First Place Art Winner - Mihaela Rusu - *Standing Between Shadows*

WILDWOOD CEMETERY

ANNUAL REPORT

FEBRUARY 1, 2025 - JANUARY 31, 2026

PRESIDENT AND GENERAL MANAGER REPORT

Dear Friends and Family,

We hope you find this annual report interesting and informative.

Wildwood has been a place of refuge for families, wildlife, plants and trees since 1887. The Trustees and the staff continue to steward this refuge as we experience robust community interest in the cemetery, in part because green burials are allowed. Between on-going lot sales and very supportive donors, we are able to maintain the cemetery as the founders envisioned it at its inception.

In this report you will read about important grounds projects and vibrant programming of the past year, conducted as we, of course, also respectfully hosted and managed burials. A shout out to all of the staff who pivoted and hustled to keep up with multiple and changing priorities during this period.

Of special note, three generous donations were made in 2025 that are making three important projects possible. First, the Morse Wilson Family Foundation offered to sponsor Wildwood's Wayfinding project, paying for street signs and a kiosk that will allow visitors to find their way around the cemetery. Please consider contributing to the road maintenance campaign which is occurring in conjunction with the Wayfinding project. Second, a special donation was made by the Lorber Family Foundation for the establishment and organization of the Wildwood Cemetery Archive. By the end of 2026, our historic records will be organized for research and better office management. And finally, work funded by a Town of Amherst grant will soon be complete, including farmhouse masonry and chimney repair, landscaping and painting.

Thank you to those who submitted their visual art or writing to our Art and Writing Annual Report contest. We hope readers will find the winners' work captures the beauty and the emotions of Wildwood.

Most importantly, thanks to all of you who volunteered, generously donated, or chose us to bury your loved ones in the past year.

Sincerely,

KELLY ERWIN, PRESIDENT

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Friends of Wildwood Cemetery 2026-2027

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Paul Boucher, Grounds Assistant

Out-Going 2025-2026 Trustees with many thanks
Jeff Brown
Casey Clark

In Memorium
Paul Lawler

PROJECTS AROUND THE GROUNDS

2025 was a busy productive year. Cemetery work is never the same from one day to the next and Silas Ball, Grounds Superintendent, constantly multi-tasks and juggles priorities. Of course, all grounds work has to be done in between burials.

- The Maintenance Center solar panels were finished and began generating.
- Completed the boulder barrier along the business drive.
- Cared for a wide variety of pollinator friendly bushes and trees, during drought.
- Continued tree work and clearing the edges of invasives.
- Supervised brick and mortar work on the Farmhouse, including replacing all of the mortar on walls and rebuilding chimneys.
- Memorial Garden maintenance.
- Planted and watered new plants at the Front Entrance Garden.
- Installed hundreds of lot pins in the Central Lawn section and established 1,600 new lots in the East section.
- Participated in planning for new equipment, tree removal, and road drainage.
- Installed "winserts" - indoor storm windows to replace outdoor storm windows.

Removing invasives shrubs and planting native plants is an important part of our work.

WILDWOOD PROGRAMMING

Spring Equinox - More than 50 people participated in an informal concert/sing-along. Mint tea was served and wildflower packets were distributed to all.

Arbor Day - Dan Ziomek, of Sugarloaf Gardens, led a hardy group of 20 around the cemetery, on a cold day, identifying trees.

Summer Solstice - Wildwood Remembers - An amazing jazz concert was held for 60 people in the Memorial Garden in honor of jazz musician and composer Dr. Fred Tillis.

Memorial Art Sculpture Unveiling - Sculptor Matt Mitchell had an artist reception for the unveiling of "Touch". Over 50 people attended to hear about his process and the Public Art Sculpture Project at Wildwood Cemetery.

Bagpipe Stroll - More than 60 people of all ages attended. The event started in the Wildwood Memorial Garden where guests sipped cider and munched on sweets and savories. When the mournful sounds from the piper drifted down from the center of the cemetery, participants walked up to meet and then follow the piper around the front sections of the Section.

Wildwood Remembers - Three fall lectures were held in coordination with UMass Downtown as well as one lecture by local writer Nick Grabbe at the cemetery.

Death Cafes - Two cafes were held, for 24 people total, in May and in October. The group conversations were from the heart.

Winter Solstice Stroll - 50 people gathered for cookies, hot chocolate, a bonfire and a sunset stroll with candles up through the woods to pause and contemplate the Holyoke Range.

Please check our website https://www.wildwood-cemetery.com for details about future events.

WRITING CONTEST WINNER

A Plot with a View, by Stephen Baker

I was walking through a cemetery one warm sunny day on the errand of shopping for my own plot. The cemetery was vast, with open areas of flat markers, some with upright stones. In a wooded area, engraved boulders were strewn about like glacial deposits from the end of the ice age. I liked that idea — a boulder engraved with the names of our family members, perhaps a hollow on top to collect rainwater for birds.

The stones read like a dramatis personae — the names and dates telling tales both of joy and pain. Many listed multiple generations, some with service markers for veterans of both world wars and even some earlier. The cruelest of all were the many lives of children cut short before the parents, or a mother and child who died the same day.

I worked up a sweat in the humid air while making my way up through one shady area that had plots available. The air was still and insects had found me. Reaching the crest, I came to a place where I felt at peace. It was still in the shade but near the edge of the wood. It overlooked an expanse of mown lawn, and a breeze swept up from it into the wood, cooling me and keeping the mosquitoes at bay. Waiting there was a grave marker in the shape of a speckled granite bench with rough edges and polished engraved seat, just right for two visitors to sit side by side. I sat down, cooled quickly in the breeze and enjoyed the view. Next to it was a plot that was still available; if I chose it for myself I wouldn't be the one enjoying the view there. But anyone who came to visit — or simply sat down — might enjoy that breeze — and maybe a little of the peace I rested in below.

Many thanks to all the artists and writers who submitted their heartfelt writing and art pieces. The jury worked diligently to choose the pieces that capture the spirit of Wildwood in words and colors. We hope you enjoy the work and will consider submitting your work next year. And many thanks to the secret jury for their time and thoughtful reflections.

Honorable Mention - Lisa Kent - *Dying Slowly*

WHY WE NEED DONORS LIKE YOU

Since its inception, Wildwood has been able to keep costs affordable for a wide range of incomes and at the same time:

- provide a beautiful place for families and friends to come and mourn
- encourage the public to walk the grounds and learn about the history of the area and those who have passed
- conserve a significant portion of the cemetery for native flora and fauna.

Fundraising is the key to our budgeting process.

Please go to Wildwood-Cemetery.com to make a donation today.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

	Feb 2024 - Jan 2025	Feb 2025 - Jan 2026
Amherst Cemetery Association ("ACA")		
Revenues		
Operating Revenues	$ 342,087	$ 434,836
Operating Gifts and Grants	$ 56,072	$ 63,335
Restricted Gifts and Grants	$ 44,818	$ 97,509
Total Revenues	$ 442,977	$ 595,679
Expenditures		
Operating Expenses	$ 280,851	$ 304,533
Property and Equipment Investments	$ 118,615	$ 88,418
Total Expenditures	$ 399,466	$ 392,951
Transfers From (To) Endowment Fund	$ (79,056)	$ (78,686)
Net Revenue (Expense) after Transfer	$ (35,545)	$ 124,042

	Jan 31, 2025	Jan 31, 2026
Operating Cash and Equivalents	$ 267,989	$ 409,269
Endowment Fund	$1,388,110	$1,697,014
Liabilities	$ 13,464	$ 30,702

	Feb 2024 - Jan 2025	Feb 2025 - Jan 2026
Friends of Wildwood Cemetery		
Gifts Received	$ 154,959	$ 169,160
Grants to ACA	$ (66,587)	$ (90,897)
Other Expense	$ (8,559)	$ (21,141)
Net Revenue	$ 79,813	$ 57,123

	Jan 31, 2025	Jan 31, 2026
Cash and Equivalents	$ 127,976	$ 184,902
Liabilities	$ 196	$ -

2025 Arbor Day Walk at Wildwood with Dan Ziomek from Sugarloaf Gardens

The Amherst Cemetery Association (ACA), which is known as Wildwood Cemetery, seeks to balance affordable access for the community along with long-term financial sustainability for the cemetery. To accomplish this, we rely on the generosity of donors to contribute to our operations, and we allocate a portion of our lot sales (licenses) to our "Endowment Fund" to sustain the cemetery "forever". In the last fiscal year (ending in January 2026) we experienced a historically high volume of lot sales and burials, and operating revenues of the ACA exceeded operating expenses by over $130,000. In addition, the ACA received over $160,000 in gifts and grants. As a result, the ACA was able to invest over $88,000 in improvements such as brick and mortar work for the farmhouse (office) which was supported by CPA funds. In addition, about $79,000 was transferred to the Endowment Fund, including $24,000 as an annual repayment for funds "borrowed" for building the Maintenance Center. A planned investment of over $100,000 for road repaving was delayed and is now scheduled for the current year. At the end of the year, the ACA had operating cash of $409,269 and an Endowment Fund balance of $1.697 million, compared to $267,989 and $1.388 million at the beginning of the year.

Friends of Wildwood Cemetery, Inc. (FWC) is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization and is the primary fundraising entity for the cemetery. In the last fiscal year, FWC received gifts of approximately $169,000 and spent over $112,000 on grants to the ACA and other expenses. At the end of the year, FWC had over $184,000 available for the support of the ACA, including road and paving projects and equipment purchases planned for the current year. Thank you!

THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS DONORS

We are grateful to the following individuals and businesses who made gifts to support Wildwood Cemetery during the last fiscal year (February 1, 2025- January 31, 2026). Your gifts allow us to keep our prices low, maintain and beautify the grounds, and pay our staff. Every effort has been made to ensure that this list is accurate; we apologize for any errors. We appreciate your notifying us of any by writing - amherst.cemetery@verizon.net.

Thank you also to our donors who wished to remain anonymous.

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Many Shades of Green - Spring at Wildwood

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WILDWOOD AT AT GLANCE

The Amherst Cemetery Association was established in 1887 as a non-denominational cemetery. The founders, including Austin Dickinson and Mabel Loomis Todd, named it Wildwood Cemetery, and planned to make it a beautiful and peaceful place for burials, as well as a place to enjoy nature. The first burial was in 1889.

Wildwood Cemetery encompasses a total of 85 acres, about 40 of which are developed as burial grounds.

As of 6/1/2026 there are 4,235 people buried here. Between 2/1/2025 and 1/31/2026 there were 51 cremation burials, 31 green burials, and 6 vault burials for a total of 88 burials.

Between 2/1/2025 and 1/31/2026 146 burial rights were purchased and there are 2145 unsold lots available.

524 donations were received totaling $108,138 unrestricted funds and $63,222 in restricted funds. Restricted funds were for pollinator gardens, trees, planning an arboretum, preservation and art memorial sculptures.

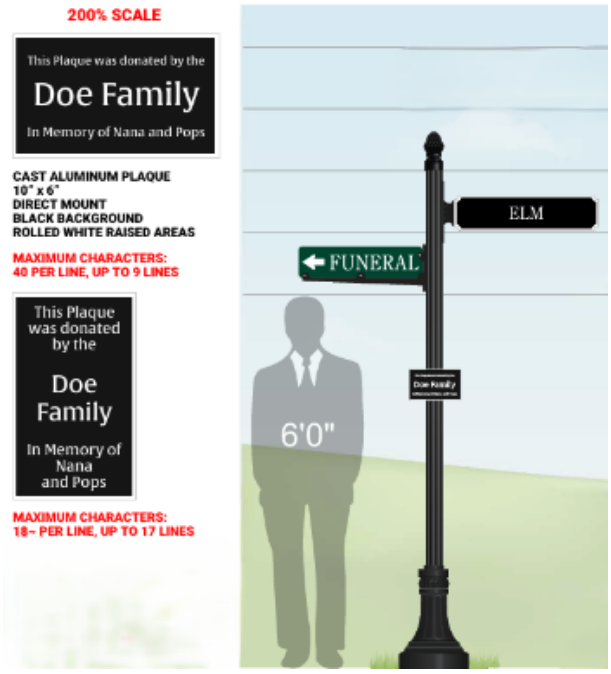
Wayfinding at Wildwood Cemetery

We are excited to announce that the **Morse Wilson Family Foundation** has generously donated the money to cover the purchase of the road signs, the main entrance information kiosk, and the installation costs.

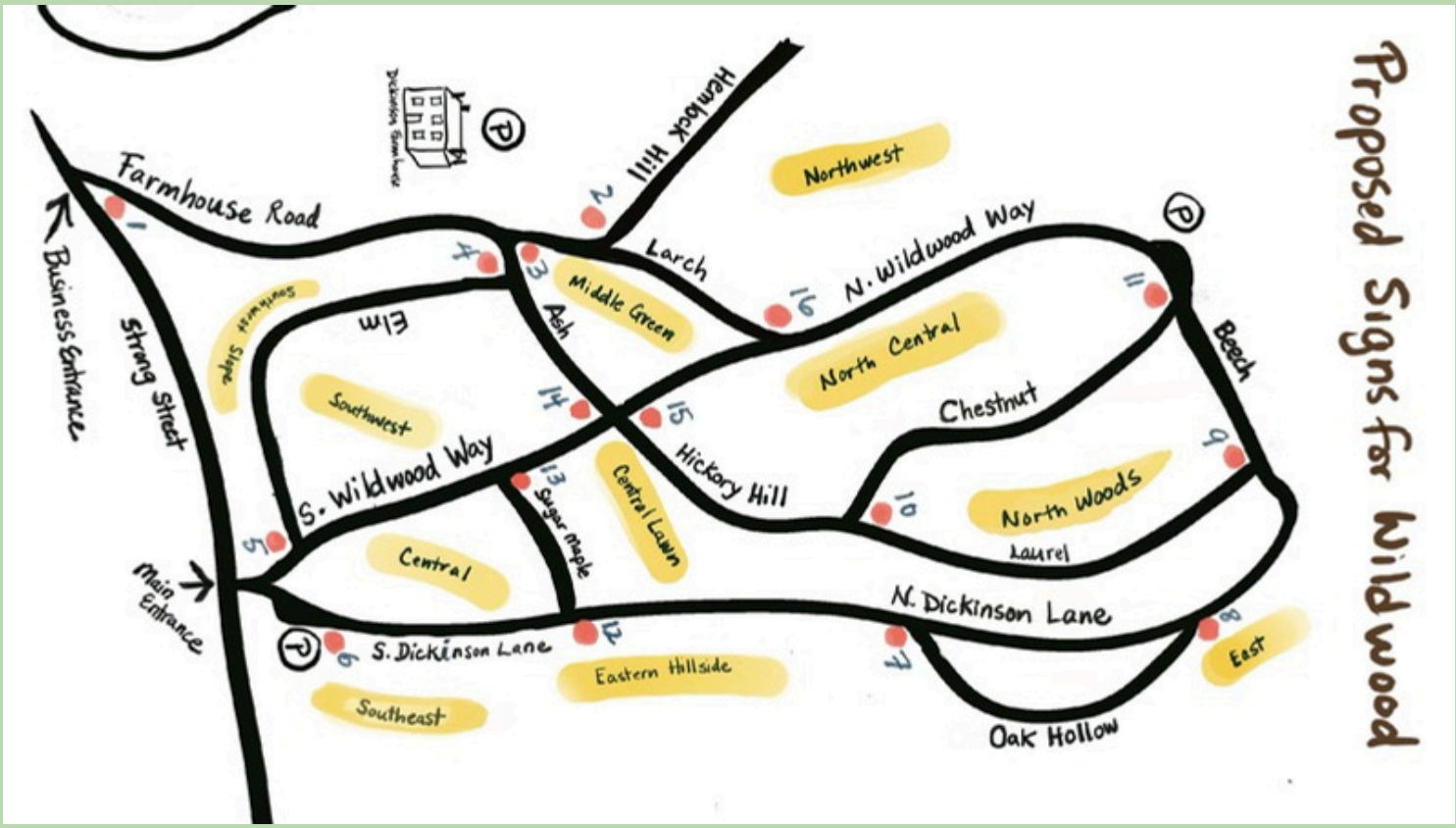
Opportunity to Honor a Loved One or Friend and Support Wildwood Road Maintenance

With this project secure and underway, we are kicking off a fundraiser which allows friends, families and businesses to sponsor individual signs. Funds raised through sign sponsorship will be dedicated to improving the drainage and surfaces of the gravel roads within the cemetery.

- Sign sponsorship costs $10,000.
- Each sign post will have one sponsor. We have 15 posts available for sponsorship.
- Sponsorship of posts will last at least 10 years.
- Each sponsor will have 10"x6" plaque attached to their sign post.
- Sponsors decide what they will say on the sponsorship sign. The text can be a memorial, a family name, a poem, or some other sentiment.
- Text must be approved by Friends of Wildwood Cemetery.



If you are interested in sponsoring a sign please call Rebecca Fricke, General Manager. 413-549-4649 or email amherst.cemetery@verizon.net.



INTO THE CEMETERY ARCHIVES

Thanks to a generous donation made by the **Lorber Family**, Wildwood Cemetery's documents from the past and present will be in ship shape by mid summer. With the donation, we were able to hire archivist Victoria Kent Worth to go through our boxes and files to create an inventory and purchase appropriate archival storage containers for the entire collection. Once the process is complete we will allow researchers to access the non-sensitve historical documents.

The top thin red book, is an Index, which corresponds to the thin beige book with red trim underneath titled, "Wildwood Cemetery Amherst, Mass. The Index, 12" long x 5 1/8" wide x 1/8" high, is dated May 5th, 1923. The Lot Map book, 13 ½" long x 8 1/2" wide x 1" high, dates back to October 7th, 1889. The large book on the bottom, "Record Book A, Amherst Cemetery Association" is a large ledger, 15 ¾" long x 11 ¼" wide x 1 ¾" high, finely crafted in light brown suede with red and black leather, stitching and gold lettering by the Springfield Printing and Binding Company. The data indicates that it contains records spanning 1892-1928.

Hold an Event in the Memorial Garden

The Wildwood Memorial Garden is located on the western side of the historic cemetery. The center grass oval is surrounded by native pollinator plants and trees, two park benches and a 40' Goshen stone seating wall.

- conveniently located next to a paved parking lot
- additional parking available nearby
- the center space 50' x 75' holds a 20 x 40 tent
- 1 mile from the center of Amherst
- available year round
- access to electricity
- restroom available

For information on how to rent this space please contact the office. 413-549-4649 or Amherst.Cemetery@verizon.net

ALL ARE WELCOME

2026

AUTUMN PROGRAMMING

WILDWOOD CEMETERY

SEPTEMBER 26 (RAIN DATE 9/27)

SATURDAY 10:30 AM - 12 (1-2:30 IF SUNDAY)
GRAVEYARD AND TREE TOUR - GUIDES ROBERT COMEAU AND TOM KASS - GO TO THE WILDWOOD WEBSITE FOR REGISTRATION LINK

OCTOBER 18

FALL EQUINOX BAGPIPE STROLL OR SIT WITH CIDER AND SAVORIES 2:00 - 3:00 PM

OCTOBER 25

DEATH CAFE - CONVERSATION ABOUT DEATH WITH TEA AND CAKE 3:00 - 4:15 PM (MUST RSVP)

DECEMBER 22

WINTER SOLSTICE CANDLE LIGHT STROLL OR SIT WITH HOT CHOCOLATE AND COOKIES 4:00 - 5:00 PM

ALL EVENTS ARE FREE - DONATIONS ARE WELCOME

70 STRONG STREET AMHERST, MA

FOR MORE INFO AND TO RSVP
WILDWOOD-CEMETERY.COM OR CALL 413-549-4649

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