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◆ FUNERAL DIRECTOR ◆

MAGAZINE

November/December 2020

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Warmest Thoughts
and Best Wishes for a
Wonderful Holiday and a
very Happy New Year.

Connecting with Families in a Time of Broken Connections
by Ken Moore, Wilbert

Burial Vaults: Differences, Personalization and Tools for Selling
Success by Crystal Truss, Trigard

The Integration Conversation: Why Funeral Technology
Programs Need to Speak the Same Language by
Craig Meehan, ASD

Social Media Algorithms: Can You Beat Them? by
Welton Hong, Ring Ring Mkt

COVID-19 Legislation 2020: A Pandemic Year in Review
by Poul Lemasters, Lemasters Consulting

Legislative Curve Balls in the State of Tennessee by Bob Batson,
TFDA Executive Director and J.A. Bucy, Lobbyist for TFDA

ICCFA Dead Talks January 2021 Virtual Conference
Feature and Keynote Speakers

Keys to Service = Conclusion by Todd Van Beck



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Brian - Philadelphia, PA

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November/December 2020

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with a Southern Accent Since 1919

Celebrating 101 Years of Service to the Industry

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Southern Funeral Director Magazine®

P.O. Box 768152
Roswell, GA 30076



John W. Yopp
Publisher/Editor
404-312-6640
johnyopp3@aol.com



Joe Weigel
Associate Editor
joseph.weigel@gmail.com



Kathy A. Guillory
Graphics/Art Director
kathyakopov@gmail.com

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notes from the editor

25 Ways We're Different this Christmas

by John Yopp

1. Last Christmas we were thinking about all the things we didn't have; this Christmas we are thinking about all the things we do have.

2. Last Christmas we were placing wreaths on the doors of our homes; this Christmas we are placing wreaths on the graves of our heroes.

3. Last Christmas we were letting our sons play with toy guns; this Christmas we are teaching them that guns are not toys.

4. Last Christmas we were counting our money; this Christmas we are counting our blessings.

5. Last Christmas we were lighting candles to decorate; this Christmas we are lighting candles to commemorate.

6. Last Christmas we paid lip service to the real meaning of the holidays; this Christmas we are paying homage to it.

7. Last Christmas we were digging deep into our bank accounts to find money to fly home for the holidays; this Christmas we are digging deep into our souls to find the courage to do so.

8. Last Christmas we were trying not to let annoying relatives get the best of us; this Christmas we are trying to give the best of ourselves to them.

9. Last Christmas we thought it was enough to celebrate the holidays; this Christmas we know we must also find ways to consecrate them.

10. Last Christmas we thought a man who could rush down a football field was a hero; this Christmas we know a man who rushes into a burning building is the real one.

11. Last Christmas we were thinking about the madness of the holidays; this Christmas we are thinking about

the meaning of them.

12. Last Christmas we were getting on one another's nerves; this Christmas we are getting on our knees.

13. Last Christmas we were giving thanks for gifts from stores; this Christmas we are giving thanks for gifts from GOD.

14. Last Christmas we were wondering how to give our children all the things that money can buy; this Christmas we are wondering how to give them all the things money can't (peace, security).

15. Last Christmas we were thinking about all the pressure we are under at the office; this Christmas we are thinking about all the people who no longer have an office to go to.

16. Last Christmas we were singing carols; this Christmas we are singing anthems.



17. Last Christmas we were thinking how good it would feel to be affluent; this Christmas we are thinking how good it feels to be alive.

18. Last Christmas we thought angels were in heaven; this Christmas we know they are right here on earth.

19. Last Christmas we were contemplating all the changes we wanted to make in the new year; this Christmas we are contemplating all the changes we will have to make in this new reality.

20. Last Christmas we believed in the power of the pocketbook; this Christmas we believe in the power of prayer.

21. Last Christmas we were sharing/spreading/ listening to gossip; this Christmas we are sharing/ spreading and listening to the Gospel.

22. Last Christmas we were complaining about how much of our earnings went to taxes; this Christmas we comprehend that freedom isn't free.

23. Last Christmas we valued things that were costly; this Christmas we value things that are holy.

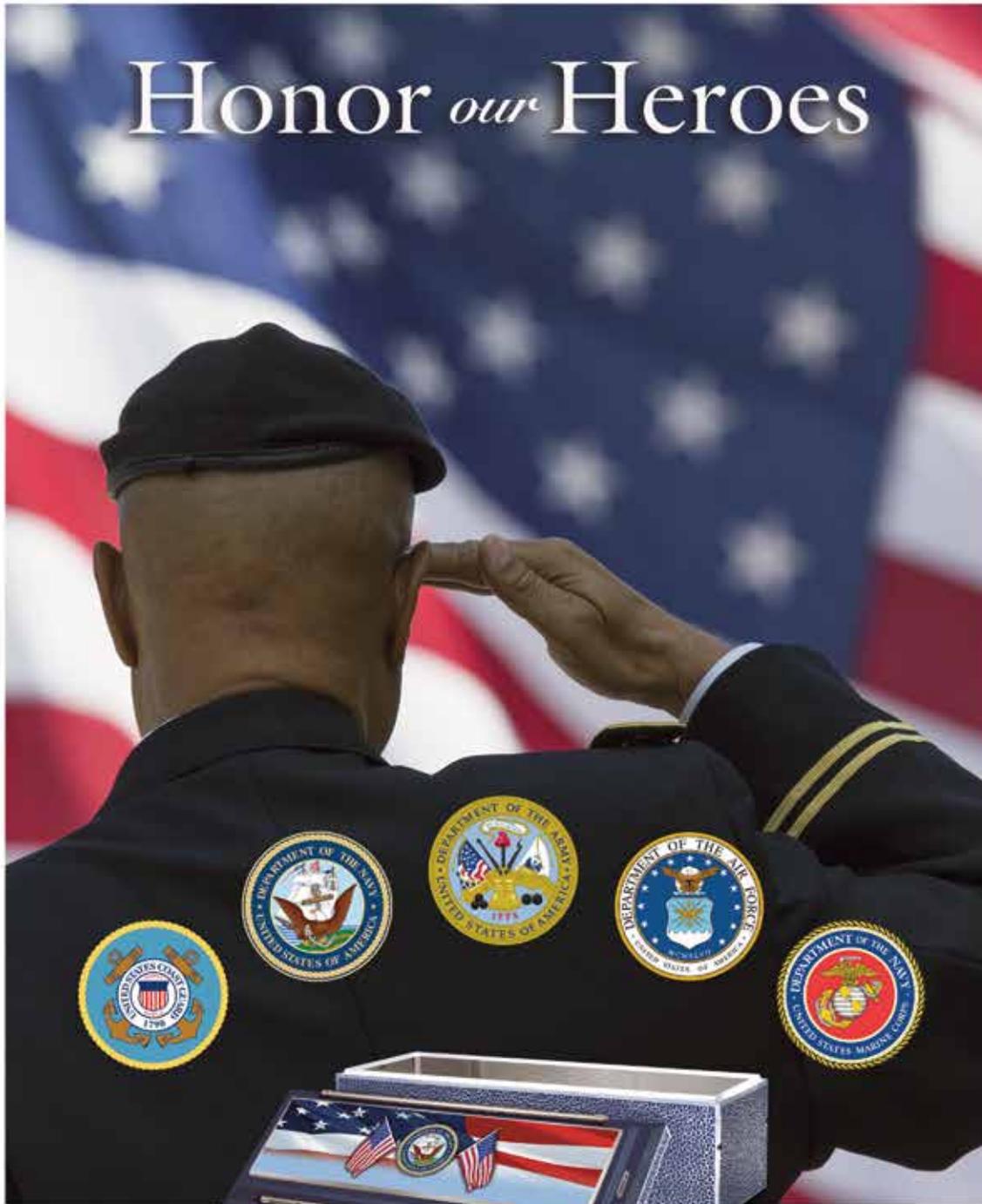
24. Last Christmas the people we idolized wore sports uniforms; this Christmas the people we idolize wear police, firefighter and military uniforms.

25. Last Christmas peace on earth is something we prayed for on Sunday morning; now it's something we pray for every day.



From the Staff
of Southern
Funeral Director
Magazine...
Happy Holidays!
Sending you
all our best this
Holiday Season,
and wishing you
much joy in the
New Year! What
a decade this year
has been!!!

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peace

Doric proudly joins the rest of the funeral industry
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Funeral homes, cemeteries, and their suppliers are doing
everything possible to help families through this difficult time.
Though the hours are long, the rewards are bountiful.

We wish you a safe Holiday Season filled with hope and compassion.
By working together, we will get through this.



PRODUCTS, INC.



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Connecting with Families in a Time of Broken Connections

By Ken Moore

Funeral service is all about human interaction. Helping families create meaningful funeral services when they are bearing heavy emotional loads is one of challenges of Funeral Professionals, yet this is also cited by most as one of the most rewarding aspects. At the heart of this is creating a connection with families, traditionally in a face-to-face setting where you can ensure that your guidance and information is being understood by family members. Sadly the year 2020 has been anything but an environment that accommodates personal interaction. Funeral Professionals have faced unprecedented challenges in meeting with families in person due to the COVID-19 pandemic and many have turned to remote presentations either in part or entirely. Burial vault presentations have always had certain challenges. Many families that have never made funeral arrangements are not even aware of the need for outer burial containers. Explaining the functionality of outer burial containers is merely the starting point but nonetheless one that families may struggle with understanding. Going beyond functionality to value and the impact that a personalized burial vault can make in a farewell commemoration is even harder to communicate. Accomplishing this in a remote environment, when you don't see the family in front of you, adds to the challenge. Fortunately in today's technological era there are ways that it can effectively be done.

First, let's address how it should NOT be done, and that is with a basic website that simply lists merchandise and services with no context. Instead consider utilizing video for at least part of the burial vault presentation. Think of the difference between browsing for products on Amazon compared to learning about products on YouTube. Sure, Amazon will present you with dozens, hundreds, even thousands of products that you can sort through. That may be great if you know all about the product already. But on YouTube you can see videos of products in use, fully understand how and why they are used, and eventually arrive at a decision if this is something that you find value in. Video is ideal for connecting with people, engaging them in a way that no other medium can, especially if you cannot physically be there with them. A second option is a

slideshow or PowerPoint presentation that while not showing action, can at least guide people step by step through pictures, graphics and captions. Again, just having a laundry list of products and services with absolutely no visual context is not only ineffective, it creates confusion and frustration. These are times when frustration needs to be minimized, not created. Furthermore, families merely presented with a list of products without being shown context and how some options can significantly add more meaning to their loved one's tribute will often just choose the lowest-cost options. Sadly, this can also result in a mundane, lowest-satisfaction experience for them – which won't be good for you either.



As effective as video can be, however, it can't be used alone. Funeral Professionals still need to present specific products and options that are

offered by their funeral establishment, discuss pricing, and answer questions that the family will certainly have. These discussions are obviously easier in-person but many are finding platforms such as Zoom or GoToMeeting to be effective ways to have remote discussions. Still, in both environments, supplemental tools to walk families through the options can assist in achieving optimal education and communication. The challenges of effectively communicating burial vault options has led Wilbert Funeral Services, Inc. to develop a program called simpliFi® which utilizes video and a graphical reference card that many Funeral Professionals are finding helpful for either in-person or remote presentations. This no-cost program provides a two-minute video that informs families about the functionality and options pertaining to outer burial containers, including various ways that burial vaults can be personalized to reflect and commemorate the life of a loved one. A large graphic provides side-by-side comparison of outer burial containers to allow families to easily see the differences and help them make a decision. Additional graphics depict graveside

services and ideas on how vaults can be personalized, visually encouraging discussion with the family in an objective manner. Wilbert's simpliFi® program even includes a simple script that Funeral Professionals can follow that completes the entire presentation, including the video, within four minutes. If Wilbert is not your vault provider, ask your supplier about available tools that they may have developed to similarly help you efficiently inform families.

Now also might be a good time to take a closer look at your product mix and offering, keeping in mind that too many choices – whether on a website or in a selection room – can be overwhelming to families. We often see well-meaning funeral establishments present so many vaults that families' eyes start to glaze over. Consumer research has shown that too many options can have the effect of poor decisions due to confusion and frustration. This is true whether it involves complex products such as stock or investment plans or simple products such as jellies and jams. When it comes to funeral products and services, there is the added factor of emotional distress and products that are exceedingly unfamiliar to most people. Consider simplifying your burial vault offerings and you may find that families are less overwhelmed and make better choices. Take a look at your historical sales of outer burial containers and consider limiting the choices to those which constitute the majority.

Of course, even with a limited selection, merely presenting products without articulating differences is not very effective – and again, doing this in a remote or online environment is even more challenging. This



ties it back to effective tools that can help inform the family and lead them to understand value. There is definitely a functional difference between an unlined grave box and a lined burial vault, but the emotional value of protection and a meaningful, personalized graveside tribute is greater than the bottom line. Yet the bottom line is where many people end up if they haven't been told. This is simply consumer behavior that applies to virtually every purchase.

Lastly, even in this time of social distancing and

simpliFi®

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Wilbert's simpliFi burial vault presentation program has helped increase sales of lined burial vaults over unlined grave boxes.

More burial vault sales can also lead to more graveside services.

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wilbert.com/simplifi/webinars

Wilbert

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limited attendees at funerals, be sure to talk to families about graveside services. This final commemoration is so important and even more so when families have fewer people around them who could give them support or sharing the significance that their loved one had in their lives. A vault cover that includes images, photos, symbols, and words that reflect the unique person who is being commemorated tells those stories and lends that emotional support. The service might also be livestreamed so that friends and family can view the service and indeed see and appreciate the treasured tribute on the vault. Social distancing is actually physical distancing. If you can find ways to help families maintain safe physical distancing but build social connections, they will have that critical emotional support and remember you for enabling that.

Remote arrangements and presentations are predicted to stay with us even past the current pandemic, but funeral service will always remain a high-touch business. The nature of the interaction with families may change, but the need for effective connections and communications will not...and in fact will even be more important. As Funeral Professionals you deserve

extreme gratitude and recognition for your frontline service to families throughout this pandemic and for your quick adaptation to change. Funeral service suppliers play more of an upstream role but have similarly acclimated to change and hopefully helped you navigate these turbulent waters. Just as families are turning to you during their time of need, turn to your suppliers for tools to help you. Maintaining connections is critical.



Ken Moore is Senior Vice President-Sales & Marketing for Wilbert Funeral Services where he has guided sales and marketing strategies for over twelve years. He has also guided the dynamic sales growth of The Wilbert Group's Signet Supply casket division since its inception in 2009. Ken has over 34 years of experience in sales, marketing, operations, executive leadership and strategy across various industries. In his leisure time, Ken enjoys boating and occasionally spends time behind the wheel as a high performance race boat driver with Team Kansas at the Lake of the Ozarks in central Missouri.

The advertisement features a background image of a child's silhouette sitting on a swing, set against a sky with soft, golden clouds from a sunset or sunrise. The child is facing away from the camera, looking towards the horizon. The text and logo are overlaid on the left side of the image.


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Burial Vaults: Differences, Personalization and Tools for Selling Success

by Crystal Truss



When choosing a method of protection for a casket or urn, most choices fall into one of two categories: grave liners or burial vaults.

Underground burial protection has many different names including burial vaults, grave liners, concrete boxes, rough boxes, and many others. Consequently, many consumers do not understand that there are significant differences between grave liners (often referred to as concrete boxes) and burial vaults (commonly referred to as lined vaults).

A grave liner, simply put, is just a concrete box that holds a casket. It is not lined or sealed in any way and has drainage holes in the bottom which allow water to seep in. This, over time, damages the casket inside. Not only do concrete boxes create an environment suitable for water damage, after a while, the box itself may break down. Because of these deficiencies, a concrete box has no warranty.

A concrete burial vault, however, is securely sealed against exposure to outside elements. In addition to keeping the earth from collapsing, the vault itself is reinforced with polymer to prevent it from becoming cracked and broken. While a grave liner (concrete box) provides one layer of minimal protection that is prone to failing, a burial vault not only prevents the earth from collapsing, but also protects the casket from exposure to outside elements by providing a clean, dry casket space. Burial vaults also come with warranties.

Today's Personalized Tradition

In addition to offering peace of mind to a family or loved one who has experienced a loss, burial vaults also offer an opportunity to further honor a loved one lost by giving the bereaved a chance to adorn the receptacle that will house and protect the remains of their loved one. This is not merely an aesthetic benefit. The act of choosing options to personalize a burial vault can further inspire thoughts of fondness and trigger beloved memories for the bereaved. This act can play a small, but significant role in the healing process.

With the ability to personalize comes the ability to present a vault that is as unique as the life of the loved one lost.

Customization options include emblems that can be added to the top of the vault lid and Appliqués®, which have the deceased loved one's name and dates, and can show beautiful images reminiscent of them. These photos can show the one being remembered pictured with family or with a dear pet, engaged in a favorite hobby, or whatever image(s) visually speak of the deceased. If so desired, loved ones, family members, and other attendees are also able to sign their names or write a farewell message on an Appliqué®.



White Marble Elite® Burial Vault with Appliqué®

Other ways that a family can customize a burial vault include selecting the vault's paint colors, choosing from any available metals, and opting for special ceremonies that allow loved ones to create unique, meaningful experiences as a part of the funeral or memorial service.

Trigard Burial Vaults gives a perfect example of personalization in their Healing Tree® Burial Vault. This vault is a part of a package that allows families to participate in the graveside ceremony in a way that is sure to leave a lasting impression on all involved. A special poem is read (or a reading of the family's choosing) and then family and friends can say their goodbyes as they take a keepsake Memory Ring® from the Healing Tree's vault lid. The Memory Rings are made of pewter and are graced with a die-cut

dove. These rings can be kept in a pocket, added to a keychain, or treated as a medallion for a necklace or bracelet. This can help the family member feel as though they are able to maintain a connection with their lost loved one.



Contact your personal vault dealer to learn more.



Resources to Support Vault Sales

While vault selection can often be seen as an important part of helping a family during the initial stages of the memorial service process, the most appropriate choices for a vault may not be readily known if there is failure to properly educate a family about vaults.

There are many tools and resources that help funeral directors sell better vaults. Among them are miniature vault samples, wall graphics, and online presentations. Miniature vault samples are smaller versions of burial vaults that are often displayed in funeral home showrooms. They can provide a hint of what a purchased burial vault will look like, but they are, more often than not, a misleading representation of the actual product. Miniatures can provide a somewhat tangible experience for families and loved ones because they can actually touch them, but even this experience can be a bit misleading since the textures on the miniatures aren't produced at the same scale as the full-sized vaults, (see figures 1 and 2).

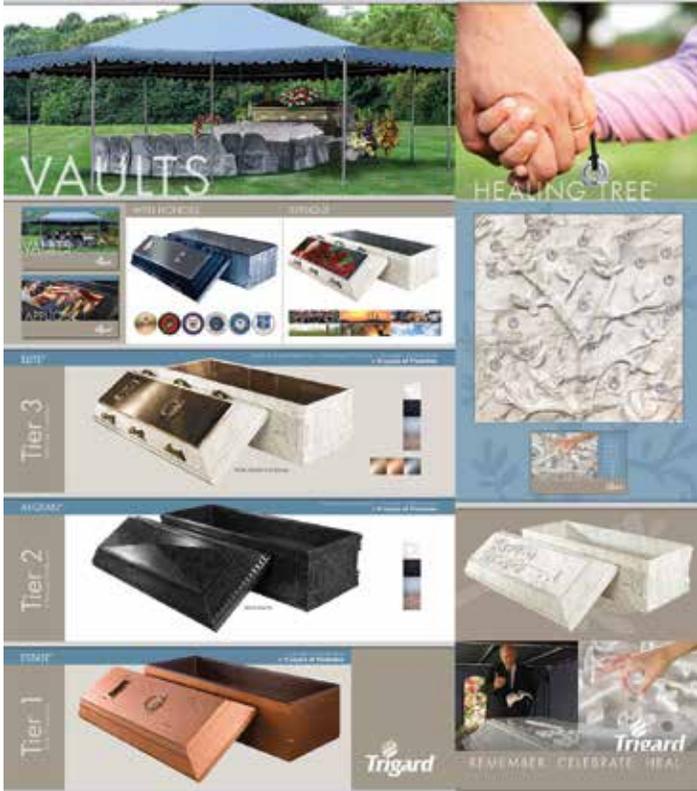


The differences are evident.

Unfortunately, miniature vault samples are also often mistaken for infant caskets due to their size.

To remedy this for vault dealers there are free marketing materials that dealers can offer to funeral homes as marketing support. A popular resource is the vault display wall graphic.

Trigard Burial Vault Display with Healing Tree® Display



The displays are printed on PVC foam board and are cut into paneled sections for easy shipping and installation. They also come with 3M Command™ Strips and aluminum alloy h-channel that the panels slide into. The Healing Tree display is often ordered to accompany the burial vault display. It has an actual piece of the carapace from a Healing Tree burial vault attached to the display. Families can get a sense of what it would feel like to take part in this interactive experience. In addition to burial vault and urn vault displays, there is also a selection of informative PVC posters and literature that can be provided to help deliver a sense of confidence when educating families about the product. Contact your vault dealer to request more information about wall graphic options or other marketing materials that may be available.

An exciting resource that has recently been made available nationwide is the Trigard Connect Online Vault Portal burial vault builder tool. While the vault

displays show a better representation of the vaults that families will be getting, this resource takes this representation to the next level. Funeral homes will be able to show families what they will actually be getting. You can show families all the burial vaults and urn vaults you offer, in every standard color option, and allow them to see what it will look like with accessories and personalization. Being able to see a truer, more accurate image of what is being purchased helps add assurance about the decision to make such an investment. Check with your vault supplier about getting set up at no cost to you! Lastly, a good way to help families in the thought process about a vault purchase is being able to clearly communicate the basics about a burial vault. The main reason to get a vault is protection. Each vault is made unique not only by the personalization available, but by the layers of protection that add to its overall strength. Trigard vaults offer several layers of protection:



- Interior & Cover Metal Liner + Outer Layer of Polymer + Polymer Liner + Concrete = 4 Layers of Protection
- Interior & Cover Metal Liner + Concrete + Polymer Liner = 3 Layers of Protection
- Outer Layer of Polymer + Concrete + Polymer Liner = 3 Layers of Protection
- Concrete + Polymer Liner = 2 Layers of Protection

Families should know that as layers are removed, so is the protection. Funeral directors are instrumental in helping them make the right choice!

Crystal Truss is a Marketing Specialist and has been with Trigard for four years. She is a native of Jackson, MS but has been in Illinois for 17 years where she has been blessed beyond measure with many friends who are now like family.



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The Integration Conversation: Why Funeral Technology Programs Need to Speak the Same Language

By Craig Meehan, ASD

At the start of 2020, I sent out a survey to more than 30,000 funeral professionals asking them to provide details on their use of technology. More than 1,600 responded. At the time, we were all still blissfully ignorant of what the year ahead was going to look like. The term ‘COVID’ was not a part of our vernacular yet. In looking back at the results of the survey, it is fascinating to see how many of the responses were focused on the need for integration across multiple platforms.

Today, the hunger funeral professionals have for synced technology solutions has only gotten stronger as a direct result of the pandemic.

On one side of the coin, there is the time factor. Now more than ever, funeral professionals are pulled in so many different directions and need technology solutions to streamline their daily task load. On the flip side, there is the customer service element. Technology can never replace the human interactions funeral professionals share with families, but it can make it easier to communicate in our increasingly remote world.

These double-sided goals of saving time and enhancing customer service can both be served through the use of integrated technology solutions. The use of synced software systems can reduce the funeral home’s data entry work while making it easier for families to arrange their loved one’s services from a distance. Many funeral home professionals recognize this; however, the roadblock they run into is many funeral home software programs do not speak the same language.

There is a myth within our profession that funeral professionals are resistant to new technology and do not want to change their current methods of operating. Our survey revealed this is a misperception. Most funeral professionals surveyed answered that the biggest barriers preventing them from investing in new technology is their uncertainty over which solutions were best suited for their firm (42%) or the amount of time it takes to learn or switch to a new system (27%).



Our survey also showed one of the biggest reasons the funeral profession is further behind other industries in the adoption of new technology is a lack of simplicity and comprehensive solutions. Many funeral home technology companies only offer piecemeal options, requiring funeral directors to learn multiple systems and enter data numerous times. When asked how important it is for their funeral home’s technology to be integrated across multiple platforms, majority of those who responded answered that it is ‘very important’ (41%) or ‘fairly important’ (26%).

Below are just a few of the many write-in responses that specifically addressed a lack of synced technology solutions:

“Options cross over on some aspects, but not others. End up using three systems to accomplish something.”

“Integrating would be helpful. Currently, if we have edits to do, we have to backtrack in multiple areas.”

“Mainly it is the time to do the training to make it all function. We are desperately in need of a set of standard operating procedures in all departments.”

“Programs that we currently use and like are not compatible with new/other options.”

These statements reveal a single irrefutable fact: when funeral technology companies work together, the entire funeral service profession wins. ASD – Answering Service for Directors recognized this crucial need early on. Our in-house technology team understood funeral directors needed solutions that could save them valuable time. ASD first began seeking out

ways to integrate our answering service system with other funeral home technology companies more than 12 years ago with the release of our FuneralSync™ program in 2008. The first version of the tool was a somewhat manual process that allowed for transfer of some very basic information. Over time, this feature has evolved to become the most flexible integration tool available to directors.

Data Management System Integration

When funeral homes forward their phones to ASD, they are trusting our company to handle the lifeblood of their funeral home: the first call. ASD's Call Specialists receive extensive training on providing compassion and empathy to at-need families who call in to report a death. We then take this human element and combine it with our technically advanced systems which are linked directly with the funeral home's data management software. This ensures all first call information, such as the decedent's name, date of birth and time of death, is transcribed by our staff and then automatically copied over to the funeral home's management system.

ASD's integration with the leading funeral home software companies makes this possible. These companies include: MiMS, the Easy Arranger Program by FuneralTech, HMIS by Batesville, SRS Computing, The Smart Director by Continental Computer Corp, FrontRunner Professional, Halcyon, CRäKN, LLC, Passare, Osiris Software, Ionic Services, Mortware and TerraPro.

The key to ASD's extensive integration partnerships is our company's willingness to make our FuneralSync™ API available to any software company interested in integrating with us. Funeral professionals can activate this service simply by contacting their funeral home management software company with their ASD account number and requesting the integration be turned on. This simple step can save funeral professionals from hours of unnecessary work while minimizing the risk of errors caused by duplicate data entry.

Obituary Information

One of the most common calls ASD handles for funeral homes are inquiries related to current services. Rather than having to provide these details to ASD, funeral directors can automatically ensure our staff has all of their current service details each time a new obituary is entered on their website. This is achieved



through ASD's integration with the leading funeral home website companies. These companies include: CFS Consolidated Funeral Services, funeralOne, FrontRunner Professional, Batesville Technology Solutions, Frazer Consultants, FuneralNet, Tributes.com search engine, MKJ Marketing, FuneralTech and SRS Computing.

With ASD's FuneralSync™ feature, funeral professionals can enter service details into one program instead of two, saving time and reducing errors. This not only streamlines the process but also gives directors peace of mind knowing that ASD will always have the most up-to-date service details to provide to funeral home callers.

Web Chat

Most people are familiar with how web chat works and the benefits, as well as the drawbacks of having one on your company website. While it is obviously a positive thing to give people more options to communicate with you, it can be daunting to worry about who is going to monitor it 24/7. ASD's Web Chat solution resolves this dilemma by connecting the funeral home's Web Chat to ASD's answering service system. This helpful communication tool can be added to any funeral home's existing website with just a quick, simple update to the website code.

What makes ASD's Web Chat so unique is it allows both an ASD Agent and on-call director to be involved with web chat sessions via 3-way chat. When a chat is initiated, an ASD Agent immediately responds using information that has been customized by the funeral home. If the question is urgent, a notification is automatically sent to relay that a chat session in progress. This allows you to quickly respond to any

urgent incoming chats via your cell phone or computer.

Web Form WatchDog™

Most funeral home websites have a 'Contact Us' form instructing visitors to leave their information and reason for contacting. ASD's Web Form WatchDog™ can help you become more responsive to submitted web forms by allowing ASD to monitor your funeral home's web inquiries and immediately alert you when an urgent need is communicated. Like ASD's Web Chat, Web Form WatchDog™ can quickly be added to any funeral home's existing website in seconds.

Obit Texting Integration

One of the most common reasons a person contacts a funeral home is to obtain current funeral service information. ASD's Obit Texting helps make obituary information more accessible while enhancing your funeral home's brand. With Obit Texting, when someone calls the funeral home looking for service information, ASD can send them a text message from the funeral home's phone number with a link directly to the obit on the funeral home's website. This helps the caller find the information they are looking for while also driving more traffic to the funeral home website, creating opportunities for visitors explore other pages which can help increase pre-need leads or flower sales.

The technology employed by this service utilizes ASD's proprietary software in combination with our company's integrations with the leading funeral home website providers. There is no effort required on behalf of the funeral home to utilize Obit Texting. Funeral homes need only to post their obituary information on their website and ASD can automatically pull this information directly from the site and text it to the caller.

Custom Integrations

In addition to the integration options ASD offers

every funeral home client, we can also work closely with funeral homes that have specific requests. Our flexible technology programs make it simple to sync our answering service systems with other software programs. For instance, several of our clients currently have their ASD account linked to their Sales Force program. Others have requested information gathered by ASD be pushed directly into their funeral home's pre-need tracking software. With an in-house technology team capable of building custom solutions, funeral professionals who use ASD never have to feel limited by a lack of integration options.

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National Sales Manager, Craig Meehan, has been an integral part of the ASD team since 2016. Craig works with funeral professionals to determine how ASD can meet their funeral home's needs. He regularly attends funeral home conferences throughout the year and enjoys speaking to directors about possible solutions to their business challenges. Craig has 15 years of experience consulting business owners on technology solutions. He was the Marketing and Customer Service Manager for Petfooddirect.com (Now Chewy.com) and was a Technical Consultant for American Reprographic Company and Verizon. Craig is passionate about helping funeral professionals develop a communication and technology strategy that meets the needs of the today's families while helping the funeral home increase productivity.



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Social Media Algorithms: Can You Beat Them?

By Welton Hong

“When are we going to use this in real life?” It’s a question asked of math teachers for decades.

But it’s highly unlikely that algebra and calculus teachers from a few decades ago could have predicted the rise of Google and other technology. Probably no one said, “One day anyone with a business will talk regularly about algorithms.”

As a funeral service professional, you might have heard about algorithms. They are what control whether your page shows up in searches when people enter certain keywords. They also control when and how your content is displayed to users on social media.

In other words, algorithms have a lot to do with whether or not your online marketing efforts are successful. And I have both good news and bad news about them.

Let’s get the bad news out of the way first: The algorithms are powerful. They can decimate a page’s traffic overnight, and they’re responsible for the organic traffic for businesses on Facebook more or less approaching zero. (I’ll explain that more below if you’re not familiar with this fact.)

The good news is that you can act to mitigate some of the impact of algorithms on social media. Perhaps even better news: You don’t need to remember any high school math to do so.

What Is an Algorithm?

For those who left high school math behind and never looked back, the definition of algorithm is “a set of rules or a process to be followed when performing calculations or problem-solving operations.”

Often, these rules are used by computers and artificial intelligence to perform complex calculations in microseconds and arrive at a decision. For example, in the case of Google, an enormous amount of data is paired with complex search engine rules to determine which pages rise to the top of search results. No one outside of Google really knows all the rules

in the algorithm, although we can guess at a few, and Google tells us about some. For instance, quality pages that work well to answer the intent of the searcher’s query get more points in the algorithm than low-quality and/or irrelevant pages.

For extra fun, Google updates its algorithm constantly. It makes about 1,000 updates a year—more than two a day on average. But you only hear about the big ones.

Algorithms on Facebook and Instagram

All of that is true for social media, though Facebook might not make as many updates as Google and users do have some control over what they see.

The social platforms use rules that decide what content people see most often. Those rules take into account a number of factors, including:

The user’s settings: For example someone blocked your page, it doesn’t matter what other rules are in place. They won’t see your content.

- How much someone interacts with your content: Someone who likes, comments on, and shares your content is typically going to see more of it than someone who regularly ignores your posts.
- How “popular” your posts are: Posts that get a lot of interaction are seen as higher-quality or more relevant than those that don’t, so social platforms may prioritize them.
- What’s included in the post: In general, users interact with posts that contain video and images much more than they do with basic text posts on Facebook. Thus the site is more likely to prioritize that type of content.

On top of all that, the social media sites are businesses. Which means they have bottom lines to attend to and (in many cases) shareholders to answer to. They’re not in the business of giving free exposure to businesses when they can charge for it. While Facebook, Instagram, and other sites aren’t completely stopping businesses from organically connecting with people (organic means you don’t pay for the posts you put on the site), they’re



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certainly not making algorithm decisions meant to heavily support this type of exposure.

For most businesses, Facebook organic reach is about 5.5% or less on average. That means if you have 1,000 followers, only 55 will see any given post you publish. That number has been decreasing for the past few years and it's likely it will keep inching toward zero.

Instagram reach is higher than that on average but is also declining with every algorithm change.

The conclusion here is that without some intervention, even funeral homes that post regularly on social won't be seen by the right consumers, and that drastically reduces the conversions you might eventually get on these channels.

Then Why Use Social Media?

Does that mean you should quit social media and concentrate on other channels? Not necessarily. Yes, you should market on other channels—a diverse marketing strategy is as important as a diverse portfolio. If one of your channels isn't pulling its weight, another can take up the slack.

But you should also consider keeping one or two social media accounts going and active. The majority of social media users of any age turn to friends and contacts on these sites when they need something, often asking outright for recommendations. They might also look up brands on social media to get a better idea of how businesses—including funeral homes—connect with and care for their clientele.

If you're not on social media, you don't get the benefits of this social proof. And that can mean you lose out to funeral service competitors.

Tips for “Beating” the Algorithm

Staying on social media and actually showing up for consumers does require a bit of work. Here are some tips for “beating” the algorithm and showing up to as many users as possible:

- Pay. This is the simplest, most effective way to ensure your posts show up for more users. Convert them into ads via sponsored post options. This works on Facebook and Instagram, which share an ad tool, as well as other sites such as Twitter. When you pay to boost a post's reach, you can

specify the type of audience you want it shown to by demographics, interests, and other factors.

- Create engaging content. While the details differ, most social media algorithms prioritize content that more people engage with. If you're getting a lot of likes, comments, shares, and saves, the assumption is that your content is valuable enough to show other people.
- Ask for engagement. Ask—nicely!—for engagement that helps you perform better in the algorithms. As of this writing, the most valuable engagement in the Instagram algorithm is a “save.” Users can save content to be reviewed later. Many businesses are letting their followers know this is the case and asking for saves, and some are simply providing reference content and reminding people to save it for access down the road.
- Engage back. If you set up a booth at a local event to tell people about your preplanning services but you never actually speak to anyone who visits the booth, you're not going to see great results. The same is true on social media. Respond to people who comment on your posts, and like, share, and comment on the posts of others.

Bonus Tip: Consistent Engagement on Social in 15 Minutes a Day

You probably don't have hours a day to sit on social and chat. While you should put someone in charge of responding to and managing content on your own posts, you can also create engagement outside of your page in just 15 minutes a day. Here's how:

- Decide on no more than two platforms. You can't show up well on every platform even if you do have hours a day.
- Follow some pages, people, and hashtags that are relevant to your industry.
- Daily, check out a couple of those pages or hashtags and scroll briefly through the most recent content. Share one or two things that are highly relevant to your own audience and like and comment on a few posts.

That's it. You're done for the day with building off-page engagement. By taking these steps, you get your name and social handle in front of new users, who might click through to your own profile to engage and eventually to your website to make a purchase.



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COVID-19 Legislation 2020: A Pandemic Year in Review

By Poul Lemasters

It has been some year - and I am not sure any better way to describe 2020 than that. In this year, there has been so much legislation and regulation that has affected deathcare that it may not even seem like it's been a year. As I look back, I have a tough time remembering what acronym came first - FFCRA or PPP. Speaking of acronyms, of all the things to come out of COVID19, I will say that the entire world now knowing what PPE stands for is pretty amazing.

In an effort to help, and put a little detail on the blur of activity that happened throughout 2020, the following is a breakdown of COVID19 legislation that affected deathcare; plus, some things, that as of the time of writing this article, are still on the way. I know more happened than this (In fact, the Funeral Rule 10-year review also happened this year and over 800 comments to the Federal Trade Commission were filed - with most of them coming from consumers asking for funeral pricing to be online.) but this should help give a little clearer picture as to legislation, COVID style.

Essential Workers

Identifying deathcare professionals as essential public health workers followed a Memorandum on Identification of Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers During COVID-19 Response, which was issued by the US Department of Homeland Security on March 19, 2020. (<https://www.cisa.gov/publication/guidance-essential-critical-infrastructure-workforce>). The issue was that the Memo 'suggested' deathcare workers be identified as essential but was not a mandate. Accordingly, this list is advisory in nature. It is not, nor should it be considered to be, a federal directive or standard in and of itself. While the federal recommendation was a great first step, there was still more to do as it was important that we get exact language to the states for the entire deathcare profession. What happened over the next several months was each state passing its own classification of deathcare - with some including deathcare as essential, and others not.

Federal COVID-Response Legislation

Since the first week of March 2020, Congress has

passed six bills in response to the public health crisis resulting from COVID-19. The first measure provided approximately \$8 billion in Fiscal Year 2020 emergency funding for federal agencies to respond to the coronavirus outbreak. The second measure, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, created new sick and expanded family paid leave requirements. The third response bill, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, created new small business lending programs, including the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). Subsequent pieces of legislation largely addressed the PPP. For instance, the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act, provided \$320 million in supplemental funding to the PPP because initial funding was depleted within days, as well as provided extra funding for hospitals and virus testing. The Paycheck Protection Program Flexibility Act, made modifications to the program largely related to the loan forgiveness provisions. Finally, as the program was ending, Congress agreed to extend the PPP application deadline from June 30 to August 8, 2020, at which point the program closed to new applicants.

As of Labor Day, it was still unclear what the next comprehensive response package would look like. Negotiations broke down in August. In May, the House passed the \$3 trillion Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions Act or the HEROES Act. The bill's highlights are that it would provide additional economic relief to local governments and individuals/families through rent relief and an eviction moratorium and extended enhanced unemployment insurance. At the end of July, Senate Republicans outlined their counterproposal to the HEROES Act by releasing the \$1 trillion Health, Economic Assistance, Liability Protection, and Schools (HEALS) Act. The HEALS Act focuses on liability protections for employers that re-open businesses, a second round of PPP, as well as including funding for additional stimulus checks and extended unemployment insurance, but at a lesser amount. The Senate resumed session on September 8 and promptly issued a new, scaled back \$500 billion COVID-relief proposal. The

House remained in recess for an extra week, resuming September 14.

The new timeframe for reaching an agreement on another COVID package is by the end of the fiscal year on September 30 to include with legislation to keep the federal government funded.

Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA)
The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) requires certain employers to provide employees with paid sick leave or expanded family and medical leave for specified reasons related to COVID-19. The Department of Labor's (Department) Wage and Hour Division (WHD) administers and enforces the new law's paid leave requirements. The provisions apply through December 31, 2020.

Employers who are covered by the FFCRA (and who have not been granted a waiver) must provide emergency leave to their employees in six different scenarios, including: employees who are quarantined on the advice of a health professional, and employees who are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and

are seeking a medical diagnosis. The other categories for granting leave under the FFCRA include: caring for a family member who has been diagnosed with COVID-19, is awaiting a diagnosis, or otherwise is under order from a health-care provider requiring them to stay away from work; caring for children if schools are closed or because a caregiver is unavailable because of the ongoing public health emergency; or to address any other "substantially similar condition" identified by the Secretary of Health and Human Services in consultation with the Secretary of the Treasury and the Secretary of Labor. Full-time employees who qualify under the first of these scenarios are eligible for 80 hours (2 work weeks) of paid sick leave under FFCRA at up to 100% of their normal pay (capped at \$511/day and \$5,110 for the entire 80 hours). For full-time employees who qualify under the other scenarios, the paid sick time compensation is capped at \$200 per day or \$2,000 in the total leave. While employers must initially cover these payments from their own funds, the cost is offset by refundable tax credits. Each quarter from April 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020, employers are entitled to a refundable tax credit equal to 100% of the qualified Emergency Paid Sick

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Leave wages paid to eligible employees.

Some employers, including “emergency responders,” have been granted a waiver from these paid leave requirements. The Department of Labor has interpreted “emergency responder” broadly and while it did provide some specific examples, it also recognized that no list could be fully inclusive or account for the differing needs of specific communities. Therefore, the definition allows for the highest official of a state or territory to identify emergency responders, as necessary for the response to COVID-19.

The DOL, as well as other deathcare associations, confirmed verbally that those in the deathcare profession would be part of the ‘emergency responder’ classification outlined by the DOL. This was based on the interpretation that due to the essential role deathcare professionals play; they are emergency responders for purposes of new paid sick and expanded family leave benefits created by the FFCRA. The basis of this interpretation is based on DOL guidance on FFCRA, where the DOL describes ‘emergency responders’ as anyone that transports COVID-19 patients and also provide specific care in a declared emergency. The deathcare profession continues to transport and handle bodies affected by COVID-19 and, under U.S. Department of Homeland Security, through its Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), recognized deathcare professionals as health care workers under critical infrastructure guidance to states.

Through this interpretation, deathcare professionals, funeral homes, cemeteries, as well as crematories, would be classified as exempt, allowing access to all of their resources, including man and woman power, to handle COVID-19 victims and other decedents.

Paycheck Protection Program

The Paycheck Protection Program (“PPP”), as amended, authorizes over \$660 billion in forgivable loans to small businesses to pay their employees during the COVID-19 crisis. Loan terms will depend on whether the loan was made before or after June 5, 2020. The loan amounts will be forgiven as long as:

- The loan proceeds are used to cover payroll costs, and most mortgage interest, rent, and utility costs over 24 weeks or until December 31, 2020; and
- Employee and compensation levels are

maintained or restored by the end of the year, with some flexibility in certain circumstances. Payroll costs are capped at \$100,000 on an annualized basis for each employee. Due to likely high subscription, not more than 40% of the forgiven amount may be for non-payroll costs (up from 25% under the initial CARES Act program authorization). Loan payments can be deferred for ten months.

501(c)(13)

When Congress drafted and passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, it precluded non-profit cemeteries registered under 501(c)(13) as eligible borrowers under the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), the new small business lending program created by the legislation. However, for-profit cemeteries were included, so there is ongoing discussion to modify exemptions in a future act. The House HEROES Act would include all 501(c) organizations in the PPP. The Senate HEALS Act would add only 501(c)(6) organizations.

HEROES Act

On May 15, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act by a vote of 208-199 along mostly partisan lines. The \$3 trillion bill produced a mixed bag of results as it relates to provisions that impact deathcare professionals. In addition to making all 501(c) organizations eligible applicants to the Paycheck Protection Program, the HEROES Act also had other benefits for deathcare professionals. The bill creates a \$190 million Heroes Fund that would provide essential workers, including deathcare, with hazard pay during the pandemic. The definition of “essential worker” has 33 categories including one for mortuary, funeral, cremation, burial, cemetery and related services. As it relates to employer provisions, the bill extends the \$600 per week unemployment insurance expansion from the CARES Act through January 2021. It also includes provisions that would place more onerous requirements on employers, including those with under 50 employees and non-profits, and take away the health care and first responder waivers granted by DOL in guidance related to the Families First Coronavirus Response Act.

HEALS Act/Senate Proposal

On September 8, the Senate unveiled a smaller, \$500 billion COVID-relief proposal with Senate Majority

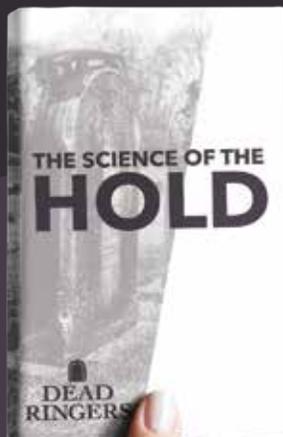
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Leader McConnell calling for a Senate vote on the package by the end of that week, but it is not expected to overcome the 60-vote threshold to defeat a filibuster. The package would provide \$300 in added weekly unemployment benefits through most of December; open up a new round of Paycheck Protection Program loans; and provide more money for schools, vaccines and testing.

COVID-19 Vaccine Prioritization

On September 1, 2020, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NAS) issued a Discussion Draft of the Preliminary Framework for Equitable Allocation of COVID-19 Vaccine, commissioned by the Centers for Disease Control and the National Institutes of Health and invited public comment. The committee responsible for drafting the framework explicitly stated that it does

NOT recommend using the Department of Homeland Security's Essential Worker guidance because many of those jobs can be accomplished via telework. However, the draft framework DOES recommend including "morticians and funeral home workers involved in the handling of bodies" under Priority 1a: High Risk Workers in Health Care Facilities, which is the highest priority. On October 2, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine released the 2020 Framework for Equitable Allocation of COVID-19 Vaccine. As part of Phase 1a: High-Risk Workers in Health Care Facilities, the Committee included: morticians, funeral home workers and other death care professionals. This definition is an update from the preliminary draft framework that was issued last month which only specified mortician and funeral home workers as part of Phase 1a.



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Legislative Curve Balls in the State of Tennessee

by Bob Batson, TFDA Executive Director and J.A. Bucy, Lobbyist for TFDA

The public policy and political landscape in Tennessee for the past several years has produced intriguing trends for the funeral profession. The Tennessee Funeral Directors Association (TFDA) has been affected by these trends and compelled to adapt. Many of these trends have been discussed on both the state and national level and are legislative proposals bearing good intentions. TFDA has worked diligently making sure the members and businesses represented are properly positioned to handle these changing trend ideas. While these economic and cultural developments are not unique to The Volunteer State, it is important adjust so TFDA members may continue serving Tennessee families in grief at the highest possible level.

Regulatory and License Changes

In 2017, legislation was filed in the Tennessee General Assembly, if passed, would allow individuals to become a licensed funeral director and/or embalmer through alternate processes historically not allowed in Tennessee and most other states. This legislation would have created a law allowing licensure to be obtained by serving an apprenticeship, passing a state administered test, and paying the applicable fees. There would be no formal education requirements. There was also legislation filed that would have also allowed reciprocity of a funeral director license from other states regardless if the other state would reciprocate with Tennessee licensees. One might discern that the actual intent was to remove the need of licensure in its entirety, which could be the outcome and not the goal. The origin of these bills is generally from national organizations which have reasonable goals to alleviate unnecessary or burdensome regulation on industry. An incredibly important and worthy goal for any small businessperson in the funeral or other regulated industry. With a couple of quick examples, some regulations have become an important part of the funeral profession and offer value to associations like TFDA.

Allowing individuals to enter various regulated occupations only serving an apprenticeship is an example where TFDA has a strong opinion, apprenticeship is an important part of the funeral

profession culture. Tennessee already requires a one-year apprenticeship in addition to coursework to obtain both funeral director and embalmer licenses.

The coursework includes law and ethics, accounting, psychology, embalming and management at John. A. Gupton College in Nashville and is just as important as the apprenticeship in the opinion of TFDA leadership. These two paths—coursework and hands-on apprenticeships—foster individuals who understand the funeral profession and are better prepared to serve our communities and protect public safety. Legislation which seeks to undermine the importance of learning the fundamentals of science, business, legal liability, and public health safety in the classroom will not be supported.

These regulatory bills were even more prolific in 2019 and 2020. Nearly 20 bills were filed (see chart A) including legislation allowing an individual to legally use an unlicensed person for professional services. By having the consumer sign an agreement holding the service provider harmless for damages, services such as cosmetology, accounting, real estate, funeral directing, and contracting could be legally obtained. This legislation was not difficult to defeat as it completely eroded the licensing processes in Tennessee. TFDA is, and will be, vigilant regarding challenges to funeral directing and embalming licensure.

The Tennessee State Funeral Board provides oversight and protection of the physical and financial well-being of the consuming public; deregulation to this extent would create problems. For example, state board representatives conduct annual assessments for each Tennessee licensed funeral establishment. While some may feel this process burdensome, the undoing of all licensing and oversight is clearly not the answer.

Randy Nash, Jr., of Sumner Funeral and Cremation and 2020 TFDA President put it aptly when he said, “No one likes burdensome regulation but the undoing of the need for coursework for a funeral directing license or not requiring a license at all is unacceptable. We will continue to stand up for funeral directors and our

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members.” As previously mentioned, these bills not only involved the funeral profession as well as several others. TFDA led the communication with members of the other professional organizations mobilizing efforts to educate members of the Tennessee General Assembly regarding the challenges of these bills. TFDA’s coordination effort led to the defeat of these bills maintaining safety practices protecting Tennessee citizens. “Being 100% successful is important, but 100% of the time is difficult. TFDA’s mission requires leadership to maintain these efforts should issues of this nature return.” Mr. Nash added.

Green(er) Burials

Another trend in Tennessee and around the country is the desire of some consumers to find what are more environmentally friendly final dispositions for their loved ones. This request has produced some interesting solutions and business models throughout the country. Tennessee has seen its share of legislation to allow for these processes.

The popularity of cremation continues rise around the country according to data from the National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA). The prospect of a greener process is attractive to some. Each year for the past several years legislation has been filed in Tennessee which would allow for alkaline hydrolysis, often considered a cremation alternative, and can be referred to as aquamation. The process is allowed in several states. Minnesota’s Mayo Clinic in implemented this process in 2005 and is still in use today.

The intent of previous alkaline hydrolysis legislation was designed to mirror cremation statutes. Alkaline hydrolysis is a process completely different from cremation, many components will simply not fit into a standard cremation statute. TFDA Governmental Affairs Committee was commissioned by the TFDA Board of Directors to ensure that changes in the Tennessee law are uniform and proper.

The TFDA Governmental Affairs Committee formed a subcommittee chaired by Steven Spann, President of John A. Gupton College, to decide if writing legislation was the proper course of action. The subcommittee met several times over a five-month period interviewing alkaline hydrolysis operators, equipment manufacturers, and state and national attorneys. The subcommittee concluded that alkaline hydrolysis should be introduced as a separate section

in the Tennessee Code regarding funeral statutes. The TFDA Board of Directors agreed.

TFDA Governmental Affairs Committee Chairman David Murphy states: “Creating a subcommittee to roll up their sleeves and better understand a process with many unknowns was important. The subcommittee wanted to make sure that if it was going to be the law in Tennessee, it was good for both funeral homes and consumers. I knew Mr. Spann and his subcommittee would do just that,”

Alkaline hydrolysis legislation was proposed in 2020 to the Tennessee General Assembly and collectively did not receive one vote in the negative in either the House or Senate committees or subcommittees. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the Tennessee General Assembly abruptly adjourned in March before the bill could get final approval on the House or Senate floors. It is expected the legislation will be reintroduced and approved in 2021.

Handling Trends

The ability of TFDA to respond to these public policy and industry trends has been generated by one source: the members. TFDA Vice-President Marc Sims of Karnes & Sons Funeral Home believes it is the nature of funeral directors to want to be involved in the public policy of their profession.

“Being leaders in our respective communities gives all funeral directors the desire to make a positive impacts and staying involved and informed on political decisions which are being made in a state capitol is just part of the job,” said Mr. Sims.

The Tennessee Funeral Directors Association has a governing board and a Governmental Affairs Committee that reports activity to the board. The Committee meets at a minimum once a month year-round to discuss issues that are impacting the profession, legislation being the priority. This type of constant engagement has been a huge source of strength for the association in handling annual legislative activities and most recently, discussion of the emergency regulations that were implemented during the pandemic.

Additionally, the Association created its own Political Action Committee (PAC) so it could generate funds to participate in the political process. Each year the TFDA PAC donates political contributions to legislators with integrity who have shown support for the funeral

profession. Brent McNeely, of Walters Funeral Home and TFDA Secretary/Treasurer said this involvement with the political process is a critical “final piece” of involvement for funeral directors and allows the association the ability to manage any trending public policy issues.

“When I served as PAC chair I realized how important it was for TFDA to stay involved in the political campaigns of those legislators who have been champions for our profession.” Mr. McNeely added.

Licensure, regulatory schemes, cremation alternatives, and green burials are all examples of trends in which the Tennessee Funeral Directors have been working on for the past few years. The mission statement of TFDA states: “TFDA facilitates the success and quality service of funeral professionals through leadership, advocacy, and education.” Successful advocacy comes through successful leadership. The TFDA Board of Directors understands how important legislation is to the funeral profession and has made advocacy the priority.

The TFDA Board charges the TFDA Governmental Affairs Committee and staff to educate the Tennessee General Assembly regarding why these ideas may or may not be the best solutions. Additionally, the responsibility of the board and committee members is to motivate the hundreds of TFDA members to stay engaged with their individual legislators. Detrimental legislation can be costly, happen quickly, and is appearing more frequently. It is critically important to the prosperity of the Tennessee funeral profession to maintain positive legislator-constituent relationships when undesirable ideas arises. These relationships are the key to political engagement and allowing TFDA to respond and achieve what TFDA President Randy Nash calls, “100% success.”

Bob Batson – Executive Director, Tennessee Funeral Directors Association, 30 years. TN licensed Funeral Director/Embalmer. Mortuary Specialist DMORT Region IV 25 years, multiple deployments. Chairperson of Council of Funeral Service Executives 2010-2012. Member of TN Medical Examiners Advisory Council



J.A. Bucy is a partner at Capitol and 5th Public Strategies in Nashville with with over 27 years of experience helping businesses and associations achieve their objectives by building and effectively leveraging political capital. He has worked in and around politics since 1984 when he was in middle school working on the campaign of a funeral director running for the state house. He has represented the TFDA in the Tennessee General Assembly for over a decade.





CONTINUING EDUCATION ON-LINE

John A. Gupton College has developed online continuing education courses. These courses have been approved for CEU hours by both Tennessee and Kentucky Boards. The online subjects range from funeral service history, embalming techniques, funeral home management, grief psychology and bereavement counseling. **For information concerning cost and program call 615-327-3927, go to our website at guptoncollege.edu or email admissions@guptoncollege.edu.**



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INDUSTRY NEWS

Messenger Introduces New Wrapped Canvas Products

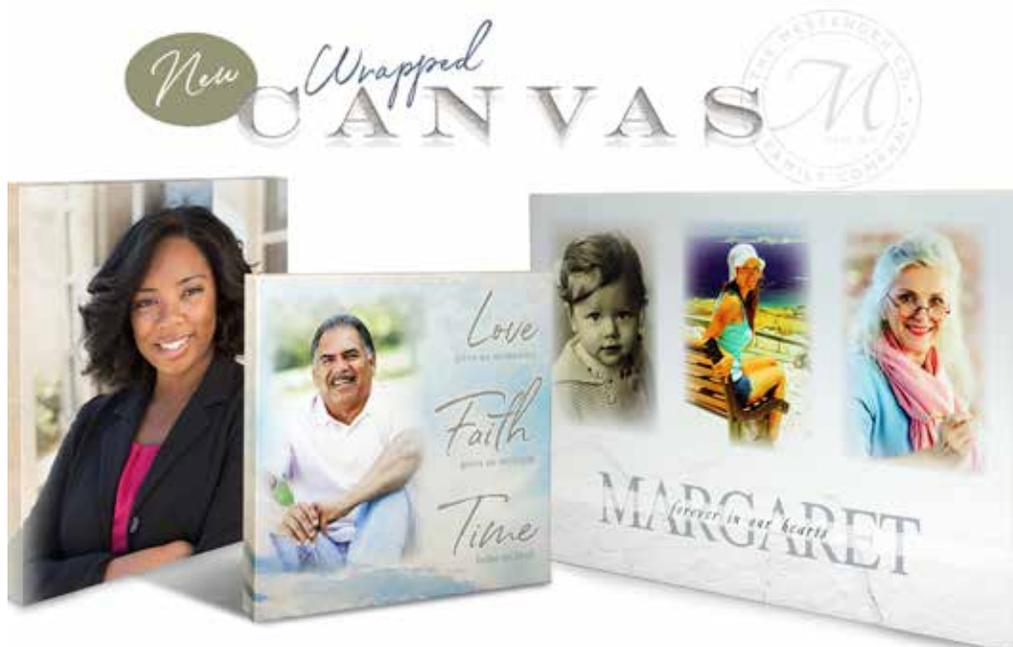
AUBURN, IN – Messenger, a leading provider in stationery, funeral service and personalization solutions, has added Wrapped Canvases to their exclusive line of Signature Service personalization products. With Signature Service, funeral professionals order premium personalized products through the Messengerstationery.com website. These products are designed by Messenger’s team of highly skilled graphic designers and printed on-demand. When proofs are approved by 2:00 p.m. EST, Signature Service products ship the same day so funeral homes receive them in time for the service. “As the popularity of our Signature Service continues to increase, funeral professionals are reaching out to us with specific requests for personalized products” said Heather Garman, Vice President of Sales and Marketing at Messenger. “We are excited that we can respond so quickly to these requests and provide funeral professionals with the products their families are asking for and appreciate.”

Wrapped canvases are available in three convenient sizes: 16” w x 16” h, 16” w x 20” h, 24” w x 18” h and feature a thick 1.5” gallery wrap for displaying. These canvases are made from high quality materials for rich,

vibrant color replication and built to be light weight and durable. Each canvas includes hardware to allow families to display at home after the service.

For more information about the Wrapped Canvas and Signature Service, please call Messenger at 1.800.827.5151.

The Messenger Co., LLC, headquartered in Auburn, Indiana, was founded in 1913 by Frank Messenger, who started in the religious calendar business. Messenger has since become the leading provider of stationery, funeral service items and personalization services. In 2019, Messenger acquired Express Funeral Funding, the largest privately-held insurance assignment funding company. Focused on being a trusted partner to funeral professionals, Messenger delivers time saving solutions to increase customer satisfaction and add value. Messenger provides quality product and technology solutions with quick lead times and exemplary service, exclusive partnerships and one of the most experienced and extensive sales teams in the funeral industry. For more information about Messenger, visit www.messengerstationery.com or call 1.800.827.5151.



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INDUSTRY NEWS

Go Beyond Back to Normal at ICCFA Dead Talks 2021

STERLING, VA (October 20, 2020) – The International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association (ICCFA) will host its DEAD Talks Sales Conference on January 11–15, 2021. This year, the decision was made to host DEAD Talks online to best adhere to travel and meeting restrictions due to COVID-19. The theme for the 2021 iteration of this event is “Back to Better,” with an event schedule that focuses on how attendees can use the lessons learned from COVID-19 to improve their processes and the way they conduct business. This event is based off the popular TED Talks, and attendees will hear the best actionable advice in rapid fire 18-minute presentations designed specifically for family service counselors and sales managers working in the deathcare profession.

The event kicks off on January 11 with a hands-on workshop on remote selling, presented by Winning by Design. Keynote presentations begin on January 12 as Lori Salberg presents “Better than Before.” Wednesday, January 13, kicks off with “Building Authentic Relationships” from keynote speaker JC Quintana. Thursday and Friday will feature the keynote presentations “How to Win New Families Online Through Relationships & Transparency – The New ‘Normal’” and “Maximizing Personal Potential” with Ryan Thogmartin and Dana Potthoff respectively. Along with the keynote presentations, each day of the conference will feature three DEAD Talks. Monday through Thursday will also feature a ‘Conversation Café’ where attendees can network and enjoy a focused discussion.

Registration for DEAD Talks 2021 will include access to bonus content courtesy of Gary O’Sullivan and the team at The System University. These sessions will feature additional sales tips and information for new and seasoned sales professionals alike.

Thanks to a generous donation by the ICCFA Educational Foundation, the ICCFA will be able to offer this entire weeklong sales experience to ICCFA members for only \$99. The ICCFA Educational



Foundation is also offering 200 scholarships for DEAD Talks 2021 to qualifying ICCFA members, so many attendees will be able to participate in this event at no cost. Scholarship applications are due by December 18, 2020. Interested members can apply now at www.iccfa.com/sales/scholarships.

To learn more and register for this event, please visit www.iccfasales.com.

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DEAD Talks

Back to **BETTER**

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DEAD Talks Keynote Spotlight: Better than Before



Lori Salberg

“A good plan today is better than a perfect plan tomorrow.” In the wake of COVID-19, there’s no better quote to summarize how businesses have had to adapt to customer needs. The world is changing at a speed greater than any other time in history. Emerging technologies will account for 70% of global revenues in 10 years. We all talk about the “new normal” but it isn’t a term for the moment. The new “normal” will be living with constant change. How you respond and adapt are no longer acceptable. You need to plan and get ahead. To get ahead, understanding customer experience (CX) in your sales cycle is more important than ever. On Tuesday, January 12, Lori Salberg, CSE, CXE, from Johnson Consulting Group, will present her keynote where attendees learn how experience driven businesses increase sales opportunities, help close more deals, and generate more referrals.

ICCFA’s 2021 DEAD Talks virtual sales conference is a week-long virtual event being held on January 11 - 15 that will feature over 3 hours of content each day. Thanks to the generous support of the ICCFA Educational Foundation, ICCFA is able to bring this invaluable sales content to you for only \$99 for ICCFA members/\$299 for non-members. Click here to learn more and register.

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Working with the Media

Keys to Service = Conclusion

By: Todd Van Beck, Director of Continuing Education, John A. Gupton College, Nashville, TN

We come to the end of our quest to explore “Keys of Service.” It is not an exaggeration to say that this experience which happens thousands of times a day in thousands of cemeteries and funeral homes across this county, this once in a lifetime experience has definite sacred tones in it and about it. That is the indeed part of the nature of human grief which every aspect of our work is saturated with – it is unquestionably a sacred experience. In the end the “sacredness” or the “transactional” implications of these “Keys to Service” will be up to the participants who escape for a time from the craziness of the modern world and hold conversations, make decisions, and participate in one way or the other in the important work of ethically caring for our dead.

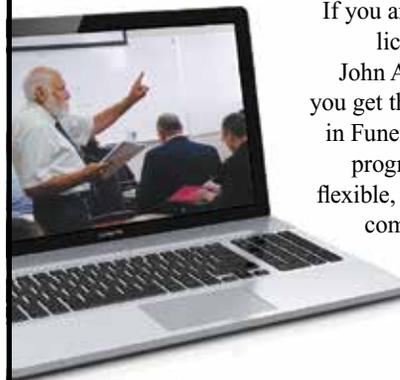
We are, everyone, in this work are indeed the custodian, the protector, the overseer of this important experience. I find it amazing, and have so for years, that in reality there is nothing we can do about our client families save for loving them and supporting them. However, as funeral professionals, we have unlimited abilities in our imaginations, our creativities, and in our personal dedication by serving other by continually improving our skills in enhancing our knowledge and skills in serving humanity.

Serving others, how many times have we heard those two words said in our great profession? The great humanitarian and jungle physician Dr. Albert Schweitzer wrote a marvelous quote many years ago concerning serving others and being happy. Dr. Schweitzer said, “I don’t know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have fought and found how to serve.”

I believe that most every in this line of endeavor that I have worked with has discovered that combined formula of service and happiness that Dr. Schweitzer is referring to.

In fact I believe I can personally prove Dr. Schweitzer’s thought is absolutely true, correct and right. I know that even today after 48 years of laboring in this vineyard of serving others when I have the opportunity to serve, through the noble work of our beloved profession, whether that service is a death call, embalming, funeral interviewing, presenting monuments, or helping a family choose cemetery and cremation services, or even today blasting cremains into obit – I feel happy when I have completed my professional tasks. When I connect with a client family it makes me happy. I don’t connect with them all, but I try. This is such a simple idea: finding happiness through serving others. This is truly a worthy ideal.

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Infant Embalming Procedures - A Continuing Education Program Presented by John A. Gupton College

By Todd W. Van Beck

Babies are not supposed to die – well not in 2015 anyway – however the brutal fact of death history is that babies died all the time. The hard truth is that in the year – let’s say 1900 for instance, the infant mortality rate was a whopping 88% - parents expected their infants to die – it is only with the great advances of medical care that we in America today live with the mental expectation that babies do not die. For the first time in human experience certain cultures live with the expectation that babies will not die - but of course as every funeral director knows this “expectation” is simply not true. Approximately 37,000 newborn infants die annually in the United States within the first 28 days of life. Another way to look at this reality is to say that one neonatal death occurs every 15 minutes somewhere in this country. Babies die all the time, and in deprived cultures the attitude towards infantile survival today is a reflection of the American attitude in 1900.

Embalming babies, infants, and children is especially difficult and challenging activity for the professional embalmer both psychologically and technically. However the value of embalming our “little ones” is enormous. The tremendous value of chemical preservation of infants is best attested to by the famous case which my friend Glen W. Davidson did many years ago called **“Death of the Wished-For Child.”** Dr. Davidson’s pioneering study proved the fact, or I should say the glaring fact that parents of infant death have very special needs.

Here is some data on Glen’s study:

1. This was a 5 year study of 15 mothers who gave birth to a dead infant or who lost their baby in the first 24 hours of life.
2. The study discovered when an infant dies the mother and significant people around them become vulnerable and disoriented.
3. There is a great desire on the mother’s part to hold the infant.
4. This request to hold the dead infant is denied at a significant rate.
5. The research showed that parents that were able to

see and/or hold the dead baby were able to orient themselves much more quickly than those parents that did not get to see and/or hold the baby.

6. It was discovered that parents find it difficult to hide emotional support from people close to them when an infant dies.
7. It was also discovered that professionals have their own problems or anxieties about accepting the death of an infant.
8. Working with little or inaccurate information concerning the infant’s death, a mother tries to discover what has happened to herself and her dead infant – the result is the mother’s imagination creates the image of a “horror” baby in appearance when most times this is simply not true.
9. Seeing the dead infant almost instantly removed the erroneous “horror” baby image from the mother’s imagination.
10. The study concluded that viewing the infant dead human remains can be psychologically helpful to the working out of the deep emotions of grief being experienced by those significantly affected.

We will cover seven embalming techniques. They are:

1. Abdominal aorta approach
2. Umbilical vein approach
3. Heart approach
4. Thoracic aorta approach
5. Angiocath/syringe approach
6. Normal arterial embalming injection approach
7. Fluid pack approach

PRE-EMBALMING ANALYSIS

In embalming infants two problems are frequently encountered by the embalmer. First, the difficulty often experienced in securing satisfactory blood drainage because of the minute size of the veins in infants. Second, there is a tendency and possibility of over-embalming the infant. Because of these challenges a full case analysis consisting of, but not limited to, the following points needs to be implemented. They are:

1. Vessel selection
2. Body positioning
3. Injection cannula size

4. Presence of liquid blood
5. Size/location of incision(s)
6. Rate of Flow
7. Pressure
8. Solution strength
9. Intensity of refrigeration
10. Un-autopsied cases/ autopsied cases

The pre-embalming and post-embalming procedures are general and might not be applicable to every technique selected by the embalmer. Each technique can be utilized on un-autopsied and autopsied cases as follows:

PRE-EMBALMING CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Case Analysis
2. Wash the infant and disinfect all orifices.
3. The infant should be placed on a bed of non-absorbent cotton as this prevents the flattening of the back, buttock, and legs which will feel unnatural if the mother wishes to hold the infant. NOTE: I have filled a small receptacle about half way full of water and floated the infant in this environment while I injected the remains and found that the legs, back, buttock etc. fill out naturally from the pressure of the injection.
4. Never remove any facial hair without the written permission of the person exercising the rights and duties of disposition.
5. Set the features – methods vary, however I usually just held the mouth while injecting – sometimes a little opening of the mouth truly resembles how infants look when they are sleeping. Eye caps are unnecessary, massage cream on a small piece of cotton works very well.
6. Massage cream need to be used to prevent dehydration.
7. HCHO demand.

GENERAL POST-EMBALMING PROCEDURES:

In the post-embalming procedures for infants several worthwhile points require attention and information. They are:

1. If a cranial autopsy has not been performed cranial treatment of the infant's brain is necessary. As all embalmers know the infant's brain will decompose rapidly causing possible purge and distention. Use a 20cc syringe and insert an #18 hypodermic needle through the posterior fontanel (soft spot) of the infant's head and inject 2-3 ounces of cavity

fluid directly into the brain tissue. At times this injection can be accomplished by going through the cribriform plate of the ethmoid bone with the hypodermic needle.

2. Bathe and dry the infant and removing all excess massage cream from the body surface.
3. Smooth and conceal any sutures by using a flexible sealer or wax over these incisions. In any event make sure to give attention to covering the sutures because the parents may well want to hold the infant.
4. Dress the infant and place plastic sheeting or covering around all openings to protect the clothing when the cosmetics are applied.
5. A word about cosmetics: Every embalmer on the face of the earth has their "special" cosmetic procedures and that is great. Here are some suggestions.
 - It is useful to implement an arterial fluid which possesses some dye when doing the initial embalming injection. Obtaining a level of color from the inside out makes for less external cosmetic use.
 - A mortuary preparation of a paraffin-based liquid, tint, or bisque cosmetic is successful for infants.
 - The base tint should be kept extremely light and rosy colored cosmetics used sparingly on the warm facial areas.
 - A very small amount of blue eye shadow when placed on the orbital areas.
 - Use talcum powder sparingly on the entire body, and be sure to clean the talcum powder away from the eyebrows and eyelashes.
6. Finally position the infant for the visitation either in a crib, bassinet, or in the casket.

One additional consideration in caring for the infant death is the manner in which the infant is posed for the viewing by relatives and friends. Sometimes a little bed or crib can be used in place of the casket for the first viewing and visitation – the infant might be placed in the casket shortly before the funeral service. The infant should be placed in a natural sleeping position. This creates a more natural and comforting setting. I am familiar with several funeral homes which offer the mother a rocking chair, furnish a baby comb, baby oil, diapers, baby powder. They encourage the mother to hold and rock the infant.

**“Part-II to be Continued in the January 2021
“Education” Issue...”**

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INDUSTRY NEWS

Funeral Service Foundation Announces \$100,000 Major Gift from Carriage Services, Inc.

This gift continues Carriage’s legacy of supporting the Foundation’s work in fueling meaningful careers in funeral service.

Brookfield, Wis. – The Funeral Service Foundation is proud to announce a major gift pledge of \$100,000 from Carriage Services, Inc. The transformational gift gives momentum to the Foundation’s mission of investing in people and programs to strengthen funeral service and lift up grieving communities.

“If we can help support transforming the industry to make it even better for the next generation, then Carriage Services wants to be involved,” said Jason Buchbinder, Director of Talent for Carriage Services, Inc. in Houston, Texas. “Fifteen years ago, we helped plant the seed for the Foundation’s endowment, and we’re honored to continue to give back.”

Carriage contributed \$25,000 to the Foundation’s Hand-in-Hand Endowment in 2005. Now just shy of \$10 million, the endowment, in part, allows the Foundation to award grants to mission-aligned organizations, offer community-building resources, and make education available to funeral service professionals throughout every stage of their career.

“We’re grateful to have Carriage’s continued support in a year when funeral service professionals are working harder than ever to serve families, while maintaining a meaningful work/life balance,” said Funeral Service Foundation Executive Director, Lee Wiensch, CFRE. “This gift will allow us equip even more funeral service professionals with resources and educational opportunities designed to support a fulfilling career.”

“We wish to see a bright future for our industry,” added Buchbinder. “At Carriage, we’re determined to see the men and women who make funeral service their calling wildly successful – both personally and professionally. Everyone deserves meaningful work and a meaningful life.”



FUNERAL SERVICE FOUNDATION



Carriage Services, Inc. has supported the Foundation since 2005. In 2020, the company supported the Foundation’s annual Golf Classic and pledged a \$100,000 major gift. From l-r: Mel Payne, Jason Buchbinder, Carlos Quezada, Ben Brink, Steve Metzger, Viki Blinderman, Michael Loeffel, Shawn Phillips, and Peggy Schappaugh. Not pictured: Chris Manceaux and Paul Elliott.

About the Funeral Service Foundation – FuneralServiceFoundation.org

Since 1945, the Funeral Service Foundation has served as the philanthropic voice of the funeral profession and has identified as the charitable arm of the National Funeral Directors Association since 1997. Donors and volunteer leaders profession-wide support the Foundation in its mission of investing in people and programs to

INDUSTRY NEWS

Funeral Service Foundation Welcomes New Trustees and Names Executive Committee

Brookfield, Wis. - The Funeral Service Foundation's Board of Trustees welcomed five new trustees and re-elected its executive committee at its meeting held during this week's NFDA Virtual International Convention & Expo. Voted onto the board in August, Lisa Baue, W. Ashley Cozine, John Heald, Timothy Schramm, and Thomas Pontone, began three-year terms as Foundation Trustees on October 19. Funeral directors and allied professionals alike serve on the 18-member volunteer board and offer their expertise and insight to advance to Foundation's mission of investing in people and programs to strengthen funeral service and lift up grieving communities.



Lisa Baue "I am honored to serve as a Funeral Service Foundation trustee and support its mission, which has been part of our family's legacy for more than four generations," said Baue, President and CEO of Baue Funeral Homes in St. Charles, Missouri.

"The Foundation's top-notch educational tools and professional resources, along with its scholarships for students and licensees, are the key to our future success." Longtime Foundation supporters, the Baue family has been instrumental in developing and supporting continuing education programs. In 1986 Baue's father, David C. Baue, helped found the Women in Funeral Service Education Program. (The program was offered by the National Foundation of Funeral Service - the name by which the Funeral Service Foundation was recognized from 1945 until 1997.) A licensed funeral director, Baue served as a Mentor in 2013 for NFDA's Meet the Mentors program, which has been funded by the Funeral Service Foundation since its 2011 inception.



W. Ashley Cozine "I am a strong advocate for giving back to our profession and serving on the Foundation

Board is an ideal way to accomplish this goal," said Cozine, President and Licensed Funeral Director with Cozine Memorial Group in Wichita, Kansas. "I look forward to helping educate funeral professionals about the important role that the Foundation plays within the profession and soliciting their support to ensure that this outstanding work continues." Cozine has supported the Foundation since 2012. In 2017, Cozine Memorial Group participated in the Foundation's National Family History Month initiative, curated in partnership with NFDA. Cozine served as NFDA President in 2016-17.



John Heald "I am honored to be a part of such a distinguished group of professionals, past and present, who have served on this board for the betterment of funeral service," says Heald, Senior Vice President-Channel Development of Legacy.com in Chicago, Illinois. "I will work hard to give back to a profession that gives so much to families, communities, and colleagues." This year marks five years that Legacy.com has backed the Foundation's fall matching gift campaign. A licensed funeral director, Heald has served on the Foundation's Fund Development Committee for the past two years.



Timothy Schramm "It is an honor and privilege to serve as a Funeral Service Foundation Trustee, representing funeral directors and vendors to the profession," said Schramm, Owner and Licensed Funeral Director at Howe-Peterson Funeral Home & Cremation Services in Dearborn, Michigan. "I am proud to represent funeral service professionals who share a passion and commitment to investing in people and programs that strengthen funeral service today, and in the days to come."

Schramm is a Mortuary Science Program Advisory Board Member for Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan and has served on the Foundation's Scholarship Committee since 2016.



Thomas Pontone “The Foundation has been important to both my family and to the Matthews corporate family for many years,” said Pontone, President of Matthews Aurora Funeral Solutions in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. “It is a privilege

and an honor to carry forward my family's legacy and the Matthews Aurora Funeral Solutions legacy as a Foundation Trustee.”

The Pontone family provided a \$250,000 lead gift in 2003 for the Foundation's Hand-in-Hand endowment, which has nearly reached the \$10 million mark this year. In 2020, multi-year major gift supporter, Matthews Aurora Funeral Solutions, gave \$20,000 in support of the Foundation's COVID-19 Crisis Relief Fund.

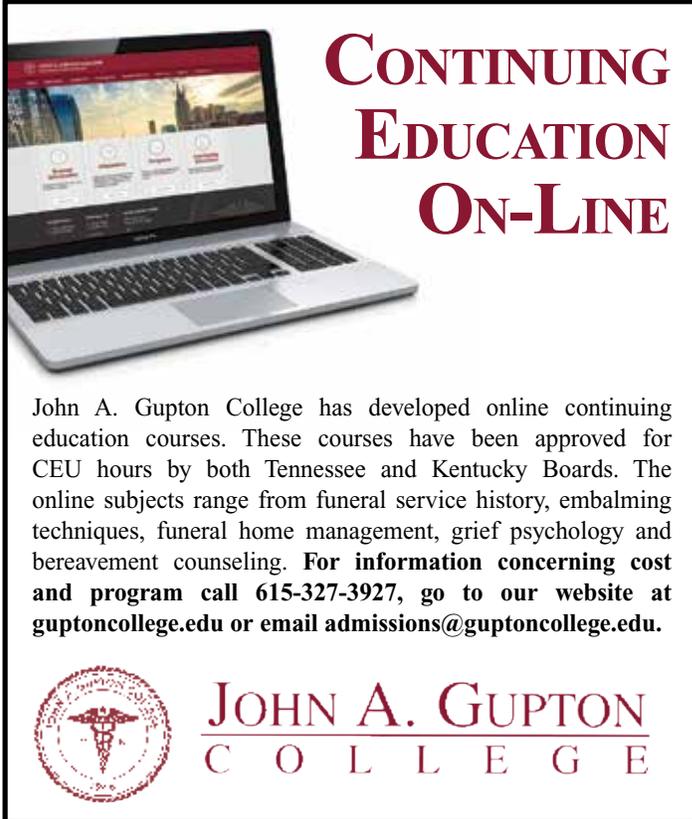
“We're delighted to welcome our newest Trustees,” said Anthony Guerra, who was re-elected as the Foundation's 2020-21 Chair. “They bring with them immeasurable industry knowledge and immense passion for the Foundation's important work.”

In addition to re-electing Guerra, Vice President of Guerra Gutierrez Mortuaries in Los Angeles, California, as 2020-21 Chair, the Board of Trustees re-elected Allan Cole, President and Owner, MacKinnon and Bowes in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, as Chair-elect. The Board also re-elected Eric Tanzberger, Senior Vice President and CFO, Service Corporation International in Houston, Texas, as Treasurer. Bob Arrington, Owner, Arrington Funeral Directors and Crematory in Jackson, Tennessee, continues his service as Immediate Past Chair.

“In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was in the Foundation's best interest to carry forward the strong leadership team for an additional term,” said Foundation Executive Director, Lee Wiensch, CFRE. “The Foundation has great projects on the horizon, and this executive committee will ensure the Foundation reaches new heights.”

Steve Gackenbach, Group President of Matthews Memorialization in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Bill Wappner, Co-owner of Wappner Funeral Directors & Crematory in Mansfield, Ohio, rotated off the board after six years of dedicated service to the Foundation. Brad Speaks, President & CEO of Speaks Chapels in Independence, Missouri also transitioned off of the board after three years of dedicated service.

About the Funeral Service Foundation – FuneralServiceFoundation.org
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**CONTINUING
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John A. Gupton College has developed online continuing education courses. These courses have been approved for CEU hours by both Tennessee and Kentucky Boards. The online subjects range from funeral service history, embalming techniques, funeral home management, grief psychology and bereavement counseling. **For information concerning cost and program call 615-327-3927, go to our website at guptoncollege.edu or email admissions@guptoncollege.edu.**



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INDUSTRY NEWS

Funeral Service Foundation Offers FREE Self-Care Handbook Addressing the Specific Needs of Funeral Service Professionals

“Caring for Families & Caring for Yourself: A self-care handbook for funeral service professionals” written by Alan D. Wolfelt, PhD, is available to funeral service professionals at FuneralServiceFoundation.org.

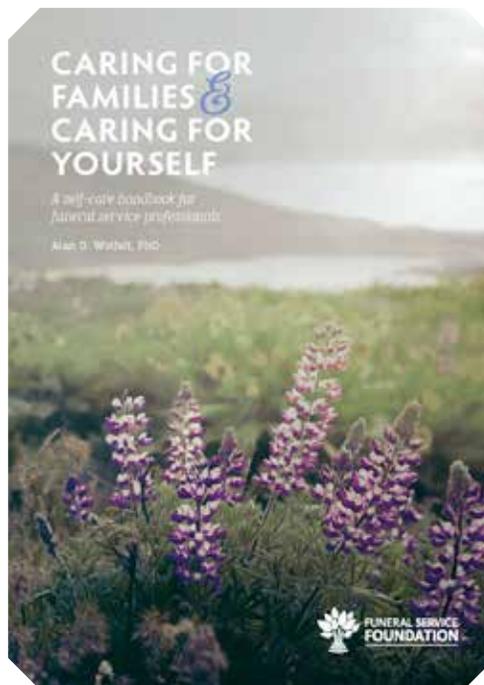
Brookfield, Wis. – The Funeral Service Foundation is proud to announce its latest complimentary resource offering, “Caring for Families & Caring for Yourself: A self-care handbook for funeral service professionals.” The handbook explores self-care techniques, specially designed to help funeral service professionals maintain a healthy work/life balance and prevent burnout.

The Foundation commissioned the 28-page handbook, written by Alan D. Wolfelt, PhD, through its COVID-19 Crisis Response Fund. The resource features tips, guidance, quizzes and journaling prompts that use proven methods to help funeral service professionals:

- Evaluate experiences, thoughts, and feelings
- Manage stress
- Navigate a path to self-care
- Uncover a deeper sense of self-understanding

“Funeral service professionals are first responders – sometimes called ‘last responders’ – in a high-touch, high-stress environment,” said Wolfelt, founder and director of the Center for Loss & Life Transition in Fort Collins, Colorado. “Effectively managing that stress is part and parcel of the vocation and essential to a funeral service professional’s well-being. Finding ways to manage stress is key to maintaining healthy relationships with loved ones and boosts a funeral director’s capacity to compassionately serve families.” More than 100 firms have already leveraged the resource, which was available during the NFDA Virtual International Convention & Expo and mailed along with the November issue of *The Director* magazine. The Foundation also shared the handbook with state associations earlier this month.

“Part of the Illinois Funeral Directors Association (IFDA) Strategic Plan is to provide addiction support



and resources to members and employees that may have behavioral or addiction problems related to the profession,” said Mary Carey, executive director of the IFDA in Springfield, Illinois. “We also need to offer reliable HR resources

to address employee addictions. The Foundation’s ‘Caring for Families & Caring for Yourself’ handbook is a perfect resource.”

Those interested may order free copies in quantities of 1, 5, 10 and 25 at FuneralServiceFoundation.org. Simply pay shipping. Orders include a companion “Self Care Manifesto” poster, ideal for displaying in break rooms or common spaces.

Additional free resources available at FuneralServiceFoundation.org include the Foundation’s Youth & Funerals booklet and video, which helps families and communities understand the important role funerals and memorialization play in the lives of grieving youth, and “Grieving Alone & Together: Responding to the loss of your loved one during the COVID-19 pandemic,” which offers guidance to anyone who has experienced the death of a loved one during the pandemic or would like to learn about how they can support those who have.

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