



**"There's so much graffiti. It's kind of funny in a way, I see it as job security. If the city didn't [clean] it, it would be out of control."**  
*Terry Miller, graffiti buster*



PHOTOS BY CRAIG WATSON / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER  
Terry Miller is Aurora's first full-time employee dedicated to erasing graffiti. The city received at least 800 reports of graffiti in 2007.

# The graffiti guy

By Dan Campana  
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Driving east on Galena Boulevard in Aurora, Terry Miller spots an electric box with an odd scrawling in green marker.

His instincts tell him it won't be the only one. Miller swings a left onto East Park, and another on New York Street. Sure enough, only a half-block's worth of driving yields another box tagged with indiscernible green markings.

"All you've gotta do is circle the block," he says — it's the key to finding a vandal's pattern.

Combining instincts honed by two years of circling Aurora with a painter's skills and general ingenuity for solving problems, 46-year-old Miller is the city's graffiti guy — a one-man crew battling a faceless militia of troublemakers wielding spray paint cans. Recently, he became Aurora's first full-time employee dedicated to the cause.

At no charge to home or business owners, the city paints, power washes and does whatever else is feasible to attack graffiti around Aurora, usually within a day of it being reported. Miller takes pictures of what he encounters and sends it to police, who use them to monitor gang activity.

Much of Miller's work is generated from phone calls to Aurora's customer service line or through the police department, to the tune of at least 800 reports in 2007. Miller spies a lot on his own, too.

## 'Job security'

"A lot of times, I see three or four on the way home from work. There's so much graffiti. It's kind of funny in a way, I see it as job security," Miller, a lifelong Aurora resident, said. "If the city didn't [clean] it, it would be out of control."

Earlier this decade, Miller lost his job of 14 years at General Mills in St. Charles when the plant shut down. He eventually picked up a job doing parking enforcement in Aurora, and later took over the graffiti beat.

"I'd done painting around the house, but nothing to this extent," he said of his experience coming into the position.

Spend a morning with Miller and you'll quickly feel that he faces an insurmountable task, with an endless stream of vandalized garages, brick walls and fences.

There's the medical office on Farmsworth that still shows subtle remnants of a tagger's work.

"They'd did that building twice in one week," Miller says.

Down Solfishburg, a couple blocks from the clinic, a vacant house and its garage wears layers of different shades from multiple paint jobs. The brick house across Farmsworth from the medical office benefitted from a warni — by this writer's standards

— Monday, when Miller was able to bring out the power washer to clear off the presumed gang markings. There's the vacant house on Fenton,

Aurora city worker has one

mission repeated hundreds of times: Eradicate urban scrawl



CRAIG WATSON / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER  
Terry Miller grabs his paint equipment as he prepares for another day on the job.

♦ Turn to GRAFFITI, C2

FM1  
If you live in Aurora and wish to report an incident of graffiti, call (630) 264-1NFO.