

Our St. Mary / St. Stephen Cemeteries -By Bonnie Koller

St. Stephen Cemetery is situated in a quaint residential area, surrounded by mature shade trees, near the Historic District of Hamilton. Just four miles away you will find St. Mary Cemetery at 4030 Pleasant Ave. It is smaller in size but unique in many ways. St. Mary/ St. Stephen Cemeteries have been serving the Catholic Community of Hamilton for over 160 years. In 1989 the three parishes of St. Mary, St Stephen, and St. Veronica merged to become St. Julie Billiard Parish and the cemeteries merged to become one entity.

As you drive through the gates of 1314 Greenwood Avenue, where one gets a sense of well-being and tranquility, you will find the office of the Administrative Assistant for St. Mary/ St. Stephen Cemeteries, Darlene Giuliano. She is a 29 year veteran who began her career in 1984 at St. Mary Cemetery and assists families through the burial process.

On a typical day, Darlene will sit and listen to family members reminisce about their loved one, while at the same time assist them through the "process". Many times Darlene is the first person the family contacts. She listens and attempts to help lift the burden of loss in their time of sorrow. She also maintains the burial records and the business records for the cemeteries. The rest of the cemetery team includes two maintenance workers who are dedicated to keeping up the appearance of both cemeteries and are at the same time respectful of the sacredness of the grounds.

How does one begin the "process" of making final arrangements? The first step is to contact the Funeral Director of the family's choice. The Funeral Director will assist in the next step of making funeral arrangements, in the event no prior arrangements have been made. The Funeral Director will then pass this information on to Darlene. If a gravesite is needed she will meet with the family to make the selection and can assist after the burial with the purchase of a monument or marker. The third and final step will take place at the time of burial. Cemetery employees will



St. Mary/St. Stephen Cemetery Staff: (L to R) Zach House, Michelle Miller, Luke Brinkman, and Darlene Giuliano.

meet the Funeral procession at the gate on the day of the funeral and assist them to the gravesite. These steps in the process are designed to give family members an opportunity to lean on the professionals who are equipped to take the lead when the burden of sorrow is so great.

That being said, not inclusive in outlining the process, are the expenses involved with funeral arrangements. Burial costs vary according to the type of service: in ground, mausoleum or cremation burials are all available. Though St. Mary/ St. Stephen is under the umbrella of St. Julie Parish, it is self-supporting, meaning the funds to manage the cemetery are separate from the Parish. The current projected operating budget is

\$233,600. The cemeteries are faced with the same budget concerns as any business. A steady flow of income is never a guarantee. Thereby, income is derived from the sale of graves, burials, mausoleum crypts, columbarium niches, installing foundations and monument sales. Volunteers are always welcome to assist with gardening projects such as planting flowers, weeding, landscaping, and mulching. At the present time, the Knights of Columbus are volunteering their time to re-landscape around the Grotto at St. Stephen Cemetery.

Contrary to popular belief, the cemeteries are not filled to capacity. St. Mary and St. Stephen Cemeteries have areas to develop with options for cremation burials. Contact Darlene for further information at 513-737-1600, or stop by for a visit. The staff at our cemeteries would be happy to show you around. #