

Ask the Mayor April 2007

We should all be thankful that we had such a mild winter this year. Very little snow meant that the city was able to save some money on salt and overtime. We are having a wonderful early spring and I know everyone is enjoying the daffodils, tulips, cherry blossoms and bird song. **Thanks to the work of volunteers, civic-minded residents and the hard-working employees of the city housing and public works departments, our town is looking cleaner than it has in years.**



My big project for this month is graffiti. I'm old enough to remember when New York City was plagued with graffiti – when every subway car was defaced with gang symbols, obscene words and the initials of the “graffiti artists”. It got so bad at one time that the city leaders threw up their hands – thinking that nothing could be done about it. But then a few people who weren't going to give up their city without a fight decided to declare war on graffiti. They started an aggressive program to enforce the laws, to remove the graffiti as quickly as possible and to sentence the “artists” to do community service by cleaning the areas that they had defaced. And now when you visit New York you find a city that is dramatically changed for the better – where subway graffiti is all but eliminated.

The lesson I take from this is that the good guys can win. It isn't easy, but if all of us who believe in our town and are committed to restoring its lost reputation can stick together and work together we can bring Bridgeton back.

Graffiti is worse than littering. It not only defaces, it intimidates. A great deal of it is gang-related. The gang members put their initials or symbols on a wall to frighten the people who live in the neighborhood. If the markings are allowed to remain on the wall, the message the decent people get is that the city is unwilling or unable to stand up to the criminals.

On the weekends of April 14th and 21st I am going to go out with paint, brushes and a group of volunteers. We're going to try to get Bridgeton graffiti-free.

I need help with this project. I want everyone who knows of any graffiti anywhere in the city to call my office: 856-455-3230 ext. 201, and give me a description of the marking and its location. This will allow me to organize the work and to get permission from the owners of the property to remove the graffiti. Afterwards, we need the citizen to monitor the area for new tagging and report it to the number above so that we can paint over it again until we remove it permanently. If someone has information on the people who are doing the tagging let me know and a full investigation will be conducted to bring these individuals to justice.

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Dates to Remember:

May 5 - Broad Street Church Cemetery volunteer cleanup and city- wide cleanup

June 16 – The Bridgeton Music Festival. Back again for the 24th year at the amphitheatre at beautiful Sunset Lake. Please make sure you order your tickets in advance. This festival has been reinvigorated with new energy and vision and is sure to be the event of the year.

Please keep sending me your e-mail messages; I have a new address here at city hall mayor@cityofbridgeton.com. Thanks once again for all the hard work that has gotten us to this point. We need to remember that this is not a sprint, but a marathon and we are only a mile into the race. Let's keep our eyes focused on the goal - a cleaner, safer city.