

Capillas Señoriales Casa de Homenajes, Merida, Yucatan, Mexico

Capillas Señoriales Casa de Homenajes, Merida, Mexico; Capillas Señoriales Casa de Homenajes, Morelia, Mexico, Capillas Señoriales Casa de Homenajes, Campeche, Mexico, Tuxtla, Mexico; Capillas Señoriales Casa de Homenajes, Tapachula, Mexico

Mother's Day Celebration at Capillas Señoriales: "Mom's Love, a Priceless Gift"

Justification behind the idea: A Legacy of Life and Eternal Love

At Capillas Señoriales, celebrating life is part of our commitment to the community, and Mother's Day is a special occasion to honor the love and legacy of life that mothers have left us. This date is an opportunity to remember and thank the mothers, living and those no longer with us, who have shaped our lives with their immense love and sacrifice.

We recognize that their influence goes beyond their physical presence, creating an indelible legacy that deserves to be celebrated and preserved. All company employees were also able to pay tribute to mom, strengthening the sense of unity and family within our organization.

For this reason, at Capillas Señoriales we decided to carry out a series of activities in our five locations to pay tribute to mothers, creating a space for unity and remembrance that would benefit both families and the community. Our goal is to protect families in these significant times, providing comfort and emotional support.

Program Description: Creating Eternal Memories for Mom

At Capillas Señoriales we celebrate life, and this month of May was no exception. With deep respect and love, we host a series of events in different locations, each designed to honor the love and legacy of mothers.

In Morelia, on May 12, we held a special mass that resonated with the angelic voice of a choir. This event was a solemn and beautiful tribute, where we gave flowers to the mothers present and created a mural of memories. Each flower represented a promise of eternal love and each note of the chorus lifted our souls in a sincere and emotional tribute.

In Tapachula, on May 24, we organized an elegant dinner at the Fonda Inn Diamante Restaurant. This event included a pink carpet runway that made mothers feel like the queens they are. The delivery of roses and personalized cards was a gesture full of love and gratitude, while live music filled the night with melodies that touched the hearts of everyone present.

Mérida was the scene of two moving events. On May 8, we paid tribute to Mom's legacy with activities guided by a thanatologist, creating an altar with photos and performing a ritual in a cenote. This event allowed families to connect deeply with the memories of their mothers, in a sacred and natural environment that symbolized the continuity of life. Then, on May 17, we offered a saxophone serenade, a mural of memories, and emotional words from attendees. The saxophone music created an atmosphere of serenity and reflection, while the shared testimonies strengthened the community bond.

In Tuxtla, on May 10, we set up a stand at the Municipal Pantheon, where we gave away roses and bottles of water, and created a flower mural. Each rose given was a symbol of eternal love and respect for mothers. On May 18, we set up a commemorative panel with photographs of mothers, gave a talk on maternal love, and handed out framed photographs. This event was a space to share stories and pay tribute to the mothers who guided us with their love and wisdom.

Finally, in Campeche, on May 10, we gave roses and organized a Tribute of Light. The light of each candle represented the life and love of mothers, illuminating our memories with their warm glow. On May 18, we held a tribute similar to the one in Tuxtla with the placement of photos and an emotional talk, delivering framed photographs. These moments were deeply emotional, uniting the community in the memory and celebration of maternal love.

Benefits provided to the artists of Capillas Señoriales: A Tribute that Strengthens Our Values

Our campaign "Mom's Love, a Priceless Gift" not only strengthened the image of Capillas Señoriales as a company committed to the community, but also promoted a positive work environment among our staff. By organizing and participating in these events, our employees experienced greater job satisfaction and a sense of purpose as they saw the positive impact of their work on the families served. This sense of belonging and purpose reinforces our values of service, continuous improvement, integrity, positive attitude and family. At Capillas Señoriales, to be stately is to be human, and this campaign demonstrated our commitment to these principles.

Benefits provided to families and community: Healing Hearts and Strengthening Bonds

The events offered families a safe and welcoming space to remember and honor their mothers, providing comfort and emotional support. The activities helped families cope with their grief, promoting unity and strengthening family ties. The community in general benefited from having a place to share experiences and find support, reinforcing the sense of belonging and solidarity. At Capillas Señoriales, we believe that protecting families is essential, and these initiatives are a manifestation of our commitment to their well-being.

Partnerships with other organizations: Collaborating to Honor Mom

At Capillas Señoriales we collaborate with various local actors to carry out the events. In Morelia, we have the support of a local choir; in Tapachula, we use the space of the Fonda Inn Diamante Restaurant, in Tuxtla and Campeche with the Municipal Panteón; and in Mérida, we work with the thanatologist Sandra Moreno. These partnerships were essential to the success of the events, providing additional resources and strengthening our relationship with the community.

Improvements and changes compared to previous years: Innovating to Remember with Love

This year, our campaign included several improvements compared to previous years. We incorporated new elements such as the special mass in Morelia, the pink carpet walkway in Tapachula and the rituals in the cenote in Mérida. These changes were made in response to suggestions from attendees from previous years and with the goal of making the events more meaningful and emotional. In addition, we expanded the scope of the activities to more locations, allowing more people to participate and benefit from the tributes.

Summary: A Massive Tribute of Love and Remembrance

In total, we held ten events in five different locations, each carefully planned to celebrate and honor mothers. Approximately 80 people attended each event, meaning more than 400 moms were honored and remembered with love and respect. Every flower given, every note of music played, and every word shared resonated with the deep love and gratitude we felt for our mothers.

Capillas Señoriales' "Mom's Love, a Priceless Gift" campaign was a resounding success, providing comfort and support to families, strengthening community ties, and improving our reputation. These types of initiatives are crucial to keep the memory of mothers alive and to support families in times of grief, demonstrating our commitment to the emotional well-being of our community. At Capillas Señoriales, to be stately is to be human, and we are proud to celebrate the life and legacy of mothers with so much love and dedication.

Gamble Funeral Service, Savannah, GA

The staff at Gamble Funeral Service does an Annual Remembrance Service in the week between Christmas and New Years. Every year we do the service a little different for the families that we serve within the prior year.

Most recently our service provided a decorative bulb for the family to take as a keepsake and also we have offered families an opportunity to bring a special bulb or decoration in prior to the service to act as a token of remembrance for their loved one to be displayed throughout the holiday season at our location.

This event is catered for the family and features a musician, soloist as well as a local Hospice Minister who officiates the service. The purpose is to allow families who have lost a loved one the opportunity to meet other families who have also lost a loved one for fellowship and sharing.

This service includes all staff members as well as our staff preneed counselors. It is important to us, as a staff, to all assist and be included as this is the goal of our Team at Gambles. It also allows our client families to meet the entire staff and to also tour our building, ask questions and also allows the families to meet and have sometime to speak with our preneed counselors as well as the local hospice chaplain.

Gamble funeral home sends out invitations the beginning of November to families that we have served that year. We also include a flyer in our family folders beginning the first part of September as a "Save the Date" opportunity. A calligraphy professional onsite to personalize all bulbs for the family that have not previously requested a bulb or a certain number of bulbs for their loved ones.

A decorated tree is present in the funeral home chapel with all bulbs of the client families loved ones that Gamble Funeral Service has assisted with during that year.

Reading of the names of remembrance is a large and solemn part of the ceremony. The goal is to provide comfort as well as showing the care of our staff to families assisted.

Gamble Funeral Service has had a very positive response to this annual event and the requests for additional Christmas bulbs happens frequently throughout the year as family and friends visit the funeral home.

Ed Gamble as well as the entire staff at Gamble Funeral Service has made this an annual event for well over a decade now as a way to recognize the difficult time that the holiday season can be for some of our families.

Jefferson Memorial Cemetery, Funeral Home, Crematory & Arboretum , Pittsburgh, PA

At Jefferson Memorial Funeral Home, we understand that the holiday season can be particularly challenging for those who have lost a loved one. The empty seat at the dinner table is a sharp reminder of their absence, making the festive season a time of profound sorrow and reflection. The Holiday Service of Remembrance, held annually during the last week of November, aims to prepare those who are grieving for their first holiday season without their loved one, offering solace, community, and a space for shared remembrance.

This year's theme, "The Empty Chair," was inspired by a touching poem that encapsulates the sentiment of missing a loved one during family gatherings. The poem speaks to the heartache of seeing an empty chair where a loved one once sat, and it provided a meaningful framework for our service. The event began with a reading and explanation of the poem, setting a contemplative and empathetic tone for the evening.

We invited everyone in attendance to participate in a symbolic and deeply personal activity. Each attendee found a tag on their seat and was encouraged to write a word that described their loved one or simply their loved one's name. This simple act of reflection allowed participants to focus on the unique qualities and cherished memories of those they had lost. One by one, attendees came forward to pin their tags onto an empty chair placed prominently at the front of the room.

As each tag was added, the chair, initially stark and vacant, began to fill with love and remembrance. By the end of the night, the chair was no longer empty but brimming with tags, each representing a cherished life and the impact it had on those left behind. This powerful visual transformation symbolized how memories and love can fill the void left by loss, offering comfort and a sense of continuity.

To extend the impact of the event beyond the evening itself, we brought the chair back to our funeral home and displayed it in the lobby. This display served as an ongoing tribute and a tangible representation of communal support during the holiday season. Visitors to our funeral home were invited to add their own tags, allowing the chair to continually evolve as a living memorial.

The Holiday Service of Remembrance has proven to be an invaluable program for those navigating the complexities of grief during the holiday season. By focusing on the theme of "The Empty Chair," we provided an inclusive way for individuals to honor their loved ones, share their grief with others, and find comfort in collective remembrance. The response from our community was overwhelmingly positive, with many expressing gratitude for the opportunity to remember their loved ones in such a meaningful way.

Mitchell Family Cremations and Funerals, Inc., Albion, NY

Christopher Mitchell Funeral Home, Holley, NY; Bates, Wallace & Heath Funeral Home, Middleport, NY; Sherrie Bream Funeral Home, Gasport, NY

Dr. Alan Wofelt, respected grief counselor, author, and educator says, "It is universally accepted that one of the key components of a funeral is remembering the one who has died. We see this happen in the eulogy, in the tribute video (if there is one,) in the songs or reading chosen, as well as in the gathering of friends and family following the service. By recalling and sharing about our relationship with a loved one, we help ourselves transition. We begin the process of moving our relationship with the one who has died to one of memory rather than presence. We must go backward into our memories before we can move forward in our grief journeys."

For decades, during the month of December, Mitchell Family Cremations and Funerals, Inc. (MFCF) has placed a silk flower arrangement containing a large candle on a table in the entry lobby of their Funeral Home. Advertising is run in the local media (social and print,) which explains the "Light a Candle of Love" campaign. The candle is lit each day throughout the month to remember each individual who we have had the honor of taking into our care throughout the preceding year. The candle is also lit to let the surviving families know that we remember them as well, and will never forget the trust and confidence they placed in us by allowing us to care for their loved one...and for them.

This year, the Funeral Home expanded the remembering aspect of the Light a Candle of Love mission, and took blank prayer card stock, placed a Christmas Tree image on one side and text on the other which read, "In memory of your loved one...Village of Holley Tree Lighting Ceremony, December 2, 2023...Loved ones gave us memories too beautiful to forget." The cards were laminated and a string affixed through a punched hole in the card. Each attendee at the Village of Holley Tree Lighting Ceremony was given a card to hang on the community tree in remembrance of their loved one(s).

For very little expense, the initial cost of the silk arrangement, and the cost of 25 sheets of blank prayer card stock...and of course a little time, the community members that attended the ceremony as well as the folks who visited the Funeral Home were reminded that the Funeral Home staff, continued remembering them and their loved ones after the flowers had withered.

Detailed Description: Listed above

Rationale behind the idea: To underscore that remembering the person who died is one of the main reasons to have a funeral/memorial service/celebration of life or whatever term you want to use to describe the activity that is being held to REMEMBER the person who lived.

Benefits provided to the Funeral Home and Staff: For very little cost and minimal hand-on effort and planning, the staff is able to re-connect with the families they've served and provide them with their personal reinforcement that those families aren't just a number and that the staff does truly care about them and will do everything they can to help them move forward in their grief journey.

Benefits provided to families and/or the community at large: Just the knowledge alone that someone remembered is a huge comfort to most individuals who have suffered the death of a loved one. To share that remembering in the Funeral Home with other grieving families as well as friends and visitors who ask what the candle is for is another blessing for the bereaved families. By extending that remembrance out into the community during a public event such as the Village of Holley Tree Lighting Ceremony is allowing the whole community to support each other, without knowing it...and by doing so, provides a source of warmth and comfort during a holiday season which may not be too joyous for some.

Mitchell Family Funeral Home, Marshalltown, IA

Mitchell Family Funeral Home Luminaries Program

As funeral homes and mortuaries, we all strive to provide at least one unique experience for our families during the process of their funeral or memorial services. But what can we do and how do we stay in touch with our families after services conclude without becoming overbearing? How can we go above and beyond to provide comfort and support after the funeral and give them something special to honor and remember their loved one? Aftercare is a great way to accomplish this, but our hope is to provide an additional source of comfort and remembrance to the families who have entrusted their love ones to our care.

2020 was a year that we all had to get a little creative with funeral services. We were forced to think outside the box for ways to provide closure for our families. In years past, we had a variety of community outreach events, including a community swim day and a holiday open house.

The community swim day began to honor and remember four children who drown in the local river because their families didn't have the resources to send them to the swimming pool. In 2020, there was a staffing shortage at the pool due to the Covid-19 pandemic and we were not able to continue with our tradition. Instead, we held our community event in the funeral home parking lot, where we provided individually boxed meals, socially-distanced outdoor seating, live music entertainment and several activities for kids.

By the time the holidays came around in 2020, there was still a lot of fear around public gatherings and we wanted to do something more. We wanted to provide a type of holiday remembrance for our families as we had previously done, but needed to do so in a way that felt safe to everyone wishing to participate. After much brainstorming, we came up with the idea of luminaries. By making this a drive-through event, people were able to remain safe while being in compliance with the state and local laws. We had the names of every individual we were called on to serve throughout the year, and right before Christmastime, held this drive-through event. Everyone could come and experience their loved ones being honored and remembered. For those that were unable to attend, we provided a livestream drive-through to provide that same experience.

This was an amazing experience, not only for our families served, but it was rewarding to our staff as well. It gave time for all of us to work together on a unique project and come together to remember the families we had the privilege of serving. The feedback received from the community and the families was humbling even from the initial announcement of the event. We were not sure on how many would theoretically attend the event, but between the livestream and the in-person drive through, this has been a large success for our funeral home.

In the last few years, we have made slight changes to the event, and 2023 was the first year we really felt people were comfortable enough to walk around to look at the luminaries, rather than just stay in the car and do a drive by.

Both the funeral home staff and the families always look forward to this happening every year. We get more and more families wanting to take home their luminary at the end of the evening so that way they have them there with them during the holiday season.

In addition to continuing this beautiful tradition for many years to come, we are also excited to be able to bring back our community swim day for 2024!

Proko Funeral Home & Crematory, Kenosha, WI

For over 20 years Proko Funeral Home has hosted two separate annual events inviting our families who lost loved ones throughout the year to join us for a group memorial service. As a staff, we feel these events allow us to reconnect and offer continued support to the families we have served.

Realizing that holidays can feel isolating, our first event is a "Tree Decorating Memorial Service" held in December. Our event in 2023 was held on December 5th at 6:00 p.m. within the Kenosha Public Museum, which sits on the beautiful shores of Lake Michigan. The museum holds special significance to the funeral home, as John Proko was the former President of the founding Board of Directors. Families receive a thoughtfully designed mailed invitation, asking that they join us to hang an ornament in honor of their lost loved one. Although the majority of families that we serve are Christian, the event is not directed at any specific religion, and we welcome families of all faiths and backgrounds to honor their loved one's memory. Proko Funeral Home staff hold doors for incoming attendees and pass out programs containing an outline of the service as well as the name of all lost loved ones for the year. We begin the program by introducing each staff member, and by thanking families for trusting us to care for their loved one. As each decedent's name is read aloud, survivors can come and hang an ornament in their memory. We then have a live musician play a song, giving families time to reflect about their loved one. At the conclusion of the service, families are welcome to take a dove pin as they leave. The tree is lit and decorated for all of December, allowing families to continue to visit should they wish.

The second event that we host is a "Tree Planting Memorial" at Southport Park in Kenosha, WI. A tree is purchased from a local nursery and the City of Kenosha assists in the planting. Similar to the event in December, survivors receive a mailed invitation to join us in May. Additionally, it is advertised in our local newspaper publication. This year's event was held on May 18th, 2024. The event is structured the same; introduction, song, and reading of names. Families are encouraged to come and shovel a scoop of mulch around the base of the tree, symbolizing their lost family member. This event is particularly unique because staff member's families are also invited to join, allowing client families to connect with the next potential generation of funeral home staff.

Ultimately the goal of both events is to leave the lasting impact on families that we are there for them long after their funeral services held.

Tetrick Funeral Services, Johnson City, TN
Oakley-Cook Funeral Home & Crematory, Bristol, TN

In December of 2023, Tetrick Funeral Services was able to carryout a project that Laura Graham, funeral home ambassador, has been envisioning for the past couple of years.

Tetrick Funeral Services has hosted and sponsored the Angel Tree Service for Ballad Hospice for quite a few years. When the service is held at the funeral home in early December, an angel ornament is placed on the Christmas tree with the next of kin's loved one's name on the angel. The next of kin has purchased the angel from Ballad Hospice and after Christmas, the angel is given to that person for permanent keeping to place it on their tree in the years to come to keep the memory of their loved one alive with them.

Johnson City, Tennessee has an annual event called Candy Land Christmas. Candy Land Christmas features over 150 natural trees decorated by area businesses, residents, and non-profit organizations. The holiday trees span two downtown parks and will transform King Commons Park to Cupcake Commons and Founders Park to Gumdrop Forest.

In 2023, the trees were decorated from November 21st - November 25th. During this time there was extreme wind, rain, and terrible weather occurring. The kick-off to Candy Land was a Grand Lighting Ceremony on November 26th at 6:30 p.m. The trees were on display until January 7, 2024, with undecorating of the trees on January 7th and for a couple of days afterwards.

The cost for each tree is \$200.00. They must be decorated with plastic, unbreakable ornaments and attached to the trees with a zip tie to secure them safely to the trees. The trees went on sale in August. There was a specific time that the bidding for a tree would open and bids accepted were acquired in an hour because all trees are offered on a first come, first served basis. Bids were placed online and you were notified the next day if your bid was accepted. This is a huge event for our community and thousands of people visit the parks to see the trees during "the most wonderful time of the year." There is a contest during the Candy Lane time to vote on your favorite tree so competition is keen.

I called our President Renee Lockhart and gave her my vision for a Tetrick tree. Instead of hosting a Memorial Service which every funeral home in our area holds, I asked her to let me bid for a tree and order an angel ornament for the arranger of every person we took into our care within the last year. We would purchase the angel ornaments and purchase a small label maker to have the deceased's name on the ornament and affix the name of the deceased on the front and back of every ornament. When we decorate the tree, we would incorporate the angels with our huge supply of Christmas ornaments that we decorate with. She was in total agreement to this project. I wrote a letter to every arranger and told them what we planned to do and told them when the ornaments were brought back to the funeral home when the tree was undecorated on January 7th, they were invited to come and pick up the ornament as our gift to them. I had several families call and ask if we would supply them with an ornament for each sibling if it was a parent or if I would place an angel on the tree in memory of a loved one who died prior to beginning this tradition. Of course, we said yes and were happy to accommodate them. We also opened the invitation up to those people going through our Grief Journey program that was co-sponsored with First Christian Church in Johnson City and to our widow/widower group for anyone who wanted an ornament placed in their loved one's memory. In essence, anyone in the community who heard about this project and called us, we were happy to accommodate them and place an ornament on the tree in memory of their loved one. It didn't matter who conducted the funeral service for them.

The response to the letter was amazing. I received so many phone calls of thanks. In fact, I received phone calls asking if I remembered where their ornament was placed on the tree so it would be easy for them to look for it when they visited Candy Land.

You don't know which tree was placed for you to decorate or its location or the color of the lights on the tree until they were placed and lights strung on the tree. There was a placard placed in front of the tree designating the name of your tree. We were very lucky for a first timer to have our tree placed on the first

row of the hillside area of the park. We had over 250 angel ornaments to affix to the tree along with our other ornaments. Decorating the tree included Lewie Shipley, Susan Thompson, Sharon Williams and Laura Graham. It was cold, rainy, and the wind was almost blowing us sideways as we decorated but we had to get the tree decorated that day for the deadline was the next day. This was Saturday and none of us were scheduled to work that day. Lewie Shipley was our ladder man. In the wind and rain, he placed the ornaments on the upper part of the tree and placed the topper. It took us several hours to complete the task.

My thinking was to honor the memory of those we were entrusted to take into our care and do something tangible for their loved one to have a memento to remember their deceased loved one during the Christmas season. We think this will help to keep their memory alive especially if they come as a family to locate their ornament on the tree

Tetrick Funeral Services plans to make this an annual event if we can obtain a tree during the bidding competition from the City of Johnson City.

Wasatch Lawn Memorial Park and Mortuary, Millcreek, UT

Valley View Memorial Park and Funeral Home, West Valley City, UT; Wasatch Lawn Memorial Park South Valley, Riverton, UT

Our non-denominational Annual Luminary Event is held on the Saturday before Christmas. We honor and celebrate the lives of those lost throughout the years and gain a sense of peace from the healing power of the community.

Preparing for the Luminary starts early each Fall. Local high school groups that are required to have community service hours gather together to prepare over 26,000 luminary bags in the garage of our South Valley location. We start early in the day having fun talking and laughing in the warm weather, working together to put sand in each luminary bag. We count and sort each bag to ensure the required number of luminaries will be ready for each location. The completed luminary bags are stored safely in the garage until the morning of the luminary.

On the morning of the Luminary Event, each luminary bag is quickly placed with purpose throughout the gardens in our memorial parks. As you can imagine, assembling and putting thousands of luminary bags takes many hands and several hours. To effectively accomplish this task; we invite volunteers from local high school groups, different church organizations, local businesses, and the neighbors of our Memorial Parks to join us. The volunteers and families look forward to this event each year and arrive early no matter the weather, dressed warmly and ready to serve. When all of the luminary bags are placed, everyone is treated to doughnuts and hot cocoa. All of the time spent preparing for this one evening is worth it when the sun finally goes down and the cemetery gardens are lit up with the flickering candlelight. It is a sight that is truly inspiring, some say even spiritual.

On the evening of the luminary, guests drive through our memorial parks and marvel at the sight of the lighted luminaries blanketing the lawns. They are directed through the park and finally to the funeral home where a cozy fire is burning, and the coco and freshly baked cookies are warm and ready to enjoy. During the open house, we invite those who have suffered losses to decorate and hang ornaments on our Tree of Remembrance. All through the evening, families delight in listening to performances from local school musical groups enhancing the Christmas experience.

This annual event is one of a kind in our area. We are grateful for the opportunity to give back to our community knowing that the families we serve look forward to this holiday tradition each year.