

January 2022

The Evergreens Cemetery Quarterly Newsletter



The Evergreens Cemetery Foundation **Receives** Grant for Veterans' Training Program

The Evergreens Preservation Foundation is honored to receive a \$315,729 grant from New York City for a veterans' masonry training program.

This spring and summer, The Evergreens will be training 20 United States Veterans in masonry and masonry repair work to include beautification of the cemetery including monument cleaning and repair of veteran gravesites in a two-stage program. The veterans will be paid during the training program and upon completion of the program will be well positioned to join the mason's union apprenticeship program and subsequently apply for positions in the masonry field.



Veterans will first receive basic safety and OSHA training in a three-week training course. Then over the second part of the ten-week program, the veterans will learn a wide

range of masonry skills including masonry, repairs, tiling, brick laying and repair, and other aspects of site beautification including power washing, monument cleaning, and caulking.

The Veterans will be divided into two groups, for which a mason affiliated with the *International Masonry Institute* will serve as their trainer and supervisor at all times.

By receiving industry recognized safety training and performing work that is specific to capital beautification and masonry repair, participants will be prepared to transition into union positions in the masonry field as well as other construction fields. Job placement support will be provided. The Evergreens will assist with the transition by leveraging its network of union and private sector employers.

The Evergreens Cemetery honors the service of our veterans and is gratified to be hosting this important program. We thank the New York City Department of Veterans Services' Commissioner James Hendon and New York City Council Member Eric Dinowitz, chair of the city's Committee on Veterans, for the opportunity to support New York City veterans.

There are supplies we will need to make the program successful, including work uniforms, safety goggles, work boots, safety vests, etc. If you would like to be involved and to support the veterans training program, please send your tax-deductible donation to: The Evergreens Cemetery Preservation Foundation, 1629 Bushwick Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11207 or make a payment on Pay Pal [HERE](#).

Thank you in advance for your support.

*Pictured above L-R: Julie Bose, President - The Evergreens Cemetery
James Hendon, Commissioner - NYC Department of Veterans' Services*

The Evergreens Cemetery Preservation Foundation Awarded - Level II Arboretums Status



The Evergreens Cemetery Preservation Foundation has been awarded a Level II Accreditation by The ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation Program and The Morton Arboretum, for achieving particular standards of professional practices deemed important for arboreta and botanic gardens. The ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation Program is the only global initiative to officially recognize arboreta at various levels of development, capacity, and professionalism. The Evergreens is also now recognized as an accredited arboretum in the Morton Register of Arboreta, a database of the world's arboreta and gardens dedicated to woody plants.

Globally, there are only 149 accredited Level II arboretum. "Achieving this level of accreditation acknowledges the commitment the Evergreens has made to its urban canopy and to the community," says Julie Bose, President. "We are an oasis of green in Bushwick and are proud to offer programming for the community as well as providing cemetery services to our families and their loved ones interred on our beautiful and serene grounds. In partnership with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's Urban and Community Forest program, we will have planted more than 400 trees in the past four years. Another NYS partnership with the DEC's Invasive Species program has helped us share educational information on how to keep an urban canopy healthy and protect against tree pests and diseases.

With special collections of evergreens and magnolias, and with astoundingly large and mature trees, including many great oaks, The Evergreens offers tranquil walks through rolling hills and open spaces. The Evergreens invites the public to enjoy quiet contemplation along its tree-lined paths and will be holding Arbor Day programming in the spring as well as offering online tree education programming this fall.

A historic cemetery in the 'rural' style, The Evergreens was incorporated in 1849 and covers 225 acres with more than 3,000 trees. Over 526,000 people are buried throughout the grounds, including notables such as tap legend Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, jazz musician Lester Young, cartoonist Windsor McCay, and painter Martin Heade. Visitors can explore the landscape, designed by the renown Andrew Jackson Downing, and see the great variety of architectural styles represented in the mausoleums and grave markers. The Victorian Gothic Chapel was designed by Alexander Jackson Davis in 1849/1850. The Evergreens Cemetery is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Board Spotlight

Interview with Wellington Chen

Wellington Chen serves on the Buildings and Grounds Committee of the Evergreens Cemetery Board of Trustees. He is the Executive Director of the Chinatown Partnership and Chinatown BID.

How long have you been involved at the cemetery and how did you first get involved?

I was recruited recently. Thanks to your good Chair Fred Bland who serves on the Landmarks Commission, and he invited me out to a meeting and to introduce me to the board members. And the next thing I know they nominated me.

What committee are you on?

On the Grounds Committee. One of the major concerns for Fred and the rest of the team [the Evergreens Cemetery Board of Trustees] is always that we are going to run out of space [for new burials] very soon, and it turns out that we may have bought ourselves some time. In looking at all the possible options, there may be other ways. Even though the space is very tight and we're running low on so-called inventory, it looks like there are a number of possible areas to explore options. And the team has been hard at work on beautifying the cemetery as well.

And beyond that we're also looking holistically, at this shifting consumer preference re the afterlife treatments of dust-to-dust, whether there be cremation, or organic ashes . . . some people even treat it as composting. What is the right way to do it for the future?

Can you tell me more about your profession?

I'm trained as an architect; I worked for I.M. Pei for five years, but my specialty is really in community revival and restoration; how do you take a caterpillar shell that has launched thousands of butterflies and repurpose it to make it relevant again?

Because from where I'm sitting in my office in Chinatown – 90 years ago the area was full of Italian kids. If you're of Irish descent, your very first home is across the street from me; and if you are of Jewish descent a million Jews used to be down here, and that's why the

first Jewish cemetery is across the window. 400 blocks of Germans were here, and they moved up to Yorkville.

I am also fascinated with how you revive the patient – rather than a medical patient, it is a town, and so I spent a lot of years in the trenches helping to revive what has now become North America's largest Asian community.

Back then, they were panicking, abandoning . . . which is very similar to Chinatown today. People are leaving because of migration as they normally do; like the Italians did, like the Germans did, like the million Jewish Americans did, and so did the Irish Americans.

And so people do migrate out for a better American dream. The question is – how do you turn the booster rocket that has sent these kids on to the greener pastures . . . how do you repurpose this booster rocket or this caterpillar shell that has launched this butterfly? Saying "how do we make you come alive again"? And that is my specialty and my interest as that's what I do.

What other boards are you on?

Besides the Landmarks Commission – The Metropolitan Museum of Art, YMCA, Governor's Islands Advisory Council, Rotary Club, GrowNYC, and the Bowne House Historical Society, among others.

Where do you live?

I live in Flushing, Queens.

What do you like to do in your free time?

My hobby is documenting memories. So, you will see that at all times I carry a small camera on my shoulder, as I like to document life – what I call the fleeting moments. Because you know as the saying goes that if, God forbid, your house is on fire and you can run out safely – what normally people will say is not "I need to save that couch or sofa or that piece of furniture," because those items can be replaced. It's those memories that are in your photographs and albums that are irreplaceable, because once they're gone they're gone.

The Evergreens Cemetery post COVID

In 2020 more than 3.35 million people died in the United States - far more than the nation's cemeteries could easily handle. Many of these additional deaths were caused by COVID-19. Cemeteries were under unprecedented stress, as a system designed to accommodate around 2.8 million deaths in a typical year confronted the challenges posed by so many more deaths.



Fortunately, cemeteries are not facing anything like the nationwide deluge of last year due to better knowledge of how to treat and contain the disease, combined with vaccinations. Taking stock, we think about how this pandemic has affected the people we care for in our community. We recognize how many people have been touched by COVID-19 and understand that nearly everyone we know has lost someone, or knows someone who has been touched by this devastating pandemic.

As we collect our breath after a tumultuous two years since the first COVID-19 case was

documented in the United States, we want to take a moment to recognize the heroic efforts of our staff in the midst of the pandemic. While many people were working from home, our staff came to the cemetery every day, working tirelessly to help families in myriad ways. Six days a week, our gravedigging crews handled triple the normal number of burials, treating each one with the utmost dignity and respect.

Our staff's dedication and commitment to the families and communities we serve is truly remarkable and we are very grateful. As we move forward, we are hopeful that this public health crisis will subside in 2022. We continue to be committed to helping ease the grieving process for our families.

Wishing everyone a happy and healthy 2022.

Exhibition: ***Triangle Factory*** ***Fire Memorial Quilt***

To commemorate the 110th anniversary of the Triangle Waist Factory Fire The Evergreens Cemetery is displaying Robin Berson's memorial quilt for the month of March.

The Evergreens is the final resting place of several victims of the fire, which claimed a total of 146 lives on March 25, 1911. The Triangle Fire Memorial to the Unknowns marks the final resting place of previously unknown victims of the fire.

We are proud to honor these victims, as well as the many others who died in the tragic fire, by displaying this quilt in our office lobby.

The quilt on display is one of two quilts in the Workers Memorial Quilts series by author, quilter and historian Robin Berson. These quilts honor garment workers who died approximately a century apart in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire and those from the Tazreen fire and Rana Plaza collapse of 2012 and 2013 in Bangladesh.



Upcoming Events



Stargazing with the Amateur ***Astronomers*** ***Association of New York***

Saturday, May 7, 2022

We will welcome the public observe and learn about the stars with members of the Amateur Astronomers Association of New York.

Arbor Day

Saturday, June 11, 2022

Join us for a family friendly event to learn about trees at the Evergreens, including a tree climbing demonstration by a professional arborist, tree identification walk, tree and flower planting and art activities.



Support Us

We are committed to maintaining our beautiful historic cemetery, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and offering our green space to our community through a wide variety of programs. Your support helps make this possible. It allows us to offer historical tours, tours of cemetery architecture and art, tree walks, stargazing, bird walks, Easter and Halloween events for local children, and other events. We are grateful for your support in helping us fulfill our mission.

Your tax-deductible donation may be made by credit card through PayPal or mailing a check to:

The Evergreens Cemetery Preservation Foundation
1629 Bushwick Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11207

To make a donation through PayPal please click [HERE](#).

Making Arrangements

The Evergreens Cemetery provides a beautiful final resting place for loved ones, and we are pleased to discuss the variety of options available.

Contact:

Damaris Rodriguez
Family Service Counselor
718-455-5300

dr@theevergreenscemetery.org

Shevonne Tucker
Family Service Counselor
718-455-5300

st@theevergreenscemetery.org

Cemetery Hours

Grounds/Gates open 7 days a week:
8:00 AM to 4:30 PM

Please visit our website or contact the office for holiday closures.

Office:
Monday through Friday:
8:00 AM to 4:30 PM

Saturday:
9:00 AM to 1:00 PM

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Shevonne Tucker, Family Service Counselor

Veronica Willis

**The Evergreens Cemetery
1629 Bushwick Avenue
Brooklyn, New York 11207
718-455-5300**

info@theevergreenscemetery.org

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