

Fenley Cemetery

Fenley Cemetery is an old, family cemetery, roughly an acre in size with burials dating back to Pre-Civil War. Over the years, Fenley was maintained by descendants of the families that are buried in the cemetery. As time passed, the descendants became elderly and could no longer maintain the cemetery. As a result, the cemetery fell into serious neglect. It became the victim of plant overgrowth and vandalism.

During the winter of 2015 a core group of volunteers from the Iroquois Neighborhood Association approached Councilwoman Vicki Welch about a volunteer project at Fenley Cemetery to be held in conjunction with Metro Louisville's Spring Brightside Community Clean Up in April 2015. We advised Councilwoman Welch that if we could have the use of a commercial chipper truck for one day, we could spend two days cutting debris and dragging it to a central location for chipping and make a tremendous impact on the condition of the cemetery. Councilwoman Welch supported our request and we managed to haul fourteen **(14)** tons of plant debris from Fenley Cemetery over a two day period this past spring. She also brought 15 volunteers from Passport Health Plan who attended the spring Brightside Cleanup for District 13.

Over the next couple of months, with the support of a strictly volunteer base and some local businesses, we have been able to accomplish great things at Fenley Cemetery:

- Friends of Eastern Cemetery helping us to locate, reset and repair tombstones has resulted in nine **(9)** tombstones standing in Fenley Cemetery that were previously lost, buried or broken.
- Ninety-two **(92)** volunteers have logged over eight hundred sixty **(860)** volunteer hours to bring dignity back to Fenley Cemetery. Our volunteer base is largely drawn from Humana employees using their Volunteer Time Off (VTO) day, to volunteer at Fenley, along with our core group of neighborhood volunteers and other community volunteers dedicated to the restoration and preservation of local cemeteries.
- John Ridgell, owner of Louisville Tree Service, donated his crew and a chipper truck for a half day for removal of dead trees that posed a threat to volunteers as well as the tombstones. Mr. Ridgell's kindness resulted in the removal of twelve **(12)** trees and additional plant debris bringing the total tonnage of plant debris removed from Fenley Cemetery to twenty-one **(21)** tons.

- Our volunteers purchase the following items to maintain and restore Fenley Cemetery:
 - Equipment necessary to take care of the cemetery- chainsaws, weed eaters and tarps
 - Fencing materials to repair holes in the fence
 - Gasoline for weed eaters, chainsaws and lawnmowers as well weed eater line and chainsaw blade sharpening
 - Rock and sand to level tombstones that have sunk into the ground
 - Tools and epoxy to repair broken tombstones
- On October 24, 2015, in conjunction with Metro Louisville's Fall Brightside Community Clean Up, Joseph E. Ratterman and Son Funeral Home is sponsoring a tombstone cleaning at Fenley Cemetery. Mr. Ratterman generously purchased enough D2 biological solution (a safe chemical for cleaning tombstones) to clean all of the tombstones in Fenley Cemetery. Other businesses lending support to this project:
 - WalMart at the Outer Loop and New Cut Road
 - Lowes on Dixie Highway

While there is a lot of positive momentum going on at Fenley Cemetery right now, some of the people involved will eventually move on to other projects and others will one day become elderly and unable to care for the Cemetery as happened in the past. The creation of a Metro Cemetery Board to locate, document and develop a plan for proper maintenance and perpetual care of these forgotten cemeteries is essential to Louisville being a good steward to those that came before us. If we are successful, Louisville will establish itself as a leader in cemetery preservation that will represent the city in a positive manner to our citizens and our visitors.