

# How To Organize A Cemetery Clean Up Day

## Advance Planning

Before you get started making your plans for the big day, find a co-sponsor for the event such as your local Rotary, Lions Club, Chamber of Commerce, Grange, fraternal organization or local school. Having a co-sponsor will attract more attention and bring more volunteers to the event. In turn you and your regular volunteers can help your co-sponsor at one of their events.

Next, talk with your local merchants to see if they would be willing to donate or discount items such as trash bags, snacks or bottled water.



## Schedule the Date

Now that you're ready to proceed with scheduling the day, check to see what else might be going on in your community on or around the date you have in mind in order to avoid conflicts.

- Are there other events scheduled where volunteers will be needed?

- Are there big sports activities or events planned that might interfere with recruiting volunteers?

## Publicity

The date is set and now it's time to get the word out!

- Make a flyer using bright colors and hang copies all around town. Ask the merchants to put one in their window, post one on the bulletin board at the post office and anywhere people pass by.
- Have your local newspaper put a notice in their "volunteers needed" or "local events" section.
- Check with your local cable provider and TV station, and ask if they run a list of local events, especially early in the morning.
- Have your event placed on the community calendar which is offered in many newspapers.
- Send a notice to the Oregon Commission on Historic Cemeteries to have your event listed on their calendar.
- Place on internet tools such as websites, Facebook, blogs, etc. In your notice be sure to tell

volunteers the date and time of the clean up, where to meet and what tools to bring with them. You should also mention to bring gloves, hats, sun screen and comfortable clothes and shoes. You can't over-do your advertising for the event. You will get volunteers and, just as important, you will let the community know that people are taking care of the cemetery.

## Prepare for the Day

A month before the clean up day, secure needed supplies.

### SUPPLY LIST:

Toilet

First Aid Kit

Tools

(rakes, wheel barrows, shovels, hand tools)

Drinking water

Snacks

Sunscreen

Sign-in sheet

(request all contact information and emergency contact)

Cell phone



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- If there are no toilet facilities, schedule a portable toilet (ask for a donation or discount).
- Find a first aid kit.
- Arrange for debris removal.
- A week or so before the clean up day walk the cemetery grounds.
- Determine what needs to be done and what equipment will be needed to get the job done.



- Since you don't know exactly how many volunteers may show up, have several plans of action ready. For example, if 15 volunteers show up then you'll know that the group can accomplish cutting the grass and weeds in one particular section. If 25 volunteers show up, you'll know that the group can accomplish that plus more in another area. Be sure to always have a good feel for the work that needs to be done and be ready to assign jobs as volunteers show up. The last thing you want is to have volunteers hanging around waiting to be told what to do or feeling unappreciated.
- If you anticipate large numbers of volunteers or the work is spread out over a large area, consider recruiting team leaders who are familiar with the site, the cemetery rules and the work. You may want to have name tags or coordinated

- clothing for the team leaders.
- Make up a back up plan in case rain or other circumstances alter your event.
- Make note of any possible safety issues, such as loose or leaning markers, rodent holes, bee hives, poison oak, etc. These areas should be noted with yellow caution tape and discussed at your pre-clean up briefing.

### **The Day has Arrived!**

Put your plan in play on the day of the clean up.

- Arrive early and have everything set up at least 30 minutes before the scheduled start time. Many volunteers tend to show up early and are ready to get started.
- Conduct a pre-clean up briefing.
- Start with thanking the volunteers for coming and expressing how important their help is.
- Pass around a sign-up sheet asking for names and contacts for emergencies, thank yous and recruitment.
- Explain what needs to be done and where you need your volunteers to work.
- Make sure all volunteers have the proper equipment and know how to use it safely.
- Introduce the volunteers to team leaders if applicable.
- Brief volunteers on any safety concerns that you noted on your walk through the grounds and where the first aid kit is located.
- This is also a good time to mention the "dos and the don'ts"

of your cemetery, for example, volunteers can remove old or out-of-season flowers or arrangements (Christmas wreaths in June), but taking care not to remove personal items from around grave sites.

- Explain how to work around the monuments, curbing, fencing and other features and highlight the importance of care for their preservation. Explain that volunteers should leave any misplaced monuments or features right where they were found.
- Also tell the volunteers where they should place the debris for removal.



- Advise the volunteers where the restrooms are located and where they can find refreshments, snacks and bottled water.
- During the clean up be sure to make yourself available for any questions or additional directions as necessary. Walk around and talk with the volunteers and extend your appreciation for all their help. Take pictures of the volunteers and the work in progress.



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- After everyone has departed, check the grounds for items that may have been left behind and that everything has been put away and secured.

## **Follow Up**

- Follow up makes for a more successful day on your next clean up event.
- Over the few days following the clean up, take some time to personally thank your volunteers, cosponsor, merchants who made donations or provided discounts, or anyone who helped to make your clean up a success.
- Thank yous can be done in person, with thank you notes, phone calls or emails.
- Thank donors and volunteers publicly in the local paper, letter to the editor, city council presentation, organizational newsletter, website or social network pages.
- This is also a good opportunity to use some photos from the clean up.
- Take down your flyers and notices about the clean up. Merchants really appreciate it and are much more agreeable to post them in the future.

***Good luck with your clean up and remember to have fun and enjoy making some new friends.***

For more information about the Oregon Commission on Historic Cemeteries and historic cemetery resources, contact Kuri Gill at [Kuri.Gill@oprd.oregon.gov](mailto:Kuri.Gill@oprd.oregon.gov) or (503) 986-0685.

***Heritage Bulletin 3 offers tips on cleaning markers.***

[http://www.oregon.gov/oprd/OH/Documents/HBO3\\_How\\_to\\_Clean\\_Markers.pdf](http://www.oregon.gov/oprd/OH/Documents/HBO3_How_to_Clean_Markers.pdf)



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