

Trust will aid Shadow Lawn graves

By **BILL PLOTT**
News staff writer

About 20 people stood in the rain in Shadow Lawn Memorial Park cemetery Saturday afternoon, but their spirits were anything but dampened by the weather.

"Our purpose is to preserve this cemetery for its past, present and future," said Dot Large. "To correct the neglect and deterioration that has endured for so long."

Large, president of the Shadow Lawn Memorial Park Maintenance and Perpetual Care Association, spoke in front

of the former cemetery office building, a dilapidated structure reflecting the neglect and deterioration.

But she said the establishment of a trust fund for upkeep is good and hopeful news for the families of those buried there.

Shadow Lawn has been closed since bankruptcy proceedings in 2000, but families of loved ones buried there complained about neglect and poor maintenance for years before the matter wound up in court.

Broken tombstones, uncut grass, the broken windows of

the office building and illegal dumping are among the problems facing the association.

"We want to ask people to stop dumping out here," said association member Norma Powell. "There is even roofing from a house on top of people's stones. They had to drive in here just to do that."

Large said the maintenance and perpetual care association is a trust fund set up with SouthTrust Bank. Papers have been filed seeking nonprofit corporation status for the association.

She said the trust fund exists

strictly to provide upkeep and maintenance to the graves. It cannot be used for operating expenses.

"This organization will not be responsible for any burial or legal actions on the cemetery," she said. (Shadow Lawn) is still the owner and is still liable for any mishaps in the cemetery."

The association will hold meetings the second Monday of each month at 6 p.m. in the lobby at Legion Field. Anyone with relatives buried at Shadow Lawn is invited to attend the meetings.

Large said the association is

seeking cash donations to the trust fund but also in-kind donations that can be applied directly to maintenance and upkeep. She said fencing, paving and lawn care services are needed.

The association will seek bids soon for some of the initial maintenance.

All of the people attending Saturday's press conference have friends or relatives buried in the cemetery in the Mason City neighborhood. Some of them said the cemetery is more than 100 years old. It was estimated to contain several thousand graves.