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Jennifer Myers

PENDLETON — Scraped, sanded, power-washed and painted, the crosses will look their best this Memorial Day.

A war memorial section of Grovelawn Cemetery, which pays tribute to 24 men that lost their lives fighting for their country, has received a new coat of paint, thanks to a patriotic Pendleton resident. Jennifer Myers, 66, wouldn't have it any other way. She bought the materials and is doing the work. Since the middle of April, as weather has permitted, she has been putting in countless hours to refurbish the 24 crosses.

"These 24 men left to serve our country and never returned home," Myers said. "Painting the crosses is just a small token and a way of saying, 'Thank you.'" Myers said her father and uncles served in World War II. And two of the crosses — for Cpl. Howard Bryant and Pfc. Howard Wade — have a connection with her family. The soldiers' mothers were best friends with her grandmother.

She had noticed as far back as 2017 the area was looking unkempt. She said she reached out to others about the need to groom the area, but unsatisfied with the response, she eventually decided to do it herself. Pendleton town manager Tim McClintick said the town's cemetery upkeep is the responsibility of the town, but admitted they have lacked proper maintenance over the years because of a shortage of personnel.

He said one person is designated to manage the grooming of all the cemeteries, but the town is in working on a plan to get more manpower to assist in the cleaning. In the meantime, he said he's grateful for Myers' work. "She is very passionate, and she wanted to tackle this project to honor the vets," McClintick said. "We're blessed to have residents like that." Myers emphasized that the veterans were her only focus.

“I didn’t do this for the recognition,” Myers said. “I knew in my heart it needed to be done. People that know me know how patriotic I am. I was brought up in a very patriotic family. “This means the world to me. None of us can repay the men and women that have died for our country.”

Information on 10 of the 24 soldiers is available through the website, findagrave.com. All 10 were killed in the 1940s during World War II. Sergeant First Class Thomas Owens, was the youngest listed, just 18 years old when he was killed in the line of duty. Many of the men were in their early 20s when they died. Another, Sergeant Richard Mace, was killed during the Battle of Normandy, the invasion that led to the end of Nazi Germany. Myers said she was bound and determined to get the crosses painted by Memorial Day.

She said weather has been her biggest obstacle. “It will be done by Memorial Day if I have to sit out here in the dark,” she said on a recent afternoon.

