



2021 NFDA Pursuit of Excellence Essay

Category #1 Section F.

At Morris Family Services, we are more than a funeral home and crematory in our community. Our mission is to provide care, comfort and guidance to those in need. Whether it's guiding a family who's preplanning their final arrangements, assisting a family who has suffered a recent loss, or those in our community who've fallen on hard times. This year has been different, since COVID has impacted all of our lives. It was extremely important to us, more than ever, to do all that we can to serve our community and the families within.

For decades, our service to our community has gone beyond funeral services. This has become even more important this year, for the families who are fighting through their own adversity and the COVID pandemic. There are many different programs that we participate in throughout the year. But the Fill the Fridge program is one of the most satisfying for us. We take time to promote this event across our website, and other social media, to shed some light on how hunger affects our community, and what others can do to help.

One of our staff's most favorite event to participate in, is the Fill the Fridge Community Program. Throughout the year, we understand that there are circumstances that put families into situations that they never thought they would be in. It is our belief that no one should go hungry. This is why each month, we Fill the Fridge of a young or single parent family in our community, with no questions asked. Provided items will include but are not limited to: Perishable and Nonperishable food products, diapers, formula, clothes, school supplies and more. Families are nominated by members of our community via our website, social media or handwritten letters of nomination. This benefits the community by giving food to those who are in need, and the staff know that they have done their part to contribute to a huge cause.

As mentioned above, this Fill the Fridge program benefits our entire community and the surrounding areas. It also brings our whole community together for a single cause. Although Owensboro is now categorized as a city, it certainly has not lost its feeling of unity, and small-town charm.

Often, the average person perceives a funeral home and those who work in the profession as individuals who only care for those in need during a time of grief and sorrow. But Morris Family Services has done more than to just be recognized as "just a funeral home"; it has allowed our organization and our compassionate staff to be viewed as keepers for all of Owensboro.



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CATEGORY 1F

“AFTER HOURS”

Basic Details:

- Tour of our funeral home to educate the public about the funeral profession
- Partnered with the My Community Festival team to organise tour which was supported by the Singapore Tourism Board
- Tour took place during wee hours (12am – 2am), highlighting the 24/7 nature of the funeral profession
- Date of execution: 05, 06, 12, 13, 19 and 20 December 2020

Flying Home, a subsidiary company under Ang Chin Moh Group decided to do something fun yet educational for the community for a change. As Covid-19 started in year 2020, all travel plans had to be cancelled. Travellers who already had their airflight tickets and accommodation booked had to request for a refund. Everyone’s mood was dampened upon receiving the news and it seemed so afar till the restrictions will be lifted and it was something that we can only look forward to and await for the good news.

As travelling is a getaway for us to take a break and recharge ourselves from work, with Covid-19 disrupting our plans, we all felt like a bird who is trapped and caged up. Many other companies especially the small medium enterprises then started coming up with workshops such as handicrafts and pottery making where the community can attend with safe measures and social distancing in place. As the hospitality and tourism industry was badly affected, many hotels partook in this initiative which allows locals to book hotel rooms as a short getaway while using the \$100 vouchers.

Since we were all unable to travel, the local community then sought for alternatives to ‘entertain’ themselves. Majority of the community then became active, explored places which we have never thought existed, sightseeing, and trying out local delicacies and understanding our culture better. As the people started getting adventurous and curious, Ang Chin Moh Funeral Directors then had an idea, why don’t we use this opportunity to do something fun yet educational? In the local community, the funeral trade has always been taught and seen as a taboo. One that our grandparents and elders would have said to avoid going anywhere near it as it brings bad luck. Hence, the concept of the funeral trade is equivalent to a taboo and naturally we shun away from the industry.

Ang Chin Moh Group, parent company to Flying Home then partnered with my community festival which is supported by the Singapore Tourism Board to kickstart the tour. My Community Tour Organisation that aims to capture and preserve community stories, reconnect people to places and social networks, and deepen heritage appreciation and expression across the country. My Community Tour has held different tours which showcases different heritage and traditions which was an eye opener for the community who has never been exposed to such. As this pandemic has affected us, locals started going for such tours to better understand the traditions and understand some of the industries which were usually frowned upon.

As our industry operates 24/7 which also responds to incoming night cases, you can say that our industry never sleeps! Many may not know, but our funeral directors are also our frontline heroes whose efforts are often belittled and overlooked. To allow the community to fully participate and immerse themselves in the trade. The tour took place on every weekend night for the month of December, from 05 December 2020 – 20 December 2020 between 12am – 2am. Prior to the event, our team had to ensure that we have met with the safe measures management criteria such as temperature taking of the visitors, printing the SafeEntry QR code for participants to check in to the premises and to always maintain 1m safe distancing throughout the tour.

At the beginning, our team had expected a low participation rate as we thought that it was not a tour which usual locals would sign up for. As the day of the event arrived, we were surprised at the participation rate and how energetic they were despite being held at 12am. During the tour, participants had the opportunity to explore our funeral home and had an engaging session with the team.

As such topics or places were not usually visited by the locals, it was definitely an eye opener for the community. The tour talked about the history of Ang Chin Moh Group, Q&A session with Funeral Director which he shared about his experiences, the challenges he faced and the satisfaction which he receives from serving the bereaved. We shared on what repatriation is about and the process of it. The team also brought the community around to show some of the products we have such as the urns and caskets in our funeral home.

During the tour, our team brought the participants through the embalming room and briefly went through the mortuary lift. As Ang Chin Moh Group not only pursue constant service excellence, but we also keep ourselves in check with the technology advancement, hence we brought in the mortuary lift as it helps the embalmer in en-coffining the beloved which requires lesser manpower.

As many would have thought that when one passes on, that would be the end of it but did not expect that there are post-funeral services as well. Hence, we introduced one of which we offer, the keepsakes. Ang Chin Moh Funeral Directors then explained the process of a keepsake and how are the ashes being stored inside. It is only through the office tour which exposed the public to more information and services that are available out there which they can choose to opt for.

As the tour was a success from the participation rate, to seeing the participant's engagement and feedbacks, Ang Chin Moh Funeral Directors hopes to be able to hold such office tour again for the community as it helps to educate and demystify the funeral trade. While the situation for the pandemic gradually improves, there are still restrictions that is affecting our daily lives. Travelling, being the biggest factor has affected all of us. Hence, Ang Chin Moh Group decided to embark on the community tour which is not only fun and innovative, but a tour that is insightful and yet educational for the community about our industry.



“Never believe that a few caring people can’t change the world. For indeed, that’s all who ever have.”

Margaret Mead

A TIME TO CARE, A TIME TO HOPE

Care is the first of Arlington’s four core values, imbibed by the Arlington family for nearly four decades. No less than its founder, Nestor Lopez Jose, role-modelled the behaviors of caring. His children, grandchildren and employees have carried on this legacy of caring in Arlington.

Caring has warmed the hearts of many sick, hungry, and disoriented people and gave them hope for a better tomorrow. The global covid-19 pandemic created health, economic, and social crises all over. But trying times were far more challenging in developing countries like the Philippines. To show its core value of caring, Arlington launched three projects in 2020 namely: (1) The Online Garage Sale, (2) the Yuletide Remembrance Tree Zoom Concert, and (3) The Care Pillow. These three projects pulled together the expertise and caring culture of its employees, the owners, the client families and the community at large.

PROJECT 1: THE ONLINE GARAGE SALE

The online garage sale was conceptualized by a Human Resource employee who wanted to help others during this pandemic. Working from home made her realize that she had new and old (pre-loved) items at home that could still be of use to others. She rallied her co-employees in HR to do the same. This gave her a sense of fulfillment and hope amid a disheartening situation.

The HR department then spearheaded the campaign by asking Arlington employees, consultants and contractors to donate items. After all the items were gathered and tagged, everyone in the company was invited to join the first online garage sale via zoom. The garage sale was held on December 15, 2020 at 4 in the afternoon. The proceeds of Twenty thousand pesos (US\$400) were donated to the Caring Circle program, a Facebook group that offers weekly group support sessions under the Reintegration for Care & Wholeness of RCW Foundation, Inc. in Quezon City.

RCW Foundation has been an advocate of inner wellness for the past 20 years. This organization is a safe haven for life - carers who are in need of healing, transformation, empowerment and support. The group answered the call for an individual’s inner wellness, growth and transformation. This is the same value of caring that Arlington Memorial Chapels has continued to nurture since its founding 39 years ago.

The online garage sale was a success. The Arlington family and its stakeholders believed that supporting a foundation that helped people care for their mental health is even more vital now in our world of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. Arlington employees realized that caring for

others outside of its business goes a long way and gives much needed hope in a sea of despair. The culture of caring in Arlington was enriched by the proactive participation of its employees even if some of them have been badly hit by the pandemic.

PROJECT 2: YULETIDE REMEMBRANCE TREE CELEBRATION 2020

Better Together: A Fundraising Online Concert

In 2002, Arlington Memorial Chapels, Inc. launched its first Yuletide Remembrance Tree. In loving memory of all those who have passed on, it was the company's hope to offer light and comfort through the annual gathering—bringing families together in the spirit of Christmas. This is a tradition that we have continued for 17 years. When the pandemic hit, and the circumstances seemed to get more dreadful with each passing day, we deemed it even more necessary to keep the tradition alive and to foster care and compassion within the community.

Although physical gatherings were impossible at the moment, we continued to believe that it is always better when we're together. Like many others who have had to shift to online platforms, it decided to bring this longstanding tradition online.

Better Together: A Yuletide Remembrance Celebration took place on December 16, 2020 at 6pm, via Zoom. In line with our the yuletide tradition, the event was a fundraising initiative, the proceeds of which were donated to displaced workers due to the pandemic as well as victims of Typhoon Ulysses (international name: Vamco) through "For The Future PH" and "Para Kay Kuya PH."

The online concert featured respected Filipino artists like Ms. Joey Albert, The Company, Gab Pangilinan from "El Bimbo: The Musical" and Jobim Javier from "Heto Na! Musikal Napo!" The powerhouse of talents encouraged audience members to attend the event via Zoom and to donate through the QR codes, which were flashed throughout the entirety of the event.

With multiple limitations due to the online nature of the event, we had to find ways to be creative in order to bring the feeling and excitement of attending a live performance to the Zoom gathering. We had a member of the 3rd generation of the Jose family host the event live to introduce the performers and have conversations with them about how the pandemic changed their lives and why this event's cause meant a lot to them as well. We also sent some audience members and sponsors grazing boxes and wine for them to enjoy the online concert from the comfort of their own homes.

The back-end preparations involved utilizing Zoom as the main platform, with the support of OBS (Open Broadcaster Software) – a free and open source software for live-streaming. This helped make the online concert a much more engaging experience for the audience members - allowing it to be more than just the usual video boxes we had grown accustomed to over the course of time that we had started using Zoom. The team also used Zoom's option to stream the concert to both our Facebook and YouTube pages. A member of the Arlington and Jose family directed the program to ensure the smooth flow of the show.

With the support and generosity of the our performers and donors, we were able to raise a total of Php180,000.00 (US\$3,700) for OUR hardest hit Filipino brothers and sisters who lost their livelihood due to the pandemic and those who were victims of the Typhoon Ulysses.

The project had given the technical team who worked on the show a feeling of pride and fulfillment as they realized that the founder's legacy of kindness and sympathy for other people lives on.

BETTER TOGETHER: Yuletide Remembrance Celebration 2020

<https://youtube/8o2jU4Suhna>

Better Together AVP:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=09Xy7I-C2o>

PROJECT 3: THE CARE PILLOW

With the current situation where everyone has been battling with the hardships brought about by the pandemic, people always seek comfort, care and consolation. One of the comforts that they miss is giving and receiving hugs to and from loved ones.

The Arlington family thought that giving pillows was like sending hugs, love and support to people. Small pillows were made that people can easily carry with them and hug anytime they would want to. The pillows had a picture of a teddy bear with an "I Care" note on its chest to remind anyone who received it that the person who gave this pillow cares for him or her.

This is a yearlong project that was started on Valentine's Day. The pillow cost was two hundred fifty pesos (Php 250.00) or roughly \$5.00 each. This is given to anyone who needs that care and hug symbolized by the pillow.

The first batch of pillows were given to some medical healthcare workers who served as frontliners during the pandemic. This was Arlington's way of honoring and showing appreciation for their hard work, sacrifice and dedication. Others were given to nuns who could no longer go out of the convent. Some were given to family members who needed to feel the love and physical care that they missed through this challenging times.

Sending someone a Care Pillow conveys our emotional reassurance to people that we appreciate and cherish them. The past year had truly been a challenge for everyone all over the world, mental health took a front seat as unemployment soared. People were not ready to lose a loved one to a sickness that surprised not only our nation but the whole world. Being in the funeral industry does not exempt us from the events and chaos that happened.

These three projects have not only brought the company together. It has also given hope to people who are undergoing mental health problems, lost their jobs and houses or even lost a loved one during this pandemic. Arlington hopes that these projects can be replicated by other communities in order to pass on the love and care that people so desperately need during this pandemic.

“ In the same light, going back to our core values helped us realize the importance we have in our community. This helped us make sure we are doing our share in making our country and the world a better place to live in during these extraordinary times.”

Your Arlington family

PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE CRITERIA

I. Basic Requirements:

F. Essay:

Baird Funeral Home strives to provide the optimum in service to the families we serve on a daily basis. As our firm's position statement indicates, *'Personalized Reflections'* to help honor and remember loved ones in a uniquely special way we believe in personalizing all services to each family. We also believe in honoring this position of personalization in all aspects of our business and community involvement.

We, like funeral colleagues across the country had to be very creative in the services to our families in an effort to bring some normalcy to very abnormal times. This same effort had to be applied to our community involvements and outreach. We were grateful that we were able to still offer our annual Shred Day and due to the pandemic we were the only business or organization to provide one in our area. Once again, we worked with our preneed colleagues of FDLIC, our staff and friends in putting on our Shred Day on October 31, 2020 at our firm. As an extension of the Shred Day and to further connect with one of our community organizations we incorporated a paper supply and monetary collection for our local community center, Lincoln Community Center. Our service schedule, weather and community participation worked out for a positive result with this community service event. The representative of the community center was on site for the entire event and extremely well-received. The Lincoln Community Center was very appreciative of the generous support of those in attendance as they were the benefactors of barrels of supplies and monetary support at a time of their first 21st century building campaign. People were inquiring almost immediately when we would be hosting another Shred Day in the future.

In our year of creative efforts toward normalcy, we were honored to host a modified version of our annual Reflections for the Holidays at the funeral home on November 22, 2020. Though we could not host our normal seated event with our service of remembrance we were able to invite all families to participate in person with scheduled times to for a time of reflection, candle lighting and placement of personalized ribbons on the tree of remembrance.

As a firm we had the opportunity to once again reach out in community service. We assisted organizations as they made great efforts to plan virtual events which included the annual county fair livestock show and sales, Hospice butterfly release, First Place Food Pantry drive-through and on-line fundraiser, Troy Area Chamber of Commerce annual auction, Troy Miami County Public Library Festival of Trees fundraiser, Edison State Foundation Holiday Evening to benefit student scholarships, and Bee for Literacy Silent Auction.

A highlight in the trying year of the pandemic and our own professional and personal losses, we were able to join forces with another funeral home following the death of their longtime owner. We were able partner with the funeral home's manager and assist her in acquiring the firm from the late director's family in September, 2020. Our staff was also able to assist the firm in putting on a public open house and dedication on October 8, 2020.

We like our fellow funeral professionals across the state and country continue to serve our families and community the best we can in the midst of personal and professional limitations and struggles. We wake up each day ready to serve families and our communities as best we can no matter the circumstances. The pandemic taught us a new appreciation for the services we can provide to our families and communities even in times of uncertainty. As always, we give thanks that we have a profession of care and the opportunity to provide personalized service to our families and community.

Signed June 2021 by:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tamara Baird". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Tamara Baird
President/Owner
Baird Funeral Home



Your Community's Funeral Homes
CHAMBERS AND JAMES

FUNERAL, PET & CREMATION SERVICES

Chambers and James Funeral, Pet and Cremation Services

Best of the Best Program

Community Banner Program

Chambers and James Funeral, Pet and Cremation Services Best of the Best Project for 2020-2021 is our Community Banner Program. Wait until you see the success and the turns this program took for our small hometown community. The rationale behind the program was to create a positive and encouraging message in our business community to inspire our town to achieve greatness.

Let's get into the simplicity of the program. We knew that this community uplifting message was able to be placed onto the city decorative poles. We began to work with Esigns to create three messages leaving room on the banner for a sponsoring organization. The messages were fun such as "Spring into a Blooming Community", "Thank you for your Service" and "Merry Christmas". Step two in the program was determining the cost from Esigns for the brackets and the banners for each pole and counting the 22 decorative poles in our town. After determining cost and find out 22 poles were available we created a flyer and form to complete. We knew at this point even if we sponsored just five poles in the town square our program would be a success. In step three we presented the program to the City Council of Wellsburg which voted unanimously to move forward with the program and authorized two years usage of the City decorative poles.

This is where the greatness of the program began. Our new community program took off and was sold out in two weeks. The sponsorships of the poles were \$225.00 each which was all given to the City of Wellsburg, who reimbursed us for all expense for a true audit trail. It was nice to see large organizations such as banks and insurance agencies taking multiple poles and other small businesses such as flower shops taking one. We were able to include large and small business together to have a true impact on our community.

Step four after gathering the sponsorships we gathered everyone's logo to input on the order of the banner. Esigns were so amazed with the program that they gave us a discount and we were able to complete three more banners with the funds. The additional banners were "We are Loving our Community", "Our Community is Heating Up" and "Giving Thanks for our Community".

Everyone in the town was so excited to see the banners go up and for a program to have movement of changing of the banners. Still to this day we have one more banner to unveil. Every two months our staff goes and removes the prior banner and adds the new one that takes about two hours of our staff time. They really love doing this project because it just does not include one but all of the staff. We are splashed into the papers and on social media every time the changing occurs. This program has been a huge benefit to the funeral homes by keeping our name out in the community while creating a positive and uplifting message to our small community.

The program didn't cost much to the funeral homes because of all of the community sponsors. Any funeral home or cemetery could very easily duplicate this program for their community and shine like we did. The core of the program was based on the theory of even if we just did some of the poles it made a difference. "This program makes our little town look organized," said local attorney Marc Cherenko explaining how we impacted the community.

This is where our little program took a huge turn for success and expansion. A local veterans organization group ask us to assist with creating Military Banners on the High of our little town. We manipulated the form for our community banners for Military Banners and the program was easily able to move forward. The military banners we did in phases to ease the number of application in addition to not knowing the response from the community on the total number. We have created 225 banners of Veterans, KIA and Soldiers from our community to honor them in a special way. The benefit to assisting with this military banner program is we already knew the steps and company to work with from creating the other banners. At this point we started collecting applications and scanning photos from the families as we were the only drop off location. This also benefited the funeral homes as we were able to interact with numerous families.

With such a big response we once again had to ask a local organization to sponsor some cost of the brackets to offset the cost for the families of the community. "We always know when Eric and his staff at Chambers and James create a program it is top notch," explained Chuck Bell of Main Street Bank. This bank not only sponsored several community message banners but also wrote a large check for this military banner program. We are known in our community as the Veteran's choice of funeral homes and numerous individuals of the community exclaim that message now in the community. As I am writing this Best of the Best essay another local community asked us to assist with honoring their military through the banner program.

Finally, you never know when or what program will make you shine in your community. With our 100 call firm, being small on the international scale in the industry, created a simple and uplifting message in our community to inspire good. Who would have known or how this story would have turned out? As we close this chapter of our Community and Military Banners we know we have made a difference. We have created a duplicable program and have numerous benefits to our funeral homes that will show for years to come. We indeed are the Best of the Best for our community, our families and to assist with inspiring the World.

ESSAY

Cozean Memorial Chapel & Crematory

July 14, 2021

During the Covid-19 pandemic being engaged in the funeral industry was certainly a challenge. Aside from the fear of contracting the disease, families were very unsure of how to proceed with services and how best to celebrate the life of a loved one under such dire circumstances. Many times it was left up to our staff to help guide these families with innovative ways to pay tribute to those who passed during a difficult time.

There were calls to the funeral home asking us how many people could come inside or if they were required to wear masks, or if they could put services on hold and have a service later to honor their loved one.

During most of the time when the virus was affecting large numbers of local people, many people just did not want to go out of their house. People were isolating themselves and staying away from businesses, including funeral homes. So many times during the worst part of the pandemic families were lined up with masks on, just staring at their loved ones in a casket. There was no line of people to pay their respects to the family or give them a hug.

This isolation was unsettling to those of us in the funeral profession. It was hard to know what would happen in the future, when all of this would end, or if it would end and whether we would go back to having services like before. There was a concern on our part that it might take a long time before things would get back to normal again.

Just as we were beginning to see the light at the end of the pandemic tunnel, we were approached by the local newspaper, the Daily Journal. They were going to sponsor a magazine called: *Parkland Living, Your Essential Guide to Living your Best Life in Southeast Missouri*. They asked if they could spotlight our funeral home in the magazine. It was a breath of fresh air because it gave us the opportunity to reassure the community that we are still here actively serving the families in the area. The article focused on our years of service to the community, our great reputation which gave us the opportunity to highlight the rich history of the funeral home. (Attached is a copy of the article to accompany this essay.)

Shred-It Event

How can we still hold an event for the betterment of our community and stay safe during a pandemic? That is the question we needed to ask ourselves this year. It is unfortunate that so many of our events had to be minimized or held virtually for public safety. However, we did the best we could under the circumstances.

This year, we came up with a drive-thru shredding event. We contacted the company Shred-It and arranged for trucks to be at both of our locations on Saturday, November 21st, 2020. This was a service to our community that was free of charge, but we did mention we would be collecting items for the food pantry at the event.

We had no idea how successful the event would ultimately be. We ended up with over 400 cars between our two locations with vehicles in multiple lanes in our parking lot as well as waiting in the street to come into our parking lot.

Due to the success, we will be continuing the Shred-It event annually. We were also able to donate a huge amount of goods to our food pantry which was extremely important as so many people were relying on their donations this year.

We always want to be active in our community and be involved in helping the community we serve. Finding a way to do that safely was paramount for us during this difficult time. There was so much for families to deal with during this time, whether it was a death by COVID-19, loss of a job or just the trauma of quarantine. Providing some sense of normalcy for us was important. We hold many services throughout the year to remember those we lost, and we didn't want this year to be different. We modified our annual events so we could still remember those during the holidays and remember the children we have loved and lost because we know these services bring so much comfort to the families we have served and are continuing to serve.

Although everything about the pandemic has caused so much loss and stress to everyone around the world, we are thankful that it pushed us to think out of the box. We were pushed to search out new ways to help families and our communities and we are a better funeral home because of it. Going forward, we can offer so much more to families than before. Our ultimate goal is helping every family with whatever they need every time, and now, we are even more capable.

Category 1 F - Essay

In the year of the COVID-19 Pandemic 2020-21, Dwayne R. Spence Funeral Homes struggled to find a project that the staff could do to serve the community. Ohio was very restricted as to what was open or permitted and with a part time staff mostly over 65 years of age there were not many safe options. In early 2021 the funeral home staff was finally able to get their vaccines and were able to breathe a sigh of relief, but social distancing and masks were still limiting possibilities for community service.

In late March of 2021, the funeral home was sent the request for our usual monetary sponsorship of the Pickerington Lions and Leo Clubs' PAWS Virtual 5K and 1 Mile Run / Walk and an idea was born. Instead of just sending in the funeral home's sponsorship, why not have the staff do the 1 mile walk as a group at the Pickerington funeral home where water and bathrooms would be available if needed. The parking lot was measured by Melinda Schnorrenberg driving around and around the funeral home (everyone inside the office thought she had lost her marbles) and it was determined that 8 times around the parking lot would equal a mile. The date was set for Saturday April 17, 2021 and the staff was sent an email invitation to participate in this event with their family members and furry friends. Dwayne R. Spence Funeral Homes would pay the registration fee for any staff member and their family members to participate.

After inclement weather canceled our first date of the walk on April 17, 2021, the staff and their families were able to complete the walk on a brisk May 2, 2021. At 1 PM the group gathered together for a "meet and sniff" to make sure all four-legged participants would behave themselves around others. Finally about 1:15 PM participants started to circle the funeral home. Most of the staff were happy to see each other in a safe outdoor climate with no facemasks. Each participant was given a t-shirt upon registration which had the Dwayne R. Spence Funeral Home logo on the back.

After the walk was completed, Melinda presented an award and certificate to all the participants in a small ceremony. Each human walker received a medallion and certificate. Ice cream treats were available to the humans at the end of the day but someone forgot doggy biscuits for the other walkers. Four participants - Penny, Christina, Charlie and Emery received an additional special "Grasshopper" medal as the youngest of all participants of the event from the Lions and Leo Clubs which had 52 total participants.

The staff and their families that participated were: Barb Callihan, Gary Madden and his wife Peggy along with their daughter Charlotte Ferguson and 4 grandchildren - Molly, Abby and Jacob Ruddock and Emery Ferguson and family dogs - Porter and Parley, Melinda Schnorrenberg and her 14 year old dog Parker (who watched from the car as he could not pass the "meet and sniff"), Melissa Siefker and her children Logan and Christina and pups Angel and Sarge, and Brent Wilson and his wife Nancy and doggy Wendy (who rode in the stroller as she is also 14 years old), his daughter Mandi Rederstoff and granddaughters Penny and Charlie Rederstoff along with their dogs Harley and Frankie. The funeral home had 17 total human participants and an additional \$500 was given to the Pickerington Lions and Leo Clubs. All the money generated from this walk went to the Pilot Dog Training Program for the Blind.

The funeral home staff was happy to be able to see each other, chat while walking and getting to know the other family members better. The young participants had a great time and were able to form new friendships and begin to learn about community service. The hope is to have a Dwayne R. Spence Funeral Home group participate in this event every year moving forward and that more of the staff and their families (four legged included) will be able to participate with improved organization on the funeral

Category 1 F - Essay

home's part (since there is more understanding of the what is expected by the Lions and Leo Clubs) and more than a two week notice.

Frank E. Campbell – The Funeral Chapel, New York, NY

I was attending my NYSFDA Board Meeting in Albany, NY on March 13, 2020. My youngest child Nicholas was with me as we were scheduled to leave for a hockey tournament in Lake Placid. My older son William was in Spain on a school trip and the rest of my family was home in Westchester.

When we received the official news about the first COVID Death on March 13, we all knew the changes and restrictions would come fast and furious. Our meetings were concluded and the hockey tournament was cancelled so Nicholas and I returned to Westchester. My next focus was ensuring my son returned safely from Spain and that my colleagues were safe and informed. Selfishly, I continued to think about how we can return to normalcy.

For the next 10 months I wondered if we were going to be able to host our Annual Winter Concert and other community events. Restrictions were still in place and activity and events in the City remained limited. Using our scaffolding bridge as a cover from the weather we planned an “outdoor concert”. Our performers were the “Campbell Brass Quartet” and we served hot chocolate, coffee and pastries. People purposely arrived for the event while others stumbled upon it while walking down Madison Avenue and a few followed the music as it echoed off the Upper East Side buildings. This event was a success and all who attended were thankful that we held our Annual Winter Concert. During this event a few social media influencers attended and share the event. I’ll tell you why this is important later.

As we entered the New Year (2021), the promise of large scale vaccinations were heard throughout the media and the hopes of lifted restrictions followed. Chatter throughout NYC included proposed dates when “Broadway” will open once again. During a meeting with my colleagues I asked for ideas for our 2021 Spring Concert. My friend Jim simply said, “A Salute to Broadway”. That is all it took, we coalesced around that great idea and contacted our Music Director.

A few days later I received an email saying that he had the perfect person, Karen Mason. Broadway was dark and she wasn’t working and the idea of singing for a crowd of New Yorkers hungry for Broadway was appealing to her. She had some trepidation early on and with knowing that this was free community event, she said, “*How could I not*”. We did not know what to expect, so we set the date and prepared to once again host an indoor event. We checked the sound and lights and

opened the doors once again to a community event. It was just over a year since the first NYC COVID death and we didn't know how the community would respond. The chapel was full with people eager to hear the woman from Broadway who performed in *Mama Mia* and *Sunset Boulevard*. Karen Mason took the stage and helped shepherd in thoughts of a City without pain or death and put a smile on everyone's face as she shared her true excitement. Every song was full of emotion as many sang along and provided their encouragement with resounding applause. Karen ended her performance with this comment. *"Leave it to Frank E. Campbell The Funeral Chapel to open Broadway, before Broadway opens"*.

Now here is the story about the social media influencers I mentioned at the end of the third paragraph. One person was a stand-up comic named Elyse DeLucci. As you can imagine, I wasn't going to miss out on a Night of Comedy. More on that event next year.....

Each year, with the exception of 2021 due to a global pandemic, myself and my family, and staff assist in displaying our authentic 1800's era horse-drawn hearse in both the annual classic car show and Halloween day and night for all to see. This was purchased by the funeral home in 2018 and refurbished for display purposes only due to its age and condition. This may seem to some as just a small part of an advertising display, but to myself and my family and staff it represents our heritage and long-term service to our town and its people.

Ever since I was a small child and starting to gain interest in the business my family had chosen, I would always be intrigued by the historic photos of the antique hearses and limousines that had been saved over the years. These were commonly taken back then to mark a new purchase of a professional vehicle and such a tradition even continues to this day in our professional trade magazines and advertisements. There was and still is a sense of pride and accomplishment that goes along with the staff and funeral home owners who stand beside their newly acquired vehicles.

By providing it for public view, it has been a focus point for not only our business, but for the opportunity to show the history and evolution in funeral service in general. It is not uncommon for many to stop, take photographs and ask questions about its function, history, and purpose. There is also a point of inspiration to younger generations who are interested in what we do. The Merchantville Classic Car Show and Halloween evening activities are attended by tens of thousands of people and well known throughout our area. The car show alone is a non-profit that generates the much needed income to support community events throughout the year.

Alongside of the display our staff is available to address such questions and provide information documents on what we offer and how we serve our local community. It also gives a chance for us to meet the public and put a smiling face to our name. Booklets for estate planning, pre-payment of funerals, and promotional souvenirs are on hand. Specifically, on Halloween we add a model skeleton horse and real oil lamps to the front to add a lighter mood and spark imagination. This display and events around it in our town have actually garnered business for us solely based on interest in the antique.

We plan on continuing this practice with maybe even the possibility of expanding it with other artifacts as time goes on. Overtime it has become quite satisfying hearing from people and being known as "the place with the old funeral wagon!"

Hill Funeral Home, Grand Blanc, MI

Hill Funeral Home has been a longtime supporter of the Grand Blanc community. From 1952 through the 1980s, the Hill family answered emergency calls for the city and ran an ambulance service. The funeral home was the dispatch headquarters for the Grand Blanc fire department. As the oldest existing funeral home in Grand Blanc, Michigan, Hill Funeral Home is honored to support FISH food pantry of Grand Blanc for several years. FISH is an all-volunteer organization who has been providing food, clothing, Christmas and emergency services to the Grand Blanc students and residents since 1974. There are no administrative costs. FISH can only provide these services with the help of volunteers and partnerships. All donations remain within the Grand Blanc Community. Hill Funeral Home supplies the storage of FISH's pantries at Hill Funeral Home. At our location, many items are stored such as food, cleaning supplies, household items. As part of their program, FISH arranges designated pick up times for each family in need at our location. Over the years, we have donated several items to their pantry during "Feed the Bus" drive event. This event is just as it sounds, our community brings nonperishable items to fill the bus. These items are then place in there pantry at Hill Funeral Home. FISH partners with the Grand Blanc City and Township Police and Fire departments, twice a year to reach out the Grand Blanc community for support to maintain a sufficient inventory of non-perishable foods, hygiene, paper and laundry supplies for our less fortunate neighbors. They also serve preschoolers, young and middle aged residents who also struggle to make ends meet. Additionally, we help our seniors with food as many are faced with making daily financial decisions that do not always include the purchase of foods. This past year we partnered with FISH in summer of 2020 for their summer food drive, during one of the most difficult times in our country we supported FISH and local authorities. They used our parking lot as the donation site. On the donation day, the parking was filled with volunteers, firetrucks with their ladders fully extended, police cars and many service members ready to receive items. All there to support our community and promote the food drive. Through our continued support FISH will continue to have free storage space to provide necessary items to our Grand Blanc Community. As the oldest existing funeral home in Grand Blanc, Hill Funeral Home stands committed to our community.

Howard K. Hill Funeral Services, New Haven, CT

Pursuit of Excellence 2021 Essay

Being a part of the HKH Holdings, Inc. conglomerate means so much more than being an employee and completing a job, it means to be a part of a movement that is focused on the communities that we not only serve but that we are a part of. We all play a part in developing and shaping our community ties and our community involvement. Here at HKHFS we not only serve but we nourish and provide avenues for our communities to learn, heal and thrive.

Over the past year the fallout from the pandemic put a pause on the world and a lot of its activities which meant that our communities would be in need more than ever. Here at HKHFS we truly exemplified what giving back and supporting our community means by being a part of the committee that put together and participated in the Farmers to Families Food Box Program where we all came together to pass out food during a 12 Community Food Distribution event in various locations in New Haven, CT on the following dates in October 2020: 1st, 6th, 8th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 20th, 22nd, 27th, 29th, 31st 2020. Additionally, we participated in the Farmers to Families Food Box Program for community food distribution at various locations in Hartford, CT on the following dates In October 2020: 15th, 22nd, 28th, and the 29th. Being able to provide and cultivate the basic needs of a healthy community is key to the upliftment and progress of a stifled society. Our staff felt honored to be in service to those in need. It helped us all appreciate the blessings that we all have and are called to do.

Because we are a small business, we feel that it is not only our responsibility but our duty to provide the community with education on the benefits and just how important it is to set up pre-arrangements for the inevitable event of funeral services prior to death. We have been actively engaging our various community members in pre-need seminars created and facilitated by our funeral service staff. This year we have created a zoom meeting platform where we showcase a PowerPoint presentation to provide an open forum for an in-depth discussion about what pre-need is and why it is essential for an individual, while providing peace of mind to family members that their loved one's final wishes are being met. We held pre-need seminars via zoom meetings on the following dates in 2021: January 25th and 26th for the House of God held for churches in Charlotte, NC, Stoughton, MA, Middletown, CT and Hartford, CT. February 23rd for the Zeta Sorority in New Haven, CT, March 26th for The Hartford Communities That Care Non-Profit Organization in Hartford, CT, April 19th for the Immanuel Missionary Baptist Church in New Haven, CT, April 26th for the Ministries of Love and Hope Church in Enfield, CT, and June 29th at Beulah Heights Church in New Haven, CT. The feedback we have received on our pre-need seminars has been paramount. The participants said it was informative and an excellent resource for information and unanswered questions. Overall, they expressed a better understanding and appreciation of the total importance of pre-planning. Providing these seminars has helped the community to see that HKHFS is a pillar of warmth, solidarity and compassion in our aspiration to provide a full level of service to the families that we serve.

Because our business is community based, we need to be sure that our team continuously is protecting themselves, their families, and their communities as much as possible. Getting tested regularly, early detection, quarantining and paying attention to how they are feeling are essential ways that we were able to do our part in keeping our community safe and keeping the spread of this virus down. To help do our part we were able to plan, schedule and participate in a one-day Covid vaccination clinic held on March 31, 2021, in conjunction with the Cornell Scott Hill Health Center. We successfully administered 100 Johnson & Johnson shots to the community from 9:30AM until 4:30PM at the Immanuel Missionary Baptist Church in New Haven, CT. Providing this support to the community also inspired our employees to educate themselves about the vaccine, quiet their fears and get vaccinated. The feedback we received from the community was they loved how organized the event was. They liked how easy it was to contact someone to make an appointment. Additionally, they appreciated that there were no long waiting lines.

The connection that we have with the community is evident in our participation in our public outreach. We held a "Drive Thru" Easter event at our Funeral home in New Haven on Chapel Street, where we partnered with Arabic Temple #40 and Arabic Court #95 on Saturday April 3, 2021. Additionally, we participated in two community Juneteenth Awareness Day's on June 19th and June 20th. We were able to bring understanding to the community about exactly what Juneteenth means to the black community, which was much needed during these unprecedented times that is breeding such an emotionally charged atmosphere bound in misunderstanding and improper judgment. Our staff and their family members were able to participate in these festivities while representing the funeral home and serving the community in order to make these event a success.

As a company education is key and is the driving force to getting our staff to a higher level in the way we do business and in the way we think and in the way that we care for ourselves, the way we achieve this is by training. Over the past year we have put time and attention into bringing awareness to our staff on all aspects of life. Not only have we completed the state mandatory Sexual Harassment Training in September 2020. But our Human Resources Director administers New Hire Orientations as appropriate in order to acclimate all new hires to our companies' culture, rules and regulations. We had a retired Marine Vietnam Veteran come in and train us on how to present ourselves and be well dressed for services. Additionally, we offered a Covid 19 proactive protocol and best practices training for keeping ourselves and others safe by bringing awareness to what Covid is and how to provide the utmost protection. There has been Numerous funeral home trainings consisting of performing successful house calls, how to use an Urn Arc for better service presentation and completing a mock funeral service for all employees. These trainings were designed to ensure that we as a company are administering funeral services the exact same way each time in order to ensure we are delivering a high level of customer service. We participated in an understanding generational differences within the workplace training that helped us as a team recognize how to appreciate and work better with one another given all our numerous ranges in age. We enlisted a professional financial consultant to speak to us about the importance of financial planning and setting ourselves up correctly for the future. We want our staff members to be more well-rounded to ensure that not only are their work lives in balance, but their home life is in balance as well, total care for our employees equates to happier and more productive employees that look forward to coming to work and getting the job done no matter how long and no matter what it takes.

In conclusion, the sense of community that exists is an aura of fellowship with others, as a solution of revealing mutual opinions, thoughts, pursuits, and goals. We here at Howard K. Hill Funeral Services exemplifies our mission statement of "We exist to create and foster a healing experience in the community for families and their loved ones. We nurture the close-knit community that is dedicated to honoring, sharing, and preserving the amazing and inspirational stories that we consider our life. We are committed to providing outstanding services to the families and communities that we serve and are dedicated to achieving the highest professional and ethical standards reachable." We not only offer this, but we embed it in all that we do to serve our communities, hereby helping us as a team to grow and do our part in making this world a better place to live, one act of meaningful service at a time.

John J. Jennings, FD
1875 - 1948

Mary Jennings, FD
1911 - 2006



Funeral and Cremation Services, Inc.
Honoring *Life* with our *Community* for 115 Years

Christopher C. Calvey, FD, CFSP
Certified Preplanning Consultant

Nicholas Paul Elko, FD

Upload # 2 2021 NFDA Pursuit of Excellence Awards

Category 1 Basic Requirements *con't*

Essay and Supporting Documents

Christopher J. Calvey, FD, CCO, Supervisor, Certified Cremation Services Provider

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Essay

Mats for the Homeless

Homelessness is a devastating situation and on the rise throughout the county. Covid-19 has compounded this public crisis even more and officials say they are seeing spikes in homelessness from San Francisco to New York. In Lackawanna County the effect of this situation is witnessed daily with individuals and families living along the Lackawanna River. They camp there for shelter and for access to water under tents and other makeshift shelters or often without either. There is rarely bedding, and most are sleeping directly on the ground. Jennings-Calvey Funeral and Cremation Services collaborated with several community members to help the homeless.

Chris Calvey, Jr. believes it is important for community businesses to act as leaders in addressing social inequities. Through his work as President of the Rotary Club of the Abingtons he learned about a creative solution to address some of the challenges faced by the homeless. A group of women in the area found a way to aid the homeless and address environmental concerns. The women collect plastic grocery bags that would have otherwise been disposed of and wound up in a landfill or in the ocean, compromising our delicate eco-system. They then take these bags and fashion them in a way where they create spools of plastic yarn, or "plarn", which are crocheted into plastic mats for the homeless to lay on where they choose to make their home. Because the mats are made from this plastic material, they are resistant to the elements and would not become saturated with water should it rain. They work with local groups that they make the special mats to donate to the homeless through organizations like Keystone Mission in Scranton.

The idea started at Taylor Community Library two years ago and then expanded to the Abington Community Library, Covenant Presbyterian Church in Scranton, and more groups throughout Lackawanna County and beyond. Chris Jr. was inspired and touched by the innovation of this project and the dedication of the group to taking action to address a challenge the homeless face. He wanted to work with the group to help them expand this innovative project which gives the homeless the human dignity and to amplify their story to increase public awareness of homelessness in the area and encourage others to become involved. He works directly with the libraries and other local organizations to provide resources and assistance.

The stories he hears about the impact of this project are profound and deeply moving. The volunteers say they enjoy helping the environment by recycling plastic and lending a hand to the homeless by giving them something dry to sit or lay on. "I had the pleasure of dropping bags off at Keystone Rescue Mission, and a homeless gentleman was stopping there for services, and he saw me unloading the mats, and he saw me and said, 'Are those for the mission?' And I said 'yes,' and he said, 'Can I have one, please? They are super.' I could have cried," said Leah Ducato Rudolph of Abington Community Library's Caring Hands group.

Loretta Heffernan of Taylor Library notes, "I knew there were a lot of homeless veterans, and I'm retired military, so that's originally who my mats were going to, and I think it's just fantastic when it spreads, you know knowledge when it spreads."

"It's hard to even imagine carrying all your worldly possessions with you, but that's what they do and to have something like this that's lightweight but insulates them from the cold is a really great idea," said Marti Rotherforth of Clarks Summit. These volunteers say their work may be especially important now.

Families served by the funeral home are introduced to possibly participate in this very worthwhile project. It has been shared with us that this activity of sorting and cutting the bags and rolling into plarn has helped them feel good again and find there is a purpose after their loss.

This effort also addresses another important issue, which is near and dear to Chris Calvey Jr. as he is an avid scuba diver, which is reducing the number of plastic bags that travel from reaching landfills to oceans directly. There is a huge problem in our oceans, rivers, and other waterways with plastic making its way and polluting these already

compromised eco-systems. According to Sylvia Earle, and American Explorer, "Why is it that scuba divers and surfers are some of the strongest advocates of ocean conservation? Because they've spent time in and around the ocean, and they've personally seen the beauty, the fragility, and even the degradation of our planet's blue heart."

Plastic bag donations may be dropped off at several places that will collect them, including Covenant Presbyterian in Scranton. Jennings-Calvey Funeral Home provides a reusable tote bag in exchange for plastic bags dropped off at the funeral home.

"In this kind of environment that we're in, any sort of positive footprint that we can leave is a great thing," said Chris Calvey of Jennings Calvey Funeral and Cremation. To learn more, check out the Mat Makers of NEPA group on Facebook."¹

Local group making mats to help homeless and environment

An effort is underway in Lackawanna County to help the homeless and the environment, and volunteers are working hard to make it happen.



Author: Sarah Buynovsky
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¹ https://www.wnep.com/article/news/local/lackawanna-county/local-group-making-mats-to-help-homeless-and-environment/523-591d3ca3-2296-4a9a-967d-cc3d312768cb?fbclid=IwAR3Di497K-0CiaWQKyAwwJ0zWjMzaat5Q_U72JV9dDWZ2iS66iGyPEM9tyw

Jones-Wynn Funeral Homes & Crematory, Villa Rica, GA

CATEGORY 1: BASIC REQUIREMENTS

F. ESSAY

An innovative program, service, or activity executed by our funeral home that has not already been done around the world is a tall challenge. The vast majority of all NFDA Funeral Homes that participate in the National Funeral Directors Association Pursuit of Excellence program are among the firms that provide exceptional service to grieving families and the community, while adhering to the highest ethical and professional standards. Each community has different challenges and needs. With that said and for us and our community this year, we will talk about an opportunity that presented itself to us. We were honored and humbled that we were approached and asked for our input, insight, and to submit a possible proposal (which we did) that was later accepted. First, let me tell you about an email that we received from a local hospital in our community that has multiple locations. They started the email by expressing that they are seeing an increase in the number of Fetuses and Unborn Infants where families prefer that the final disposition be handled by the hospital. They explained that they turned to the local coroner for some of these situations but have realized that this type of scenario might best be handled if they (the hospital) entered into an agreement with a local crematory to handle these for them. They approached us and other local crematories in our community, asking for proposals to be submitted to them to see if this is something that our crematory and funeral homes would be interested in providing as a service to meet a need in our community.

Following the initial email from the hospital, our leadership team got together to brainstorm. Yes, of course, we knew immediately that we wanted to partner with the local hospital and provide excellent care to these fetuses and unborn infants (Sideline: For our essay we are using unborn babies vs the clinical name of Fetuses and Unborn Infants). However, during our team huddle, we quickly realized that from a business standpoint we needed to form a solid proposal and plan of action. We talked about many different scenarios and possible challenges we and/or the hospital staff might face and then put our plan of action and proposal in place. Our proposal also included another step and area that was not requested from the hospital, and yet was still very heavy on our hearts of service to offer to these unborn little lives. We believe everyone deserves a proper and respectful final resting place. In our proposal to partner with the hospital, we included both our funeral home chapels and our crematory and our sister company/cremery, Meadowbrook Memory GardensSM. In summary, our proposal included our services for the cremations, a burial for each one of the unborn babies, a final resting place in a controlled cremation scattering garden, and a service to honor these unborn babies.

After many meetings and planning sessions of preparing paperwork, etc. and many hours on behalf of our team and the hospital's team, we formed a solid plan of action that was full of love and support. This is a growing need in our community that most members of our community will never know exists. Yet, this is such a heavy hearted part of our calling in funeral service. Its an emotion that will forever live in our hearts. This first year we honored the lives of 3 precious unborn babies. Each one was treated and cared for as if they were our own family. Words can't explain how a tiny unborn and unframed life can hold such a large space in our hearts. We invited the hospital staff, their chaplain, and our team/staff for a holiday/final resting place service. When we started this process, it was pre-covid and with the services being held during covid season and the busy schedules that come during holiday season, we didnt know if the hospital staff would want to join us in participating in the burial and memorial service. Their response to our invitation lit our emotions in a very unexpected way that rocked us to the core of even a deeper emotional need we didn't realize. Our contact explained to us that the nurses and staff who delivered these unborn babies needed closure. She explained in more details that the void and emotions they face after helping families deliver a deceased child isn't something that words can explain, but rather an understanding for the overwhelming need and calling for a ceremony to honor a tiny human. Their story of grief isn't something anyone should take lightly. They joined us for the memorial service and they actually spoke over these 8 unborn lives. We placed 8 flowers and baby cherubs on each of the burial sites, and we concluded the service in silence as we then released 8 lanterns into the night sky. One lantern was released for each of these unborn lives who did make an impact on this world, esp to us who had the high honor to care for them.

CATEGORY 1: BASIC REQUIREMENTS
F. ESSAY CONT...

To be honest, we didn't realize how hard it would hit our emotions when we walked in the shoes of the delivery nurses. We offered the service and final resting place for these fetus and unborn infants because that is our calling in funeral service. I would assume that any NFDA funeral home or funeral director reading this essay would have come the same as we did, but being able to bring our community, the hospital staff, and these 8 lives together in such a unique way is what embodies the true meaning of funeral service. Thank you for reading our essay, and thank you for what you do in your community.

POE Committee Notes:

-Out of respect and confidentiality for the families we serve and our community we will not disclose the name of our local hospital. We have included pictures of the ceremony for these unborn babies as the documents required for this entry.
-We are using this one essay for both our funeral homes POE entry. To honor the requirements, we doubled the minimum number of 400 words and made sure our essay was over 800 words. => Douglas Chapel and Villa Rica Chapel, both joint efforts by our removal care team to bring these unborn babies into our care; Douglas Chapel - onsite Crematory, and our Villa Rica Chapel took the lead to arrange and plan with our Cemetery, Meadowbrook, for the final burial and service.



Joseph Vertin and Sons Funeral Home, Breckenridge, MN

Pursuit of Excellence: 1.F

Honoring and enriching the lives of family members and the people who care for their loved ones has a uniquely special place in the hearts of the staff here at Joseph Vertin and Sons Funeral Home. As funeral professionals, we understand that grief is can a difficult, seemingly never-ending road to navigate. Each loss is impactful, and especially the loss of a child. A flood of what-if's and debilitating wishes for a future full of memories, joy, and love...are suddenly gone. Our goal as a funeral home is support families beyond the funeral service and this year, we held our Cherish the Child Walk to Remember Event. We compiled a list of families who purchased a personalized brick honoring their departed child and invite them to join us at Tom Richel's Park. Located at the park is a memorial path made up of bricks purchased throughout the years, giving grieving families a special, serene place to remember their loved one. Invitations were mailed out to each family and a public invitation was placed in our local newspaper and social media platforms.

On June 24th, 2020, Joseph Vertin and Sons Funeral Home held the Cherish the Child Walk to Remember. Due to incimate weather we were able to utilize the Vertin-Munson Funeral Home. Leading up to the event, we approached one of our local lay ministers who has experienced the loss of a granddaughter to assist with the event's invocation. She detailed the devastating loss of her granddaughter and the seasons of grief that have eclipsed their life moving forward. As families gathered at the funeral home, they were invited to write the names of their loved ones on pinwheels to bring home and place in their yard or garden. Once guests were seated in the chapel, special music was played by Cassie Boelke who performed, "Jealous of the Angels."

Our Cherish the Child message was given by Kayla Sorum and Jen Burgard, the co-founders of the Hopeful Heart Project. They shared their stories of infant loss, Kayla lost her daughter, Hope and Jen lost her son, Henry. Hope entered this world stillborn and Henry entered this world and the gift of a few precious hours with his family was received with saddened hearts. Kayla and Jen used their friendship and similar stories of infant loss to blossom a organization that helps families walk through their journey of grief.

The annual Cherish the Child walk is one program we hold dear, offering grief and support resources for families that have lost a loved one and offering a time to remember and celebrate their memory.

Kerrville Funeral Home, Kerrville, TX

The pandemic has been very difficult for many people over the 2020-2021 seasons. Community events have been cancelled or delayed in many parts of the country. Along with the pandemic, Texas was immobilized by a horrific snow storm in February 2021. It is in these difficult times that reaching out in small ways to touch people's hearts is very important.

Many people choose to live in areas that get snow. Those who reside in these cities, towns and rural areas know how to accommodate their lives for inclement weather. We, in south central Texas, don't. Generally, a snow fall in Kerrville, Junction, or Levelland, Texas is no more than a few inches and accumulation of any amount is a rare event.

However, in February 2021, the majority of the state was with overwhelmed by the amount of snow and ice. As the Electric Reliability Council of Texas quickly learned, the Texas power grid was unable to keep up with the major demands the storm put on it. People were left with no power – thus no heat; and in Kerrville and Junction many had no water.

Our friends in law enforcement are always a huge blessing to Kerrville, Kimble, and Krestridge Funeral Homes. Directors at all three locations worked as a team with law enforcement when deaths calls came and roads were unsafe to travel. At one point, director Reese Taylor transported a gentleman, who had fallen and possibly broken his leg, in his four-wheel drive truck when the ambulance was unable to travel the road leading to the man's home.

When the water supply at Sid Peterson Regional Medical Center in Kerrville waned, Kerrville Funeral Home donated 60 cases of water to aid patients at the local hospital.

Owner/Manager Gene Allen, director Reese Taylor, and other members of the Kerrville Funeral Home staff, assisted the City of Kerrville in delivering water to citizens in need. Mr. Allen additionally went to numerous homes checking on neighbors needs for groceries and other items.

In Junction, many stranded travelers were in local shelters, and many locals did not have water due to burst pipes or lacked heat from power outages. Police and other emergency management personnel were given the code to open the door to Kimble Funeral Home where they could retrieve blankets and bottled water as needed.

It's sometimes the little things we do as a person that show the heart of a funeral director and a funeral home. From helping out during a crisis, delivering groceries to a widow when roads are icy, to planting memorial trees for loved ones lost, and sending a book to families following their loss to ease the grief, families are shown that the care and support does not end with a funeral or memorial service. In good times and in difficult times Kerrville, Kimble and Krestridge Funeral Homes are there to support and assist in the communities they serve.

S.E.R.V.E

The pandemic of 2020 was not accompanied by a playbook and the reality of this brought endless opportunities for us, as owners of Macz Funeral Homes, and our staff, to create unique ways to bring reassurance and assistance to the families we serve, and our community.

During the Covid 19 Pandemic as a staff we had many meetings and we started to call them S.E.R.V.E. Consultations. It was what we genuinely found important to do daily. It was to ensure we were serving families the best we possibly could. And that was what the first "S" stood for SERVICES. The "E" was for our EMERGENCY PLAN in the prep room, chapel, office, public and all other scenarios that arose. The "R" stood for RESOURCES, we wanted to be a great resource to our community, other funeral homes, and care facilities. The "V" naturally stood for VACCINE in which we advocated for fiercely. And the final "E" was for EDUCATION making sure everyone was up to date on CDC regulations and FEMA Reimbursement opportunities.

Tom Macz served as Region 3 Director of the Illinois Funeral Directors Association. This role allows him to passionately advocate for Southern Illinois at the state level. Tom is extremely proactive in advocating for the funeral homes in his area, proving to be an excellent resource in keeping his fellow colleagues informed during the fluid situation of 2020. During his trips to the capital, Tom, along with his fellow board members, were able to deter complete shutdown for funeral homes, making sure families were able to say their goodbyes with a service. Tom also played an intricate role in bringing the need for funeral directors and staff to be included in the list of critically essential workers to light, making the availability of this important vaccine a reality. Tom worked hand in hand with the Marion County Health Department, taking it upon himself to compile a list of the area's funeral directors and staff that gratefully received the protection of the vaccine.

Tom's hard work is just one example of how we were able to build relationships and care for those in need. Above all, it was of utmost importance that our implementation of offering Covid awareness and support be researched and delivered in a way that did not throw any more confusion into a situation that was continually changing. The outcome of

Macz Funeral Homes, Centralia, IL

each area where we offered support was positive and generated much respect and appreciation, confirming the fact that the quality of our implementation was above and beyond.

At Macz Funeral Homes, the benefits to those served by our efforts to be a rock-solid support and a bright light in a dark time were appreciated not only by the families we assisted with the passing of a loved one, and the people of our community, but also us, as owners, and our employees. It is said that “you can not have light without darkness”. During the pandemic of 2020 we discovered how true this statement is. As we listened, weekly, to the Illinois governor’s state of our state’s address, update on the death count, and what phase our state would be in, which would determine the size of gatherings for celebration of life services, it was easy to feel overwhelmed and forlorn. The ability to be a blessing to our families we served, the community we call home, and to each other, as we worked in the trenches of life during Covid, was undeniably what kept us motivated and able to inspire others.

Macz Funeral Homes became a collection hub for PPE resources and emergency supplies, as we coordinated with our local ESDA. This allowed other funeral homes in need, a reliable and convenient location to depend on, which benefitted them greatly. Macz Funeral Homes wanted to bring the best available options for services to the families we served, being diligent in maintaining the funeral home so that it would be open and available for families’ services. The funeral home purchased a handheld sanitizing fogger to provide a safe, sanitized space for families to gather. This fogger was also a benefit to local churches to use, offering them an efficient way to prepare the church for their time of fellowship. An open house was scheduled for April 2021, to benefit not only for the families we served, but for any family that lost a loved one to Covid-19, to assist in the application process for the FEMA Reimbursement that was offered to any family that lost a loved one to Covid-19. This benefitted these families by taking this added burden, of the steps needed to apply, off their shoulders. At the end of the open house, we felt such a sense of accomplishment, as we were rewarded with bringing aid to each family that attended and experience the sense of peace, we were able to be a part of. As we continue

Macz Funeral Homes, Centralia, IL

to follow up with the application process it has been extremely rewarding when our families do receive the Fema Reimbursement.

We also highlighted our area's essential workers by having them participate in a dance video. This video showed how our community had been able to create beauty from the ashes of a year living through a pandemic. Along with the fun of getting teachers, nursing home staff, and first responders together to laugh and enjoy a dance together, this video help to motivate a need to spread a movement of unity and support throughout our community, benefitting all who viewed it.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1HjK2B88k4&t=420s>

The implementation of another funeral home utilizing our story of connections, support, and sharing knowledge can be easily replicated, as it obviously occurred during a time when even finding toilet paper on the shelves at the grocery store was a challenge. During this challenging time, we were able to focus on the needs of the situation, come up with innovative ways to meet those needs, gain lasting connections, and grow as individuals. Thus, we continued to S.E.R.V.E.



Social responsibility: Irmãos Vila Company donates funerals for families in extreme poverty

We are a company that has the social factor very present in our day to day. With that in mind, we continued the Solidarity Funeral project. It was structured to serve families in situations of social vulnerability, who offer, free of charge, a service worthy of farewell.

This project aims to provide shelter to needy families at a time of loss through funerary donations, acting responsibly and collaborating strongly with an important social issue in our region hard hit by poverty.

Unfortunately, the number of families that barely survive on the streets is increasing and the government cannot offer any assistance. Many of them are unable to support the basic needs that every human being should have: food, drinking water, housing, etc. in need.

We then decided to partner with some of these institutions and offer some dignity when someone in these conditions dies, offering complete and entirely free services. In order to meet the needs of this public, a fully organized project was developed, which had the direct coordination of our executive management, in order to establish the best way to serve needy families. A committee, formed by several areas of activity, was created and most departments can feel, see and collaborate with this initiative.

The project was implemented in early 2018 through the selection of philanthropic entities that serve children and the elderly in the Greater Natal region, in the state of Rio Grande do Norte. Of all the institutions participating in the selection process (18 in total), the committee chose six. The choice was made through pre-established criteria and a final evaluation by the company's board of directors. The awarded institutions were: Hospital Infantil Varela Santiago; Integrated Center for Social Assistance of the Evangelical Church Assembly of God; Grandmother's house; House of the Evangelical Elder; Friends of the Heart of the Child and Support Group for Children with Cancer.

With the advent of COVID 19, which unfortunately has impacted on the lives of many people, the company is expanding donations for the year 2021, and will make, according to the plan, more than 110 donations (40 children's funerals and 70 funerals for children). adults), but that number may increase as more institutions become interested and currently under evaluation. We hope to reach 200 donations a year, and gradually increase that number. This will depend on the need and also on the

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UMA EMPRESA





interest of the institutions.

This project has received notable recognition in our segment and has served as an inspiration for several companies here in our region. This project is part of the company's social responsibility program.

Photo beneficiary institution: Varela Santiago



Photo beneficiary institution: Home of the Evangelical Elder



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UMA EMPRESA



Mililani Memorial Park & Mortuary, Waipahu, HI

Hawaii is an island paradise. Our location, in the middle of the Pacific, has created a natural barrier from the COVID pandemic causing Hawaii to be the state with the lowest per capita infections. This has also created a bottleneck for fresh goods and consumables such as toilet paper. While that may sound funny, a recent run, on toilet paper, back in April of 2020, has left hoarders with garages full and lots of people without. Local Costco Warehouses even had to place a limit on the amount of TP per person, per day to be sure there was enough to go around. Everything needs to be shipped into Hawaii by either barge, or by air, increasing costs by sometimes as much as double. Strict restrictions about essential businesses and quarantines for inbound passengers during the pandemic left our tourism economy crippled and lots without a paycheck and no way to feed their families. A friend of ours whose wife was recently unemployed started seeking assistance from local churches and food distribution sites to cover the deficit created by the pandemic. When we spoke, they could not express how blessed they were that they were able to access staples like rice, beans, eggs, canned meat and non-perishable items like cereal. What they did express was a lack of produce to create balanced meals for their family.

As a growing cemetery with 108 total acres, we decided that we could use some of our undeveloped land to help with that lack of produce for our residents. Over the course of a month, we cleared nearly 2 acres of pristine land, out of public view, and prepared that for planting. During a test run, we noticed that items like corn or melons were ravished by the insect populations while pumpkin (kalabasa) and squash (tabungao) were left to grow and thrive. We did not want to use any type of pesticides and instead opted for the natural thick skin of the pumpkin and squash to keep the insects at bay. Over the course of a 6-month season beginning in September 2020 and ending in March 2021, Mililani Memorial produced over 2 tons of fresh vegetables for local food distribution sites. In November 2020, Mililani donated its first crop of Long Squash to St. Stephen's Episcopal Church at 1679 California Ave in Wahiawa. They received 40 pieces (appx 400lbs) to distribute at their biweekly event. The next donations for St. Stephen's came in December and then January, totaling over 150 pieces (1500 lbs.) each delivery. The delivery dates had to coincide with the distribution and when the next two harvests were made, we needed to find a different distribution point or risk spoilage of the perishable vegetables. Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church in 1403-A California Ave, Wahiawa was happy to distribute the fresh veggies at their February '21 and March '21 food distribution event. At both events we provided over 150 pumpkins (750 lbs.) and 50 (500 lbs.) squash, a welcomed addition to the regular bag of canned goods and packaged dry goods. The season has passed and while the squash and pumpkins have reached their lifespan, we are preparing the ground for next year's program.

If there is one good thing that has emerged from this pandemic it is a realization that Hawaii is very susceptible to changes in the ability for producers of fresh goods to get their items to our beautiful state. We also realized that by banding together, we can weather any storm by helping each other out.

Mitchell-Wiedefeld Funeral Home, Inc., Baltimore, MD

In recent years, our firm has engaged with St. David's Episcopal Church in helping to educate their members on end of life decisions. Our long time director, Dennis Xenakis, coordinates with the church pastor to speak at the third of three discussions, which take place on three consecutive Sundays after their customary Sunday service.

The first discussion centers around wills and estates and the second on long term care. Mr. Xenakis is the speaker for the third session which addresses many options and questions pertaining to end of life decisions.

The advantages to the use of a full service funeral establishment are discussed and the value of a full traditional service. Abbreviated services are discussed as well, where the family will take on more responsibility and the funeral home is called upon for less than full staff services. Cremation societies are addressed as the most economical option for disposition but will entail the least level of service provided. Anatomical gifts are explained as well, how to arrange them, and the parties involved.

Some more technical issues are discussed, such as the information required to go on a Maryland death certificate, number of certified death certificates needed to settle financial and legal affairs and for whom they are needed. Another topic is Social Security, how they are notified of a death, who is eligible for the death benefit, and how it is applied for, as well as how to settle existing home reception of check and direct deposit.

Advice is given on arranging for a reception after services. Some of the less common areas of need are addressed, such as arranging for remains to be shipped into or out of state. Regulations are discussed such as where and how cremated remains may be disposed of. And of course, pre-payment is discussed, the options for how to do so, how the process works, and how doing so effects eligibility for medical assistance.

We consider ourselves fortunate to have such good relationships with our nearby parishes. Their members find a value in having us as a resource when it comes to the many matters that need to be addressed when planning for end-of-life services and the ensuing matters that need to be handled. While we expect to be counted upon at the time of need, we are always happy to be as helpful as we can and provide as much information as we can ahead of time, so that families are better prepared when that time of need does arrive.



Offering Stress Management Tools for Stressful Times

The pandemic not only changed the rhythm and structure of our funeral work, it also challenged the rhythm and structure of the community educational resources and the seminars we offer annually to support healthcare workers, ministers, educators and all professionals who deal with grief in their work.

Our number one priority with regard to the pandemic was to ensure we protected our community members from the illness. The irony was that during this difficult year, that was when so many people needed the resources that are usually easier to offer. With that in mind, we decided to offer a webinar (to ensure we did not contribute to the spread of Covid) with a timely and universal topic appropriate for all members of our community—not just the professional community and not specific to grief. We chose stress management and resiliency training (SMART), and we asked the best leader we could think of to present it: Dr. Amit Sood, who is internationally recognized for his work on stress management and resilience.

Our seminar and what participants received:

The webinar, “Emotional and Immune Resilience: The Need of the Hour” was held on June 8, from 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM. The state chapter of NASW (National Association of Social Workers) both assisted us with promotion of the event and approved the event for 2 CEU credits. It was a thorough and encompassing introduction to SMART, an approach developed by Dr. Amit Sood at the Mayo Clinic.

The webinar was for anyone interested in how stress can affect their emotional and physical well-being, and participants walked away with both an increased understanding of stress and with practical tools they could use right away. They also received discounted access to continued education at www.resilientoption.com.

More about SMART:

SMART has been tested and found effective for decreasing symptoms of stress, anxiety, and burnout, and increasing resilience, well-being, mindfulness, happiness, and positive health behaviors.

The training we offered addressed two aspects of human experience: attention and interpretation. Our brain’s attention, in its default state, incessantly wanders and instinctively focuses on the negative aspects of the day. This excessive ‘dwell time’ in the default mode

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correlates with symptoms of anxiety, depression, low engagement, and attention deficit. It also fatigues our brains.

Our participants learned about how SMART offers a way out of this dilemma by engaging the brain's focused mode—not only to experience more uplifting emotions, but also to develop better focus, enhance creativity and productivity, improve engagement, deepen relationships, and find greater purpose in life.

The seminar's learning objectives were:

1. Review and assess neuroscience and behavioral aspects of human experience, particularly with respect to stress, burnout, resiliency, performance, professionalism, and well-being.
2. Identify and integrate practical approaches to enhance engagement and emotional intelligence and thereby decrease stress and anxiety, increase resilience, enhance performance and professionalism, and improve relationships.

About our speaker:

Dr. Amit Sood, M.D., M.S., F.A.C.P., is the Executive Director of Global Center for Resiliency and Wellbeing, former chair of the Mayo Mind Body Initiative, Carla and Russ Paonessa Enterprise Director of Student Life and Wellness, and Professor of Medicine (Retired) with Mayo Clinic College of Medicine. Dr. Sood has developed several resiliency solutions that have reached hundreds of thousands of professionals, patients, and students, and he has led over 30 research studies involving healthcare professionals, healthy volunteers, and patients at Mayo Clinic and elsewhere.

Integrating fundraising for our local children's hospital:

We offered the seminar for free, only charging participants for a certificate of attendance, so that anyone with access to the internet could attend this seminar, no matter their location. We also believed it was important to integrate support into the program for an organization that was hit hard during the pandemic, so we added an option for participants to donate to Niswonger Children's Hospital, and in doing so, we raised \$510.21 for the hospital.

What our participants said about our webinar:

We surveyed our 150 participants following the event, and we found that attendees thought the information timely, easily absorbed, and applicable to the mission of their work. Some specific feedback we received was:

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“The Seminars that Morris-Baker provides are always educational, easy to comprehend, & professional. I appreciate all the things, & acts of kindness & caring that Morris-Baker provides for this community.”

"[I liked] how applicable the information was to the current climate in mental health. I have attended several seminars over the years and they are always so helpful in my practice. Thank you for making them so affordable for such great content!"

Benefits provided to the funeral home and the community at large:

For years, we have operated under the belief that the best way to have strong relationships with the caregiving community, and the community at large, is to demonstrate our long-term commitment to their success. One of the primary ways that we do that is by bringing world-class educational resources coupled with a great in-person experience every year. With the unique challenges of this year, we feel this virtual event allowed us to nurture our relationship with the greater caregiving community by supporting them and their life’s work with timely content presented in a safe manner.

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Pedersen Funeral Home's Innovative Program – 2020

Like many funeral homes throughout the country, the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic were something that nobody was prepared for. At Pedersen Funeral Home, we had to come up with ideas to reach out to the community in ways that were safe and reasonable. One of our biggest events in our area is the Stevens County Fair in Morris, Minnesota. This is a time for the community to come together and to advertise for our funeral home. We always have a booth at the fair where we are known for giving away individual pies. It goes with our pre-planning slogan, "Pre-plan at Pedersen Funeral Home, it's easy as pie!" When the Fair was canceled due to the pandemic, we had to come up with some idea where we could still have a fun day at the fair. That is when Pedersen Funeral Home came up with the idea to have, Pedersen Funeral Home's a day at the fair.

On August 19, 2020, our event was held in the parking lot of our funeral home. We invited several food trucks in the community to come and sell food for our event which was held from 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. We had seven participants including the Cattleman's Association, Pork Producers, Morris Hockey Association, Morris Women of Today, St. Mary's Catholic School, Old Number 1 Restaurant and Wurstmacher's. We rented picnic tables to be placed throughout our parking lot to allow for social distancing. The turn out was amazing. So many people came from the community to enjoy fair food and a time to get out of the house. One of the food trucks ran out of food in the first few hours of the event!

This event was a huge benefit to the staff at the funeral home. It was one of the first times we were able to greet people from the community in a social environment. At this time, our restrictions for services were very strict and were only able to have small private gatherings for services. It was great to be able to get out and talk with others and to provide them the comfort of food and a time to socialize. By the outcome we had of people coming to our event, it was clear that this had a huge impact on the community as well. Everyone looks forward to the fair every year, and although it wasn't the same, it was still a time for the community to gather together and to have some part of going to the county fair.

This event also sparked up other events throughout the community. Other businesses had similar events after attending our event. This allowed for other businesses to have the same success that we did at the funeral home and another way for the community to come together and to support one another. This year, the Stevens County Fair is scheduled to go on as normal. We are so excited to be able to have our booth at the fair again and look forward to seeing all of the people supporting our community again.

Criteria F:

Seaver-Brown Funeral Service and Crematory & Falling Water Baptist Church Covid Care Packages

In December of 2019 we knew that “something was coming”. We were hearing rumblings of masks for everyone-everywhere, unheard of numbers of deaths, body bag shortages and whatever this is, is extremely contagious. My name is Blake Frazier. I have been employed by Seaver-Brown Funeral Service and Crematory since January 1, 2014. On May 14, 2021, my family purchased Seaver-Brown from the Brown family. Our families have morphed into family over these last several years and with the passing of Mal Brown in 2015, the family felt it was time to pursue other interests. And they have. They are currently purchasing and revitalizing multi-family dwellings. The funeral business was the passion of Mal. His wife and son served his legacy well since his passing but have passed the torch to my family to run with for the next 176 years. We are excited to continue serving our community. The talks and transitions began in October of 2020 and ramped up around the first of December. During this time, we were serving many families with covid related deaths. It was a bit overwhelming, scary and sad. To date, we have taken over 100 covid related decedents into our care. In the beginning, I was doing all the covid removals from hospitals and nursing homes. Those facilities were our main source. We used the utmost caution and care in each removal, making sure we were protected on site, within our facility and when we returned home. In the weeks just before Christmas my entire family tested positive for Covid-19. The contact was made from a church visit and was completely non-work related. My experience with Covid was hard and is explained in the article attached. While we were quarantined within our home, my wife Tina and I began feeling blessed by our being health restored, the love and support of family and friends and a true desire to help others who needed support in their experience with Covid. This pandemic was not a respecter of persons or concerned with current situations. It seemed to hit the most vulnerable people at, particularly the worst possible time. For many this was a mere cold or aggravating headache, for many others it was horrible. We wanted to do something to help.

One afternoon after Christmas, Tina began describing items we could gather for a family. Those items included a pulse oximeter (this was a God send to our family), thermometer and a Bible Promise Book (this was helpful to Tina throughout our Covid experience). We also gathered cans of soup, crackers, Gatorade and cough drops to fill our simply named Covid Care Packages. Our family, funeral home and church all pitched in to create this help, this ministry. In each care package there was a letter (included) that gave them telephone numbers for help and a friendly message of hope. We began providing packages to our local doctors’ offices. The plan was to provide something they could have right there after receiving the news of a positive Covid test. People with no family, limited income and other hindering factors were not able to enter a pharmacy or grocery store. Thermometers and pulse oximeters were detrimental to their survival, and many did not have these within their home. The Covid Care Packages had everything a person would need to start on their recovery. Within weeks, the Virginia Department of Health’s Covid Care Team began contacting our office several times a day with a new family that needed a Covid Care Package. After work, my wife Tina, a Special Education

Seaver Brown Funeral Service and Crematory, Marion, VA

Teacher for our county would travel to deliver the packages. I would help in between services and after work when possible.

Over the several months of assembling and delivering the Covid Care Packages we received many calls thanking us for the difference each piece in the package made to everyone, telling us how they were doing or just offering to contribute to helping someone else. We live in a wonderful, nurturing and generous community and it is just a wonderful feeling to be a part of it. Our local newspaper came to the funeral home to learn about our Covid experience and to find out more about the Covid Care Packages. The newspaper article link is attached.

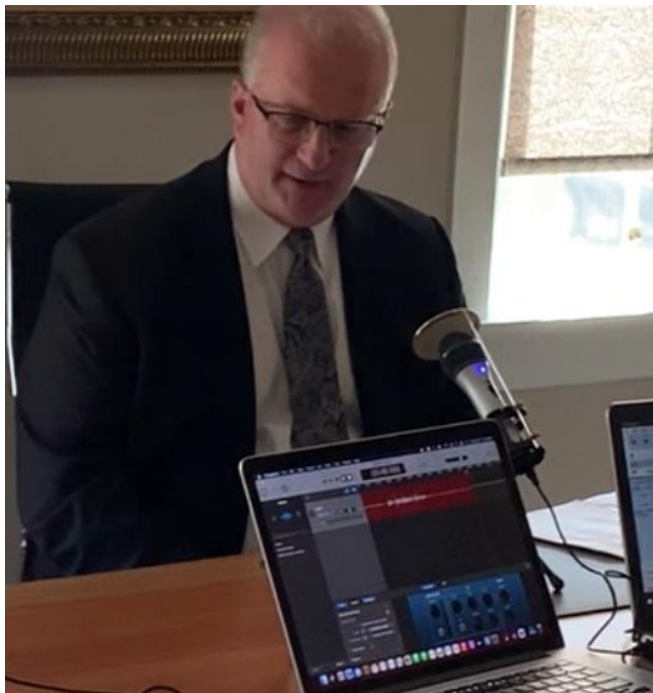


POE 2021 BEST OF THE BEST ESSAY

BEST OF THE BEST:

SPICER-MULLIKIN LAUNCHES PODCAST SERIES

The “What You Didn’t Know and Never Thought to Ask About Funeral Homes” series helps the public understand pre-need, funeral service procedures and life celebration options.



Mitchell A. Jackson, Co-VP of Operations, Licensed Funeral Director and Embalmer, and Certified Crematory Operator participates in the Spicer-Mullikin podcast series on pre-need and service options.

Spicer-Mullikin Funeral Homes & Crematory was proud to launch a podcast series in May 2021 called “What You Didn’t Know and Never Thought to Ask About Funeral Homes.” Our staff were excited to share their expertise with listeners and found it was a creative and effective way to build relationships with families they had already served as well as those they may serve in the future.

Rationale behind the idea – When the pandemic hit and restrictions were put into place with regards to visitation policies, funeral services, and general safety measures as outlined by the NFDA and CDC, we also wanted to think of other ways to reach the community on a more personal level. Though many of our families are longstanding followers of our social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest) and checked our website for information, we knew that a podcast was an appealing, personal option that was convenient, portable and a little more intimate than the traditional ways of communication, many of which were limited due to Covid restrictions.

Detailed description of the program, service or activity – Podcast topics included grief support, memorial tributes and/or life celebrations, and the benefits of pre-planning. Future topics for the series will include:

- Understanding the Importance of Pre-Need
- Funeral Etiquette in 2021
- How to Support Someone Who is Grieving
- How to Write a Eulogy.

This link features the podcast on pre-planning benefits: <https://spicermullikin.com/pre-planning/>

The series is comprised of 15-minute interviews with Spicer-Mullikin staff, including Mitchell Jackson, Co-VP of Operations, Licensed Funeral Director and Embalmer and Certified Crematory Operator; Rich Buchanan, Licensed Pre-Arrangement Counselor; and Matthew C. Smith, Owner and Licensed Funeral Director at Spicer-Mullikin.

Each podcast is shared via our website and Facebook page. We also sent personal email invitations to families we have served. The series began in May 2021 and will continue each month until December 2022.

Benefits provided to funeral home and staff – Our staff found the experience of sharing their professional knowledge about during one of the most challenging times for the funeral home industry to be an uplifting and almost cathartic experience. It opened the virtual doors for us to discuss themes that so many people wonder about: pre-need, funeral etiquette, grief support, etc. Staff also found that it enhanced their public speaking skills and was an effective team-building exercise. Mutual respect was shared among staff members for the information they presented. The experience also served as a confidence booster for those who were newer to the podcast-style interview.

Benefits provided to families and/or the community at large – The Spicer-Mullikin podcast series provides helpful guidance to families we serve as well as the general public in two ways:

Emotional – The topics of our podcasts are often themes that many people need or want to know about but are either afraid to ask or just not ready to ask yet because they have not put “funeral planning services” on their list of things to do that day, week, month or year. By having a podcast series, we are confident that the messages we share can reach the right person at the right time when they need grief support or answers about how to help their parent or their spouse make decisions about pre-need.

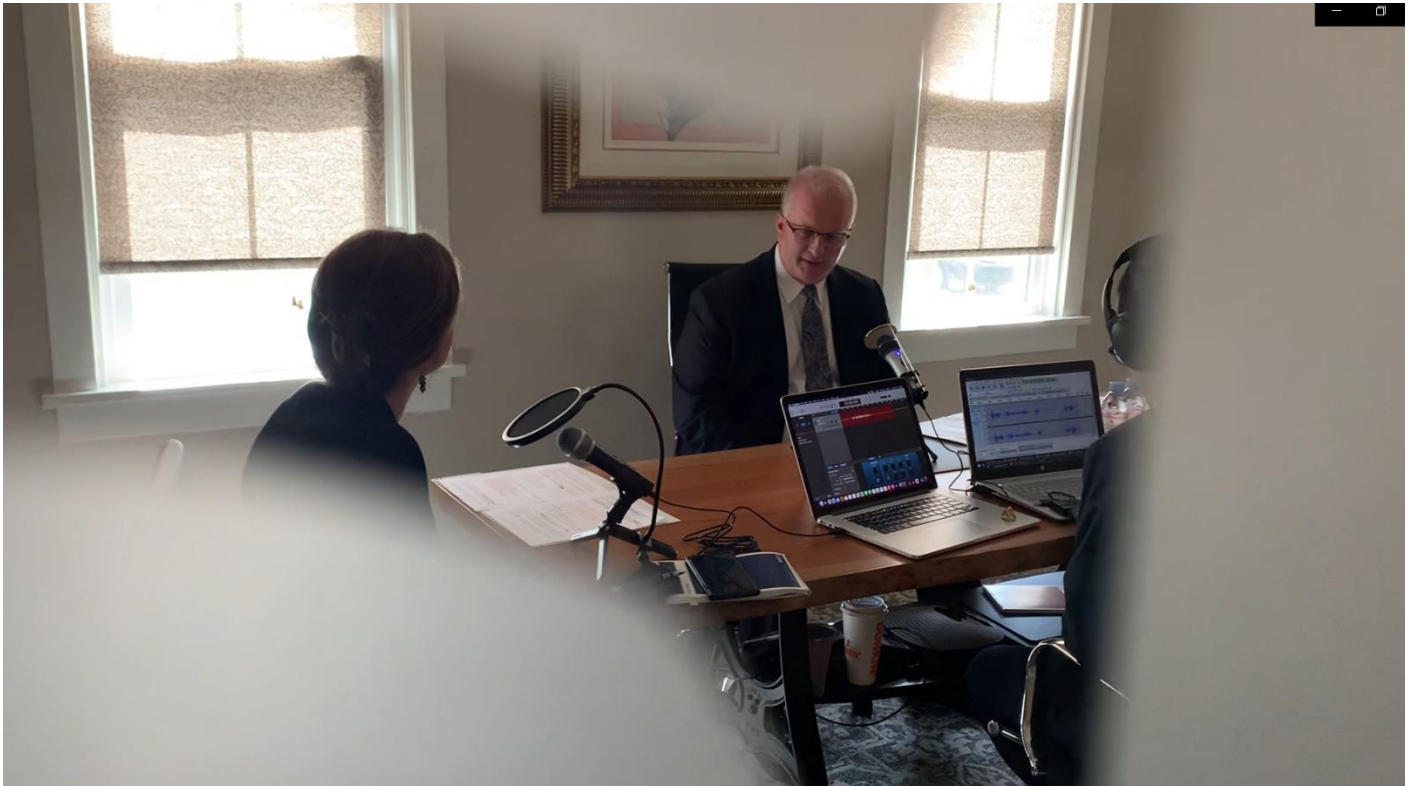
Practical – We all lead busy lives, so having a podcast series to tune into is convenience. The audience can listen to interviews from their home, office, car or even at a coffee shop on their smartphone. We wanted to be able to reach our community when it was practical for them to hear our message. We hope our podcast series will help them with wherever they are in their journey of grief, pre-planning or immediate need services.

Other Forms of Outreach:

Through direct and social media outreach, Spicer-Mullikin offered the podcast on pre-planning to:

- Senior Centers
- Moms Clubs
- Grief groups

“This has been such a positive, informative, supportive experience for all of us at Spicer-Mullikin and the communities we serve. I was proud of how our staff embraced the opportunity to serve our families in a new way, keeping them informed and protected with useful information. We will definitely continue with this initiative.” – Matthew C. Smith, Owner.



Mitchell A. Jackson, Co-VP of Operations, Licensed Funeral Director and Embalmer, and Certified Crematory Operator participates in the Spicer-Mullikin podcast series on pre-need and service options.



1-F.

BEST OF THE BEST ESSAY: OUR LIFE MATTERS IN THE MIDST OF THE COVID PANDEMIC!

As we adjust to the new reality of life under the quarantine and amid this global COVID health crisis, many institutions are taking advantage of their digital spaces and facilities to conduct their online activities. In St. Peter, we started our first online activity in April 2020 with a regular Online Prayer Meeting every Monday morning and in May 2020 with the Online Talitha Kum Healing Mass. In October 2020, we also conducted our first week-long webinar series in celebration of our St. Peter DeathCare Week. The positive reception of our online audience to these online programs led us to create our very first live online talk show that will serve as a free source of valuable, relevant, interesting and entertaining topics that are matters of concern in the lives of every Filipino.

Dubbed as Life Matters, the online talk show provides educational and entertaining content covering topics that encourage living life to the fullest. The relevance and significance of the talk show are to address and bring public awareness to the different and important matters of life in our society.

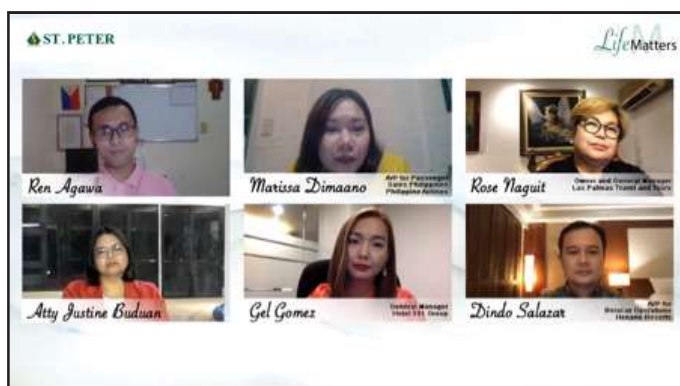


As much as possible, we carefully select very timely content that everyone can relate to and are especially beneficial to our online audience.






The first two episodes that aired in February talked about love and relationships. The pilot episode aired on February 10, 2021 featured Bro. Obet Cabrillas and his wife, Sister Joie Cabrillas. They talked about #CoupleGoals and how couples can keep their relationships healthy and lasting. On February 24, Jhon Cadiz Carandang, Registered Psychologist of the Carandang Institute, spoke about understanding modern-day relationships of couples.



In March, we talked about #PandemicTravelGoals with Ms. Marissa Dimaano from Philippine Airlines, Ms. Rose Naguit of Las Palmas Travel and Tour, Ms. Gel Gomez of Hotel 101 Group, and Mr. Dindo Salazar from the Henann Group of Resorts. At that time, the Philippine government eased travel restrictions and at the same time it was aired during the onset of summer.



Aired Date	Episode	Topic	Invited Guest
March 24, 2021	4	Importance of getting vaccinated by COVID-19 vaccines #GetVaccinated	Karl Evans Henson, MD, FPCP, FPSMID The Medical City
April 14, 2021	5	Mental Health #RecoverTogether	Jhon Cadiz Carandang, RPsy Carandang Institute
April 28, 2021	6	Homeschooling during the pandemic #Homeschool	Cristina Agustin, Philippine Homeschoolers Association
May 12, 2021	7	Hypertension Awareness Month #KnowYourNumbers	Flordeliza Ramirez, MD University of the East Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Medical Center, Inc.
May 26, 2021	8	Cervical Cancer Prevention Awareness Month #EndCervicalCancer	Kooky Ongoco, MD Dr. Jesus C. Delgado Memorial Hospital

 Melanie Briones Alcantara · 29:00
 Good evening everyone. Thank you for your nice sharing . God bless you all.
 Like · Reply · 15w

 Sharer
 Bambi Calub-Marasigan · 44:05
 Husbands are ma PRs
 Wives shall have TLCs
 Super agree
 Like · Reply · 15w  2

 Long Javellana · 58:18
 Very informative episode. Thank You guys.
 Like · Reply · 1w  1

As of May 31, 2021, our first episode has gained a total of 8,070 views, 1,893 engagements, and has reached more than 23,330 people based on Facebook insights. This brought us to the conclusion that people in these trying times are relying on the internet to look for educational information yet entertaining content.



Life Matters airs live on the official Facebook page and YouTube channel of St. Peter Life Plan and Chapels every 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month, from 7:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m PST.

Weeks' Funeral Home, Buckley, WA

F.

Rarely does a person or a group of people have the ability to reach back in time and help someone in the past, especially when that someone lived and died over 100 year ago. Nevertheless, that is exactly what our “Daisey Kirtley Project” allowed us the opportunity to do.

The history of our project dates back 143 years, to 1878, when a baby girl named Daisey was born to James and Mary Kirtley. Sadly, just eight years later, little Daisey died. The cause of her death is unknown; her death certificate never found. Daisey was most likely laid to rest on the family’s farm in Bonney Lake, WA. A few years after her death, the Kirtley family sold their land in Bonney Lake and moved to the neighboring community of Buckley, WA. Years passed, and eventually James and Mary Kirtley died (James in 1909 and Mary in 1917). Both were buried in the Buckley City Cemetery.

In the fall of 2020, a man in the Bonney Lake area stumbled over what looked to be an old headstone in the woods. He took a picture and posted it on Facebook. The members of the Greater Bonney Lake Historical Society recognized the Kirtley name on the stone as a pioneer family in the area; they kept the stone in safekeeping while continuing to research. They reached out to the Foothills Historical Society in Buckley for additional help.

In early May of 2021, our funeral home was asked to get involved since we are community partners with both historical societies and are in charge of the Buckley City Cemetery. Of course we said yes! Daisey’s parents have been buried in our cemetery for over a century, so it only seemed right that this little girl’s marker be near her parents and have a final resting place too. We checked dates with our Historical Society partners and got busy making plans to host a public commemorative setting for Daisey. Flyers were made and distributed around town and on social media, and an article ran in the newspaper.

Then on June 26, 2021 we hosted a small service at the Buckley City Cemetery. The local VFW post delivered and set up extra chairs for the ceremony. Over 50 people came to honor this little girl whom they had never met. In attendance were Buckley City Council members, board members from both historical societies, members from the VFW post, many members of the public, and two of Daisey’s great nieces. These relatives even brought many old family photos and shared them with those present.



We kept the project and program simple yet meaningful - beginning and ending in a blessing, telling Daisey's story from several different speakers, songs with only guitar and banjo as accompaniment, and a meaningful keepsake for everyone to take with them. In the keepsake was a pink heart-shaped piece of quartz identical to the two we placed in the base of Daisey's marker.



After a tough year, our team members were pleased to be a part of a happy ending for this family and our community. It was fun to partner with multiple community groups and fun to see ourselves in the newspaper. The publicity even seemed to bolster attendance at our Memorial Day Pioneer History Walk at the cemetery. Overall, this event served as a reminder to our communities of the value of recording our history and the importance of memorialization.

Daisey's life started a long time ago and there is absolutely no doubt that at eight years old she left too soon in 1886. It's still a mystery how and where her gravestone travelled for miles and years, but on June 26, Daisey's story came to a beautiful close as her little marker (with the sweet lamb on top) was gently placed at the final resting place of her mother and father.



Pictured above are Daisey's two great nieces