



Realizing the Dream

The Meadow Natural Burial Ground

“Thank you for hearing the wishes of so many who prefer this natural and very normal acceptance of their death and concern for the well being of the environment they leave behind.” –Ashlea

The above quote is from an e-mail that I received the same day our local paper ran a press release about the opening of The Meadow Natural Burial Ground at Greenacres Memorial Park, which took place at the end of January.

Greenacres Memorial Park is located in Ferndale, Wash., the north-westernmost corner of the lower 48 states. Greenacres is owned by Moles Family Funeral Homes & Crematory, a fourth-generation family-owned funeral provider in Whatcom County. We are 20 minutes south of the Canadian border, sandwiched between the glistening waters of Puget Sound and the stunning Cascade Mountains. Whatcom County is also characterized by old-growth forests, mighty rivers and a population that is very focused on the quality of life. Our county seat,

Bellingham, is the second-largest purchaser of green power in the nation. We have a variety of places to purchase organic and locally produced foods, and we have a dizzying array of nonprofit environmental organizations. So we anticipated a pent-up demand for green burial options.

We also knew, living in a community that is so savvy when it comes to all things green, that our choice to offer green burial would have to be more than marketing; it needed to be a practice driven by our values. To ensure that we held to the high standards of green set by our community, we worked closely with several individuals and organizations. Foremost were Joe Sehee and the Green Burial Council, of which Sehee is the executive director.

With less than a dozen green burial cemeteries in the nation, and none of them in an existing traditional cemetery, we had very few precedents to draw on as we moved into the development phase of The Meadow Natural Burial Ground. The knowledge and experience

of Sehee and the Green Burial Council proved invaluable. With information and referrals from Sehee, we were able to make The Meadow more than a green cemetery. We have created a nearly 5-acre site dedicated to restoring a thriving native ecosystem that also serves as a memorial landscape. On a recent visit to Greenacres Memorial Park for the launch of The Meadow, Sehee stated that, “Greenacres has become a role model for green cemeteries in the United States. Moles has done everything we have asked, and more, to show a commitment to a new ethic rooted in environmental stewardship.” We were honored by Sehee’s presence and comments at this event. The Meadow is certified by the Green Burial Council as a Natural Burial Ground. Soon we will be applying for certification as a Conservation Burial Ground, the Green Burial Council’s highest level

Above and Right: The dedication of Meadow Natural Burial Ground at Greenacres Memorial Park. (Photos courtesy of Brian Flowers)

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of certification.

This “commitment to a new ethic” allowed us to approach as a potential partner our local nonprofit land trust organization, the Whatcom Land Trust, whose mission since its inception in 1984 has been “to preserve and protect

wildlife habitat, scenic, agricultural and open space lands in Whatcom County for future generations by securing interests in land and promoting land stewardship.” We are currently working with the Whatcom Land Trust to establish a conservation easement that

it will hold over the nearly 5 acres that make up The Meadow. This conservation easement will place significant restrictions on the land into perpetuity, ensuring that The Meadow will only ever be used for green burials. The Whatcom Land Trust will regularly monitor all activity in The Meadow to make sure it is compliant with the requirements established in the conservation easement.

By creating this partnership we have engaged a much-loved organization in our community and its many members as enthusiastic supporters of our green burial options. We have aligned The Meadow’s objectives with our personal values and the values of the community we serve. With the help of the Green Burial Council, the Whatcom Land Trust and other community partners that have become stakeholders in this process, we have created The Meadow Natural Burial Ground at Greenacres Memorial Park as a living example of the Moles Family Funeral Services stated core value of community stewardship. We “take care of our community, environment and resources through environmentally sensitive practices” and our mission statement, “Caring for all families – as we would our own.” •

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