

New funeral home will serve Jewish families

BY JON HUBBARD
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For years, people who knew funeral director Alan Dorfman asked him, "Why don't you open your own place?"

Then employed by Hebrew Memorial Chapel, Dorfman finally set out on his own, opening a small business in Berkley. Since 1989, he and his son, Jonathan, have been offering the Jewish community an alternative to the larger Hebrew Memorial and Ira Kaufman chapels.

On Sunday, they took the historic step of breaking ground for the first Jewish funeral chapel to be built in the past 50 years in the Detroit area. Located on 12 Mile in Farmington Hills, the 13,000-square-foot Dorfman Funeral Chapel will be more than 13 times the size of their Berkley building.

"All we do now is graveside services," Alan said. "We use the facilities on the cemetery grounds for the service and then proceed to the grave. Now, families will have the opportunity to hold the service right in the new place, and then we'll either proceed to the cemetery or meet there, which is safer."

With its canopied front entrance and enclosed, outdoor garden, the building will be constructed of limestone, granite and brick. The three-acre site posed some challenges, Jonathan said, but has good access to major roadways.

The Dorfman chose Farmington Hills because demographic studies showed the community is roughly the center of a Jewish population living in an area from Troy to Walled Lake.

"It's a perfect location," Jonathan said, "but it's a terrible site. The underground utilities are unbelievable. We have to take our sanitary sewer pipes 20 feet deep, stretching 60-some feet."

That and recent wet weather have made the Dorfman a little nervous about the planned Octo-

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ber completion date. They're looking forward to expanding on more than a decade of providing services to the community during times of greatest need.

The tradition began with Alan, whose family had been in the pharmacy business. His father operated a store at Joy and Quincy roads. Alan would sit at the lunch counter with workers from the Ira Kaufman Chapel and listen to them talk about their work.

He found the field fascinating and decided to make it his life's work. Alan served an apprenticeship with William R. Hamilton Co., then began what would become a 27-year career with Hebrew Memorial.

"I enjoyed working there, but there's nothing like being your own boss," he said.

Jonathan came into his father's business from medical school, at Michigan State University.

"He was at the point of opening this place, and he asked me if I wanted to come in and build this business together," Jonathan recalled.

After talking with people already in the profession, he changed his mind about medical school and has been working with his father ever since. He has particularly enjoyed the opportunity to see the business grow, through work they've done as a team.

Particularly in recent years, the business of providing funeral

and burial services has taken an upward curve, as the "baby boom" generation ages. People born shortly after World War II ended are now growing older and facing the end of their lives.

"That's why huge companies are paying large sums of money for funeral homes," Jonathan said. "A lot of the 'mom and pop' funeral homes are being bought out."

He doesn't see that happening with the Dorfman Chapel.

"I think there's a down side," he explained. "You lose the personal service. When you own your own business, there's a real pride in helping the family through it. We've always thought of it as, how would we like to be treated when we're going through this?"

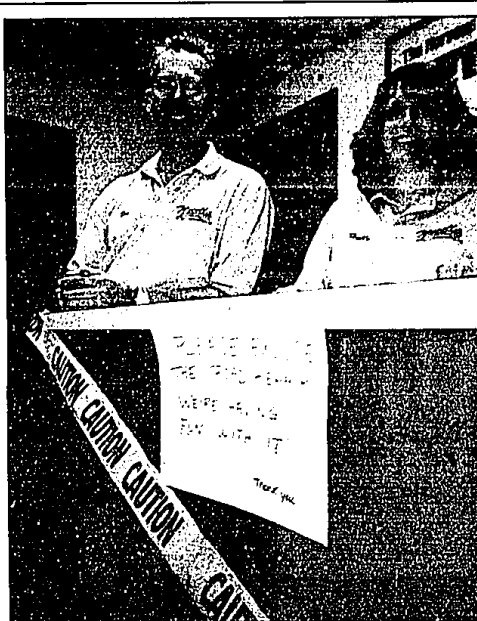
In addition to being a licensed funeral director, Jonathan holds a master's degree in psychology. He pursued the advanced degree after talking with a professor who specialized in the psychology of grief.

While he initially worked with the Maximum Living center to provide aftercare for people who had lost loved ones, Jonathan had to stop because it took so much time away from his family. He hopes the new chapel will create opportunities to return to providing that kind of support.

Hills City Council member Jerry Ellis, who has known the family since Jonathan was a young boy, spoke at Sunday's groundbreaking ceremony of his pleasure at having the family located in his community.

As he listened to Jonathan make the first presentation for a re-zoning request on the property last year, Ellis recalls thinking back to the days when the applicant was in middle school. He remembered carpooling to take Jonathan to Sunday School.

"I got a real kick out of it," he said. "Here he was a very nice young man, in business with his father. It's a nice project, and they did a nice job with it. I took a lot of pleasure in that."



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL SCHULZ

Going along: Patients who drive to Nocella Chiropractic on Grand River are inconvenienced by construction on nearby Adams, Grace and Cass roads. So to put some lightheartedness into the situation, Dr. Brian Nocella and staff members, such as Holly Russell (at right), decided to decorate the office in a construction motif. Nocella and Russell are modeling the shirts they had designed to show their logo and a bulldozer.

Construction ahead Chiropractor's office gets into spirit of summer road work

BY TIM SMITH
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If road construction workers are going to be tearing it up around their Farmington office, employees at Nocella Chiropractic figured they might as well tear it up, too.

With city road projects under way on nearby Adams, Cass and Grace roads, Dr. Brian Nocella and his staff decided it was time to have a little fun with a difficult, inconvenient situation.

They decorated their office with a construction motif, such as yellow caution tape in the lobby, and also printed up some bright yellow T-shirts

■ 'My patients are being inconvenienced by the construction. So to diffuse it a little bit, we made shirts with our logo and a bulldozer.'

Dr. Brian Nocella
—Chiropractor

with — you guessed it — a bulldozer squarely on the front.

"My patients are being inconvenienced by the construction," explained Nocella. "So to diffuse it a little bit, we made shirts with our logo and

a bulldozer."

Those shirts are construction zone yellow for good measure.

According to Nocella, things are getting better as the projects progress. But his office needed to juggle hours and appointments to help accommodate Friday's overlay of more than two inches of asphalt on the roads.

Nocella Chiropractic, at 33708 Grand River, usually is closed on Thursday and open on Friday. He merely switched days, moving Friday's appointments over to Thursday, so that the office not be open when the noisy asphalt project takes place.



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL SCHULZ

New to town: Alan Dorfman (left) and his son, Jonathan, plan to build a new funeral home in Farmington Hills. It would bring to a total of three funeral homes in Oakland County that serve the Jewish community.

Looking pretty Mansion gets ready for change

BY TRACEY BIRKENHAUER
STAFF WRITER

The Governor Warner Mansion is undergoing some changes.

On Monday, the Farmington City Council approved a bid for \$5,978 to paint the exterior of the building on Grand River Avenue. The council also approved an agreement with Metrobank to provide credit card payment processing at mansion activities, such as auctions.

During the Governor Warner Mansion Committee quarterly update, co-chairs Jim McGlinchey and Penny Lehto explained to the council that the group is raising funds to renovate the Carriage House, located behind the mansion. The Carriage House is used for storage.

Architects gave the committee three options for interior changes to maximize building use. The proposals include one- and two-story options, a kitchen and expanded rest rooms.

■ Renovation costs will range from \$220,000 to \$300,000. Fund-raising will start Saturday, Aug. 12, with The Governor's Ball, a dinner, dance and auction on the mansion grounds.

Lehto said these changes will provide much-needed additional space at the facility.

"Who ever would have thought one of our problems would be crowd control?" she jokingly asked the council.

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