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Restoration clean up day planned for Gadsden's Southern Hills Cemetery (photos, video)

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By [William Thornton | wthornton@al.com](#)

GADSDEN, Alabama -- A group overseeing the restoration of Gadsden's Southern Hills Cemetery has planned a cleanup day for July 13.

Chari Bostick, with the Grace Heritage Foundation, said the group will be out at the cemetery off Sixth Street from 8 a.m. to Noon, with lunch provided. Anyone wishing to join in should bring hand tools, saws or other implements to help with the cleanup.

Clean-up begins on mountain of rubbish dumped beside the A34

"It's a community workday," Bostick said. "We welcome any volunteers who want to come."

The cemetery

[was recently added to the Alabama Historic Cemetery Register](#)

though the efforts of the Grace Heritage Foundation. The cemetery is a short walk from where Sixth Street dead-ends into the Martin Wildlife Park and Bird Sanctuary behind the Gadsden Mall.

The cemetery is one of the last reminders of the Forest Hill community, a predominantly black section of Gadsden. The cemetery has several names, such as Sixth Street and Sunset, and its earliest headstone is dated 1888. The City of Gadsden took the land through eminent domain in the 1940s, and the cemetery fell into disrepair.

Bostick said she became involved in helping to restore the cemetery after doing some genealogical research. When she found a death certificate that listed a burial in the cemetery, she didn't know where it was. Someone who knew its location showed her.

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"When I got to the top of the hill, I thought, are you serious?" she remembered. "It broke my heart. Something had to be done."

Some of the graves are covered by brush and hedges. Bostick said she hasn't yet found the grave of the ancestor that made her discover the cemetery, but she's still working.

Quality of Life will be taking part in the cleanup along with several other organizations. For more information, call Bostick or Anthony Treadwell at (256) 441-2789.

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