

## Why Not the Cemetery?

By Jill Blumenthal

“Why would I join the Hebrew Cemetery board?”

That’s the first thought that popped into my head when Kevin Levine invited me to join the board of the Hebrew Cemetery Association of Charlotte in 2007. I was in my early thirties and, frankly, I was not thinking too much about the Cemetery – I barely knew where the Cemetery was located. But now a member of the Charlotte Jewish community that I respected was asking me to commit some of my limited time and resources to this institution I’d barely thought about.

But I didn’t dismiss the invitation either and not just because I was flattered. (Although I was. Thanks, Kevin.) I knew that my grandparents, Anita and Herman Blumenthal of blessed memory, had supported the Cemetery and were buried there. I suspected Charlotte was where I would live for the rest of my life, and where else would I want to be buried but close to my family? And my grandparents, along with my parents, had instilled in me the idea that, since I had benefited throughout my life from the Jewish institutions created and nurtured by the people before me, it was my responsibility to steward

them going forward. My grandfather Herman often spoke about how his own father had told him, “If a community is good to you, you have to be good to that community.” I felt I could not “opt out” of Jewish life if I wanted it to continue.

I think I also sensed that a cemetery was an important institution that every Jewish community requires. I soon learned that establishing a burial space – a sacred place to honor the dead – is the first task of a new Jewish community. (This also explains why the Cemetery is the oldest Jewish institution in Charlotte, formed by the Hebrew Benevolent Society in 1867.)

So, after a little reflection, I realized I needed to reframe that original question that had popped into my head: Why wouldn’t I join the Cemetery board? I called Kevin back and accepted the offer; obviously the Cemetery has not been able to get rid of me yet.

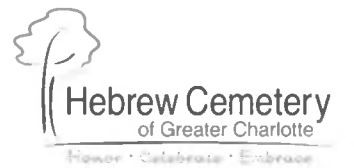
After joining the board in 2008, I was honored to serve and learn more about the Cemetery. However, it took me a while to find a way that I could contribute other than attending our quarterly meetings, helping out at the registration table at our Annual Memorial Service (held on the

Sunday between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur), and generally acting as an ambassador in the community.

I found my niche a few years later when the Cemetery joined the new Create Your Jewish Legacy (CJL) program initiated by the Foundation for the Charlotte Jewish Community. As someone who didn’t have a lot of extra income to make large charitable donations, I was excited to learn that I could designate the Cemetery as a partial beneficiary of my employee retirement plan. After my death (hopefully a long time from now so the magic of compounding interest can get to work), the Cemetery and a few other Jewish nonprofits I care about will receive significant donations that will allow me to give back to the Charlotte Jewish community that supported me during my lifetime.

I was honored to become one of the early members of the Cemetery’s Legacy Society. Over the last few years, I have become passionate about introducing the benefits of legacy giving to others. I love sharing that anyone, with a little thought and planning, can find a way to support the nonprofits and causes they love and value. Our Director and I are always happy to speak with anyone about legacy giving. To learn more about the Cemetery in gen-

eral, how to become a member, or the possibility of supporting the Cemetery with a legacy gift, please contact Director Sandra Goldman at [director@hebrew-cemetery.org](mailto:director@hebrew-cemetery.org) or 704-576-1859. ✪



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## Charlotte Airport Chaplains Needed

The non-profit, inter-faith Airport Chaplaincy at the Charlotte Douglas International Airport is expanding and seeking caring individuals who would enjoy serving the traveling public as well as airport and airline employees. Our mission is to care for travelers and the airport community by offering personal, emotional

and spiritual support, providing a comforting “ministry of presence.” Ministry leaders and lay people are welcome to join our team of volunteers, and we are particularly seeking volunteers of the Jewish faith. Training is provided. Chaplains typically serve inside the airport on four-hour shifts, the same day and time

each week that is convenient for them. Shifts are available from 6 AM to midnight, any day of the week. Contact George Szalony at [gshalony@msn.com](mailto:gshalony@msn.com) or David Reiser at [reiserd@hotmail.com](mailto:reiserd@hotmail.com) if you are interested in exploring joining the team. ✪

## Greater Charlotte Jewish Genealogical Society Chapter Being Formed

You are invited to join a group of interested members of our community in the preliminary discussion of creating a formal Greater Charlotte Jewish Genealogical Society Chapter. There are already approximately 30 people who have signed up and a lot of interest is being generated very quickly.

The organization encourages participation from beginners who want to pass on family history to experienced family historians who can be contributors and help others. Those (including non-Jewish) who are looking for lost Jewish heritage or still searching for extended families of Holocaust survivors may find additional resources through this organization and support from others with similar interests.

The organizer, Elissa Boyet, is an experienced local researcher with a lot of passion to share her knowledge about what this organization has to offer. At the November meeting, there will be

a brief introduction, a questionnaire to determine levels of interest and experience, and a short presentation on what tools the Jewish Genealogical Society has to offer.

Forming a formal genealogical organization will also open the doors for guest speakers.

As a Beneficiary Agency of the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte, Temple Solel of South Carolina has offered to sponsor the first speaker coming to Charlotte. “We are very grateful for this opportunity. Jewish Genealogy fits in with our educational focus of pass on Jewish tradition and culture within our community and families,” said, Temple Solel President, Shelley Pawlyk and member, Helaine Yancy, who is also experienced in genealogy research.

Please RSVP directly to Elissa Boyet at [niftee@msn.com](mailto:niftee@msn.com) or call her at 203-731-1882 to receive confirmed dates and times of the upcoming meetings. ✪

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