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## Area organizations step up to maintain abandoned cemetery

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In an example of local news making a difference, two Lawton area organizations have stepped forward to take over maintenance of the Mount Scott Cemetery.

“I had been reading the stories in (The Lawton Constitution) and following along with the cemetery,” Dennis Clippenger, president of the Southwest Oklahoma Chapter of Military Officers Asso-

ciation of America, said, “so I was familiar with it.”

Clippenger was approached by another member of the organization, Sam Kaufman, who brought up the idea of the organization stepping forward to take over maintenance of the cemetery from Melanie Jackson, whose illness had sidelined her after she spent years restoring the cemetery.

“Sam is on the executive board and so when he brought it up I told him it sounded like a great idea,” Clippenger said.



Courtesy Photo

**Dennis Clippenger, left, Sam Kaufman and Ben Burris stand in front of a freshly mowed Mount Scott Cemetery. The trio are part of two organizations that have pledged to maintain the cemetery for at least one year.**

“He reached out to Ben Burris with the Triangle 548 Lawton Masonic Lodge who showed up with a riding lawnmower

and we mowed the whole thing in about two hours.”

Burris has assisted Jackson

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# Cemetery

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with the restoration of the cemetery and agreed to partner with the officer's association for at least one year to help maintain the cemetery.

"When I called Ms. Jackson and told her about the plan, she was very happy," Burris said.

Burris also had kept track of the cemetery through articles published in The Lawton Constitution. The first time he stepped up to help Jackson, he was inspired

by an article in the paper detailing her work.

"We're going to keep this up for at least a year, between the Masons and the officer's association," Burris said.

The cemetery's time in the spotlight hasn't been entirely without incident as there has been some recent vandalism at the cemetery that has upset Burris and others.

"I am going to have to get another flag to replace the one that got stolen. It's the second time someone has stolen the flag out there. Someone stole some of the lights, too," Burris said. "I just don't understand who would

want to go into a cemetery, a place that is supposed to be about peace and rest, and steal something."

For now, the Southwest Oklahoma Chapter of Military Officers Association of America and the Triangle 548 Lawton Masonic Lodge will continue maintenance of the cemetery every two weeks or as needed, Clippenger said.

"We are going to do as much as possible for as long as we can muster," Clippenger said. "This is a service project, and the motto of our organization is 'never stop serving.'"