

Marion group cleans up cemeteries

By Lon Medd

DAILY PRESS & ARGUS

The years have not been kind to Marion Township's three cemeteries: Harger, Greene and Lakeside.

However, with the collective efforts of the township and a group of a dozen people, the cemeteries will soon be seeing better days.

A few months ago, township resident Tom Zielke was surfing through the television channels when he came across the Marion Township public access channel, which had an announcement that the township was looking for volunteers to help clean the three cemeteries.

"Having a crazed passion to do that, I decided to check it out," said Zielke, the chairman of the group.

Throughout October, the group has focused its efforts on Harger Cemetery, located on the west side of D-19, just north of Coon Lake Road. Zielke said the group has people from their 20s to their 70s.

Zielke said some of the headstones look like they've been through a tornado. Other markers are covered by an overgrowth of shrubs.

"We are really pushing the maintenance," Zielke said. "It would be nice to knock down the shrubs around the markers."

Harger was first established in 1848; some of the markers in the back of the cemetery are from that time period.

"My first impression was, 'Oh, my God, what did I get myself into?'" Zielke said. "There were markers lying down in places where they shouldn't be."

Marion Township Supervisor Bob Hanvey said the group working at the cemetery is enthusiastic and looking for more help.



Photo by GILLIS BENEICT/DAILY PRESS & ARGUS

Bob Beardsley cuts up a tree he and a team of volunteers took down at Harger Cemetery in Marion Township Saturday. Landscaping, repairing markers and updating records of those buried in the cemetery were among the tasks taken on by the volunteers.

Hanvey tried to get a similar group formed a few years ago, but there wasn't as much interest.

"Now it's a much bigger group," he said. "We have some people who are new in the area and some who have lived in the area for a long time, and they are trying to keep the cemeteries straightened up."

Zielke, a resident of the township for eight years, hopes to get Harger done before winter comes and begin with Greene Cemetery in the spring.

"Our long-term goal is to find where headstones go that have been misplaced and to set rules and regulations on the cemeteries," he said. "We would establish cleanup times at certain times of the year."

Once winter comes, the group will continue to meet regularly and figure out the game plan for next summer's cemetery maintenance.

To learn more about the cemetery cleanup, call Marion Township Hall at (517) 546-1588.

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— Tom Zielke

Chairman of the group that's renovating three cemeteries in Marion Township
