

# 'Make a Difference Day'



PHOTO BY TAMMY SHRIVER

A recent picture of Woodlawn Cemetery shows how much the grounds have improved in the past few months. Saturday, the community is invited to come to the West Side burial ground between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. and help clean up around the stones and read records.

## Community members asked to help Saturday at Woodlawn

BY MALLORY PANUSKA  
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FAIRMONT — Woodlawn Cemetery will be participating in a national day of service this weekend, and members of the community are invited to come out and help.

Cemetery superintendent Gena Wagaman said the Points of Light Institute is hosting "Make a Difference

Day" on Saturday, and anyone who wants to help clean up or read records to eventually be converted to an online database at the West Side burial ground from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. is encouraged to participate.

"It is an opportunity for people to do service projects," Wagaman said of the event. "Anyone who wants to come out and clean is more than welcome."

A Girl Scout troop is slated to come

to the event and clean up graves and plant flowers, and students from Fairmont State University and Pierpont Community and Technical College will be helping do some work as well, Wagaman said. She said other volunteers from the community are encouraged to come to the grounds and help, too.

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Also, anyone who has deeds or records of burial sites that have been purchased are encouraged to bring that information to help cemetery crews develop an up-to-date mapping system.

Since a shift in the management of the grounds at the beginning of the summer, Wagaman and cemetery board of trustees president Doug Hutchinson said that many of the cemetery's records are still missing.

The court decision in June that handed duties of the cemetery over to a five-member board of trustees ordered the former caretaker to turn over the maps and records documenting which plots have been sold and which ones are still eligible for sale.

But, Hutchinson said these records still have yet to be retrieved. And until they are, the board cannot sell new plots, which cuts into the amount of funding that can be collected for the maintenance of the cemetery.

"That is one of the two or three significant ways we could generate revenue for that cemetery," Hutchinson said of selling plots. "It helps build the perpetual care fund and helps with operating costs."

Since taking over the management duties of the cemetery several months ago, Hutchinson said the board, which now has only four members following the resignation of one, has met as a group several times and keeps in contact in the interim.

And since the board has taken over the cemetery, Hutchinson said the 42.52 acres of rolling hills have gone

through "a world of difference."

Before the court decision, the cemetery had been ill-maintained because it was wrapped up in a legal dispute between the board and the former caretakers. The grass was uncut and overgrown in many places. There were potholes on parts of the road winding through the grounds, and many of the graves and tombstones were in disrepair, among other issues.

But now, Hutchinson said the grass has been maintained throughout the summer, and C.W. Stickeley Inc. completed some paving work at the entrance and exit. The board is also trying to get an old building on the site secured and a newer, unfinished building sided before winter hits.

A couple of months ago, a group of inmates from Pruntytown Correctional Facility came up to Woodlawn and performed some maintenance duties as part of the governor's Good Neighbor Program, which Hutchinson and Wagaman both said was very helpful in keeping the grass cut and cleaning up some of the other areas.

The board also hired a company to do some of the grass-cutting over the course of the summer, and there have been volunteers who did a lot of the other work that was done as

well. Hutchinson said they are trying to do some of the same things to keep the grass maintained and the grounds looking presentable once the weather gets warm again next spring.

"We are trying to find a way to utilize programs and volunteer efforts to get things done up there. The grass cutting seems to be the thing that upsets people the most," he said.

"We want to try to be a positive part of the community and present the best image we can for the public to try and stimulate how we are involved with it."

Both Hutchinson and Wagaman said that monetary donations are also being accepted to help maintain the grounds and anyone who wants to contribute can send checks or money orders to P.O. Box 765, Fairmont, WV 26554.

Wagaman said that Woodlawn, because of its historic background, will also soon be a part of the area's Civil War trail, and a sign will be put up designating this near the Pierpont graves. She said anyone who is interested in learning about the history of the cemetery and the famous historic individuals buried there is encouraged to come up and take a tour.

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