

**MCB Project Summary Outline**Community/Neighborhood: AlbanyName of Project: Old City CemeteryProject Coordinator: Connie WordenType of Project:  Long-term (1-5 years)  Short-term (up to 12 months)Time Frame: Date began: May 1, 2010 Date completed: May 28, 2010Number of volunteers: 5 Age range of volunteers: 40-60

Cost of Project:

Materials	Donated	\$ <u>    </u>
	Purchased	\$ <u>500</u>
Labor	Volunteer	\$ <u>100</u>
	Paid	\$ <u>8,000</u>
Total Cost		\$ <u>8,600</u>

Sources of funding :

Donations: Northwest Medical Center \$ 8,600**OLD CITY CEMETERY**

The Visionary Partners for a Rural Community (VPRC) and the Albany Community Betterment Organization (ACBO) agreed to help our friends and neighbors with a clean-up project this year. During the "Helping Hands Clean-up Day" on May 1, 2010, volunteers worked at a residence near the "Old City Cemetery", a cemetery last used in 1934 and nearly forgotten. The cemetery had been neglected for several years since no cemetery association existed nor were there any family members of those interred to care about its appearance. The workers were appalled at the condition of the cemetery: tall weeds around every stone, a mowing job that resembled a hay cutting, and litter and limbs strewn throughout.

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The situation was discussed at the May 18th meeting of the VPRC, the group who organized the work day. Lacking the manpower or the equipment to tackle the overgrown weeds and disrepair of the stones, Connie Worden, as a member of both the VPRC and ACBO, offered to investigate the status of the cemetery. She contacted Derek Brown, Administrator of the City of Albany, who was aware of the cemetery's appearance. He said no cemetery association exist to oversee the upkeep. He was uncertain who owned the land since property records had been destroyed decades earlier in a courthouse fire. He explained the city had finally "assumed" ownership many years before his tenure and had hired various private individuals to care for it. For the last three or four years, the maintenance budget was a mere \$500; therefore, it was mowed only four or five times a year and never trimmed or manicured. Brown, too, was dismayed at the state of the cemetery, but the city had no viable solutions to the problem.

Ms. Worden thought the restoration of the cemetery fit perfectly into the VPRC and ACBO's vision of beautifying our community as well as being an offshoot of the "helping hands" project. In considering a community partner to collaborate on this important proposal, she decided to seek assistance from her employer, Albany's Northwest Medical Center (NMC). The hospital has a long history of assisting community organizations. She felt once the hospital administration staff understood the situation, they would volunteer to take on the project. She invited the CEO of the hospital to see the cemetery; one look was all it took! He immediately pledged labor to mow, trim and rake the property, and more importantly, he promised at least a year-long continuation of upkeep as an employee volunteer opportunity to benefit the city. The goal became to have the cemetery looking beautiful for Memorial Day which was only a week away!

First, an NMC employee counted the stones so flags could be purchased for each grave. Then, a maintenance crew of three started work cutting, chopping, raking, and trimming the knee-high weeds. It took four days and two mowings to finally complete the task, and the result was amazing. After the clean-up, 40 additional stones were discovered that had been completely hidden by the weeds. Many grave markers were overturned, some broken.

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The hospital then contacted a local individual who repairs old grave stones; he surveyed the site and found that 87 stones needed repair. The restoration, funded by NMC, began on June 28th and was completed in July.

On May 28th, NMC employees placed a United States flag on each and every grave. Two urns with lovely, blooming flowers were placed on either side of the entrance. The ambitious goal was accomplished! On Memorial Day, the cemetery was, indeed, beautiful! The hospital received dozens of calls and comments of appreciation for its effort. The Albany Ledger printed an article about the restored cemetery and people went to see the results of this labor. The community was grateful, and more importantly, by Memorial Day of 2010, Albany's "Old City Cemetery" had not been forgotten! The restoration, though an impromptu project, was certainly in line with our goal to beautify Albany, and more than that, it was a gesture of respect and gratitude to those who lived and cared for our home town a century ago.

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