

Hebrew High Students Discover the Hebrew Cemetery

By Sandra Goldman

On a beautiful late morning in March, about 30 Hebrew High School ninth graders went to the cemetery as part of their annual retreat. Their mission: To learn as much as possible about the history of the cemetery and the people buried in these holy grounds.

In order to bring certain lightness to their experience and to spark interest HCA president, Brian Yesowitch, spoke first to the group of 15-year-olds about the

history of the cemetery. They were brought back to 1867 when the cemetery was founded, they were told about Louis Leon, one of the private soldiers who fought at Gettysburg and wrote the famous "Diary of a Tar-Heel Soldier" and learned about known writer and newspaper editor Harry Golden. They also checked out the new gem at the cemetery, the memorial building and admired the former white marble ark from Temple Beth El.



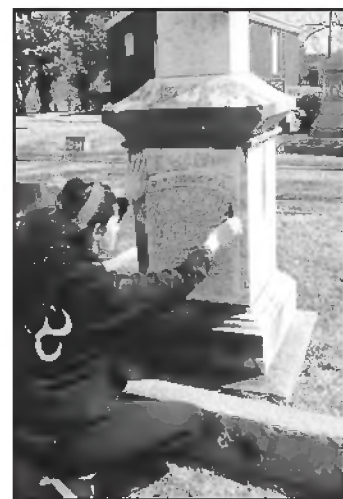
The Hebrew Cemetery Memorial Building.

Afterwards they broke out in small groups and went on a mission to solve the questions of a scavenger hunt. Questions included: Find a typical symbol for a woman's grave. Find a confederate soldier and a World War II vet. Find the tallest monument or how old was the oldest person buried at the cemetery? With newly opened eyes and tremendous interest, the group then went on to choose monuments in the historic section, covered them with paper and etched the mark-

well. But there are ways to start a conversation without instilling fear.

Obviously with my job comes a more natural understanding about the landscape of cemeteries and death in general. I often bring my own children and sometimes have them help me picking up branches. Seeing my children walk around the different sections and reading aloud the names of long gone people and asking questions about them gives me a sense of pride. I love that from their young age on and long before they even realize it, they experience the cemetery as a learning environment. This place is accessible to them, not taboo, not forbidden, but rather, something where they can experience history, life and death, and Judaism based on its roots.

David Sarnoff, founder of NBC once said: "We cannot banish dangers, but we can banish fears. We must not demean life by standing



Mia Goldman does a grave rubbing.

voiced the all-around positive experience: "Visiting the cemetery really showed me the history and landscape of Jewish Charlotte. The students and I enjoyed this program very much and it was fascinating to watch the children how they behaved and interacted in this unknown territory. I got to see a totally different side of them and I was impressed with what deep and profound questions they asked."

Director of the Consolidated Hebrew High School, Roz Cooper, agreed and stated: "This is our community. I recognize so many names. It is all so familiar."

To arrange a personal tour of the cemetery, to hear about pre-panning and how one can honor a loved one with a memorial plaque inside the new memorial building please contact the Hebrew Cemetery Director, Sandra Goldman, by phone at 704-576-1859 or by email at director@hebrewcemetery.org. ✪



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The Hebrew High ninth graders get ready to learn about the Hebrew Cemetery.

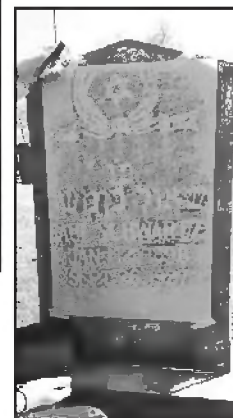
ers. Once they returned to the classroom, they made pieces of art from the imprints.

While many families keep children away from ritual practices of death and mourning, I have always included ours. It is certainly not always easy for adults to include kids at the nursing home, at the hospital or even at the graveside. Surely, there are arguments to be made for letting kids live idyllically unaware of illness and dying, and waiting until they're older to share the really painful parts of life. Some might even argue that it is selfish or unfair of adults to expect children to be able to handle the heavy stuff that we, ourselves, can't even really handle

in awe of death." And so the idea to bring High School kids to the cemetery took fruition.

Brooke Whipkey, one of the attending girls, felt inspired after visiting the graveyard: "I thought it was a great experience. I learned a lot about the kind of people buried here and it really connects me now more to Judaism." Noah Tobias added: "It was interesting to hear how the cemetery started and what made the Jews decide to come here to Charlotte."

Lisa Nagel who teaches the children at Hebrew High and accompanied the group thoughtfully



A grave rubbing done by one of the Hebrew High students.

Jewish Educational Loan Fund 2014 Application Available Through April 30

Applications for interest-free loans for post-secondary education (college, graduate school and vocational programs) will be available for the 2014-2015 school year from the Jewish Educational Loan Fund (JELF). The application will be open to Jewish students in FL, GA, NC, SC, and VA (excluding metro D.C.) on JELF's website at www.jelf.org until April 30.

JELF loans are need-based and offer "last-dollar" financing, meaning that JELF provides the final dollars that bridge the gap between a student's total financial resources and the cost of attending school. Applicants must be enrolled full-time in a program

leading to a degree or certificate at an accredited institution located in the United States, be a U.S. citizen or have lawful immigration status in the U.S., and be able to demonstrate financial need (FAFSA application required).

The Jewish Educational Loan Fund (JELF) awarded more than \$852,000 in interest-free loans to Jewish students in FL, GA, NC, SC, and VA for the 2013-2014 school year, including \$47,306 to Charlotte area students. A record number of applicants came to JELF seeking to fill the gap between the resources they assembled through grants, loans and scholarships and the real cost of their education.

While JELF currently administers over \$4 million in outstanding loans, it has maintained its impressive 99% repayment rate. As students repay their loans, JELF uses those payments to make new loans, creating a circle of tzedakah. As a loan recipient recently expressed to JELF, "Thank you so much for your kindness in helping make it possible for me to work towards achieving the career goals to which I've long aspired."

For additional information, contact JELF at application@jelf.org, 770-396-3080 or visit www.jelf.org. ✪