



The 2019 configuration of the abstract sculpture at the Armenian Heritage Park. (Matt Conti Photo, from the North End Waterfront)

Armenian Heritage Park Virtual Public Programs: Connecting and Engaging

FEBRUARY 11, 2021

BOSTON — Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway public programs are usually held year-round except during the winter months. However, with virtual adaptations of several programs since March, many programs are keeping people connected, coming together virtually all while expanding our

reach and building community. The response to these programs speaks to the Park's influence and impact, with appreciation to the Park's Benefactors, Supporters, Collaborators and Friends.

“Our Park on public space is unlike most, with innovative design features that, when experienced as a whole, enlighten, enliven, and enrich our senses of citizenry and community,” comments Ann Zacarian, Founder, Motion Play Ventures, who serves on the Friends' Programs Planning Team.

A key design feature of the Park is the Abstract Sculpture, a split rhomboid dodecahedron made of stainless steel and aluminum. Annually the sculpture is reconfigured, symbolic of all who pulled away or were forced to pull away from their country of origin and came to our Massachusetts shores to establish themselves in new and different ways.

Annually, the two halves of the Abstract Sculpture are pulled apart by a crane and reconfigured to create a new sculptural shape, symbolic of a new life. “Public Art...permanent and alive,” the *Boston Globe* wrote.

The much-anticipated Annual Reconfiguration of the Abstract Sculpture is held in April, under the direction of Aurelian Mardiros, A&A Industries, Bill Martin representing the Armenian Heritage Foundation, sponsors of the Park and Don Tellalian, AIA, the park's architect/designer. A&A Industries, Anahid and Aurelian Mardiros, co-founders, fabricated the Abstract Sculpture, their most generous gift in-kind.

The annually reconfigured Abstract Sculpture sits on the Reflecting Pool. The etched dedication reads, in part, “This sculpture is offered in honor of the one and one-half million victims of the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1923. May it serve in remembrance of all genocides that have followed and celebrate the diversity of the communities that have re-formed in the safety of these shores.”

Waters from the Reflecting Pool wash over its sides and reemerges at the Labyrinth's Center as a single jet of water, representing hope and rebirth.

The Labyrinth, a circular winding path paved in grass and inlaid stone, celebrates life's journey. Etched around the Labyrinth's Circle are the words Art, Service, Science and Commerce in tribute to contributions to life and culture.

Year round, many walk the labyrinth at the park daily, a source of relaxation, contemplation and meditation. Unlike a maze with dead ends, the labyrinth has one path leading to the center, the same path leading out. Some visit this place of solace and comfort each day for a quiet moment on one the benches that surround the Labyrinth and the Abstract Sculpture.

Influenced by those who walk the park's labyrinth and the medical community, the Labyrinth Walking Wellness series focuses on the benefits of labyrinth walking. The series is being planned under the leadership of Kristin Asadourian, founder, Living BECOME, LLC; Armineh Mirzabegian, MD, Internist, Reliant Medical Group, part of OptumCare; Katrina Piehler, founder, Living from Center and Chiara Megighian Zenati, founder, Aya Institute of Systemic Constellation Work.

Under the leadership of Dr. Armineh Mirzabegian, Labyrinth Walking: The Power and Health Benefits will be held virtually on Wednesday, March 3 at 5pm. A public program of the Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine, Osher Center for Integrative Medicine at Brigham and Women's Hospital and Friends of Armenian Heritage Park offered in collaboration with the Armenian American Medical Association, Boston Public Health Commission, City of Boston Age-Friendly and Parks and Recreation, and The Greenway Conservancy.

Darshan Mehta, MD, MPH, an expert in stress management and resiliency, will offer a talk on stress reduction and the meditative benefits of walking the park's labyrinth, especially timely as the pandemic has caused a great deal of stress and anxiety for so many people. Dr. Mehta is Medical Director and Director of Medical Education, Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine; Associate Director, Osher Center for Integrative Medicine, Brigham and Women's Hospital and Assistant Professor in Medicine, Harvard Medical School.



Walking the Labyrinth at Armenian Heritage Park on the Greenway (photo Andrea Burns)

A conversation with Drs. Mehta and Mirzabegian follows Dr. Mehta's talk. Maura Koutoujian, PCC, CPHWC, Senior Professional Coach, Mass General Brigham / Brigham and Women's Hospital and Fellow, Institute of Coaching, McLean/Harvard Medical School will offer the welcome.

Celebrating Art, Science, Service and Commerce: Leadership, Sharing Experiences, a public program in a series to celebrate contributions to life and culture in Art, Science, Service and Commerce, the words etched around the Labyrinth's Circle. This virtual program will be held on Wednesday, April 7 at 5pm and will feature influencers — each leading by extraordinary example — who will speak about their experiences and commitment to social good and making a difference. Ann Zacarian, Founder, Motion Play Ventures, will offer the welcome; Chief Marty Martinez, City of Boston Office of Health and Human Services, will offer greetings. WCVB TV Cindy Fitzgibbon is host. Participants include Edward Casabian, investor, early Uber employee;

Julia Grove, Picture Editor, This is Us, NBC series; Avak Kahvejian, PhD, General Partner, Flagship Pioneering; Councilor Julia Mejia, Boston City Council; Berj Najarian, Director of Football and Head Coach Administration, New England Patriots; and Tracey Zhen, President, Zipcar.

For the first time, Under the Snow Moon will be held virtually on Saturday, February 27 at 4 p.m., a part of the series of moonlit evenings held at the park during the summer. The program opens with Tsoleen Sarian offering a welcome and includes a virtual labyrinth walk. Participants will share their wishes to be then written on colorful ribbons and tied to The Wishing Tree at the park at a later date when all can come together at the park. The ribbons are the gift of Faith Cass, Cass the Florist. This initiative, among others, is under the leadership of Susan Deranian and Tom Dow. Under the Moon series was prompted by Tea and Tranquility, the late afternoon series hosted by MEM Tea Imports and initiated by and under the leadership of Catherine Minassian.

Celebrating What Unites Us! virtual cooking series continues on Wednesday, February 10 at 10 a.m., highlighting French Cuisine with Chef Tyler Stout, Executive Chef, Troquet on South in Boston. Wednesday, February 24, at 10 a.m. will highlight African Cuisine with Glorya Fernandez, Oldways Instructor. Special guest is Emmanuel Owusu, co-founder/Executive Director, African Bridge Network.

This virtual cooking series is offered bi-monthly in collaboration with the City of Boston Age-Friendly, Andrea Burns, Director and Oldways. Sara Baer-Sinnott, engaging participants worldwide. The two-part program was successfully launched three years ago to build community and cross-cultural understanding while promoting healthy and active living. Each month features the ethnic heritage of many living in the City of Boston and beyond. Prior to the pandemic for two years, participants first met at the park where a community leader shared his/her immigrant experience and then all walked the labyrinth. Then, walked to The KITCHEN (now permanently closed) at the Boston Public Market where a guest chef shared a signature dish for all to enjoy for lunch and conversation. The series was offered in collaboration with City of Boston Age-Friendly and The KITCHEN and funded by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts. Planning is underway to continue the series once all are out and about again.

Geometry as Public Art: Telling A Story, the educational curriculum inspired by the park's design and geometric features, was developed by the Friends' Curriculum Development Team, Jason Behrens, Manneh Ghazarians and other educators among the Friends in collaboration with the 4th grade educators at The Eliot K-8 Innovation School, Boston Public School in the North End. The curriculum is now available to all schools in Boston and beyond.

A Boston Public School Partner Program, the curriculum can be implemented virtually with the video, Join us! We're on our way to Armenian Heritage Park on The Greenway, developed and narrated by Tom Cahaly and Elizabeth Cahaly, Wellesley High School students.

"This curriculum is an exciting and engaging way for students to learn more about their family heritage and reflect on the American immigration experience...and a wonderful way for teachers to learn about and better understand their students and for the students to learn about one another," comments Brianna Greene, 4th Grade Educator at The Eliot K-8 Innovation School.

Friends of Armenian Heritage Park is an initiative of the Armenian Heritage Foundation. The Foundation Board, comprised of representatives from parishes and organizations within the Armenian-American community of Massachusetts, is responsible for proper governance and fiduciary oversight, as well as for the park's ongoing care and maintenance. Please visit ArmenianHeritagePark.org for Armenian Heritage Foundation Board and its key leadership.

Let's all — Benefactors, Supporters, Friends and Collaborators – continue to celebrate the park, an extraordinary gift to the City of Boston and Commonwealth, and to children and grandchildren. A living tribute to parents, grandparents and ancestors engaging all, coming together on common ground. Remembering the past. Honoring the present. Celebrating the future.

To support the park's ongoing care and maintenance, please visit ArmenianHeritagePark.org/Support or mail your check, made payable to Armenian Heritage Foundation, to Karen Dederyan, Treasurer, Armenian Heritage Foundation, PO Box 77, Watertown, MA 02471.

For the link to register for these virtual programs, visit ArmenianHeritagePark.org/Events