

✓ Crime + Criminals - Graffiti

Santa Cruzan arrested on graffiti charges

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Santa Cruz police are asking local residents whose property might have been spray-painted with the initials "TWK" and "FAT" to contact them as part of a widening case against a Santa Cruz man arrested last week on suspicion of graffiti "tagging."

Justin Paul Sconce, 20, was arrested at 1:30 a.m. on June 3 at the corner of Frederick and Windsor streets, a few blocks from his residence. A police officer on a routine patrol in the Seabright neighborhood stopped him for questioning.

"He had spray cans in a backpack and paint on his fingers," said Lt. Chuck Gilbert. "He admitted tagging."

Sconce had painted the letters "TWK" and "FAT" on a yellow street sign, a city bus bench and a telephone pole, said Gilbert.

Sconce, who is identified in police reports as a preschool teacher, was arrested on suspicion of vandalism and providing false information to police, both misdemeanors. He has since been released from Santa Cruz County Jail pending court

hearings.

In recent months Santa Cruz's east side has been particularly hard hit by vandals with spray paint. Fences, houses and businesses have been painted. On May 18, so-called taggers covered historic Gault Elementary School with hundreds of dripping logos and obscenities.

A common misconception is that most tagging in Santa Cruz is related to Hispanic gangs. Not true, said Gilbert.

"Ninety percent" is done by middle-class young people who are bored, looking for a thrill or trying to impress friends, he said.

Catching graffiti taggers is difficult because the crime is often committed late at night and takes only seconds, police say.

Sconce told police that last Thursday was the first time he had ever spray-painted property illegally, said Gilbert. Investigators want to make sure.

Anyone whose property might have been defaced with the logos "TWK" or "FAT" is asked to contact investigators at (408) 429-3710.

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