

Memorial Narrative:

The outbreak of a global COVID pandemic in the early spring of 2020 irrevocably changed life as we previously knew it. Thoughts of a memorial in the Davis Cemetery District began early in 2022 as we gradually emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic, but as our collective lives continued to be profoundly impacted by covid-related losses and life changes. The Davis Cemetery District surveyed the local community to assess interest and solicit ideas for a memorial and a COVID Memorial Subcommittee formed to plan and fundraise for the memorial. In the spring of 2024, the Subcommittee contracted an Artist Team to collaborate on designing and creating ceramic tile mosaics and mural artwork for the memorial. Community participation in the memorial was solicited through a second feedback survey and several tile-making workshops held in numerous public venues during the summer of 2024. Creation and installation of artwork for the memorial continued up to the Memorial Dedication on September 22, 2024.

The result of this collaboration between the Davis Cemetery District, COVID Memorial Art Team and community contributions is a memorial that documents the lived experience of our community during the COVID-19 pandemic and offers a cathartic space for those experiencing the impacts of COVID and others experiencing and recovering from loss and grief.

This memorial invites you to journey through this experience - to remember, reflect, and connect. The journey begins at the western end of the pathway where two entrance obelisks invite you to be present in this moment and to connect directly and physically with this location and with other memorial visitors by running your hands (if you like) over the very tactile ceramic surfaces. Walking to the east towards the Reflecting Wall, you pass through several arches or portals, each representing themes and experiences from the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as stages experienced by others dealing with loss and grief:

- Portal 1 - Isolation/Shock/Home
- Portal 2 - Support/Help/Community
- Portal 3 - Loss/Grief/Remembrance
- Portal 4 - Hope/Healing/Renewal

Although the lived experience of grief and loss is seldom strictly linear, there is a sense of movement through the stages represented in the memorial. As you move towards the Reflecting Wall at the end of the pathway, take time to circle around each of the portals and take in the full meaning and impact of each. As you reach the eastern end of the pathway, a tile and mirror wall invites you to reflect on your memories, feelings, lessons learned, and wishes in whatever way feels right to you. Finally, retracing your steps back along the pathway, the portals offer a different face with new images and an altered perspective.

COVID Memorial Subcommittee: Heidi Kellison, Jessica Smithers, Stephen Souza

COVID Memorial Artist Team:

Lead Artist - Wes Horn

Mosaic Team - Wes Horn, Donna Lemongello, Jennifer Nachmanoff

Mural Team - Brenda Cibrian, Will Durkee, Gregory Shilling

Reflecting Wall - Ro Mottsmith

Portal Narratives:

Portal 1 (“Isolation/Shock/Home”)

This first portal features a large almond and cherry tree with branches extending up into the painted mural panel. On the west side, pink blossoms, green grasses, and flowing waters signify the spring season when we first became aware of a global COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. On the east side, fall colors and foliage signify the passage of time and our gradual emergence from the pandemic in the fall of 2021. Throughout this portal, local wildlife and their homes (nests, bird houses, an owl box) abound, reminding us of the relief from monotony that nature and outdoor places provided as we quarantined in our own homes, first for weeks and then months, isolated from friends and family members. A mother quail “isolates” and protects her young chicks. A young girl sits on a hill reading a book. As we turn to fall on the portal’s east side, local resident birds leave their nests and homes and finally fly free, just as many felt a renewed sense of freedom with the waning of the pandemic.

Portal 2 (“Support/Help/Community”)

On the west side of Portal 2, warm color tones and many hands and hearts offer support, prayer, love, friendship, and encouragement. This portal portrays the many ways in which first responders, health care workers and other essential workers rose to the occasion and sacrificed to help our community (represented by red roses). On the east, north and south sides of Portal 2 are many iconic symbols of the pandemic, including health care symbols, washing hands, covid tests, and masks. These symbols are embedded in geologic-like layers of colored tiles, along with large crystals, giving them the appearance of fossilized artifacts of the pandemic - a preserved record of this impactful period of time.

Portal 3 (“Loss/Grief/Remembrance”)

This portal is dedicated to those we have lost. Candles of remembrance, white lilies and mourning doves represent deep sadness, and large steadfast oak leaves and Dia de Los Muertos imagery acknowledge and pay homage particularly to the many lost lives, as well as other losses that resulted from the COVID pandemic. Blues and other cool colors add to the somber effect. On the east side, the tall candles have burned down, marking the passage of time. Water flowing under it all reminds us that life also flows on.

Portal 4 (“Hope/Healing/Renewal”)

The west side of the final portal is an explosion of flowers and color, representing resilience, healing, renewal, and hope for a brighter future, informed by lessons learned through the pandemic experience. Most of the flowers included are locally present in the Davis Cemetery Arboretum and many of the flowers relate to the Portal 4 theme symbolically. Yellow chrysanthemums, for example, symbolize deep love. Daisies, daffodils and sunflowers symbolize new beginnings, hope, joy, spiritual awakening and personal growth. Large format tiles on the east side of Portal 4 as well as smaller community-made tiles throughout the portal feature symbols of hope, healing and renewal from a diversity of cultural and faith traditions. Among these are the Ankh - an ancient Egyptian symbol representing eternal life and hope while mourning; the Hamsa - a universal sign of protection, power, and strength dating back to ancient Mesopotamia, the Trinity Knot - a Celtic symbol of never ending love and eternal life;

the Lotus - a Buddhist symbol of hope and resilience; the Wheel of Samsara - a Hindu symbol of birth and rebirth; and some Adinkra (Ashante) symbols of love, hope, healing and renewal. In the background of these symbols is a traditional Patwin basketry motif with a diamond banding often used to represent the Patwin peoples or nations. The Patwin basketry motif extends into the mural panel with a traditional Patwin "Stairway to Heaven" basketry pattern. These cultural and faith symbols represent the global impact of the COVID pandemic, as well as the diversity of people within our own local community impacted by it. They can also serve as a reminder of the importance of our ancestral traditions in supporting us through hard times.