

# THE FIELD REPORT

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## PLANTING WITH PATRIOTISM

SPOONER GARDEN CLUB HELPS BEAUTIFY WDVA NORTHERN CEMETERY



A member of the Spooner Garden Club digs inside of a planter at the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs' Northern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery. The garden club volunteers their time at the cemetery by planting hundreds of flowers and maintaining a garden throughout the year.

May 17, 2018 | By Chris Bucher

Every year after enduring months of subzero temperatures and digging out from several feet of snow, the Northern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery undergoes a special transformation. What once was a scenic winter landscape in the northern part of the state buds into a breathtaking site that honors military Veterans and their families.

The grounds crew at the Veterans cemetery works tirelessly on the beautification process during the spring, ensuring the 87 acres of land at the Veterans cemetery in Spooner continues creating a lasting memorial to the achievements and sacrifices of the more than 3,000 Veterans and



Two members from the Spooner Garden Club plant flowers at the Northern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Spooner. The group consists of about 25 members, and they also help out with projects throughout the community.

their spouses interred there.

Then, once the ground is finally thawed from the frigid winter temps,

the process and preparation nears completion when a special group of volunteers visits the cemetery.



Two members of the Spooner Garden Club plant flowers in a pot at the Northern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Spooner. The group comes to the cemetery every spring to plant flowers around the 87 acres of land.

The Spooner Garden Club, which has about 28 members, was formed in 1932 and has been a staple in the Spooner community ever since. Members have been coming to the cemetery for many years, primarily to maintain their own dedicated garden bed.

In recent years, though, the group has volunteered their time toward a special cause at the cemetery:

Planting and maintaining hundreds of flowers around the grounds prior to the annual Memorial Day ceremony.

More than 400 individual plants are ordered every year, including Petunias, Zinnias, Potato Vines, Euphorbias and many more. Once they arrive, the garden club goes to work, sending about 15 members to plant all around the property. The process normally takes only one or two hours, Spooner Garden Club member Sue Wallace said.

“It makes you feel so good,” she said. “We have so many members

and family members in the military. Because it’s a cemetery, you want to do something to make people feel a

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little calmer, a little more at ease and make them feel restful out there; it really does that.”

Northern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery Director of Operations Dawn Anderson said the group offering to come forward to assist the cemetery in honoring Veterans and their families is valued by many. It also takes a lot of pressure off of the staff heading into the Memorial Day ceremony, she added.

“Their efforts make a great difference on our timeline in preparation for our (Memorial Day)

program,” Anderson, a military Veteran, said. “What used to take us two days to plant takes them just a few hours.”

Wallace, whose husband served in the military, said the cemetery holds special meaning to many in the group, making it even more inspiring to work on the project.

“It makes us all feel like we’re being a part of things,” she said. “We’re really helping out and we have this connection, a military connection, and we want to honor our military members who have passed on.

“My husband was in the military, and that’s where we’re planning on going one day.”

With the cemetery holding more than 250 services annually for Veterans and their families, Anderson said that the group’s project and their continued upkeep on the landscaping throughout the year is deeply cherished.

“Their willingness to share their time and talents is greatly appreciated by all of us here at the cemetery,” she said. “Their volunteerism impacts our cemetery all season long –

words cannot adequately express our gratitude for the difference they make at the cemetery.”

In addition to the work and dedication put into the garden plot at the cemetery, the group maintains several gardens around the community. They also assist with the Washburn County Junior Fair, raise funds and awareness for multiple charitable causes around town and also sponsor several gardening clinics and seminars.