

Group fights graffiti in Live Oak

By ERIN K. QUIRK

Sentinel staff writer

LIVE OAK — A handful of dedicated Live Oak community members showed up Wednesday night for the first meeting of Project Neighborhood Pride.

But members say many more volunteers are needed.

The new anti-graffiti program seeks to get residents, business owners and kids to take responsibility for their neighborhoods by adopting a sector of Live Oak and caring for it.

"We want to set up a system, similar to Neighborhood Watch, that places resources and power back in the neighborhoods," said Karen Delaney, director of the Volunteer Center, which will spearhead the project.

Project Neighborhood Pride has received donations from local businesses. One local nursery donated native plants to deter graffiti "tagging" along freeway corridors.

Volunteer Susan Page, who attended the Wednesday meeting, suggested poison oak might be a good vandalism deterrent.

Pleasure Point, 17th Avenue and Brommer Street also are hit hard by taggers, said project organizer Debbie Brooks. She hopes people will volunteer and protect their respective graffiti-free domains.

If the county-funded program is successful in Live Oak, the Volunteer Center will launch similar ones in Santa Cruz, Aptos, Pajaro and around the Villa San Carlos apartments.

The Volunteer Center helped create the program after Live Oak residents expressed anger at the county's plan to hire a cleanup crew and charge residents. Brooks said residents proposed the project to the Volunteer Center.

Jerry Shanahan, one of the organizers of the project believes the work of the volunteers will deter graffiti vandals.

"They (the taggers) want to see their work ... if they don't see it they won't come back," he said.

The next planning meeting is April 17 at the Del Mar School Library. For more information call the Volunteer Center at 427-0462 or 722-7771.

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