



FRIENDS OF
CRYSTAL MEMORIAL
GARDENS CEMETERY

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS & ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT

2023–2026

*Preserving History.
Honoring Legacy.
Inspiring the Future.*



HONORING
THE PAST.



INSPIRING
THE FUTURE.



COMMUNITY
DRIVEN



PARTNERSHIP
FOCUSED



HISTORY
PRESERVED



LEGACY
SUSTAINED

www.friendsofcmgcmemetery.com

Prepared By: Andrea K. McCray
Andrea K & Co
July 2026



FRIENDS OF CRYSTAL MEMORIAL GARDENS CEMETERY

Preserving History. Honoring Legacy. Inspiring the Future.

Transforming History Into Legacy Friends of Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery Major Accomplishments & Organizational Impact 2023–2026

Since its founding in April 2023, Friends of Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery (FCMGC) has evolved from a grassroots volunteer organization into one of Florida's emerging leaders in African American cemetery preservation. Guided by a committed Board of Directors, FCMGC has demonstrated how visionary leadership, strategic planning, collaborative partnerships, and responsible stewardship can transform a community-led initiative into a model for historic preservation.

In just three years, the organization has secured more than **\$81,000 in State of Florida funding**, **\$99,000 in community investment**, leveraged **over \$1.5 million in volunteer and pro bono professional services**, established enduring preservation partnerships, and advanced one of the most comprehensive cemetery preservation initiatives in Citrus County's history. Through archaeological research, public investment, and cross-sector collaboration, FCMGC is preserving an irreplaceable cultural landscape while creating a sustainable framework for future generations to honor, protect, and interpret this historic African American burial ground.



HONORING THE CEMETERY STEWARDS

Who Came Before Us

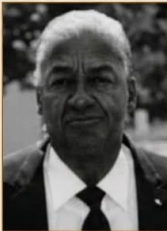
Their hands cared for the sacred grounds. Their hearts protected a legacy. Their service ensures we remember.

THEIR LEGACY.
OUR RESPONSIBILITY.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO THE CARETAKERS AND STEWARDS OF HISTORIC CRYSTAL MEMORIAL GARDENS CEMETERY.

 REUBEN S. JACKSON 1884-1960 Community leader and early caretaker whose faith and service laid the foundation for generations.	 CARLTON WASHINGTON 1911-1978 Dedicated servant and protector of our cemetery and community.	 STROTHER NATTEAL, JR. 1913-1994 Faithful steward and advocate whose service strengthened our heritage and legacy.	 DEACON WILLIAM ROBINSON 1933-2022 Beloved deacon, mentor, and community pillar who served with humility and heart.	 STROTHER NATTEAL III 1951-2021 Continuing the legacy of service, leadership, and dedication to our sacred grounds.	 DEACON WILLIE J. JOYNER Lifelong volunteer and steadfast steward whose service continues to inspire.
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PAYING TRIBUTE TO THE CARETAKERS AND STEWARDS OF HISTORIC CRYSTAL MEMORIAL GARDENS CEMETERY.

 RICHARD "TUNA" WHALEY 1908-1991 Dedicated caretaker and beloved steward whose commitment upheld the dignity of this sacred place.	 DEACON CLAUDE BROOKS 1917-1987 Faithful servant and community leader whose nurtured both people and place.	 OSCAR "OH" HOPKINS 1921-2004 Steadfast supporter and guardian whose presence and service left a lasting imprint.	 GEORGE DEVAUGHN, SR. 1919-1994 Loyal volunteer and caretaker whose love for the community was deep and enduring.	 JUNIOR CANLEY 1933-2001 Quiet strength and dedicated service that helped preserve our shared heritage.	 RAY LOCKLEY, SR. Hardworking steward whose hands helped keep the grounds beautiful for generations.
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FRIENDS OF CRYSTAL MEMORIAL GARDENS CEMETERY

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Governed by a volunteer Board of Directors committed to preserving one of Florida's most significant African American historic cemeteries through strategic leadership, responsible stewardship, and community collaboration.

- Andrea K. McCray, President & CEO
- Dr. Danita Smith, Vice President
- Josh McCray, Secretary
- Vicki Sawyer-Lindo, Treasurer
- Greg Sawyer, Director

Impact at a Glance

- **Friends of Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery (FCMGC) Founded: April 2023**
- **Historic Cemetery Established: 1884**
- **State Historic Preservation Grant Awarded**
- **Professional Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) Survey Nearing Completion**
- **Launched the Citrus County Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Leadership Gala as a fundraiser to support the preservation and restoration efforts**
- **Funded the first ever boundary and topographical survey of the Historic Cemetery**
- **Hundreds of Previously Unknown Burials Identified**
- **Multiple Community Volunteer Days Conducted**
- **Annual Veterans Memorial Ceremony Established and ongoing**
- **Professional Archaeological Partnerships Developed**
- **Historic Preservation Website Launched**
- **Community Education Programs Expanded**
- **Statewide Preservation Recognition Achieved**

FCMGC By the Numbers

\$81K	\$99K	\$1.5M+
State Funding	Community Investment	Volunteer & Pro Bono Value
350+	17	1884
Volunteers	Strategic Partners	Cemetery Established



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Key Outcomes Since 2023

- \$81,000 State Historic Preservation Grant secured
- 350+ volunteers engaged
- 16 community events
- Hundreds of previously undocumented burials identified (Formal count still in process)
- Multiple preservation partnerships established
- First Ground Penetrating Radar Survey completed
- Annual Citrus County Dr. MLK Leadership Gala established
- Annual Veterans Memorial Ceremony established
- First comprehensive Tree Maintenance Program established

Organizational Development

- Founded Friends of Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery (FCMGC) as a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving one of Citrus County's oldest African American cemeteries.
- Established an independent Board of Directors and organizational governance.
- Developed the organization's mission, vision, strategic priorities, and preservation framework.
- Created financial management systems and reporting processes.
- Established partnerships with local, regional, and state preservation organizations.

Leadership & Collaboration

- Brought together archaeologists, engineers, preservation specialists, veterans' organizations, elected officials, historians, churches, funeral professionals, and community volunteers around a shared mission.
- Built a collaborative preservation model that is strengthening historic preservation efforts throughout Citrus County.

Historic Firsts

- First comprehensive archaeological investigation of the cemetery.
- First Ground Penetrating Radar survey conducted.
- First Boundary and Topographical survey completed.
- First state-funded preservation initiative.
- First documented headstone & monument conservation program.
- First organized Memorial Day Veterans Ceremony.



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Historic Preservation

- Documented and substantiated the historic significance of Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery.
- Conducted multiple cemetery clean-up and restoration days utilizing community volunteers.
- Removed years of overgrowth, debris, and invasive vegetation.
- Documented existing monuments and cemetery conditions.
- Conducted three rounds of headstone cleanings with approved D/2 Biological Solutions

State Historic Preservation Grant

- Successfully secured a State Historic Preservation Grant from the State of Florida via the Florida Department of State Division of Historical Resources to preserve the cemetery.
- Managed grant administration and compliance.
- Executed a grant amendment expanding archaeological investigations based on field discoveries.
- Coordinated multiple professional preservation consultants.

Archaeological Discovery & Research

- Conducted the most comprehensive archaeological investigations ever completed at the cemetery.
- Established a preservation & archaeology partnership with Gulf Archaeology Research Institute (GARI).
- Retained nationally recognized Ground Penetrating Radar specialist Mike Wood, a NASA contractor, in partnership with GARI.
- Currently completing an extensive Ground-Penetrating Radar (GPR) survey.
- Expanded archaeological survey into the cemetery's oldest section.
- Identified hundreds of previously unknown and unmarked burials.
- Improved understanding of the cemetery's historical boundaries and burial patterns.
- Documented evidence supporting future preservation planning.

Preservation Partnerships

- Established a preservation partnership with the Florida Public Archaeology Network (FPAN).
- Completed several professional cemetery monument assessments.
- Secured ongoing monument conservation assistance at no additional cost.
- Arranged volunteer training in proper cemetery preservation techniques.
- Partnered with Citrus County Sheriff's Office and Crystal River Fire Department to supply water for headstone cleaning efforts.
- Partnered with Crystal River High School, Crystal River Fire Department, City of Crystal River, Beverly Hills VFW Post 10087, American Legion Post 155, Boy Scout Troop # 457, and Seven Rivers Church for volunteers.



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- Partnered with Home Depot, Crystal River, for donation of hand sprayers and 2 Gallon Sprayers for Headstone Cleaning Projects.

Cemetery Protection

- Funded the first ever boundary and topographical survey of the Historic Cemetery.
- Coordinated law enforcement and archaeological response following the inadvertent discovery of historic human remains.
- Ensured respectful handling and protection of all archaeological resources.
- Implemented documentation procedures for sensitive discoveries.
- Addressed incidents of vandalism and unauthorized disturbance of archaeological markers.

Community Engagement

- Organized numerous volunteer workdays and expanded volunteer participation.
- Launched the Citrus County Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Leadership Gala as a fundraiser to support the preservation and restoration efforts at the Historic Cemetery.
- Increased community awareness of local African American history.
- Built relationships with veterans' organizations, churches, civic groups, and historical organizations.
- Established educational opportunities for residents and students.

Memorial & Public Events

- Successfully organized annual Memorial Day Veterans Remembrance Ceremonies.
- Honored veterans buried within the cemetery.
- Coordinated Color Guards, rifle salutes, and community remembrance events.
- Increased public participation each year.

Public Education

- Launched educational initiatives highlighting African American history in Citrus County.
- Developed historical presentations and community outreach programs.
- Increased public awareness through social media and public communications.
- Published the *Heritage Brief* newsletter.
- Expanded the organization's digital presence.

Website & Communications

- Developed and launched the FCMGC website.
- Created online volunteer registration.
- Published project updates and preservation reports.
- Documented restoration progress through photography and storytelling.
- Established consistent organizational branding.



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Recognition

- Featured at the National Black Cemetery Network Conference
- Invited to present preservation work
- Established partnerships with state archaeological experts
- Recognized by preservation professionals across Florida
- Developed collaborative relationships with preservation agencies.
- Positioned Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery as an important historic resource within Citrus County and the State of Florida.

Financial Stewardship

- Maintained responsible financial oversight.
- Leveraged volunteer labor and professional partnerships to maximize every donated and grant-funded dollar.
- Increased the value of preservation services through in-kind professional contributions.
- Benefited from significant pro bono executive leadership, strategic planning, communications, and organizational development services provided through Andrea K & Co., enabling FCMGC to accelerate its preservation initiatives while maximizing every public and private dollar invested.

Leveraging Resources

- Secured State funding
- Generated significant in-kind professional services
- Leveraged volunteer labor
- Reduced restoration costs through strategic partnerships
- Maximized public investment through collaborative preservation efforts
- Leveraged significant pro bono executive and strategic consulting services provided by Andrea K & Co., including CEO leadership, strategic planning, marketing and communications, website development, stakeholder engagement, and community outreach.

Acknowledgments & Strategic Partners

Friends of Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery gratefully acknowledges the organizations, agencies, businesses, and individuals whose collaboration, expertise, and generosity have helped advance the preservation of this historic cemetery.



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Strategic Partners

- American Legion Post 155
- Andrea K & Co.
- Beverly Hills VFW Post 10087
- Black Cemetery Network (BCN)
- Boy Scout Troop 457
- Bunch Lawn Care & Tree Service
- Citrus County Historical Resources
- Citrus County Sheriff's Office
- City of Crystal River
- Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery Board of Directors
- Crystal River Fire Department
- Crystal River High School
- Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources
- Florida Public Archaeology Network (FPAN)
- Gulf Archaeology Research Institute (GARI)
- Seven Rivers Church
- United Way of Citrus County

Sponsors & Community Supporters

- Adera and Adera
- Afro American Club of Citrus County
- AJ's Cafe
- Andrea K and Co
- Anonymous
- Armond Blackwater
- Artistic LunaSea
- Ayinde Matthews State Farm Ins & Fin Services
- Bralonn's Bed and Breakfast
- Bunch Lawn Care & Tree Service
- Cattle Dog Coffee Roasters
- Cavallo Estate Winery
- Citrus County Chamber of Commerce
- Citrus County Chronicle
- City of Crystal River
- CL22 Productions
- Connectively Yours by Nicole Durante
- Dix Developments
- Dr. Christopher Keen & Family
- Dr. Dacelin St. Martin
- Dr. Hersell Lindo
- Duke Energy
- Fairway Independent Mortgage Corp - Nathan Paff
- Flying High in Florida
- Grant Law Partners
- Greg Sawyer
- Hernando VFW Post 4252
- Hometown Citrus
- Jeffrey B. Campbell State Farm Insurance
- Jennifer and JJ Grow
- Kings Bay Rotary
- Meadowcrest Family Physicians
- Mike Bays State Farm
- MWC Dumpster Rentals & Land Clearing
- Nick Nicholas Ford
- PedIm Healthcare
- Ralph Massullo Campaign
- Robert and Claudia Brockett
- Seafood Seller Cafe
- Senator Blaise Ingoglia
- Seven Rivers Church
- Suncoast Title Partners LLC
- Technology Conservation Group (TCG)
- Tropical Windows Inc
- Village Toyota Cadillac
- WGHR/WXDE/WXCV/W



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Building the Future

In just over three years, Friends of Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery has laid the foundation for the long-term preservation of one of Florida's most significant African American historic cemeteries. Through leadership, collaboration, stewardship, and an unwavering commitment to honoring those who came before us, FCMGC is ensuring that this sacred place—and the stories it holds—will endure for generations to come.

Current priorities include:

- Completing archaeological documentation.
- Preserving historic monuments and crypts.
- Improving cemetery drainage and flood mitigation.
- Expanding historical research.
- Enhancing visitor accessibility.
- Strengthening long-term financial sustainability.
- Preserving the stories and legacy of those buried at Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery for future generations.

Looking Ahead (2026–2028)

- Secure designation of an official Florida Historical Marker recognizing the historical significance of Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery.
- Complete restoration of historic monuments and crypts to preserve the cemetery's cultural, architectural, and historical legacy.
- Implement a comprehensive digital cemetery documentation and burial records system to strengthen historical research, records management, and public accessibility.
- Complete critical drainage and infrastructure improvements to enhance site preservation, visitor accessibility, and long-term resilience.
- Launch the FCMGC Legacy Preservation Fund to provide sustainable philanthropic support for the cemetery's perpetual preservation, stewardship, and educational mission.
- Expand educational programming and community partnerships to increase public awareness of African American history and historic cemetery preservation.

Why This Matters

Historic cemeteries are among a community's most important cultural resources. They preserve the stories of those whose lives shaped our neighborhoods, churches, schools, businesses, and civic institutions. By protecting Historic Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery today, Friends of Crystal Memorial Gardens Cemetery is ensuring that future generations inherit not only a restored landscape, but a deeper understanding of the people and history that helped define Citrus County.



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TIMELINE

2023

- FCMGC Organization founded
- FCMGC Board established
- Hosted Community Visioning Workshops
- Volunteer Cemetery Community Cleanups begin

2024

- Annual Citrus County MLK Leadership Gala launched
- Boundary and Topographic Survey Secured
- Florida Public Archaeology Network (FPAN) class completed
- Sunken Gravesites Discovered
- Flooding Issues Identified

2025

- Completed small scale Ground Penetrating Study (GPR) survey with Gulf Archaeological Research (GARI)
- Florida State Appropriation (\$81,000) Designated
- Identified existing well on Cemetery Property
- Presented Inaugural Community Outreach Events (Cookies & Painting for Kids)

2026

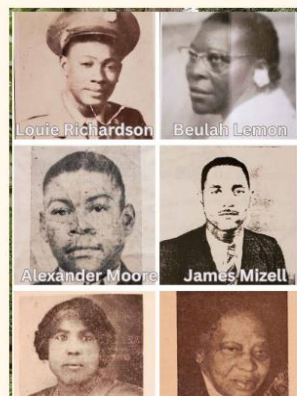
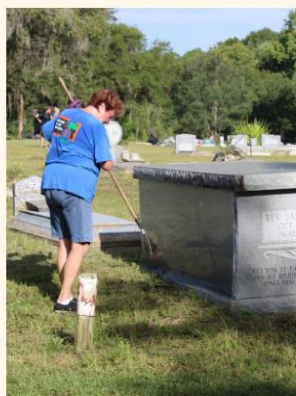
- Presented FCMGC's preservation initiative at the National Black Cemetery Conference (St. Petersburg, Florida)
- Potential of Hundreds of burials identified by GPR
- Tree Maintenance Assessment and Maintenance Scheduled
- Headstone and Monument Assessment Completed
- Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) Study
- FPAN Partnership for Headstone & Monument Restoration
- Well Head (Water Pump) Installation
- Florida Historical Marker in Development
- Cemetery Directional Signage in Development
- Cemetery Documentation Software implementation underway

Every milestone in this report reflects the collective efforts of volunteers, partners, donors, and community members united by a shared commitment to preserving Citrus County history for future generations.



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A LEGACY IN MOTION

2023-2026

**THE FACES AND PARTNERSHIPS BEHIND THE
PRESERVATION MOVEMENT**



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MISSION ORIENTED. COMMUNITY FOCUSED. 2023-2026

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