

Mika Ziv

Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science | Cincinnati



Sometimes, you find your passion in the most unexpected places ... sometimes even down the road from where you live.

Just ask Mika Ziv, who will graduate from the Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science at the end of the year.

Ziv was 20, living in an apartment in downtown Cincinnati and running a restaurant full time when she decided it was time to go to college. Enrolling in the University of Cincinnati, Ziv started out as a psychology major.

But a conversation one day with one of her instructors – a psychologist who is also a licensed cosmetologist – started Ziv thinking. “In one conversation we started talking about funeral directors, and I explained that I really didn’t know much about the funeral profession,” she said. “My teacher then told me she thought I would be well-suited for the job.”

Ziv found her way to the university’s counseling center, where a counselor went over the course material. “Hearing what the courses included really appealed to me,” she said. “I really thought that a mortuary education was something that I really wanted to study.”

What Ziv didn’t realize, she laughingly says now, was that CCMS was just nine minutes away from where she grew up. “It’s funny now, looking back, that I never realized it was so close to me,” Ziv said. “But when I walked through the doors for the first time, I knew there was where I was meant to be.

Ziv graduated with her associate degree from the University of Cincinnati in 2015 and started at CCMS in August 2016.

From the first day of classes, Ziv has displayed a sense of passion for learning all things funeral service, Melissa Kloss, a faculty/clinical faculty member at CCMS, wrote in her nomination letter.



“Immersion in the curriculum would be an understatement,” Kloss said. “Many students speak of this passion, but Mika is one of the few that live it each and every day.”

“I can’t really explain all of the benefits I have reaped from mortuary school,” Ziv said. “I had an idea of what that transformative experience would be for me, but I really couldn’t understand (then) what an incredible experience it would be in my life.”

CCMS has provided her with an opportunity to take a good, hard look at not only who she is, and what she believes in, but also what shapes her as a human being, Ziv said. “It has helped me figure out what I would like to contribute to society.”

And those contributions include becoming a grief counselor. “I think, as a society, we really don’t talk about death,” she said. “In so many ways people alive today live with a sense of perceived invulnerability ... that they are not going to succumb to death, that death is not present in their lives. But death needs to be part of life. A well-rounded life includes understanding death.”

Ziv holds high regard for the deceased, stemming from her strong Jewish upbringing and faith, Kloss said.

“Learning about the Judeo-Christian roots in funeral service has been of particular interest,” Kloss wrote. “She has been an ambassador for her own Jewish faith, even becoming part of the chevra kadisha at her synagogue, and volunteering at a funeral home serving a high Jewish population.”

“The Weil Funeral Home serves about 97 percent of the Jewish families in the area,” Ziv said. “I volunteer there because I want to help my community. (The death of a loved one) is a scary situation, and I really want to be able to take what I have learned back to the community, to help educate them.”

Being a funeral director, Ziv added, is one of the most righteous jobs she knows of. “I truly believe that a funeral director has a responsibility, an ethical duty, to educate a community on all aspects of death, dying and grief,” she said. “It’s not a responsibility that I take lightly.”

There has to be a balance between society and its relationship to death, Ziv believes. “And educating people about death, dying and grief is how you can start getting that balance,” she said.

Her passion for educating others will lead Ziv down another educational path upon graduation. She plans to attend graduate school to obtain a degree in psychology and then become a grief counselor. Eventually, she’d like to teach a course on death and dying at the college level.

“I’m lucky to be attending mortuary college at this time, because I feel you are not limited to just becoming a funeral director,” Ziv said. “You can pursue careers involving the subject matter as well. Whatever path you choose, you can bring something to families in their time of need.” •