



BRIDGE TO CRAFTS CAREERS PROGRAM HELPS REVIVE AFRICAN-AMERICAN CEMETERY IN RYE, NY

June 18, 2021, New York, NY—This week, graduates of World Monuments Fund’s (WMF) Bridge to Crafts Careers (B2CC) program at The Woodlawn Cemetery & Conservancy in the Bronx brought their stonemasonry skills to rehabilitating damaged grave markers at the African-American Cemetery in Rye, NY. The pilot project signals the next phase of B2CC, which was established in 2015 to provide underserved and underrepresented young adults in the New York City area hands-on technical training with the opportunity for placement in a stable career. The work completed is a modest but important step in bringing much-needed resources to historic cemeteries and burial grounds of African American communities. It also leads up to the cemetery’s reopening on Saturday with a special commemoration of Memorial Day and Juneteenth organized by Friends of the African-American Cemetery. Event details can be found online [here](#).

Established in 1860, Rye’s African-American Cemetery is located within Greenwood Union Cemetery and is home to veterans from each of America’s armed conflicts from the Civil War through World War II. Among the cemetery’s notable residents are Samuel Bell, a soldier in one of the first black military units of the Union Army, and World War I veteran Francis M. Husted with the 370th Colored Regiment, the only unit in the U.S. Army with a full complement of African American officers from colonel to lieutenant. The site closed in 1964 with the desegregation of cemeteries and fell into a state of disrepair in the intervening years.

“Since launching Bridge to Crafts Careers, we have seen its outsized impact on both the individual lives of participants and the heritage sites that need their help,” said Bénédicte de Montlaur, President and CEO of WMF. “It is an honor to extend the program’s reach toward supporting a sacred but overlooked place, ensuring the memory and outstanding contributions of those buried remain present in our minds today.”

“Woodlawn is proud and honored to have been a partner in the restoration of the African-American Cemetery burial grounds through our innovative Bridge to Crafts Careers preservation training program in collaboration with World Monuments Fund which has prepared over 100 young people for entry-level positions to assist with the restoration of masonry structures,” said Mitch Rose, President and Chief Executive Officer and Trustee of The Woodlawn Cemetery & Conservancy.

Throughout the week, B2CC graduates trained at Woodlawn Cemetery assisted with unearthing or repairing more than 40 gravestones, many of which were buried or fractured. The work was made possible with support by the Jay Heritage Center and carried out in coordination with the Friends of the African-American Cemetery and the Town of Rye.

“The work that is being done this week is transformative. I have visited the site twice and each time I was amazed at the amount of change that has occurred,” said David Thomas, President of the Friends

of the African-American Cemetery. “I hope that the interns and the crew from Woodlawn are enjoying the results as much as I am. I could not be more pleased and grateful.”

“The Town of Rye has made a firm and continuing commitment to a policy of practicing respect for diversity and inclusion. Bringing Bridge to Crafts Careers to our historic African-American Cemetery represents the perfect coming together of this mission. We are delighted and grateful to collaborate with our partners; an effort that has resulted in the restoration of a great many of the headstones that mark the graves here,” said Rye Town Supervisor Gary Zuckerman.

This endeavor marks the latest evolution of the B2CC program. B2CC was created by WMF in partnership with the Woodlawn Conservancy, which manages the historic Woodlawn Cemetery, and the International Masonry Institute (IMI). An initial pilot in 2015 immersed 12 interns in 10 weeks of classroom and hands-on training in masonry cleaning, conservation, and maintenance techniques. The program produced immediate results with three participants being offered paid apprenticeships at Woodlawn Cemetery and the rest of the graduating class being placed in jobs at New York-based restoration firms or masonry contractors.

Building on this success, training programs offered at Woodlawn and Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn, which joined B2CC in 2018, continue to feed budding craftspeople into the stonemasonry trade. With assistance from local social services agencies such as The Door and Opportunities for a Better Tomorrow, B2CC has an 80% job-placement rate among graduates. After finishing the program, participants are encouraged to take the apprenticeship exam for the Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers Local 1 Union. Those who pass are offered a three-year, paid apprenticeship that provides an hourly wage of \$26.36 plus benefits and can lead to long-term employment. Roughly 20% of B2CC graduates are accepted as union apprentices upon completion. Last fall, B2CC expanded its training offerings to historic landscape preservation in partnership with the Woodlawn Conservancy, The Door, the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development, and the Davey Tree Expert Company.

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About World Monuments Fund

World Monuments Fund is the leading independent organization devoted to safeguarding the world’s significant cultural places to enrich lives and build mutual understanding. For more than 55 years, working at more than 700 sites in 112 countries, its highly skilled experts have applied proven and effective techniques to the preservation of important architectural and cultural heritage sites around the globe. Through the World Monuments Watch—a biennial, nomination-based program—WMF uses cultural heritage conservation to empower communities and improve human well-being. In partnership with local communities, funders, and governments, WMF seeks to inspire an enduring commitment to stewardship for future generations. Headquartered in New York City, the organization has offices and affiliates worldwide. wmf.org

About The Woodlawn Cemetery

Founded in 1863 and located in the Bronx, NY, Woodlawn Cemetery is more than 150 years old. Still an active cemetery with new development ongoing, families look to Woodlawn to provide answers to

questions regarding final arrangements. Nearly 400 acres, it is one of the largest cemeteries in New York City and is a designated National Historic Landmark. Woodlawn Cemetery is a non-sectarian cemetery since its inception and is the final resting place of many persons of note. Celebrated lot owners include artists, religious leaders, writers, business moguls, civic leaders, entertainers, diplomats, jazz musicians, suffragists and more. 4199 Webster Ave., Bx, NY 10470. Find out more at www.woodlawn.org

About the Woodlawn Conservancy

The Woodlawn Conservancy provides educational programs for students and the public, engaging a strong volunteer corps and working to present the extraordinary collection of monument and plantings found on the 400-acre site of The Woodlawn Cemetery. This mission is accomplished through the support of individuals and organizations who desire to preserve Woodlawn's beauty and history for the enjoyment of future generations, thereby, investing in the future by preserving the past. For more information, visit www.woodlawn.org

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