

Make a Difference Day prompts volunteers

People work to rid city of trash, weeds and graffiti

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Graffiti in Fort Collins is popping up faster than ever, and volunteers are becoming key players in the war to keep the city fresh and clean.

On Tuesday morning, a dozen volunteers from Worldcolor in Loveland helped paint over graffiti in an area south of Drake Road along McClelland Drive as one of more than 110 Make a Difference Day projects happening in Larimer County this week. The volunteers pulled weeds, picked up trash and painted over graffiti on a railroad trestle along a concrete culvert and on a dozen green transformer boxes.

Nick Myers, a retired police officer who works part-time as the Fort Collins graffiti coordinator, said so far this year, the graffiti hotline has gotten about 800 calls. That's up from 560 calls in 2008.

Myers attributes the graffiti to kids.

"It's gone from a semiart form with a lot of time and effort to what we call bombing," Myers said. "They want to get as much up as they can as quickly as they can."

The key is to paint over that graffiti quickly to show the taggers their work is not allowed, Myers said.

And that's why volunteers, such as the employees from Worldcolor, are so critical in the fight and why volunteers are helping all week through Make a Difference Day projects.

Myers said the work done by the volunteers would cost several thousand dollars if the city had to use its own crews or hire other workers to paint over the graffiti.

Janice Herren, a World-color employee who coordinated the team helping out on McClelland Drive, said she had no trouble getting volunteers to help with the project.