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Milton Neighbor

SERVING ONE OF NORTH FULTON'S FINEST CITIES

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Milton Fields offers natural alternative

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With the economy still struggling and consumers becoming more green-conscious, Milton's Jim Bell has made it his mission to help north Fulton residents deal with the inevitable while keeping costs and carbon footprints low.

In 2009, Bell, a former property manager, opened Milton Fields Natural Burial Ground — Georgia's only privately owned, state-licensed green cemetery.

Bell said his cemetery focuses on land conservation, while also saving families money.

Bell has owned the 17-acre property, adjacent to his home, for about 35 years and said he always thought it would make a good cemetery.

"The more I learned about funerals, the more I realized that a lot of people do expensive things that are unnecessary," he said.

Milton Fields does not use caskets made of metal or exotic wood, concrete burial vaults or large stone monuments, and instead uses only biodegradable soft wood caskets and small, flat stone grave markers.

"If you didn't know it was a cemetery, you would think you were just looking out at a field," Bell said. "Natural is just prettier than artificial."

The natural burial process also excludes using chemicals to embalm.

"There's no sense in putting that stuff into the ground," Bell said.

Bell said the community has embraced his burial ground — for many different reasons.

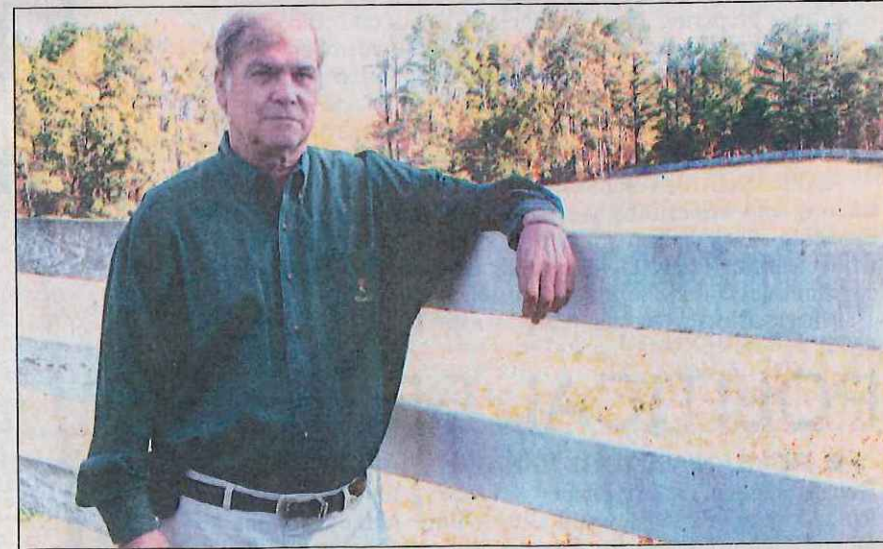
"Some people like the green aspect and some like the fact that it's just more natural," he said. "And some people like the financial savings."

According to Bell, caskets alone can cost up to \$20,000, but his method is much less expensive, with single plot burials starting at \$1,300.

The site also allots a 10 by 10 foot space for each plot, which Bell said some cemeteries have from 800 to 1,000 plots in a single acre.

With another section reserved for cremated remains, Milton Fields also offers a permanent resting place for a loved one's ashes.

The burial site is at 1150 Birmingham Road in Milton.
Information: www.miltonfieldsgeorgia.com or



Staff / Erin Gray

Owner and operator of Milton Fields, Jim Bel stands outside Milton Fields.