

2026 Impact Report — Friends of Alexandria's Historic District

Oct 28, 2026 · @Kris

All information in this report, including reach statistics, is as of October 28, 2026.

The Friends of Alexandria's Historic District is a volunteer group dedicated to caring for the places that hold Alexandria's past: our cemeteries, the historic Seay Chapel, and the stories of the families who built this town over more than 200 years.

In 2026, volunteers with the Friends of Alexandria's Historic District reclaimed more than 2 acres of Seay Chapel Cemetery, the African American cemetery, from 30+ years of overgrowth. They placed a memorial tombstone bearing 100 names of people buried in unmarked graves and began restoring the historic Seay Chapel.

This work matters most at Seay Chapel Cemetery. Generations of Alexandria's Black families rest there, yet for decades the grounds were swallowed by overgrowth and many graves lost their markers. We believe about 450 people are buried there in unmarked graves. Every stone we clean and every name we restore gives those families back a place in Alexandria's story.

We are also restoring Eastview Cemetery, the white cemetery, which covers about 2+ acres and is the resting place of approximately 750+ people. Work there is completed on a most-needed basis, starting with the stones and areas in the greatest need of repair.

Alexandria's story is also tied to one of America's great thinkers. As a young Fisk University student, W.E.B. Du Bois taught at the Wheeler School, a school for Black children founded during Reconstruction just outside Alexandria, during the summers of 1886 and 1887. He later wrote about those summers in *The Souls of Black Folk*, in the chapter "Of the Meaning of Progress." Members of the Eddings and Burke families he wrote about in that chapter are buried in Seay Chapel Cemetery. They are the people he worshipped and prayed with. The church where they gathered burned down and was rebuilt in the 1930s as the Seay Chapel that stands today. When we look out from the hill at Seay Chapel, we can feel him standing with us.

None of this happened alone. More than 600 hours of volunteer labor, local businesses that sponsored our work, neighbors who donated materials and family photos, and everyone who gave, shared a post or showed up on a Cemetery Day made this year

possible. This report shows what you helped accomplish, where every dollar went, and what we plan to do next, from finding those unmarked graves to replacing Seay Chapel's roof.

Thank you for helping us honor the people who came before us.

At a glance

Measure	2026
Seay Chapel Cemetery cleared and cleaned	2+ acres
Names honored on the first memorial tombstone	100
Second memorial tombstone	Fully funded (\$2,600)
Stones cleaned	300+
Stones repaired or straightened	About 20
Eastview Cemetery cleaned	5/6 of the grounds
Community Cemetery Days	2 (July and October)
Volunteer hours	600+
Value of donated labor (Tennessee rate)	\$18,852+
Videos released	20+
Facebook and YouTube views (Jan 1 – Oct 27)	353,596
Book published	What The Record Leaves (USCT soldiers)
Total funds raised	\$19,789 (Jan 1 – Oct 28)
Grants requested	\$157,000

Cemetery restoration

Seay Chapel Cemetery (African American)

- **Grounds reclaimed:** Cleared and cleaned 2+ acres that had been lost to more than 30 years of overgrowth.
- **Unmarked graves honored:** Placed the first memorial tombstone, bearing 100 names of people buried in unmarked graves.
- **Second tombstone funded:** Raised the full \$2,600 for a second memorial tombstone. It will be placed once research on the names is complete.
- **Cemetery Day:** At the July Cemetery Day, volunteers filled sunken graves with a full load of dirt.
- **Stones restored:** Cleaned every stone and repaired numerous broken stones.

Eastview Cemetery

- Cleaned 5/6 of the cemetery.
- Straightened and repaired numerous stones, including at the October Cemetery Day.

A tripod hoist has been used to right fallen stones at both cemeteries. Frank Nistad donated the materials and labor to build it.

Remembering Julia Berry

Julia Berry rests in Seay Chapel Cemetery, beneath a stone that can still be read. Her life shows why this work matters.

Julia was born on September 20, 1843, most likely in Virginia. She was enslaved by Beverly Roy, who is believed to have brought her to Alexandria from Virginia. In the 1860 slave census she appears only as a 16-year-old girl, without a name. In April 1862 she married Mack Berry at the Roy house in Alexandria, and they had four daughters: Maudaville, Laura, Harriet and Zora. Mack served with the U.S. Colored Troops during the Civil War and died as a result of his service, leaving Julia to raise their girls on her own.

As a single mother after emancipation, Julia built a life for her family on Main Street. For four years, beginning in 1890, she fought for a widow's pension, believing Mack had served with the 17th U.S. Colored Infantry. In 1895 the pension was denied for lack of proof. Julia kept going. By 1910 she was working as a laundress and owned her home, mortgage free. She had outlived three of her four children and was raising a granddaughter.

Julia died in Alexandria on November 7, 1918. Restoring Seay Chapel Cemetery means people like Julia are no longer just a number in a census. They are remembered by name.

Seay Chapel restoration

- **Rock wall repaired:** Rebuilt the section of the church's rock wall that had fallen (\$6,000).
- **Cleaning underway:** Started cleaning the church.

Preserving and sharing Alexandria's history

- **"The History of Alexandria" video series:** Produced a series with Ria Baker, Co-Chair and Official Alexandria Historian, bringing photos from the community's photo archive and donated family collections to a wide audience.
- **More videos:** Released 20+ videos in all, including Ria's stories, photo stories and restoration work from Cemetery Day.
- **YouTube channel:** Launched a YouTube channel so the videos are available to everyone, anytime.
- **Podcast:** Invited to appear on the Upper Cumberland Radio Podcast.
- **USCT soldiers book published:** Published What The Record Leaves in October 2026, a book on the United States Colored Troops soldiers with ties to the area.
- **Alexandria Ancestor story contest:** Launched a contest inviting families to share stories and photos of Alexandria's past. Entries close December 1, 2026.

Reach

Our posts and videos were viewed more than 350,000 times this year, and 75.8% of Facebook views came from people who don't yet follow the page.

Platform	Followers	Views (Jan 1 – Oct 27)	Watch time
Facebook	729	352,029	21 days, 13 hours
YouTube	30	1,567	10.5 hours

Volunteers

Volunteers gave more than 600 hours in 2026, worth at least \$18,852 in donated labor. Our two community Cemetery Days drew 17 volunteers in July and 15 in October.

That value uses Independent Sector’s Tennessee rate of \$31.42 per volunteer hour (2025, preliminary): 600 hours × \$31.42 = \$18,852. [Source](#)

Funding, grants and sponsors

From January 1 to October 28, 2026, the Friends raised \$19,788.75 and spent \$12,594.23, ending with \$7,194.52 available for the work ahead. Most spending went directly into the church and cemeteries.

Where the money came from

Source	Amount
Donations from individuals	\$13,242.15
Grants from other nonprofits	\$2,900.00
In-kind donations (materials & services from Marvin Willoughby, Jerry Strickland and Luke Prichard Excavating & Trucking)	\$2,500.00
Corporate & foundation grants	\$1,102.60
Sales	\$44.00
Total revenue	\$19,788.75

Where the money went

Use	Amount
Church restoration (rock wall repair)	\$6,000.00
Cemetery materials	\$3,197.63
Memorial tombstone	\$2,600.00
Legal & accounting fees	\$457.35

Use	Amount
Office & marketing	\$339.25
Total expenditures	\$12,594.23

Net available: \$7,194.52

94% of spending (\$11,797.63) went directly to the church restoration, cemetery materials and the tombstone.

Source: Statement of Activity, January 1 – October 28, 2026.

Grants applied for

We have submitted three grant applications totaling \$157,000.

- **Preserving Black Churches**, National Trust for Historic Preservation's African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund: \$117,000 requested for Seay Chapel. [Program](#)
- **Cemetery restoration grant**: \$20,000 requested for a ground-penetrating radar survey (\$10,000) and landscaping (\$10,000) of Seay Chapel Cemetery.
- **Wilson Bank & Trust**: \$20,000 requested for church work at Seay Chapel.

Thank you to our donors and sponsors

Businesses and organizations

- Adams Dental
- Alexandria Lions Club
- Bass Funeral Home – Kurt Bass
- Enchanted Wildflower
- History Before Us – Frederick Murphy
- Luke Prichard Excavating & Trucking
- Mercantile Markets – Tony & Jamie Nicole Bates
- Middle Tennessee Natural Gas Utility District
- On the Square Junk & Jewels – Susan Wooten Holmes
- Sons of Confederate Veterans, Savage-Goodner Camp 1513
- Windows Mite – James Groves

Individuals and families

- Liz Antoniak
- Tammy & Tommy Baird
- Ria Baker
- Frances Bastien
- Robin Bolton
- William Freddy Curtis
- Rod Goodner
- William Goodner
- Rob Hearn, Carol Hearn & Judy Buterbaugh Morgan
- Col. Larry Jones
- Jan & Mark Knowles
- Charlie & Tracey Lawrence
- Ricky & Terry Bess Malone
- Stacey Martin
- Frank Nistad
- Melanie Nistad
- Pat & Danny Parkerson
- S. Pipes
- Kim Reeves
- Ronald Roberts
- Jane Sandlin
- Judy Sandlin
- Livy Simpson
- Bill Smith
- Jerry Strickland
- The Sullivan Family
- Barry & Patsy Turner
- Dale Walker
- Kris Wheeler
- Bobby White
- Daphene Willoughby
- Marvin Willoughby

And thank you to the donors who asked to remain anonymous. Your generosity is just as deeply appreciated.

Looking ahead

Our next phase will cost an estimated \$137,000 or more, most of it to make Seay Chapel structurally sound. Grant requests now pending would cover these costs.

Project	Estimated cost	Funding
Seay Chapel: roof replacement, electrical, foundation, drainage, and repointing the rest of the rock wall	\$117,000 (may be higher)	Preserving Black Churches (\$117,000) and Wilson Bank & Trust (\$20,000) grants requested
Seay Chapel Cemetery: ground-penetrating radar survey to locate unmarked graves	\$10,000	Cemetery restoration grant requested
Seay Chapel Cemetery: stump removal and landscaping	\$10,000	Cemetery restoration grant requested
Second memorial tombstone	\$2,600	Fully funded
Total still needed	\$137,000+	

Seay Chapel

- Replace the roof
- Repoint the rest of the rock wall
- Improve drainage
- Update the electrical
- Check the foundation
- Finish cleaning the church

Seay Chapel Cemetery

- Locate an estimated 450 unmarked graves with ground-penetrating radar and GIS mapping

- Remove the stumps left from the overgrowth and restore the grounds so they can be mowed
- Place the second memorial tombstone once research on the names is complete

Eastview Cemetery

- Finish cleaning the last 1/6 of the cemetery
- Continue repairing and straightening stones

How you can help

Every dollar and every hour goes directly into restoring these grounds and the church. Donors receive a tax receipt.

- **Donate:** Mail a check to PO Box 14, Alexandria, TN 37012
- **Volunteer:** Join us for the next Cemetery Day in January 2027
- **Sponsor:** Support the video series or the Alexandria Ancestor contest
- **Contact us:** alexandriahistoriccemeteries@gmail.com, or message Friends of Alexandria's Historic District on Facebook

Sources

- [Value of Volunteer Time 2026 Report](#), Independent Sector
- [Preserving Black Churches 2026 grants](#), National Trust for Historic Preservation
- [Wheeler School historical marker](#), Tennessee Historical Commission, via the Historical Marker Database