BALTIMORE COUNTY

Baltimore County unveils memorial honoring lives lost to COVID-19

by **Aliza Worthington**
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Photo via Baltimore County.

Baltimore County this week opened a public art installation at Lake Roland dedicated to honoring the lives of those lost to COVID-19.

Baltimore County Executive Johnny Olszewski – along with state and local elected officials and community stakeholders — unveiled the **COVID-19 Memorial Public Art Project**.

The project commemorates the immeasurable impact of the pandemic during which more than 3,100 Baltimore County residents died. This is the first public art project Baltimore County has ever commissioned. **Lake Roland**, centered in the Jones Falls valley, was chosen as the installation site because of its acres of open space and its multiple trails for hiking, biking, running, and strolling.

"More than 3,000 Baltimore County residents lost their lives to the COVID-19 pandemic, and we are committed to honoring their cherished memories and the profound impact they had on our lives and communities," Olszewski said. "This memorial – created in partnership with community stakeholders and artists – offers a space to find hope for healing, and peace while remembering the beloved neighbors and loved ones taken from us far too soon."

James Dinh is the artist whose design was chosen in 2021 from 74 submissions that poured in from across the country. A panel of eight judges included members of the regional arts community and representatives from the Baltimore County Commission on Arts and Sciences and Lake Roland Nature Council.

A press release describes the memorial as overlooking the waters of Lake Roland and featuring a pathway, a gathering circle, prayer millstone, inscribed mending wall, seating, and memorial mound with plantings. There are also personalized poems and community members' stories etched into the wall describing the pandemic's toll in their own words.

"We welcome visitors to Lake Roland and this memorial to recognize and commemorate the lives tragically lost and those who were touched by COVID-19," said Bob Smith, director of the Baltimore County Department of Recreation and Parks. "During the pandemic, parks in Baltimore County and nationwide became even more essential as an outlet for residents in uncertain and trying times. Our parks often serve as a space the public uses to find peace and comfort and we are hopeful that this dedicated space will in some small way perhaps provide that to our visitors."

Support for the project came from a number of county departments, including the Department of Economic and Workforce Development, Department of Recreation and Parks, Department of Health and Human Services, the Property Management Division, and Office of Law. Lake Roland is open to the public daily from sunrise until sunset