Heritage Bulletin

Tips, Ideas & More to Help Preserve Oregon's Heritage

33

So you want to hold an event at the cemetery

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Offering events at a cemetery can provide many benefits and challenges. You can find walking tours offered universally, however, some managers go beyond this programming to offer larger community events.

While any event can be an opportunity to educate the public, an important need, some events have been found to provide financial resources; many on a recurring basis. Before providing any event, be it a small walking tour or a larger program, there is much deliberation to be made.

Below are suggestions to help in your consideration of hosting community events. These will help you plan and work with the local government and neighbors for a successful event. Local laws vary considerably on public events, and may have little or no involvement in your. If you are able to give careful thought to your event, you will find working with local agencies much more satisfying.

Memorial Day event at Marshfield Pioneer Cemetery, Coos Bay.

COMMUNITY EVENT PLANNING

First things first, establish your capacity. Meet with your managing body and discuss ideas. Be realistic in identifying what types of events your facility and volunteers/staff can support. It is easy to get caught up in the excitement new programs but take your time to visualize the event each step of the way.

Consider the following:

Public perception

- How will families and friends feel about the event?
- Be sure that your board or operating body discusses this and has a shared opinion. If issues arise the discussion and decision can be explained.

Logistical issues

- Can you provide event staff/volunteers that may be needed for oversight?
- Should you be concerned about security to your property and adjacent property?
- Do you need to limit number of attendees and how will you do that?
- Where will attendees park?

- How are you managing entry/exit?
- Are you accepting money at the site and/or online ticket sales?
- What will your insurance needs be?
- Will you need to limit access to restoration areas or areas that might cause harm?
- Are you providing food, beverage, and what about alcohol?
- Are you allowing vendors for food, beverages or other services?
- Will your event need additional tables or chairs?
- What are the costs of hosting the event?
- What is the impact on the neighborhood as far as noise, parking, dust?

Jacksonville Cemetery, Jacksonville.

Well thought out concepts will demonstrate your concern for rules, regulations, and impact on neighbors.

Once you have an outline of your capacity and your general event ideas, contact local agencies to find out what rules and regulations need to be addressed. The agency you need to contact varies depending on where your location is based. A call to the local administration offices should help determine where to start the discussion.

Having as much information as possible in advance of talking with agencies will ensure wise use of time for all parties. Once process and or agencies are identified, schedule an appointment to enable a dedicated discussion on the subject.

Who else to include in deliberations:

If you have a way to contact neighbors, families, and burial site owners you should consider doing this well before the event. Reaching out in the early planning phase may get facilitate support, ideas and participation.

Including law enforcement in your planning or execution is a terrific way of obtaining their advice and gains you valuable friendships. This may be built in to any process that may already be in place with your local agencies, but nothing beats the personal touch.

EVENT TYPES

There are a myriad of event types but here are a few based on a web search of those hosted by cemetery management or support groups:

Art Exhibits	Hosted by local art organization
Music Ensemble Performances	Hosted by local organization
Book Reading/Signing	Hosted by a book club

Genealogy Workshops	Hosted by management and/or local organization
Painting Workshops	Hosted by local art organization
Garden Shows/Sales	Hosted by management and/or local organization
Bird Watching	Hosted by bird club
Night and/or Day Tours	Hosted by management and/or local organizations
National Holiday Celebrations	Hosted by management
Veteran Celebrations	Hosted by management
Annual Picnic	Hosted by management
Earth Day Clean Ups	Hosted by management

If you are contemplating renting your facility out to private parties and they will manage their own event, there are additional layers of consideration. Now that you know your capacity and have met with local agencies creating fee structures, application forms and required documents they may need to submit should go fairly smoothly. There are cemeteries and parks and recreation departments that have excellent similar types of forms you might be able to copy. Be sure to check with your insurance agent!

It is not uncommon to complete (survive) a few special events in order to work out all the kinks and unanticipated "surprises," however, with hard work and tenacity you will be successful.

By Bev Power
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Hood River County Historical Museum cemetery tour.