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EMCA eNewsletter Special Edition



EMCA Welcomes Shannon Blas-Blair as Managing Director



The Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association Board of Directors has named Shannon Blas-Blair as its new Managing Director.

We are very excited to have Shannon join our team in this leadership role. This is an important time for the EMCA as we strive to grow our endowment and continually cultivate the cemetery as a community treasure. Her skills, experience, and enthusiasm for philanthropy and fundraising will continue to bring success and long-term strength to the organization.

Shannon was born and raised in Southern California. She has undergraduate degrees in music and drama from San Diego Mesa College and the University of California, Irvine. In 2014, she earned a dual-master's degree (MBA/MFA) in business administration and theater management from California State University, Long Beach. Shannon has spent her career serving others and developing and strengthening organizations, both in the nonprofit sector and in the education sector.

Shannon is a 16-year member of Rotary International, and remains active remotely as treasurer in her Rotary club based in Huntington Beach, California. In service to her club, she supports fundraising, developing international programs, grant writing, event coordination, and much more.

When not serving others at the cemetery, Shannon and her husband like to hit the road in their Airstream trailer, exploring the beauties of the Pacific Northwest and beyond. She is also an accomplished musician, most notably as a big band jazz singer. She may even participate in future events at the cemetery such as *Music on the Square* or *Music to Die For*. Stay tuned!

Shannon began serving in her role as Managing Director on November 1st. Sally Dietrich will remain on the payroll until the end of the year, which will make for a smooth transition of responsibilities. (see article below) Shannon's duties include sales, coordinating operations, coordinating fundraising, business development and strategic planning. She will work closely with the Board of Directors during this important time for the organization. She will also work alongside Diego Llewellyn-Jones who was recently promoted as the EMCA Site Director. Together, Shannon and Diego will lead the organization as we continue to provide services as an operating cemetery, and to ensure the cemetery remains a cultural and natural resource for the community.

Welcome Shannon!

Farewell to Sally Dietrich Administrator Extraordinaire



reputationally, with much thanks to her.

Sometimes the third time's the charm. For EMCA, this was never more true than when the board hired Sally Dietrich in January 2014, when the first administrator, Mary Ellen Rodgers, retired. Two people were hired and two people were fired before Sally joined the organization. Nine years later, the cemetery has never been in better shape, financially and

It began when Sally had lunch with her friend Alex Brokaw, who was, and still is, an EMCA board member. Alex casually mentioned to Sally that EMCA was searching for a cemetery administrator. As Sally recalls, the day before she had been visiting a pioneer cemetery outside of Coburg and said to herself, "I wonder how I get a job in a cemetery?" Lucky for EMCA, she got one with us.

Sally had no background in running a cemetery. She had been a successful small business owner in downtown Eugene and a local painting contractor prior to that. In addition, Sally has a long-standing passion for the history of this community. Her retail background and interest in historical preservation made her a great fit for the administrator position at our 160 year old pioneer cemetery.

While there is the business side of running a cemetery, there is also the deeply human side. Sally notes: "I have had the privilege of working with people during some of the most profound moments of their lives. I have been fortunate to be allowed to do that."

On the business side, Sally's diligence at selling plots and building public trust, enabled the cemetery to get on a solid financial footing. She has been so successful that EMCA will soon run out of lots for coffin burials. However, this success means we have sufficient funds to tide us over as we transition to relying more on annual donations and growing our endowment.

Two examples of Sally's contributions to EMCA's success deserve special mention. As an illustration of her entrepreneurial mindset, Sally proposed to the board that we start selling grave markers as a convenience to our customers. When we gave her the green light, she turned this into a solid source of income. More recently, Sally helped the cemetery transition from purely paper records by working with board members to locate and contract with Cemify, which provides a software tool for managing cemetery burial and sales records. Sally can testify that the transition is very time-consuming on the front end, as all the records dating back more than 160 years must be entered into the system. However, the future payoff will be huge for folks who deal with these now easily accessible and fireproof records.

One can't end a description of Sally's accomplishments without mentioning how valuable her artistic sense of taste and her eye for detail has been to EMCA. As Alex Brokaw notes, "Sally changed the way we presented Hope Abbey on Memorial Day weekend open houses. She took it to a new sophisticated level that the mausoleum deserved."

The board wishes Sally great joy and satisfaction in her retirement. We're confident that she will find new and exciting ways to fill her time. Thank you, Sally!

Site Manager Promoted



Congratulations to our Site Manager, Diego Llewellyn-Jones, for his promotion to full time status with the cemetery. Diego will continue to work with our Landscaper, Jackson Kopka. Diego is on the left in the photo, with Jackson on the right.

Our recent listing as an arboretum will require additional time, so the promotion is a welcome move.

John Bredesen, eNewsletter Editor
Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association

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Mission Statement

To restore, rehabilitate, maintain, interpret and operate the historic Eugene Masonic Cemetery and Hope Abbey Mausoleum as a cultural and natural resource for the community.

The cemetery is operated for the public benefit,
but it is private property.
(A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization)



Eugene Masonic Cemetery
ASSOCIATION

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