

Community News

Supporting the Hebrew Cemetery Association

By Brian Yesowitch, President, Hebrew Cemetery Association

The Hebrew Cemetery Association continues to conduct its business of serving families at their time of need as it has since our first funeral in 1870. Although its mission is respected and the community praises its volunteers and director, it's still a fact that nearly 90% of the Greater Charlotte Jewish community doesn't choose to affiliate with the Cemetery Association by paying \$72 dues each year. There are individuals who do not have the means to associate with the Cemetery Association (or other Jewish institutions), but finances should never be an impediment if Jewish funeral arrangements are required. To that end, a partnership has been created between Jewish Family Services, The Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte, our four partner Temples (Congregation Or HaTorah, Temple Beth El, Temple Israel, and Temple Kol Tikvah) along with our community's clergy and two partner funeral homes (JB Tallent and Sons and Harry and Bryant). This partnership works in tandem with our Association's Steinberger Funeral Assistance Fund to support those needy families at their time of loss.

What about the other families and individuals who live an active

and engaged Jewish life in Charlotte and the surrounding region? Charlotte is a unique city in that our Cemetery Association is independent from the synagogues and other Jewish agencies. That is a simple result of Southern Jewish history and geography. Many of you have seen the black and white photograph of Rabbi Mendelsohn that is displayed in Shalom Park (near the snack bar in the Jewish history display). For those Jews living in Charlotte at that time, their spiritual needs prior to 1870 were met by affiliating with the synagogues in Charleston, SC or Wilmington, NC. It wasn't until after the Civil War that the Charlotte Jewish community assumed its own identity distinct and separate from those coastal towns. Furthermore, in those days, people were self-reliant. They were often their own butchers, grocers and clothiers. Some could even argue they didn't need their own cemetery as Jews in our region had opportunities to be buried in cemeteries in the area. We have records of Jewish individuals buried in the historic Elmwood Cemetery among others.

At some point in time, though, it becomes more than an individual responsibility to live a Jewish life and instill Jewish values in one's community. That's what the post-Civil War community said in

1867 when they purchased the 11 acres of land on McColl Street north of Uptown to consecrate as their community's Bet Olam – Eternal House – the Hebrew Cemetery. People don't often recognize the need for a well-funded and maintained cemetery. However, for nearly 150 years, our community has supported its Bet Olam and made it available to all, regardless of station in life or Temple affiliation.

The winter has been extreme. In just this short period our children missed three days of school. The weather did close the Cemetery for a day, as the ice on Statesville Avenue as well as within the Cemetery gates would have posed a challenge for drivers and walkers alike. Because of the physical toll ice and water play on the grounds, upkeep and maintenance are required. When you become a member of the Hebrew Cemetery Association, your \$72 dues goes towards this maintenance. Your membership and support are needed to continue to perpetuate the mission of the Hebrew Cemetery Association – providing a dignified final resting place for the Greater Charlotte Jewish community.

With the New Year, make this the time that you consider funeral pre-planning. When you pre-plan, you can save over 30% in plot and

service fees. Payments are generally on a two-year term. Our Director, Sandra Goldman, can walk you through the process – and there's never "hard-selling" involved. Membership is affordable at \$72 annually – and funeral pre-planning is available immediately upon becoming a member.

Perhaps in 2016, your family is expecting a child or grandchild. Maybe you have just received an inheritance or are drafting a will. These are just some of the ways that you can participate in the Create Your Jewish Legacy program and create a lasting relationship between your family and the He-



brew Cemetery. Our Hebrew Cemetery has been a very real testament to the sustained successes of our Charlotte Jewish Community. I hope you will consider adding the Hebrew Cemetery Association to your CJL bequests.

For more information about membership or funeral preplanning, legacy planning or any of the programs discussed, please contact our director Sandra Goldman at director@hebrewcemetery.org or 704-576-1859. ☆

Shalom Park Community Garden

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full summer of learning opportunities for Camp Mindy, the teen camp and the 80 children who will attend the Shalom Park Freedom School, a literacy based program for low income families.

The garden committee also has developed a plan to contribute the food grown by its members and volunteers to Jewish Family Services and Friendship Trays. This part of the garden's mission determines the list of crops scheduled for summer, which includes tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, squash, green beans, eggplants, cilantro, and dill.

The garden will host a variety of programs through the growing season, the first of which is scheduled March 6 for families that signed up for "Eating Green, Growing Green" this month's theme in the Shalom Green Challenge. If you are interested in attending, contact Julie Rizzo at julie.rizzo@charlottejcc.org.

The garden committee will schedule monthly workdays for routine garden maintenance and could use the help of anyone interested. The work days will be announced on the Shalom Green Facebook page and on its scheduling Website at lotsahelpinghands.com.

Bobbie Mabe, the garden's designer and construction consultant has been hired on a one-year contract to coordinate the activities in what is expected to be a busy season. Mabe is the owner of Growth through Gardening, a company that specializes in horticultural therapy. She also will serve as a consultant to keep the garden growing well. Her contract is paid with grants from the ClearPath Foundation and the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte.

Anyone interested in supporting ongoing garden operations is invited to join the Shalom Park Garden Committee simply by

showing up at committee meetings held the second Wednesday of each month in Room A-111 of the Levine Jewish Community Center. ☆



Counting the rings on the tree stump seats to see how old they are.



"The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is today."

---Chinese proverb

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