

Youths help preserve Ithaca cemetery



Randy Ruth, rear, shows Alexis LaPage, 16, how to repair a headstone using mortar.

NICK REYNOLDS / STAFF PHOTO

4 teens help save past through job placement program

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Four Ithaca-area teens have worked this summer on a grave task: Preserving 16 acres of Ithaca city history equipped with nothing more than mortar, some hand tools and advice from a masonry specialist.

The Ithaca City Cemetery, a venerable hillside plot wedged between Cornell University and the valley below, has seen its former luster fade over the years, filled to the brim with graves dating over three centuries and no funds to fix it.

“The budget for the cemetery is pretty low,” Christine O’Malley, preservation services coordinator for Historic Ithaca, said.

Littered with broken monuments with faded façades, the once-beautiful cemetery, a site meant as an eternal memorial, lay somewhat forgotten and without help. That changed this summer, when Historic Ithaca, through its Work Preserve program, decided to collaborate with Friends of Ithaca Cemetery to bring two pairs of youth volunteers to help repair many of the monuments — expected to end up being 30 or 40 — and bring the memory of those beneath them back to life.

Under the direction of Randy Ruth, a local historic masonry specialist, the

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NICK REYNOLDS / STAFF PHOTO

Flags mark the repair status of a previously repaired headstone. Green symbolizes a clean stone, blue means a repair has been done or is planned, yellow means it is leaning and needs to be made upright, red means it’s a fragment, silver means it needs to be documented.

“It’s a perfect fit for Work Preserve because one of our focuses is on building traditional skills. Masonry work happens to fall in with that.”

CHRISTINE O’MALLEY

Town supports living wage

Ithaca Town Board backs legislation push

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Following in the footsteps of numerous community groups throughout Tompkins County, the Town of Ithaca town board formally decided to back a push to create legislation setting a countywide minimum wage, indexing it to the regional median living wage for the state.

“This is a movement not only starting locally but around the country,” Town Board Supervisor Herb Engman said.

The town’s position is based on a study conducted by Alternatives Federal Credit Union, which has reassessed the county’s living wage each year since 1994. This year’s study, released in June, set the living wage for those with employer-provided health insurance at \$13.77 an hour, or \$14.34 for those who must purchase their own health insurance.

Consequences of the living wage, if

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“This is a movement not only starting locally but around the country.”

HERB ENGMAN
ITHACA TOWN BOARD SUPERVISOR

Prisoners say they were beaten after escape

MICHAEL VIRTANEN
ASSOCIATED PRESS

ALBANY — Inmates who knew the two convicted killers who escaped from a maximum-security prison in northern New York reported beatings by guards trying to determine where the pair went, according to a legal services group.

Prisoners’ Legal Services of New York has received several complaints from inmates on that Clinton Correctional Facility honor block, who were later moved to other prisons, managing attorney James Bogin said Tuesday. Many were transferred and spent time in solitary confinement and some are still missing their clothes and other belongings, he said.

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