

Dear Franklin Tomorrow Awards Committee Members:

On behalf of the Rotary Club of Downtown Franklin, we would like to nominate Patrick Shairs for the Franklin Tomorrow Exemplary Volunteer Award for creating and directing the ongoing multi-club "Franklin Rotarian Cemetery Restoration Project".

We asked him, when initially considering this as a club outreach, to share how the idea was conceived and his goals for the project. This is what he wrote in his proposal:

"Memorial Day Weekend of 2020, I was on a jog in downtown Franklin and found myself in City Cemetery, walking around, looking at the American flags that were put in the ground for our Veterans. I then headed over to Rest Haven and noticed how a lot of the markers were unreadable. I remembered talking to the club board a few weeks before about possible service projects that could incorporate all three Rotary clubs in Franklin, as working together has been a goal of ours since our club's inception. We contacted Brian Walker, Franklin's City Arborist and Amanda Rose, Franklin's Preservation Planner. We met and discussed a cleaning project of all three historic cemeteries in Franklin...City, Rest Haven, and Toussaint L'Overture. On September 17th, 2020, several Rotarians met with Brian Walker to learn how to clean the headstones in Rest Haven. Our end goals for this project are to create permanent signage at the entrances of all cemeteries, map out the plots showing where each person is buried, build community awareness of Rotary, work within the Rotary Avenues of Service Club, Community, and New Generations frameworks, and increase opportunities for local clubs to work together to personify the mottos of "Do Rotary Good" and "Service Above Self"."

To track the impact of the project, we have collected data. The data demonstrates laudable results and the widespread inspiration this project has generated. For example, in total to date, there have been 127 **different** volunteers, Rotarians and Non-Rotarians, families and individuals of all ages. Most of the volunteers have worked more times than one. We have logged, in total to date, 781 community service hours in the cemetery, cleaning 560 head/footstones and over 140 cemetery plot pillars. Due to the enormous response by volunteers, this phase of the multi-year project, projected to take two-three years, was completed in eight months. Now, Patrick is leading the next phase of the project at another cemetery.

As the stones have been cleaned, Patrick has documented who has been buried in what plot (the town has an alphabetized record from 1975, but there is (was) no official location of the deceased). In Rest Haven, to date, there are 68 names on record that have not been found/identified. Over the last 150 years some have been broken, removed, etc. that we cannot account for. However, there are 82 individuals buried in Rest Haven who have been identified that are NOT on the town's official record. Patrick made an excel document detailing the gridded system of each person that is buried in Rest Haven. Our plan is to make permanent signage at the entrance of the cemeteries detailing who is buried in which plot.

What isn't disaggregated in that data is the role Patrick Shairs's lead-by-example style played in this project.

- He spent 174 hours IN the cemetery cleaning, teaching, and assisting members and community members.
- He spent 82 hours outside the aforementioned efforts researching and documenting information about more than 80 individuals buried in the cemetery, but not listed in the town's official documentation.
- In all, that is 256 hours since September 17, 2020.
- He invited and encouraged family participation (children ranging in age from 6-18), local high schoolers' involvement, encouraged other civic organizations and professionals to participate, invited and included the surrounding food truck small businesses, and he organized a cookout with the other clubs in the cemetery parking lot to encourage community participation.
- ALL of these efforts followed social distancing and mask mandates, proving by his example, that great things can be accomplished when a community works together for good and to benefit everyone.
- He developed a presentation and spoke during a "zone" meeting (which, for Rotary, encompasses 31 Rotary Districts in 13 states) to share the project and teach them how to implement it in their communities.

During the time he created this project, Patrick served admirably as Rotary Club President, participated in every service project the club held, continued his career as a software instructor trainer for Vanderbilt University Medical Center, and turned his love of running into fundraising for various causes by participating in races.

Patrick's character and abilities to balance short-term and long-term needs in our community, motivate others, and solve problems meld together to embody the kind of dynamic, dedicated role model and leader our community needs for today and tomorrow. Thank you for your consideration and continuing to recognize volunteerism.

Sincerely,
The Rotary Club of Downtown Franklin
Lorrie Graves and Michelle Koehly, Service Committee Chairs