

CEMETERY from page 1A

It makes her feel good. But there's also people who have helped Emma as well.

"They help me with homework," Emma said, a little shy when it comes to talking about needing help. That's when Nicole asked, "What kind of help did we get after daddy had his accident?"

Emma's father had suffered a traumatic brain injury a while back, preventing him from going to work.

"He was driving to work early in the morning, and there was a tree that fell in the road, and he hit it," Emma said.

But after that, the community stepped up to help.

"A bunch of people brought us food," she said. "They were getting us food, and my family from Washington came down and helped us."

"And what were you doing at that time, were you playing bas-

ketball?" Nicole asked Emma.

Emma smiled when she remembered someone from her preschool who would take her to basketball practice.

Emma's father is back to work now, and it was time for the family to start giving back. That's when they started looking at the Kindness Club challenge.

"Most of the kids wanted to do something for the humane society," Emma said, though the Kindness Club has a variety of projects, including creating care packages for displaced families and volunteering with local organizations to help beautify the city. But Emma had something else in mind.

"I had gone to cemeteries a lot," Emma said. "Some of them are dirty and you couldn't read the headstones. So, when they challenged us, I decided that I wanted to clean the cemeteries."

Nicole is active in genealogical work, taking photographs for the global website finda-

grave.com.

"If someone is buried in this area, the family can request a photo of the headstone," Nicole explained. "And so, the kids go with me a lot when we're fulfilling photo requests."

The Meiers were also fans of "The Good Cemeterian Historical Preservation Project," a group inspired by the work of Floridian Andrew Lumish, who decided to dedicate his life to preserving the headstones of veterans and sharing their stories online. They began researching the best ways to clean headstones.

"Lots of research, because you have to make sure you're using the right stuff so you're not damaging the stones further," Nicole said.

"We started looking for something that would clean them without hurting them," Emma said.

Nicole provided the name of the "special cleaner," D2 solution. While new headstones can be cleaned simply with warm water, she explained, "some of those older historic stones that have a lot of pollution and molds and lichen and things like that need to have D2."

D2 is a specialized cleaning solution that is often used to clean historical monuments.

"Do you remember other places they use D2?" Nicole asked Emma.

"They used it to clean the White House," Emma answered. "All the national monuments," Nicole added. "It's preserving history."

Why is it important to preserve history through monuments like headstones?

"Because what if later it's still there, and other people see it, and its way dirty, and you can't see it?" Emma said. "Maybe the family can't clean them, so I wanted to."

But D2 isn't readily available at the corner store; it needs to be ordered and it's expensive.

"Six gallons of D2 cost us al-

Emma got together her friends and siblings and their parents to help make the headstones at Deadwood Pioneer Cemetery easier to read, preserving some of the area's history for local residents and those seeking genealogical information online.

most \$500," Nicole said. "Shipping alone was \$120. There're only a few places in the U.S. that sell it. And then she had to order brushes and gloves, scrapers and spray bottles."

One gallon of D2 is only enough to clean five headstones, so the family needed some capital to finish the project. For almost a year now, they've been working to raise funds for the project. It became a family affair, with Nicole, Emma, Emma's brother Lincoln and sister Hailey making cookies, cupcakes and bracelets to raise funds. They partnered with Tracy Aaron at Sugar Mama's Cupcakes and Goodies who baked about 40 dozen cookies, along with cupcakes and berry trifles Emma had made herself. They had two bake sales.

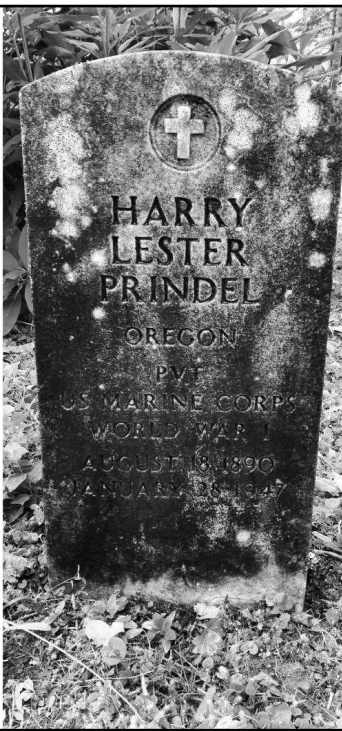
"And then we were invited to go the Power of Florence to sell," Emma said. "And so we sold treats and bracelets."

They raised \$633 in total. Then, three weeks ago, they headed to the Deadwood Cemetery.

"I had never been there before, so we went up there to see what we were cleaning," Emma said. "There's these weird designs on the headstones, and it's by the woods, and I think it's cool."

The Deadwood Cemetery, located just off Highway 36 in Deadwood, has been going through a revitalization as of late, with grant funding helping to beautify the area and restore some of the older headstones that had been lost with time.

"It's a really nice area up there,



and they worked really hard to clean it up and make it really nice," Nicole said.

The original plan was to clean just 10 headstones, but by the end of the day they completed 25.

"Some were really big, some were really small," Emma said, but most of them were pretty good size.

Emma, Nicole and Lincoln got a posse of cleaners together to help with the project.

"Deadwood coordinated a cleanup day with our project, so they had a few people from their board come out and do mowing and some edging and trimming," Nicole said.

"And Ms. Graham came," Emma added of the Kindness Club leader.

"And Allison, Maron and Liz Hughes," Nicole said. "Alison is a fifth-grader, Maron is a first-grader, and Liz is their mom."

To clean a headstone, one should spray it with D2, wait 15 minutes, and then apply the elbow grease.

"You start from the bottom in circles, and then you go all the way to the top," Emma said. "And you have to wash off your

brush. I liked spraying the water to wash off the D2."

Along the way, the small crew began learning about the different people that rested in the hallowed area.

"One of the person's names was Mabel Bacon, and that was the first one I did, and it was my favorite," Emma said.

Nicole took the project as an opportunity to learn more about the cemetery's inhabitants.

"We went back home afterward to research some of the ones she really liked, and see who they were," she said.

They researched Harry Lester Prindel, a World War I Marine Corps veteran, and looked at other names.

"We really wanted to find more information on Mabel Bacon, but she was young when she passed away," Nicole said. "Not a lot of records on that one."

After they cleaned the 25 headstones, they could have called it a day.

"But we still have a little D2 left that we want to go back out and use," Nicole said. "We want to try and finish the rest of the cemetery."

Not all of the 300 headstones in Deadwood need to be cleaned, as some have been recently restored and replaced and others are recent burials that only need a warm water cleaning.

"We're kind of targeting the older ones," Nicole said. "I don't know how many more there are."

Looking at her daughter and the work she accomplished, she added, "We're really proud of Emma, and we want to support her and help her in whatever way she wants to give back to the community."

And thus far, the community has been grateful for Emma's work.

"The Deadwood Pioneer Cemetery Board of Trustees is so thankful to you Emma, and your mighty team for your hard work and contributions to the Deadwood Pioneer Cemetery," the board wrote for Deadwood's monthly newsletter, the Deadwood Ditto. "We are so proud of these kids, and we're thrilled to have their help in restoring and preserving these lovely stones that represent our amazing ancestors and heritage. Outstanding work, all!"

Emma and her family do not plan on stopping with Deadwood. If they can raise enough funds to finish that project, they want to move on and restore all of the historic cemeteries in the area.

"We want to make sure we can support her, fundraising however we can, or putting together work crews to go out and do the physical work," Nicole said.

They're waiting for the winter to cycle through before they begin hitting up the rest of the headstones in the Siuslaw.

As to why Emma thinks taking on such a massive project is important, the answer is pretty simple.

"Maybe someone is related them to them, and they're trying to find their gravestone, but no one knows it there because it's covered in stuff," Emma said. "You have to make sure other places are clean, so you can still see them."

To make donations or offer support for the headstone cleanup project, contact Kindness Club coordinator Shannon Graham at sgraham@siuslaw.k12.or.us.

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