

Volunteers Needed to Help with Cemetery Restoration

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The project of reclaiming the beauty and dignity and preserving the history in the Forest Hill Cemetery, behind First Parish Congregational Church in East Derry, is well under way, but the going is slower and has been made more difficult than need be by a lack of volunteer help.

"We just want to bring the cemetery back to the way it was," said Dorothy Goldman. "We had a very successful workshop funded by the Heritage Commission June 13, where we cleaned 12 stones, straightened two and reset two, one of which was a potential liability to the town."

Rick Holmes, chair of the Heritage Commission and the Derry town historian, is working with Goldman to photograph and document the stones in Forest Hill Cemetery for a reference book they plan to put together. He said other stones in the cemetery also pose a liability issue to the town.

"Were a child to jump on one of these stones that are multi-parters, it could cause it to fall on the child, injuring or even killing the child," he said. "This is a serious liability,

and we are going to take care of it because it is the right thing to do."

Holmes and Goldman will immediately start going through the cemetery and will mark the stones that pose a threat. Then town workers will lay those stones down flat until they can be properly fixed. So as not to have too many stones marked and possibly drawing unwanted attention, Holmes and Goldman said they would work section by section.

Goldman is seeking volunteers to help scrape and paint the fence and gates of the burial ground. She said the Derry Garden Club and the Molly Reid Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) have already purchased four shrubs each to plant along the gate area, but these plantings can't take place until the gate and fence work are completed. She asked that anyone who could volunteer some time or any young person needing to do community service to contact her. She wants this particular task completed by mid August at the latest. She can be reached by email at Forest_Hill_cemetery07@yahoo.com or people can go to her Web site at

<http://www.forest-hill-1721.webs.com>.

"I am also in need of donations of supplies for the stone cleaning and painting projects," Goldman said. "Not living in Derry, it is difficult for me to know what businesses to appeal to, although Benson Lumber has stepped forward to help. I am in particular need of several 3-gallon pump sprayers."

She noted that she was given five gallons of D2 Biological Solution for cleaning the stones when lichen removal is needed, and termed it a generous gift.

The Derry Heritage Commission is in the process of getting new plaques to be placed at the entrance to the cemetery, Holmes said. The plaques will say Forest Hill Cemetery, 1722 on one side, and on the back, will name Gen. George Thom, who provided the gates and fence. The commission decided on aluminum rather than bronze for the plaques, not only because of the price differential but also because bronze signs are a target for theft.

Goldman, a gravestone preservationist, said she has done projects similar to this



Dorothy Goldman in the background and Amanda Bossell, an intern from Keene State College, work with the Upper Room and the Community Services Opportunities Learning Program in Forest Hill Cemetery to clean and restore some of the several-hundred-year-old gravestones. Michelle Mobsby from the Upper Room brought several youths with her to help Goldman. *Photo by Penny Williams*

before but never one this large. She said she is excited and delighted to be involved with this project.

“There is so much history here, and I just don’t want

it to get lost,” she said.

Goldman and Holmes are also working on putting photos of the stones together as a means of preserving the cemetery’s historical rec-

ords. To assist in their efforts, they found the original cemetery records and another set of charts about the cemetery.