

**Hill, Brown and Reigle Funeral Homes  
Grand Blanc, Michigan**

Among the thousands of cremations that take place every Nothing is more important to the future of our businesses than that of our hospice and palliative care providers. During the past year the Hill, Brown and Reigle Funeral Homes hosted an Hooray for Hospice Event for 150 Hospice and Palliative care providers that currently partner with our funeral home throughout the year. The rationale behind this idea is that we find it essential to support our partnering agencies that share end-of-life care with the families we are privileged to serve. During the month of November which is National Hospice Month we celebrate the important partners by "showering" them with a special treats and gifts as our way to say thank you for the tireless support they provide to our community. We recognize that they are busy serving families both night and day and it is important to make it easy for them to receive our recognition so we deliver to them. They don't have any more time than we do because of the numbers of families they serve on a daily, round-the-clock basis. So, on November 29th we celebrated our hospice agencies in a "Hooray for Hospice" event. On this day our staff made special delivery to Compassus, McLaren, Kindred and Heart to Heart Hospice team members. Our gifts included specialty chocolates and candy canes, water, chips, pens, notepads, and more! Gifts are delivered by our staff as they each wear Hooray for Hospice aprons and they cheerfully deliver great gifts and enthusiasm for all they continue to do for us! It is an "Us serving them" event! It is up-beat, it is brief, it is meaningful. And each year we mix it up for them... some years treat, some years lunch, all years surprises! We make it fun!!! It is of great benefit to our funeral homes to have solid relationships with our hospice agencies because our care is an extension of each others and as hospice staffing changes it allows us to remain current with their staff and it allows us to continue our interactions with them which ultimately translates to the care that is provided to our families. This program benefits the community because it keeps our funeral homes names current with agencies that are instrumental in our communities and the connections they provide are an extension of our care. Our partnerships help them stay connected to and speak well of us when out in the community. They partner with us in providing the necessary education surrounding end-of-life care and we help each other to that end at all times. When they serve our families well we have strong beginnings to our relationship with the families that then come to us for final disposition.

**Morris-Baker Funeral Home and Cremation Services**  
**Johnson City, Tennessee**

**Helping Our Community Cope with Grief Affected by the Global Pandemic**

The global pandemic has brought a whole new set of challenges to communities, and with those challenges have come new psychological challenges. Elements of stress and trauma have exacerbated what might have been the most benign and normal grief processes. Health workers and professional caregivers were at the epicenter of the pandemic and continue to be. They are often the ones helping our community manage their stress and grief.

We at Morris-Baker wanted to do something to help address their needs and our community's needs. Thus, we decided to bring in Michelle Post to provide a full-day seminar: *Riding the Coronacoaster When Grief & Stress Aren't "Cancelled."*

We knew that professional caregivers could benefit from additional tools and interventions to support the discharge of clients' emotions, grief, and stress and teach clients healthy coping skills during a time that is anything but "normal."

**More About the Seminar**

The seminar took place on Friday, May 13, 9:00 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Holiday Inn in Johnson City, Tennessee. Sixty professional caregivers attended the seminar.

In Post's work with grieving children, teens, adults, couples, and families, Ms. Post has seen families forced to adjust to deaths with delayed, changed, interrupted, and complicated goodbye processes and mourning rituals. Many times, the bereaved have been without the typical or normal support from their personal or professional communities.

In this seminar, with the aid of the research of J. William Worden, Ph.D. and personal and professional experiences, Ms. Post led beginner and seasoned caregiving professionals to develop a clear understanding of normal grief and anxiety responses during pandemic times and identify "red flag" reactions that require a higher level of care. In addition, participants left with sharpened skills, tools, and interventions to care for the grieving and stressed hearts of clients during this pandemic time.

The objectives of the seminar were for participants to be able to:

- Identify normal grief responses for different developmental ages of children, teens, and adults.
- Assess "red-flag" grief responses that may indicate need for a higher level of care.
- Understand a proven research-based grief and loss model to help families conceptualize the grief process.
- Utilize various instruments to assess depression, anxiety, and/or stress.
- Apply interventions and tools to engage grieving and stressed clients in their emotional discharge.
- Employ a guide to help families develop good coping skills for grief, stress, and anxiety management.

The seminar was designed for: physicians, nurses, social workers, child life specialists, counselors, educators, psychologists, hospice personnel, clergy, chaplains, lay ministers, and others who care for bereaved adults, couples, children, teens, and families (many of whom are likely also coping with stress and anxiety).

Our speaker, Michelle A. Post, MA, LMFT, is a licensed mental health provider and a national and international life strategist, business coach, and grief coach. She has specialized in grief, loss, trauma, anxiety, and stress management since 2002 and travels nationally and internationally to teach other professionals. In 2019, Michelle left her corporate healthcare management role to launch her own

international business to coach others via live and online trainings, self-care retreats, teach, consult, and provide expert witness services.

#### Partnerships

We worked in partnership with local chapter of The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) to offer accreditation for continuing education credit to its members and other professional caregivers. This relationship has been cultivated for several years and offers professional caregivers very affordable continuing education credits.

#### Benefits to the Community at Large

Professional counselors often have little specialized grief training. Our annual seminars, like this one, have benefitted the community at large by consistently raising the grief competence of the caregivers practicing in our community by bringing qualified grief educators to educate caregivers on grief topics requested by past attendees.

#### Benefits to the Funeral Home and Staff

The partnership with NASW and the consistent presentation of grief seminars for professional caregivers, like this one, has established Morris-Baker as more than an "order taker undertaker" facilitating logistics. Instead, we believe, past and present attendees see us as part of their community of caregivers serving grievers, and so do we. We believe that position in our community strengthens our relationship with influencers in the community, is an inspiration to our hard-working staff, and sustains the funeral home as a business.

**Jones and Son Funeral Home  
Richton, Mississippi**

Throughout our generations of business, Jones and Son Funeral Home has always been dedicated to helping our community. Over a decade ago, we started a program called "Neighbors Helping Neighbors" as a way to give back to the communities we serve throughout south Mississippi. This program is designed to allow the employees of Jones and Son Funeral Home to say "thank you" to the men and women who give of their time and efforts to serve others, often without any compensation. The basis for our program is to make sure these unsung heroes know they are appreciated and their service does not go unnoticed.

This year, instead of choosing a volunteer fire department or law enforcement agency as we have in the past, with the Covid-19 pandemic still active across our country, we decided to honor our local health care workers. We chose to provide lunch to the nursing staff at Perry County Nursing Center in Richton, MS and the Greene Rural Nursing Center in Leakesville, MS. These two small, rural nursing homes are often overlooked by those choosing to bring light to health care workers.

These two rural communities each have a population of roughly 1500 people, and most of the nurses and staff that run these facilities are our friends and neighbors. During this pandemic, many of these nurses and staff have worked day and night caring for their friends and neighbors who are unable to care for themselves. With the restrictions still in place in many medical facilities, these residents are oftentimes unable to leave the facility or even visit with other patients.

We felt it was the least we could do to make sure that they knew how much we appreciated their sacrifices and courage as they faced the front line of this global illness head on and without a second thought. The courage of these often forgotten, front line workers, like so many hundreds of thousands around the world, has not gone unnoticed and we are forever grateful for them. Their efforts to make sure that these elderly and infirmed in our communities were cared for has without a doubt saved countless lives here, and for that, the least we could do was attempt to bring a small sense of joy to their day. Because of quarantine restrictions in place at the facilities, many of the workers were not allowed to leave during the day to go out for lunch, so it became our mission to make sure they at least had a hot meal. Through the coordinated efforts of our staff and the administrators of the two hospitals, we were able to work out the details to get the meals in to the staff while not exposing them or ourselves to any potential health risk.