

Graffiti returns in Marlborough

By Kristen Bradley / Daily News Staff

Sunday, June 26, 2005

MARLBOROUGH -- Less than a month after the city embarked on a mission to rid the area of graffiti, it's obvious some people do what they want, where and when they want.

On June 1, Middlesex Sheriff James DiPaola, along with Marlborough Police Chief Mark Leonard and Mayor Dennis Hunt, kicked off a campaign aimed at erasing the graffiti scattered throughout the city. They started at the Assabet River Rail Trail, where a giant cement wall had been splashed with cartoons, words and some profanities.

To clean the vandalism on just that cement wall, DiPaola said, was a \$15,000 project -- something the city could never afford, Hunt said.

Thanks to DiPaola's team of prison workers and a special cleaning vehicle that lugs around a tank of cleaning solution and powerwashing equipment, the tedious task was done. The machinery was paid for through federal grants for which DiPaola had applied.

Alex Leone, deputy superintendent and director of the community work program with the Middlesex Sheriff's office, was paying Marlborough routine visits since the first cleaning and everything looked fine on the cement wall and along other parts of the trail, according to Public Information Officer Mark Lawhorne.

But last Monday, Leone was shocked to see the freshly painted and cleared areas had only survived for three weeks.

The clean area had been hit by taggers, Lawhorne said, probably last weekend.

"It's very important to remove it in the first 24 to 48 hours to show the taggers the (resilience) of the community to remove it," Lawhorne said. "You want to show them that the graffiti will be removed each and every time it goes up...over time, they're less likely to return."

DiPaola stood by the promise he made in early June. The graffiti was reported to the sheriff's office Monday. By Wednesday, it was gone, Lawhorne said.

"And we'll be back again if we have to," Lawhorne said.

DiPaola provides the graffiti cleaning service to all communities in Middlesex County, putting prisoners to work to better communities.

Kristen Bradley can be reached at 508-490-7463 or kbradley@cnc.com.