

# Crestwood student organizes program to care for graves of deceased servicemen

**BY PAT RUSHTON**  
CORRESPONDENT

When Ava Groth participated in “Wreaths Across America” as a member of Mountain Top American Legion Junior Auxiliary Unit 781 last year, she noticed there were many graves that lacked attention.

The 17-year-old Crestwood High School senior has set out to change that.

With the support of her parents, both U.S. Navy veterans, Groth has launched an effort to clean up unattended graves at Albert and St. Martin-in-the-Field cemeteries in Mountain Top in time for Memorial Day.

“When I participated in “Wreaths Across America” I realized not all graves got wreaths,” Groth explained. “I realized most of those graves seemed to be neglected,” she related. After thinking about that

for a while, Groth came to the conclusion that there probably aren’t family members around to take care of the graves of the many older veterans.

So, she decided to do something about it.

Groth is organizing a grave cleanup at the two cemeteries on May 21, just ahead of Memorial Day and she is looking for volunteers to help with the project.

She recently outlined her project at a meeting of the Mountain Top Historical Society where her plan was warmly received. When society president Scott Hilenski heard of Groth’s plans, he embraced it. Hilenski, who owns a company that cleans headstones, got the company that provides solution approved for cleaning headstones to donate a supply for Groth’s project. He is also working on getting donations of

spray bottles. What she needs is personal protective equipment such as latex gloves, eye protectors and, most importantly volunteers. She emphasized that the work will not be strenuous and anyone who can lend a little time is welcome. Even if you can’t participate in the cleanup, she noted, you can donate supplies or make a financial donation to the American Legion Auxiliary.

To help with the effort, the Mountain Top Historical Society voted at its February meeting to make a \$50 donation.

Anyone who would like to help out can contact Groth’s mother, Stacey Acri, at her email, [staceyacri@yahoo.com](mailto:staceyacri@yahoo.com). Volunteers should report to Albert Cemetery at 9 a.m. on May 21 with a rain date of May 28. Groth said if there are enough volunteers, she will include other cemeteries in the Mountain Top area.



**Scott Hilenski, left, president of the Mountain Top Historical Society, presents a check to Ava Groth, right, to help with her cemetery cleanup project.**