



## Board of County Commissioners

County of Hunterdon  
71 Main Street, Building #1  
PO Box 2900  
Flemington, NJ 08822-2900

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: August 29, 2022

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# Hunterdon County Volunteers Maintain Veteran Headstones Through 'By Memorial Day' Cleaning Program

**Several Fall Events To Be Planned At Cemeteries Throughout**

**Hunterdon County, Starting September 24<sup>th</sup>**

Inspired by non-profit founder, Trae Zipperer, and his 'By Memorial Day' organization, Hunterdon County volunteers recently cleaned 280 veteran headstones at the Rosemont Cemetery in Stockton, with support from the Hunterdon County Commissioner Board, Prosecutor's Office and Veteran Services Officer (VSO) Rich Booth.

Hunterdon County Commissioner Susan J. Soloway, the Board's Co-Veteran's liaison, said, "We seem to have gotten away from patriotism in this country, but all these different groups come together at the veteran headstone cleaning events, and it doesn't matter who you are. We are all Americans. It is our duty to clean the headstones of our nation's heroes, as Americans."

When the program started in Hunterdon County last fall, there were less than twenty volunteers on the list. That list has now blossomed to more than 135 volunteers and at the Rosemont Cemetery, thirty-five volunteers were on-hand to clean veteran headstones.

Hunterdon County Commissioner Deputy Director Zachary T. Rich, also the Board's Co-Veteran's liaison, said, "Seeing grandparents and grandchildren here together, families too, it's humbling. Everyone is here because they understand that a veteran in his or her final resting place deserves our care and respect."



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VSO Booth said, “We should care about the men and women buried here and take care of their headstones. They fought for our freedom and as a Navy Veteran myself, it’s heartwarming to see regular, everyday people out here showing their appreciation for our county’s veterans.”

During the August 21<sup>st</sup> cleaning event at the Rosemont Cemetery in Stockton, the State’s largest media outlet came to record and report the story about the veteran headstone cleaning program.

“We have the Hunterdon County Prosecutor’s office represented here today, there are Scout Troops cleaning headstones, county veterans and couples. It is inspiring to see the volunteers at each event and hopefully with the help of the media coverage, more communities will want to participate,” Soloway added.

Booth noted that by having press at the event, “the hope is that this program will spread to other counties in the state. Trae’s mission is to care for every veteran headstone, nationwide.”

“Recently, a county resident reached out to ask for his father’s headstone to be cleaned at his final resting place in Clinton. This resident was not aware of our group’s efforts at the Evergreen Cemetery, in Clinton, on July 9<sup>th</sup>.

We were able to write back to this gentleman and let him know that his father’s headstone had already been cleaned and care for by a volunteer from the community. It brought the meaning of all our volunteer’s hard work right to the forefront.

There are more than 150 cemeteries in the county and it’s a lot to clean and care for, but when we can tell a family that we showed up and respected their loved one, it’s worth the work,” Deputy Director Rich concluded.

The Veteran Headstone Volunteers have visited a total of eight cemeteries and have cleaned more than eight hundred headstones so far.

To sign up for fall cleaning events, interested residents should email [rcass@co.hunterdon.nj.us](mailto:rcass@co.hunterdon.nj.us) or can call VSO Booth, 908-788-1361.