

Time out for Tour of Untimely Departures together with One Stone at a Time

Background

When over 80 headstones of Lone Fir Cemetery were toppled and broken in 2000, Metro, the public agency which operates Lone Fir Cemetery, was left with trying to figure out what to do. Metro reached out to the community to ask for support. This call for support has resulted in the Friends of Lone Fir Cemetery (FLFC), a non-profit, that has grown to over 400 volunteers and provides more than 3,000 volunteer hours for the cemetery. The FLFC efforts have included the annual Tour of Untimely Departures. Held on Halloween every year, this event has become a community tradition. Instead of closing the cemetery gates Metro and the FLFC open them to invite over 2,000 people in for an eerie exploration into Oregon's history. The FLFC has also ensured that Lone Fir Cemetery will be protected and treasured forever by spearheading the National Register nomination for the site in 2007. In 2011, the cemetery again received good fortune from the pay it forward nature of the FLFC and was listed with National Geographic as one of the top 10 cemeteries in the world.

Frequently asked questions

Q – Why is the event being suspended?

A – It takes over 7 months to plan the event and without a steady stream of volunteers the event has taken away from the Friends of Lone Fir Cemetery ability to stay true to their mission.

Q – Who are the Friends of Lone Fir Cemetery (FLFC)?

A – The FLFC began in 2000, when over 80 headstones in Lone Fir Cemetery were toppled and broken in an unprecedented year of vandalism. When neighbors pulled together to clean up, they found that they enjoyed working together to protect the cemetery, and the FLFC was born. Their core team of eight works with more than 400 casual volunteers a year for an annual total of over 3,000 annual volunteer hours.

Q – What is Metro?

A – Metro, an elected regional government, crosses city limits and county lines to build a resilient economy, keep nature close by and respond to a changing climate. To achieve that mission, Metro offers a wide variety of programs and services, ranging from historic cemeteries, park recreation, sustainable living, solid waste disposal and recycling to land use planning. Metro represents a diverse population of 1.5 million people in 25 cities and three counties.

Q – Will the FLFC host the Halloween event in the future?

A – The FLFC would like to bring back the Tour of Untimely Departures, despite the prohibitively long planning process. Everyone loves the event but there have been no decisions for next year. The FLFC would like to stay true to their mission "restoration, preservation and education of Lone Fir Cemetery." The event takes seven or more months to produce. This time takes away from important restoration efforts that ultimately help preserve this historic treasure.

Q – Can I help with the Tour of Untimely Departures event production?

A – The FLFC is committed to the spirit and integrity of the event and would not want to do it halfway. Through the years the FLFC have fine tuned a schedule and an event plan that works. To implement this event plan, community sponsors, a consistent and committed volunteer base and

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seasoned actors are needed. If your group is interested in proposing a partnership with the FLFC, please submit a proposal to info@friendsoflonefircemetery.org. The requirements of the proposers include at least three recent and consecutive years of experience in event production, volunteer management and securing event sponsors.

Perhaps even more than event volunteers, we need people to accept leadership positions throughout the year. If you're interested in joining us, please come to a board meeting. The more steady year-round volunteers we have, the greater the chance that we'll be able to take on large projects like the tour.

Q – Will the cemetery be secured on Halloween?

A – Yes, Metro park rangers will be on site most of the evening followed by contracted security patrol.

Q – What other work is the FLFC responsible for besides the Halloween Tour of Untimely Departures?

A – The FLFC does many things: from grounds cleanup to stone repair and restoration; special events that highlight different aspects of Oregon history; monthly tours; research and documentation. They host various events such as the Tea and Roses at the pioneer rose garden and they also co-hosted the 2012 Suffrage Centennial.

Q – What plans are there instead of the Halloween Tour of Untimely Departures?

A – Metro and the FLFC are kicking off a much-needed project, One Stone at a Time. In recent years, there has been an increase in headstone safety concerns in American cemeteries. When people lean or climb on stones, they can cause them to fall, resulting in injury and damage.

In an effort to preserve the historic monuments within Lone Fir Cemetery Metro and the FLFC have started this program to help restore and protect many of the ageing structures for future generations while ensuring the safety of cemetery visitors.

Why is this important? Unfortunately, stone isn't any more immortal than we are. Mortar erodes with time; ground moves when trees grow, unpermitted activity occurs such as playing and climbing on the stones, causing the large stones to tilt; stones crack with time, causing further instability. Although Lone Fir Cemetery has not seen any injuries so far, many of its stones are over a hundred years old, and we need to ensure that Oregon's history is kept on a secure foundation.

Q – What will One Stone at a Time involve?

A – The FLFC will use the proceeds and donations earned from events such as the Halloween Tour of Untimely Departures to help fund this program. Metro has agreed to match these funds and to hire a historic preservation firm, Donovan and Associates who have years of experience working in cemeteries and with volunteer groups.

This program is an important long term priority for the cemetery. Supporters have an opportunity to be a part of this vital project through volunteering, donations and raising public awareness about this preservation effort. To learn more visit www.friendsoflonefircemetery.org.