior vinyl sided walls of the bandshell were spray painted with the same symbols that turned up on the side of two Acton businesses.

The floor of the bandshell stage was scorched where vandals set fire to pieces of a jigsaw puzzle.

"They also broke a picnic table and threw it up on the stage so they could have a party, but that happened several weeks before. Kids have been frequenting the facility, but this is the first incident of paint vandalism," Beaton said adding the fire really bothers him.

"Paint is one thing, but arson could be another," he said, adding Halton police were taking the incidents very seriously.

Get parents involved

"We would hope that the citizens get involved and get the parents involved in knowing what their children are doing after hours. There is parental responsibility (needed), and as citizens, we all have to be concerned about that," Beaton said.

He said the Rotary Club wants increased police surveillance in Prospect Park, but notes that can't happen because the gate to the track is locked to prevent all but

maintenance vehicles from driving down to the end of the park.

Rotarian Bill Sanford said the vandalism is disheartening.

"You try to do something like this bandshell for the good of the community and before it's even been used once it is vandalized," Sanford said, adding the defacement is "like somebody breaking into your home."

Along with the graffiti on the bandshell, the same spray painted symbols were found on the window and side of the Boathouse, on several signs in the park and on several pieces of the steel frame at the Acton Agricultural Society's construction site near the entrance to the park.

Acton Councillors Jon Hurst and Clark Somerville are frustrated by the senseless and potentially expensive vandalism.

Somerville said one solution that has worked in some cities is to provide graffiti artists with a specific wall that they are invited to decorate.

"The Acton BIA has been very vigilant in cleaning up any graffiti — it's very expensive, but if you don't clean it up, it can lead to bigger problems," Somerville said.

Councillor Jon Hurst said while the paint vandalism was bad at the bandshell, the fire on the wooden floor is "scary."

"It is sad that this happened. The bandshell isn't even finished and neither is the Agricultural building, even though those steel

beams will be covered. It's disrespectful and will be fairly costly to repair. What a waste."

Acton Councillor Mike O'Leary hopes that the police treat this recent spate of

vandalism very seriously and devote "appropriate time and resources" to find out who is responsible.

He said it's been proven that fighting vandalism is a good use of police time and

efforts because studies show when things like graffiti are cleaned up and broken windows are repaired, crime goes down.

"This is a crime against all of the citizens of Acton,"

O'Leary said, adding he hopes the perpetrators are caught and sentenced to a "significant number" of community hours, perhaps washing graffiti off downtown walls.

Funding is available for community projects

The Halton Healthy Community Fund (HHCF) is now accepting proposals from local community-based partnerships who are seeking funding for projects that contribute to Halton's healthy community and quality of life.

Recipients may receive up to \$30,000 each year for a maximum of three years. Second and third year funding will be based on the availability of funds and the project's success.

In 2006, the HHCF distributed \$432,399 in funding and supported 24 local community-based projects. The fund is made available through combined resources of funding partners in Halton Region. The HHCF partners have been working together since 1998 and include the Regional Municipality of Halton, City of Burlington, Burlington Community Foundation, Town of Halton Hills, Town of Milton, Ministry of Community and Social Services, Community Foundation of Oakville, Town of Oakville, The Ontario Trillium Foundation, and the United Ways of Burlington & Greater Hamilton, Halton Hills, Milton, and Oakville.

HHCF 2007 Guidelines and submission forms are now available from Halton Region by calling 905-825-6000 / toll-free 1-866-442-5866 ext. 7901. Deadline for receipt of applications is Monday, March 12, 2007.

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