

# Grave Markers at the Historical Western State Hospital Cemetery in Steilacoom Park

In 2000, Western State Hospital staff member John Lucas launched the first effort to bring attention to the long forgotten cemetery. While holding a simple ceremony over a few visible graves, hospital patients started to uncover additional markers laying beneath prairie grasses in a field near the old dairy barns that once served the hospital. That discovery began an effort to restore the cemetery and replace the numbered markers with markers featuring the name, birthdate and date of death of each patient buried in the cemetery. Reducing the stigma associated with mental illness by prominently displaying the person's name and bringing dignity and respect to those patients is part of the mission of Grave Concerns.



*Pictured: Laurel Lemke, Chair of Grave Concerns, has worked between 5-50 hours per month for the last 10 years to restore the cemetery and bring dignity to the patients buried there. It's part of her personal mission to reduce the stigma associated with mental illness.*

