

**G.H. Herrmann Funeral Homes
Indianapolis, Indiana**

It has been 20 years since the tragic attack of 9/11, but for many of us it still seems like yesterday. Each year, G.H. Herrmann hosts an annual memorial service held at The Gardens at Olive Branch Cemetery, in Greenwood, IN where owner, Jeff Herrmann, has built a beautiful tribute for the community. This ensures people have a nearby place to remember the 9/11 attacks and honor the victims and troops who have sacrificed for our country. The site has been named "The Freedom Plaza."

The 9/11 monument boasts a steel beam from World Trade Center 1, leftover limestone from rebuilding the Pentagon and constructing the 9/11 Memorial in New York City and soil from the crash site of Flight 93. The steel beam is supported by brick columns that contain cremation niches and a pentagon-shaped planter that holds three bronze plaques. The plaques tell the story of the lives lost and the damage done on 9/11. The planter is filled with 8 yards of dirt hauled in from Shanksville, PA. At the center of the planter is an eternal flame. It's limestone base was crafted by Brian Swersky, who built an identical flame at John F. Kennedy's gravesite at Arlington National Cemetery. An American flag flies above the memorial daily.

The idea for this monument came to Jeff in 2006 while he was in New York for the fifth anniversary of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. Soon after he returned Indiana, he sketched out a design on a napkin and gave those designs to an architect. Within a few days he had the blueprints to get started on the project! Jeff spent more than 5 years and a lengthy federal approval process to acquire the items he needed.

During the annual ceremony the flag is flown at half-staff at 8:46 am, the time the first plane hit World Trade Center 1. At that time, bagpipes and taps are played and the local VFW fire a three-volley salute. Following the salute, a ceremonial bell rings for the victims followed by a moment of silence. This year, local first responder heroes were part of the memorial tribute.

Veterans and families from all over come to visit our Freedom Plaza. We will never forget the vicious attacks that occurred 20 years ago on U.S. soil. It is our hopes that generations to come will also never forget.

America: Land of the Free...Home of the Brave!

Gamble Funeral Service Savannah, Georgia

In 2000, we held our first annual Service of Remembrance and Hope when we were with the former Sipple Mortuary. The idea of such a program came during a regularly scheduled staff meeting, where our Sipple Mortuary funeral home family explored a number of topics focused on providing our families with aftercare assistance and bereavement support. An enthusiastic consensus was reached among the staff that we should pursue an observance that would help bring strength, encouragement, and healing to families and individuals during their grieving progression. With that vision in mind, the staff began a strategic planning process to construct a fitting Service of Remembrance and Hope. This vision has continued annually since Gamble Funeral Service was founded in October 2003.

The final product has been followed each year, only with minor adjustments. A huge Tree of Remembrance is placed in the front of our chapel and is adorned with striking ornaments that have the name and date of death of each person who died in the past year. This is a service provided by our funeral home and is offered without any cost to the public. Much thought has been given to these three areas: the title of our service, the timing of our service, and the type of our service.

A) The title of the service—Our staff felt that most of the families had previously been through a funeral or memorial service for their loved one. We determined this service should be more than just a message of hope but rather a service designed to deal with the brokenness that grief brings and a service of reflection, thankfulness, and simple tribute. This is why the staff chose to title the occasion as the Service of Remembrance and Hope.

B) The timing of the service—Most services of this type are held before Christmas Day. There is certainly nothing wrong with this approach, however, our observance is typically held the Sunday evening following Christmas Day. Our staff felt that most friends and family members are keenly attentive to the close survivors until Christmas Day. Unfortunately, after that special day, most of the friends and family members return to their homes and go about living their own lives, without giving personal support to the other members of their family.

C) The type of service—The staff and management of Gamble Funeral Service desired our observance to be a non-denominational program and not related to a particular religion. We wanted to avoid offending any particular family that we had served or a family we may serve in the future. The order of service includes an opening hymn, a prayer, scripture reading, special music from a local group, the citing of those whose names are on the Tree of Remembrance, a message of hope, a prayer, the closing hymn, and benediction. At the conclusion of the service, the attendees are invited to enjoy a time of fellowship where refreshments have been prepared.

The actual planning of the service begins at our staff meeting in August and September when we gather names of potential clergy in the community who have demonstrated their ability to connect with bereaving people and can articulate solace. We contact the selected clergy shortly after their selection in order to eliminate any scheduling conflicts and to collaborate with them concerning desired scriptures and music that may be used during the service.

The next phase is the process of personalizing the ornaments for the Tree of Remembrance. The initial group of ornaments are designated for those individuals who were served by our funeral home from December 1st of the past year through November 30th of the current year. Insuring each ornament is correct and legible is a very time-consuming process.

In November, the staff turns to social media to provide public service announcements concerning the upcoming service. These messages inform others in the community of this program who may not have a connection to Gamble Funeral Service and would like to attend.

On December 5th we typically mail a personal letter to the next of kin of each deceased person we provided a service for during the past year. The letter invites all of the family members and friends to

share in our service, and reminds them of our offer to provide an ornament for other members of their family who have died.

Throughout the process, we make certain the officiating clergy, organist, and our staff members have communicated with each other to ensure a smooth flow with the order of service. The bulletin is proofed, printed and folded, and the refreshments are ordered during the final days of preparation.

The ground work for the next year's service begins with our first staff meeting following the Service of Remembrance and Hope. All of the staff are asked to share any positive or negative feedback they may have from the service. We challenge each other on every detail from the message and music presented, the availability of parking, the placement of our staff, to the refreshments offered. These comments and discussions have helped us "fine tune" our services over the years.

The Service of Remembrance and Hope has been unquestionably a very positive observance for our funeral home. It has provided us the opportunity to acknowledge the loss of loved ones and to share once again with grieving family members our compassionate attention as they take those steps towards healing.

The local newspaper, the ABC and NBC affiliate television stations have provided valued coverage to our funeral service after the service.

In 2016, we reached out to clergy members representing more than one denomination to participate in and lead the service. This gesture was intended to add more diversity to our service which aligns the service more closely to the families we serve. Our intentions are to continue with this practice.

Then in 2017, our staff opened the service to all families, not just the families for whom we had provided a service. Additionally, we do not charge for nor do we limit the number of ornaments requested and given to a family.

A number of improvements to the logistics of the service were made in 2018. Backlogs to families waiting to receive their ornaments after the service was becoming a trying experience for our staff. As a result, we increased the number of staff used to locate the ornaments on the tree in order to expedite families receiving their loved one's tribute. This change in process, coupled with pre-sorting the ornaments for families requesting multiple orders for other family members reduced the "wait-time" that previously caused the backlog. The staff is constantly trying not to cause anymore delay than necessary during an already stressful time to the family members and friends who are attending the service.

The 2019 Service of Remembrance and Hope saw continued improvements to the logistics and coordination between staff and families receiving ornaments. The staff initiated a new process to the program which now allows for the immediate production of additional ornaments requested by families at the time of the service by having two areas set up with extra blank ornaments, manned by staff who are able to reproduce any additional personalized ornaments in a timely manner. Additionally, Gamble Funeral Service offers to mail additional ornaments to requested family members or to those who are unable to attend the service in person.

The challenges of 2020 due to COVID-19 are of course well-documented. With concern for the health and safety of our staff and the families that we serve, the in-person service was suspended, and instead personal letters were delivered to the families of those who had lost a loved one in the past year. We reached out to the Reverend Dr. Drew Corbett, who is also a local hospice program chaplain, and were able to offer grief counseling as well as the personalized ornaments that were either mailed or hand delivered as requested by surviving family.

The 2021 Service of Remembrance and Hope saw us adjusting to the "new-normal" with the return of an in-person service. In addition to inviting families and the public at large, we also live streamed the service so those who were unable to attend in person could view the service and hear their loved ones name.

Gamble's Service of Remembrance and Hope is an integral part of our long-standing tradition of continuing to minister to our families in their journey of grief after the death of a loved one. We strive to live by our watchword of "Ask a family we have served."

Myers Mortuary, Inc.
Ogden, Utah

America Remembers

As part of an America Remembers event, Myers Mortuary along with a group of private individuals took initiative to create a Box Elder Remembers program which took place at Reese Pioneer Park on Saturday, July 9, 2022 in Brigham City, Utah. This event is designed to honor those lost to COVID. The event was open to the public and all were invited, especially those who have lost a friend or loved one to COVID.

After seeking authorization from the city, our committee's efforts paid off with approval of a permanent bench at Reese Pioneer Park. This marble bench was installed on the lawn overlooking the pond at the park. The bench was engraved to recognize the loss within Box Elder County, Utah as a result of COVID. All of our Myers locations along with other service-related organization, raised funds to pay the hard costs associated with the purchase of the bench, and Bott & Sons monument Co. donated the cost of engraving. The event featured a lawn display of flags, which could be personalized by participants to honor those people who they have lost. The flags were planted on the lawn in a visual display to show the magnitude of the pandemic's losses. This was originally organized by Maryland artist Suzanne Brennan Firstenberg. Her "In America: Remember," (a public art installation commemorating all Americans who have died due to COVID which has been seen on the National Mall in Washington D.C.) display featured 660,000 white flags on 20 acres of the National Mall for two weeks. Since that endeavor Firstenberg has continued providing flags for local communities who would like to participate in a similar honor, all flags associated with this "In America: Remember" effort will be submitted to the Smithsonian for posterity.

Suzanne Brennan Firstenberg wrote, "As art, different people interpret it differently, for some it is data visualization. We make the number of losses understandable, rendering it tangible by the use and display of flags that have heartfelt notes. For others, the art is the memorialization that captures the dignity of those who have just become a statistic. Taken in its entirety, the art is a physical manifestation of empathy and affords us an opportunity to reflect."

Tracy Borup, Ken Borup, Laurie Abraham, Matt Myers, Tracy Franklin, Triston Franklin, Shaun Myers, Wes Riches, James Quigley, Shawn Kotter and Steve Beanfield from our staff were all in attendance on the day of the event to assist families with flags and writing messages on them.

We began our ceremony with prayer followed by two speakers who touched on grief and healing. One of those speakers was our own Tracey Borup from Myers Mortuary who manages our Good Grief program for Brigham City. A pianist and singer performed, "Amazing Grace." Then, the VFW Post 1695 members presented a flag. Those who can't make it to the event can submit a request digitally for a flag to be dedicated to their loved one's honor. Grief is something we usually do alone, but the hope is that we can all heal together.

The memorial bench and ceremony were a wonderful event to allow the community to come together, grieve together and mourn our loved ones that passed from COVID. Almost all of our staff have suffered from the effects of COVID. Some are still feeling the effects from it. We lost one of our own at Myers Mortuary, Leon Hyde, to it. America will always Remember!

**Oliverie Funeral Home
Manchester, New Jersey**

9/11 20th Anniversary Commemoration

Oliverie Funeral Home in memory of the 20th year since 9/11 tragically happened hosted a Remembrance ceremony with a butterfly release at Manchester Town Hall on September 11, 2021. Geraldine Oliverie researched all the victims from Ocean County that perished that day and released a butterfly for each name. The ceremony began with a moment of silence at the time that the first tower fell. All local fire stations and fireman as well as all local First Aid Squads were invited and in attendance. Geraldine made sure to send a personal invitation out to the families whose loved ones were on that list.

Geraldine Oliverie chose to implement this new ceremony this year because she wanted to honor those who lost their lives that day and the families they left behind. Innocent people lost their lives and brave first responders sacrificed everything including their future health, to make sure they saved as many Americans as possible on that day twenty years ago. Nothing will fill the void in these family's lives but gathering at that ceremony we were able to show them that they will always be remembered as American Heroes and how grateful we are for their sacrifices.

The lovely ceremony opened up with "God Bless America" and the presentation of colors by the Manchester Police Honor Guard. We had the local Pastor, David Rittinger say an invocation followed by the Manchester Mayor, Robert Hudak making a welcome statement. We then had Geraldine Oliverie make the keynote address and had the beautiful choir from the local church sing "America the Beautiful" after. After the choir was finished all the names of the people lost in Ocean County were spoken aloud and a butterfly for each name was released in memory of them. While we watched all the butterfly fly up and away "Amazing Grace" was played. After the closing remarks from the Mayor "Tap" was played. Each person that attended received a mini American flag, a prayer card with a 9/11 poem on it and a 9/11 20th Anniversary commemoration pin.

This ceremony was very touching, and it meant a great deal to our community. Many members of community approached Geraldine thanking her for having a ceremony in honor of their loved one. It meant a great deal that their loved one's sacrifice was not forgotten. Coming together on the 20th Anniversary we showed that America's spirit will never be broken. We will always show hope, faith, love and resilience.

**Smith Family Funeral Homes
North Little Rock, Arkansas**

In the Midst of Tragedy, Community Stands Strong Together

On March 1, 1997, the earth stood still for residents of Arkadelphia, Arkansas. A devastating tornado plowed through the area and forever changed the community. The aftermath of the natural disaster left 825 residents without power, 256 homes damaged, 117 homes destroyed, 45 businesses damaged or destroyed- including Smith Ruggles Wilcox Funeral Home, 102 residents injured, and 6 lives lost.

Together with the city of Arkadelphia, Smith Ruggles-Wilcox Funeral Home hosted an event on March 1, 2022 to recognize the 25th anniversary of the 1997 tornado that struck the community. The event took place at the Smith Ruggles-Wilcox Funeral Home and included an easel walk display from 4:00 to 5:30 PM, a remembrance ceremony from 5:30 to 6:15 PM, and a candlelight vigil from 6:15 to 6:45 PM.

The purpose of the event was to gather as a community and reflect on all that was lost, including homes, businesses, and lives of loved ones. The purpose was also to honor those who stepped forward to help others and acknowledge the resilience of the community. The remembrance event also gave residents the opportunity to celebrate the growth of Clark county and the city of Arkadelphia since that day. The easel walk display featured news articles, personal stories from Arkadelphia residents, photos and videos about the events of March 1st, 1997, as well as the rebuilding period afterwards. Special tribute was also paid to the six individuals who lost their lives in Arkadelphia.

The remembrance ceremony was held in the chapel at Smith Ruggles-Wilcox Funeral Home and consisted of prayers, special speakers, and a testimonial video. At the candlelight vigil, there was a special ringing of the city bell in memory of those who had passed away in the tornado.

Following the closing prayer, attendees had the opportunity to release silver balloons in honor of all that was lost and all that the community endured.

Smith Ruggles-Wilcox Funeral Home provided coffee and desserts provided by local businesses for all in attendance. Owners, Jeff and Leslie Smith, along with team members from other Smith Family Funeral Home locations were in attendance to serve and assist in any way possible.

Tim Wright, manager of Smith Ruggles-Wilcox, stated "Even though it was hard and brought a lot of pain at the time, it's important to remember things like this because it brings our community closer together and reminds us that we can rely on each other." He went on to say, "Sharon and I lost our home that day, and there are others who lost even more. But it's part of our history, and it's part of what makes us a strong Arkadelphia family. To try and forget it would be wrong."

Twiford Funeral Home, LLC
Elizabeth City, North Carolina

Twiford Funeral Home, LLC hosted the 20th Anniversary Patriot Day Celebration of Remembrance at the Memorial Chapel location in Elizabeth City, NC on Saturday, September 11, 2021 at 12:00 p.m.. A large contingent of police, firefighters, EMS, along with their vehicles, US Coast Guard personnel and the general public attended to commemorate the day. Many of the attendees had lost loved ones in the 9/11 attacks, as many volunteers from Elizabeth City and surrounding areas were deployed to New York City to assist in the aftermath of the attacks.

Fliers were placed in every VFW Post, the DAV Post, the US Coast Guard Chief Petty Officer's Association, American Legion Post, Fire and Police Departments, County Sheriff's Office, USCG Base, Elizabeth City, the local Senior Center, the newspaper offices and numerous local churches and businesses. The program began at 12:00 Noon with a welcome from David H. Twiford, Sr. FS18, CFSP followed by the Posting of the Colors by the Marine Corps League Honor Guard from Virginia and the Pledge of Allegiance led by SSgt Dan Serik, and an invocation by David H. Twiford, Sr. FS18, CFSP.

The raising of the flag by JJ Twiford and his son John Twiford continued the program, after which Ken Bateman sang "The Star Spangled Banner". Keynote speaker Walter (Kirk) Harris, Special Asst., Office of the Under Secretary of Defense was introduced by Sgt Maj Gene Overstreet, 12th Sgt Major of the USMC. Mr. Harris spoke eloquently about the events of 9/11, and his personal experiences that day. He also shared with the crowd of well over 200 people details about his visit to the Memorial in Somerset County, PA and played audio recordings of some of the cell phone communications the passengers and crew aboard Flight 93 made to their loved ones shortly before they caused the plane to crash, killing everyone aboard. The recordings were very affecting for the audience, as they heard ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances say "Goodbye" and "I love you" prior to their heroic actions which potentially saved thousands of lives, at the expense of their own. Following his remarks, locally well known band Out 'N the Cold, along with most of the attendees, sang Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the USA".

Special flags were raised and wreaths were laid representing the First Responders/Firefighters (Fire Dept. Chief Chris Carver), Military (US Coast Guard Cmdr. Brook Sherman), Law Enforcement (Pasquotank Co. Sheriff Tommy Wooten), "good Samaritans" (Asst. State Cpt Patriot Guard Riders Roy Hankinson) and all other Personnel/Volunteers (David H. Twiford, Jr. and son Spencer Twiford). Taps and a Rifle Salute were rendered by Clarence Jackson VFW Post 6060, then Out 'N the Cold sang "Standing on Holy Ground" in solemn respect. Many in the audience had tears in their eyes at several points during the program. There was also a special Wreath Laying Ceremony by Crawford, NC VFD Captain Jay Cirillo in honor of those who lost their lives volunteering to help others, in the wake of the horrific events of 9/11. Reverend F. Joe Griffith, USAF veteran, Pastor of Rehoboth Baptist Church in Maple, NC and thirty year plus employee of Twiford Funeral Home, made closing comments reflecting on the importance of these remembrances to honor the people who died on and following September 11, 2001 and reminding everyone of how the United States pulled together during that time. He then said the benediction and blessed the food being provided to the attendees and guests.

As this was the 20th Anniversary of 9/11, Twiford Funeral Home Staff who participated were given t-shirts made with a small Twiford logo on the front and a large representation of the twin towers, Flight 93, and the Pentagon on the back, as well as a commemorative coin with the same representation. A picture of the coin is included, and the staff was very touched at the special effort Twiford Funeral Home put in to providing these items.