JCAM Dedicates First Covid-19 Memorial

Memorial honors the stories of those lost during the pandemic and their loved ones

This past July, JCAM dedicated a granite memorial to those impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic – the first in Massachusetts and possibly in the country. It stands as a permanent reminder of the tragedy and heroism our community experienced last spring.

“We saw an immediate need for a thoughtful space that honors the victims and comforts the survivors,” said JCAM Executive Director Jamie Cotel. “Our community has experienced a massive trauma, and we need to provide a place to mourn and reflect. We didn’t want to

Finding New Homes for Jewish Books, Judaica, and Religious Items

Jewish law requires the burial of religious items and books with the name of G-d, and for more than three decades, JCAM has collected these items in its community Genizah. Many of these items are still useful, and even beautiful — just no longer needed by their owners. JCAM has re-purposed many religious items, including prayer books sent to a Jewish community in Africa and Tallises to be used by the Hebrew Free Burial Association in New York. On Sunday, October 18, JCAM held its first Community Judaica, Book and Tent Event to find new homes for Siddurs, books of Chumash and Talmud, Tallit, children’s books, and more. Contact JCAM to learn more about Genizah services.

Funerals During the Covid-19 Pandemic

It’s always tragic to lose a loved one, but especially during a pandemic. Last March, as it became clear that funerals could be “super-spreader” events, guidance from the governor continuously evolved. Indoor chapels and synagogues closed for all events, including funerals. Burial protocols adjusted to keep cemetery caretakers and families safe, and we worked hard to find PPE for front-line cemetery workers. Social distancing, attendee limits, and masks changed the way we mourn. Zoom funerals became part of our lexicon — bringing together family from all over the country — but it’s hard to provide comfort from six-feet away with no hugging. Even so, traditional rituals were modified and maintained. The immediate family gathered, prayers were said, dirt was scattered by hand, and military honor guards paid respect. As we look forward, we hope for the best, but if necessary, we will continue to adapt, together, as a community.
Welcome: Aaron Press Taylor

JCAM is pleased to welcome Aaron Press Taylor as Associate Director of Field Services and Strategies. Aaron comes to JCAM from Mejdi Tours in Jerusalem and Habitat for Humanity – Spokane. He has a long-term commitment to social justice work and holds degrees from Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Brandeis University. Welcome, Aaron!

Restoring 100-Year-Old Monuments

Time is not a friend to century-old monuments — even if they are granite. Last winter, JCAM introduced an environmentally friendly method of cleaning monuments and uncovering obscured inscriptions — and the results are striking. More gentle than power-washing, volunteers can help honor the memories of those we have lost in an outdoor, socially-distanced, hands-on activity. Contact JCAM to learn how you can make a difference.

Wind Storm Damage

October brought two dramatic wind storms to JCAM cemeteries, resulting in extensive damage to monuments and landscape. Within 15 minutes, more than 25 healthy, large trees were uprooted, creating a public safety hazard that must be remedied immediately. Donations to help with cleanup are appreciated.

JCAM Dedicates First Covid-19 Memorial (continued)

wait years to erect a memorial.”

JCAM has a unique role during this pandemic, burying people on its 125 cemeteries and caring for their final resting places forever. The memorial is dedicated to those who were not able to say goodbye, those who could not have family and friends console them, and those who died alone.

The memorial is located in front of JCAM’s Sons of Abraham Cemetery at the end of the Baker Street Memorial Park. Through a generous donation by Steve Schneider, principal of Slotnick Monuments, the memorial’s inscription captures this moment in time: “...and the people mourned as one community.”

The memorial also includes two granite benches to provide a place for personal reflection. The first bench is dedicated to those who died without family. The second bench is dedicated to the cemetery caretakers — “the last responders” — who unselfishly performed the ultimate act of loving kindness.

The memorial ensures that the victims and their stories will never be forgotten. It honors the elderly woman who died without family and was laid to rest in the last available grave in the same cemetery where her parents were buried decades ago. It honors an only adult child with limited resources who lost both parents within 48 hours, veterans who defended our country, and Holocaust survivors who lived through genocide and died during a global pandemic. The list is long.

JCAM was there and will continue to be there for the community and to tell the stories of those lost during the pandemic.