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The Lone Pine Cemetery sign greets visitors near Tekoa.

By Garth Meyer

Gazette Reporter

Friends of the Lone Pine Cemetery Association is the recipient of the Washington State Historic Preservation office's 2015 Outstanding Achievement in Historic Preservation Award in the category of Cemetery Preservation.

"We've been doing this for quite awhile and it's a big booster," said Jim Irwin, secretary/treasurer for Friends of Lone Pine, which formed in 2006. "It's a real far away location, but it's just as important as any other cemetery."

Association members meet to work on the grounds near Tekoa twice per year, in the spring and fall, while funds are raised through a newsletter.

The group was nominated for the award by retired State Cemetery Coordinator Susan Goff.

"They were recognized for the outstanding work that they've done," said Russell Holter, awards coordinator for the state Historic Preservation office. "We like to see a demonstrated work pattern over a long period of time. It's quite a compliment. The work that they've done is exemplary."

He cited the group's fundraising ability as well as headstone repair and restoration.

"It's not just mowing the grass and pressure-washing," Holter said.

The group has also documented histories of the people buried at Lone Pine and made the data available online. They are one of the first groups to do this for an inactive historic cemetery.

Lone Pine Cemetery, located about five miles west of Tekoa on Lone Pine Road, was in use from 1883 to 1953. The association's members journey from their homes in various parts of the northwest for the work occasions.

Irwin, who lives in Walla Walla, has a great-grandmother buried at Lone Pine.

Irwin and other representatives from Friends of Lone Pine will receive their award at a ceremony to be held May 19 from 2 to 4 p.m. in the Columbia Room of the Legislative Building in Olympia. A single award will be presented to the association, one of 12 winners this year in eight categories.

"It's been quite a project," Irwin said. "We like doing it."