

# First Impressions

By Sandra Goldman

Spring is here and the grass at the cemetery is lush and green. The idyllic setting just minutes from uptown and the careful attention paid to the grounds shows now in its entire beauty. For cemeteries, it is all about first impressions. A well taken care of property sends a distinct message to families: We care.



Sandra Goldman

and their history. Next up was a gentleman discussing cemetery management systems. He introduced a program that one can access from anywhere in the world. One can look up grave locations, marker pictures, deed ownership, contracts, search records and other history. It uses the Gregorian and the Hebrew calendar and calculates Yahrzeits. We are currently looking into the possibility to acquire this program.

In order to continue to increase the respect and affection which our community bestows upon those who are buried here, it is intended that our cemetery perpetually be an area of quiet beauty and serenity - to beckon the living as well as to provide repose for the dead.

Last month I attended a funeral and cemetery convention in Miami. I find it important to network with fellow cemetery executives and learn about new developments and see other Jewish cemeteries with my own eyes. The convention began with a tour of Mount Nebo cemetery. Probably the most prominent person buried here is Meyer Lansky, known as the Mafia mob's accountant. His grave is manifested only by a simple flat marker.

Back at the convention location me and about 80 others from around the Nation including Canada and England, listened to a fascinating lady, Marcia Jo Zerivitz, who is preserving the history of Florida's Jewish cemeteries. She calls death "The crisis of life." As the founding Executive Director of the Jewish Museum of Florida, she travels up and down the state, meets with people, gets artifacts and collects them to preserve the cemeteries

Our heritage is enriched by the lives and deeds of the men and women who have preceded us. It is, therefore, our goal, as part of the remembrance of them, to maintain permanent records of those whose earthly remains have been entrusted to us; and so I was introduced to Mona Morris, Founder of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Palm Beach County and an expert on Ancestry.com. She spoke about the role of the genealogy community and how they can help support the cemetery and about the historical value of keeping records. The convention further included the introduction of shivaconnect.com, a Shiva related registry which can be very useful during the grieving time and the importance of endowment funds and how cemeteries invest their money safely.

The most impressive presentation included cemetery operations with a panel discussion from Raleigh, NC, Richmond, VA, Burlington, VT, Bethlehem, NH, Philadelphia, PA and London, England. They spoke about their problems, especially the smaller cemeteries not having rules and regulations which led to unsafe headstones and an interfaith section with non-Jewish inscriptions



The marble ark is ready for its unveiling.

like crosses. Rural North Country cemeteries deal with harsh winters so they pre-dig graves in anticipation of deaths. Other lush cemeteries in warmer regions take care of over 2500 different species of trees and bushes on their property. The biggest impact on me left the speaker from England. He described the huge issues of abandoned cemeteries due to mismanagement, migration, or collapse of cemetery associations. A shocking example was an over 300 year old totally overgrown Sephardic cemetery surrounded by tall apartment buildings. In order to make room for a more park like setting, bones were exhumed and dumped in a mass grave down the road, markers were destroyed and records disappeared forever, the remaining graves slowly disintegrating.

This brings me back to first impressions. What a person recalls is mostly conveyed visually. Green cut grass and properly pruned trees don't happen by accident. It is all maintained with a labor of love and devotion. I am grateful and proud to see our very own Hebrew Cemetery being well preserved. Still, we can't do it all alone, help is needed. Join the

growing community of supporters of the new Memorial Building, make a five year pledge or purchase a plaque to memorialize a



loved one. Together we embrace our cemetery to be always grounds of pride where we can celebrate and honor our loved ones because one thing is sure - one never gets a second chance to make a good first impression.

To learn more about the building, how to purchase a plaque, pre-planning or to discuss how to leave a Jewish Legacy, contact Sandra Goldman at 704-576-1859 or director@hebrewcemetery.org. ☆

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## DrumSTRONG Rhythm and Arts Festival

### We Gather to BEAT Cancer

May 16, 17, and 18 at Misty Meadows Farm, 455 Providence Rd. S., Weddington

DrumSTRONG is an annual event to raise money for cancer causes. Each year people gather to beat cancer with the drum circle running now for 24 hours non stop.

"We are going to break the planet's record for the longest continuous rhythm \*Drum Circle\* ever held (and possibly the largest!), drum with people globally (simultaneously) and, at the same time, raise awareness and incredible amounts of money for survivorship assistance, education and research for one of the most nefarious diseases known to man," says Scott Swimmer, who created drumSTRONG in response to his son's battle with cancer.

"We will throw ourselves at eradicating cancer, fortify our friends, families and ourselves, glean useful info about the resources available to address cancer and have a blast doing it!"

This year's lineup features Railroad Earth, The Felice Brothers, Yo Mama's Big Fat Booty Band, and so much more, encompassing three days of music and arts. For the full lineup, go to drumstrong.com.

Ticket information is at drumstrong.com/tickets and range from single day passes to full weekend passes; this year there is even a VIP ticket that includes beer, meals, and access to the VIP tent. Join the fun and raise money for a very important cause. Don't miss this year's amazing drumSTRONG with the biggest lineup ever and the longest continuous drum circle ever.

For information on Drums for Cures, visit drumstrong.org. ☆



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