

Cemetery Reclamation Project Updates - Fall 2009

Community efforts to enhance cemetery properties in Athens, Cincinnati, Columbus and Toledo are underway with support from ODMH and coordination with local advocates and volunteers. With respect for the people who died while patients at former psychiatric hospital sites and the family and friends who visit today, several improvements have been made. Read the update on work completed in 2009 and visit our Web pages on Cemetery Reclamation and System History at *mentalhealth.ohio.gov*.

Athens:

Crushed stone has been added to the surface of the Nature Walk which connects the Tower Cemetery with the other two cemeteries and additional stone benches were added along the trail. Hundreds of grave collapse dimples in Cemetery 2 were filled by J. Trivett Construction and patient volunteers from Appalachian Behavioral Healthcare, and the area was reseeded with grass. Participants from the Athens Photographic Project spent a weekend lifting and resetting sunken stones.

Cincinnati:

The cemetery gate will be replaced and a group of patient workers are planting drought resistant perennial flowers. The committee is planning to clean and seal the monument and install a plaque that reads "This sacred ground is the resting place of former patients of Longview State Hospital, 1856-1967." The sidewalks will be repaired and volunteers from the Recovery Center of Hamilton County are planning to install pavers from the cemetery gate to the monument.

Columbus:

In July, a memorial stone dedication ceremony with Ohio Department of Mental Health Director Sandra Stephenson, community members and Twin Valley Behavioral Healthcare representatives was held at one of the area's three cemetery locations. Brandon Lofton is cataloging the grave stones as his Eagle Scout Project and a new perimeter fence and gate will be installed. Photos of the event were added to the ODMH Web site.

Toledo:

Saturday work sessions of volunteers were held every week for three hours to raise grave markers. To date, 1022 markers have been found and raised to ground level. A map of the markers will be created and a local engineering firm is assisting in creating a GPS-based map of every burial site by number. The committee is also planning to install a granite monument with this inscription: "In memory of those persons whose lives were challenged by mental illness and physical disability during a time when they conditions were largely misunderstood and treatments were in their infancy and mostly unexplored. May we always remember your struggle and your strength, and may your peace now be eternal."