

# Wartburg Hosts Three-Day Memorial Service

MOUNT VERNON, NEW YORK, UNITED STATES, October 2, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Wartburg Hosts Three-Day Memorial Service in the Aftermath of COVID-19

Wartburg Provides Memorial Services For Grieving Families While Honoring The Brave Men And Women On The Frontlines

Mount Vernon, N.Y. (September 14, 2020) – Amid the unprecedented loss and mourning experienced by those connected to senior care and housing organizations due to COVID-19, Wartburg, a premiere senior care and housing provider in lower Westchester County, New York, moved to help quell the feelings of loss and isolation. In doing so, several hundred people visited Wartburg's historic campus throughout the perfect weather memorial weekend. Masks and social distancing were required, screening and contact tracing was also in place.

This year, many traditions were upended as we observed strict social distancing orders which undeniably made us feel incomplete. In terms of end of life, there were no hugs or shared meals and we believe this lack of closure could delay emotional healing and that any prolonged self-isolation could even trigger depression. Some families simply feel lost, and their grief is only exacerbated by the absence of prayer and remembrance services.

Wartburg kicked-off the memorial weekend recognizing the hundreds of talented and diverse staff who put themselves on the front lines during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in this region. A memorial plaque was unveiled with a joint-proclamation issued by Wartburg's Boards of Directors. "In years to come, when this pandemic is over, we will look back on this time; and, while we will never forget the sorrow and the losses, we will have endured, and we will remember this as a time of great love, compassion, caring and courage, all over our world, and here at Wartburg." said Thomas A. Roth, Wartburg Home Board Secretary.



The Robert H. Coke Memorial Tree

"Those of us in the field were honored to take care of patients during this pandemic - but it didn't come without stress and risk. Although this has been an incredibly trying experience for all of us, it has also been inspiring to see the community support. The angels are still on our side." said Dr. David J. Gentner, Wartburg's President & CEO.

An anchor tree was planted in memory of a 40-year Wartburg employee. "We wanted to do our part to recognize these brave men and women on the frontline against COVID-19 and give them a beautiful and deserved legacy on the campus. The Robert H. Coke Memorial Tree will serve as a reminder of the meaningful work we do every day in the care of our residents," said Dorothea Bell, EVP Compliance and Human Resources.

We were aware that many families did not have the comfort or closure that viewings, wakes, and funerals provide when their loved ones passed. At the same time, we knew that we had to be flexible with our own offering of ritual, not knowing what restrictions may be in place at the time of the event. Blessed with a wonderful chapel and an open meadow beside it, we created times of visitation where one could "remember" both in the outdoors by tying a ribbon on a memorial tree and in the chapel on Saturday afternoon. When families walked the meadow, they heard the vibraphone played by Chris Dinghman from the gazebo, which many likened to the sound of wind chimes. In the chapel, Wartburg's Pastor and Director of Spiritual Care, Rev. Kimberli Lile, and Dr. Gentner greeted families and said prayers of commendation. James Pfister, Wartburg's organist and chapel associate, provided music for meditation.

Sunday's memorial service, led by Pastor Lile with music directed by Pfister, included instrumental improvisation on the hymns, as current restrictions discourage singing in closed settings. "We had what we thought was an overwhelming number of names to hear at one reading, so we created four 'portions' in the liturgy to remember the departed," said Lile. The first was dedicated to those lost in the pandemic, the second to the deceased residents of the Wartburg Community as a whole, the third to the Sisters of Catholic orders who lived among us, and the fourth to the Veterans who resided here. In each portion, we had a reading from scripture, a recitation of names, then a melody line from the hymn, Shall We Gather at the River, with the organ first, then Pfister as vocalist, followed by the violin played by Clare Detco each providing variations for the first three portions. The last portion concluded with the playing of Echo Taps on two trumpets by Jorge and Susan Lopez, a married couple who are Veterans, themselves, who served in Iraq.

When one walks the campus now, a few days after the three-day memorial service, the purple ribbons can be seen tied to the memorial tree, mirroring the Memorial invitation. "We wove a royal purple ribbon into each card, giving families something to touch in what has become a virtual world. We wanted to give them a tangible reason to come, a ritual in hand, if they had been lost without one." Lile explains.

Bridget Zimmerman, Wartburg's Skilled Nursing Facility Administrator, shared that in talking to both staff and families since the event, she found that many expressed they experienced the three-day Wartburg 2020 Memorial Weekend to be both helpful and healing. "Just about everyone found something they needed in those three days." said Zimmerman.

About Wartburg

Wartburg, located in Westchester County, NY, offers integrated, comprehensive senior residential and healthcare services. Unlike conventional retirement communities, Wartburg provides a wide range of services to both residents living on their beautiful 34-acre campus and people in their own homes. From independent, assisted living and award-winning nursing home care to inpatient/outpatient rehabilitation, home care and adult day care services, their continuing care approach has earned them a trusted reputation. Wartburg also provides caregiver support at every stage with an array of options to find the level of care that considers the whole family. Wartburg was named one of the "Best Nursing Homes in New York State" by U.S. News & World Report for the ninth consecutive year in 2019.

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