

Girl Scouts give cemetery a face-lift

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DERRY
— Derry
Girl

Scouts spent quiet time last weekend giving one of the town's most historical areas a bit of sprucing up.

Junior Scouts, members of Troop 1028 traveled to Forest Hill Cemetery in East Derry on Oct. 11 for a community service project and some much-needed gravestone cleaning.

Dorothy Goldman, longtime cemetery supporter and now working on a photo project at the graveyard, helped the young girls with the cleaning project and taught them how to work on the stones.

Earlier in the day, Scouts had worked at Broadview Farm in Derry for some fall cleanup tasks. Upon arriving at Forest Hill, Goldman had spray water bottles, brushes, and toothbrushes ready for the girls' cleaning project.

Goldman's Forest Hill project is part of a new research book she and town historian Rick Holmes hope to complete so people can learn about the vast history of everyone buried in the 35-acre space, plus an inside look into the intricacies and carvings of the many aging stones, dating back to the area's earliest settlers.

Those carvings and intricacies gave the Scouts a chance to study the interesting designs and styles of the early gravestones that Goldman chose for them to clean. With only water and a brush, the girls got to work.

"Remember the stones are fragile," Goldman told the girls as they worked in pairs to gently spray the water, then brush in and around the words etched in stone. "We don't want to scrape the finish off."

One grave belonging to Civil War soldier Ira Meriam, was on the cleaning list and by the end of the day, was much cleaner and brighter thanks to the Scout cleaning crew.

"Now I can see his name and what regiment," Goldman remarked to the girls. "I knew that would come out good."

The Scouts were patient and took turns spraying then brushing the stones.

"We keep taking turns, that way we'll both get a chance to do both things," Victoria McCulloch said.



JULIE HUSS/Staff photo

Linda Rowe, a member of Derry Girl Scout Troop 10298, cleans a tombstone at Forest Hill Cemetery as part of the troop's cleanup project at the historic graveyard in East Derry.

By the end of the cleaning project, Scouts had cleaned 10 stones. Girls worked both days last weekend to get the job done.

"They were so cute [on Sunday] Goldman said, "as they hurriedly walked to view their handiwork from the previous day. I then hear, 'Mrs. G., come see our stones. They are sparkling!'"

Forest Hill has stones dating back centuries and many are in disrepair from aging, neglect, and the ravages of time, Goldman

said. Some stones are even missing, or overlooked. She hopes to keep working in the cemetery to keep those histories of the area's past alive through the gravestones that stand there. Her project will give the town a chance to learn more about the people who lived here.

Scouts involved in the cleaning project were Linda Rowe, Jennifer Robinson, Ashley Cox, Jaime Robinson, Victoria McCulloch, and Natalie McCulloch.