

Mount Sinai Memorial Chapels, East Brunswick, NJ

2021 Best of Best POE

“End of Life Lunch and Learn”

The Care Team at Mount Sinai Memorial Chapels teamed up with its sister firm, Brunswick Memorial Home, to set up an end of life planning program for Hall’s Corner, an independent affordable senior community. The goal of the event was to educate seniors on the importance of preplanning, explain their options, and guide them in the direction that best fits their wants and needs. In addition, the Care Team wanted to spend some time getting to know the community; laughing, eating, getting them to tell their story.

The event was scheduled for Monday, May 24th at 12pm. A flyer went out to all the residents asking them to RSVP. The flyer indicated the topics of discussion and that lunch would be provided. The funeral home put together a box lunch, which included a sandwich, a drink, and several snacks. The manager of the facility was very helpful in getting the word out about the event. Over 25 residents RSVP’d, and around 40 residents attended the event.

The day of the event had picnic tables set up outside, where residents were able to gather. Some residents arrived earlier, so the Care Team mingled and got to know them. The funeral home presented for a short time, and left the rest of the time to engage with the residents. Lunches were distributed prior the presentation and time was allotted for them to eat and chat with their friends. After the residents ate the Care Team split up and got to talk to the residents on a one to one basis. At that time questions were answered and if they wanted to preplan the team would take their information down. At the end of the event a gift bag was given out; not only to those who attended, but to the entire community (150 residents). The gift bag included sanitizer, water, chips, chocolates, and information about our services and how to contact us.

The positive response from the residents was amazing. They enjoyed an event outside, the food, and getting to tell their story to the Care Team. Several residents wanted more information on how to preplan and made follow up meetings. Even some who didn’t attend the event called the funeral home do to the positive word of mouth and the giveaway. Some of these residents would not have sought out this important information; however, by the funeral home coming to them they realized it was information they needed.

The Care Team had a nice day out talking to the community. Several residents decided to pre-plan, while others just wanted more information. Mount Sinai Memorial Chapels plan to have more of these lunches throughout the year. In addition to residents learning about pre-planning and the importance of talking to their families about it, the residents were just happy to have a conversation. The conversation about funeral services does not mean it is the end, it just means your family is better prepared for it when it does happen.

2020 was a challenging year for every profession, the funeral industry being no exception. When one hurdle was thrown at us, we came together as a team, brainstormed ideas, and continued to safely put our families first. Pre-need and At-need had to adapt to the ever-changing restrictions. We asked ourselves, how can we still provide high quality service and white glove treatment, but do so at a distance? We jumped both feet into the digital world and explored every opportunity.

The inquiries for pre-planning seemed to grow instead of diminishing. It may have been because we were now more than ever confronted with the thought of our own mortality. Many folks also had more time on their hands; schools were shut down, most were working from home and at many times, we were mandated to quarantine. Since we could no longer hold lunch and dinner events in person, we chose to offer pre planning seminars online. Using platforms that many were comfortable with, we were able to provide face to face information at the comfort of their own home.

On September 22, 2020 Wm. Sullivan & Son Funeral Directors collaborated with the Preserve At All Saints. We discussed the growing interest in having final wishes be "green" and the details on how those plans would look, whether choosing burial or cremation. The funeral home had multiple staff listening and interacting with guests and many set a personal appointment for a future date to learn more. An advantage of having a digital platform is the fact that we can re play the entire webinar. We can grow personally as staff by listening to our message and making changes as needed. Being a funeral home, we always want to have staff at our locations, ready to serve families. For that reason, there are many staff that are unable to attend our events and know what was discussed. Having things recorded gives the pre-need side of the funeral home the opportunity to share with our at -need staff. Having all staff on the same page and providing the same message is an important aspect to a well-run funeral home.

Our families directly benefit from learning about preplanning. It is our goal to have more families come into the funeral home better prepared at the time of a loved ones passing. When folks learn about their options ahead of time, they can make rational decisions and even take care of the funding aspect ahead. This in turn, let's a family grieve their loved ones passing and takes the burden of the small decisions off their plate.

We are optimistic that 2021 will be brighter than 2020. It was a year we all grew together as staff. Making the best of what we were confronted with, we were able to serve families to the best of our ability. We are more prepared offering family's options in a digital form. In a way, we grew from the challenges and in the end, that make us better off.

Wm. Sullivan & Son Funeral Home, Royal Oak, Michigan

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