AIDS Memorial Grove’s Changing Landscape

November 10, 2014 By Trent Straube

Created nearly 23 years ago in San Francisco’s Golden Gate Park, the National AIDS Memorial Grove is a living tribute to all those touched by the virus. As such, the 10-acre park, like the HIV epidemic itself, continues to evolve. Three notable updates:

- Two acts of vandalism require major repairs to the Grove. Memorial trees and benches were damaged, as were nearly 65 carved names in the stone Circle of Friends. So far, neither homophobia nor AIDSphobia is linked to the crimes. “Early estimates put the damage done in the hundreds of thousands of dollars,” says executive director John Cunningham. “However, as those of us who have been through far darker times in the AIDS struggle know, we will come through stronger, embracing love and compassion as a community.”
- In August, the Grove lost one of its longtime leaders: Thom Weyand, a former executive director and trustee, died of leukemia. A ceremony in his honor was held, fittingly, in the Grove, complete with flaggers dancing to a version of “Over the Rainbow” sung by Israel Kamakawiwo’ole.
- The Memorial Grove’s annual youth scholarship program was renamed in honor of Pedro Zamora, who starred in MTV’s The Real World: San Francisco in 1994 and died that same year at age 22 of AIDS complications.

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