



This copy is for your personal, noncommercial use only. You can order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers [here](#) or use the "Reprints" tool that appears above any article. [Order a reprint of this article now.](#)

Prairie Creek unveils Jewish natural cemetery

By *Evvy Struzynski*

Correspondent

Published: Saturday, December 10, 2011 at 6:01 a.m.

A new, certified green Jewish cemetery will be dedicated at 3 p.m. Sunday at the Prairie Creek Lodge.

Several acres of Prairie Creek Conservation Cemetery, an existing natural cemetery in Gainesville, will be quartered off and the entrance marked with a large archway to establish a Jewish area.

This is the only local cemetery of its kind, said Dennis Shuman, the founder of P'nai Or Gainesville Jewish Renewal Congregation.

Burial in this cemetery is unique as caskets are not necessarily used. Wrapped in shrouds of biodegradable cloth, the body returns to the earth quicker and nutrients are made available for other organisms sooner than when caskets are used, Shuman said.

"The body decomposes quickly and is recycled into other living things much more quickly," he said. "There isn't that separation — it's closer to being a part of nature."

The cemetery is open to Jews of all affiliations, and non-Jewish spouses and significant others can be buried in the cemetery next to their Jewish counterparts.

The new cemetery supports traditional Jewish burial regulations, which call for a swift and natural return to the earth.

Shuman said this is the main type of burial in Israel.

"Ecologically, it has an advantage, and it's also probably the least expensive burial available," Shuman said.

This environmentally-friendly alternative to traditional burial practices is a cost-effective way to be laid to rest.

The fee for a natural, green burial in the cemetery is currently \$2,000, Shuman said.

In addition, the cemetery is on conservation land and the proceeds from the burials go toward conserving more land for future generations.

The dedication ceremony will begin at the Prairie Creek Lodge, from which attendees will walk or take a shuttle to the cemetery site. Then there will be a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the unveiling of the new archway.

Shuman designed the arch in the entrance way to the Jewish section of the cemetery which is being created by Gainesville Ironworks Inc.

After the ceremony, there will be a pot-luck style vegetarian dinner reception.

This celebration is co-sponsored by P'nai Or Gainesville and the Prairie Creek Conservation Cemetery.

“People were choosing cremation because it wasn’t wasting land and it could be more natural, but this will give them another alternative,” Shuman said, “In a shroud in a hole in ground without a box or concrete.”

Copyright © 2014 Gainesville.com — All rights reserved. Restricted use only.