

EVERGREEN CEMETERY ASSOCIATION
1105 Third Avenue N.E. Brainerd, Minnesota 56401
(218) 829-5898 EMAIL evergreencem@brainerd.net
WEB www.evergreencemeterybrainerd.com

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Dear Members and Friends of Evergreen Cemetery Association:

The Cemetery Board of Trustees along with Executive Director Karen Lentz and Superintendent Rusty Billman extend springtime greetings. It is our overall concern and goal, consistent with long established policies, to maintain both Evergreen Cemetery and Memorial Gardens in the best possible conditions at all times with the resources available. As a result, we wish to express a heartfelt THANK YOU for the financial support many of you provide Evergreen Cemetery Association through your donations.

With the change in our culture of cremation, we want everyone to know that we have several options available for cremation burials as well as provisions for standard or casket burials. We have both in-ground and above-ground options. Additionally, we have smaller cremation lots available at Evergreen and at both cemeteries we permit second burials (of cremains) in the same grave as a traditional casket burial. Our columbarium at Memorial Gardens provides the above-ground option that some families are now seeking. All these options for cremations assure future generations that they will have a permanent place to remember their loved ones.

It is important to note that we continue to experience the impact of cremation that has seriously affected cemetery business in addition to the impact of the State Veterans Cemetery at Camp Ripley. A recent review and study of burials at Evergreen and Memorial Gardens cemeteries indicates a significant decline in the past 20-years: in 1997 there were just under 180 burials whereas in 2017 there were just over 80. Similarly grave sales have declined by a third. ***Since burials and grave sales represent the major source of income this has negatively affected our income to the extent that we are operating with a deficit budget relying heavily on savings and donations.***

This is perhaps the biggest challenge for the Cemetery Board of Trustees in our efforts to perpetuate the legacy of our cemeteries as places of Rest, Remembrance and Reflection. Although it has been necessary to reduce seasonal workers to two and eliminate part time office staff for the coming summer season, we are pleased to report that last year we were able to proceed with major road repairs and updating along the fence from the 1st Avenue Gate and north of the 3rd Avenue Gate. We anticipate that additional roadwork will be able to be accomplished this year with previous donations along with replacement of a 40-year old pickup truck. We also are looking forward to the completion this year of a Tree Management Plan being developed in cooperation with the Central Lakes College Natural Resources program. However, our focus will be to perpetuate the park-like appearance of our cemeteries as noted in the beginning paragraph and to appropriately care for the more than 20,000 burials within our cemeteries.

