

<https://triblive.com/local/mccandless-cemetery-involves-community-becomes-part-of-eagle-scout-project/?TRUE>

Abandoned cemetery involves community, becomes part of Eagle Scout project



JULIA FELTON ([HTTPS://TRIBLIVE.COM/AUTHOR/JULIA-FELTON/](https://triblive.com/author/julia-felton/)) [✉ \(mailto:jfelton@triblive.com\)](mailto:jfelton@triblive.com) [🐦 \(https://twitter.com/JuliaFelton16\)](https://twitter.com/JuliaFelton16)
Friday, May 6, 2022 12:01 a.m.

<https://triblive.com/author/julia-felton/>



COURTESY OF BETH BURRELL

A community effort is under way to clean up and revitalize the abandoned Duncan Heights Cemetery in McCandless, and a student at North Allegheny Senior High School has made aiding the restoration his Eagle Scout project.

The cemetery, which spans between 4 and 6 acres along Duncan Avenue, was established in the 1930s, according to Beth Burrell, who lives nearby. She began researching the cemetery after she and her husband stumbled upon it while walking their dog.



"A Jewish man who owned the property specifically designed it to be a place for the African American community to bury their loved ones, because at the time, things were still 'separate but equal,'" she said, explaining that cemetery plots sold to Black people then were often "less than desirable."

About 10 years later, the cemetery was opened to anyone, Burrell said, and a small section was specifically dedicated to war veterans.

The cemetery was abandoned in the 1960s, Burrell said.

Last summer, Burrell worked to document via GPS where each grave site was — and she's since gotten support in her efforts to revitalize the cemetery from local officials, community groups and the Boy Scouts.

Ralph Abdel-Massih, a 16-year-old student at North Allegheny Senior High School, decided that fixing up the site would become his Eagle Scout project.

"When I first heard about it, I was interested because I saw the history," Abdel-Massih said. "Honestly, it would painful not to do something. There's a story behind it. There's a lot of veterans buried there, and it would be disrespectful to keep it like that."

On April 30 Abdel-Massih and other Boy Scouts and community members worked to cut down dead bushes and trees and collect trash.

"It felt nice. There were certainly some fun moments," he said. "I was amazed by the amount of people who came down and helped — just knowing this many people actually cared."

The next step for Abdel-Massih's Eagle Scout project is to build a rain garden at the cemetery, which he hopes will alleviate flooding issues.

"It has potential to become a park that people can walk through," he said. "My project is more of a steppingstone for other people to start doing projects there."

Burrell said she's excited to see Abdel-Massih and others in the community work to fix up the cemetery.

"I just really feel like those who are laid to rest here and our community both deserve better than what this property currently looks like," she said. "It's really overgrown, there's a lot of water issues — but it could be so beautiful. I see the potential there."

Julia Felton is a Tribune-Review staff writer. You can contact Julia by email at jfelton@triblive.com (mailto:jfelton@triblive.com) or via Twitter

🐦 (<https://twitter.com/JuliaFelton16>).

Categories: Local

EMAIL NEWSLETTERS  ([HTTPS://SIGNUP.TRIBLIVE.COM/](https://signup.triblive.com/))

TribLIVE's Daily and Weekly [email newsletters](https://signup.triblive.com/) (<https://signup.triblive.com/>) deliver the news you want and information you need, right to your inbox.








Placeholder for content, possibly an advertisement or featured article.

**Buying Gold & Silver
Coins. We Pay Top
Prices**

Close



 (<https://www.facebook.com/triblive>)
  (<https://twitter.com/TribLIVE>)
  (<https://instagram.com/triblive/>)

1-800-909-8742 (tel:18009098742)

Fax (724) 779-8743

210 Wood Street
Tarentum, PA 15084

© 2023 Trib Total Media | All Rights Reserved

About Us

About Us (<https://mediakit.triblive.com/about/who-we-are/>)

Advertise (<https://mediakit.triblive.com/advertising-services>)

Career Opportunities (<https://tribtotalmedia.com/jobs/>)

Contact Advertising (<https://mediakit.triblive.com/contact-us/>)

Contact Newsroom (<https://triblive.com/news/contactus/>)

Contact Us (<https://triblive.com/news/contactus/>)

Feedback (<https://tribtotalmedia.com/subscriber-services/customer-feedback/>)

Request Correction (<mailto:corrections@triblive.com>)

Resource Center (<https://triblive.com/resource-center/>)



Scholarship Opportunities (<https://tribtotalmedia.com/scholarship-for-diversity-in-media/>)

Send Letter to the Editor (<https://triblive.com/opinion/send-a-letter/>)

Send News Tip (<mailto:multimedia@triblive.com>)

Subscribe (<https://www.tribliveoffers.com/>)

Ω

TRIB
LIVE

Subscriber Services (<https://tribtotalmedia.com/subscriber-services/>)

Get the Trib

Blog (<https://mediakit.triblive.com/blog/>)

eFeatures (<https://advertisers.triblive.com/onlineMagazines/>)

Email Newsletters (<https://signup.triblive.com/>)

eTrib (<https://e.triblive.com/>)

Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/triblive>)

Home Delivery (<https://www.tribliveoffers.com/>)

Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/triblive/>)

LinkedIn (<https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/triblive>)

Marketing Minute (<https://mediakit.triblive.com/marketing-minute/>)

Store Locations (<https://tribtotalmedia.com/tribune-review-store-and-other-retail-sales-locations/>)

TribLIVE App - App Store (<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/triblive-news-sports/id328217517>)

TribLIVE App - Google Play (https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.tribtotalmedia.triblive&hl=en_US)

Twitter (<https://twitter.com/TribLIVE>)

Close Sections

Arts & Entertainment (<https://triblive.com/aande/>)

Best of the Best (<https://bestofthebest.triblive.com/>)

Business Directory (<https://businessdirectory.triblive.com/>)

Circulars (<https://triblive.com/circulars/>)

Contests (<https://contests.triblive.com/>)

Coronavirus (<https://triblive.com/news/coronavirus/>)

Lifestyles (<https://triblive.com/lifestyles/>)

Local (<https://triblive.com/local/>)

News (<https://triblive.com/news/>)

Obituaries (<https://obituaries.triblive.com/obituaries/triblive/>)

Opinion (<https://triblive.com/opinion/>)

Our Publications (<https://mediakit.triblive.com/advertising-services/>)

Real Estate (<https://realestate.triblive.com/>)

Sports (<https://triblive.com/sports/>)

Video (<https://video.triblive.com>)

Weather (<https://triblive.com/news/weather/>)

Terms of Use

Cookie Settings (<https://cookiepedia.co.uk/giving-consent-to-cookies>)

Privacy Policy (<https://triblive.com/termsofservice/>)

Terms of Service (<https://triblive.com/termsofservice/>)

