



## From the MFDA Board

Funeral service in Maine has always been built on steady leadership, clear standards, and a deep commitment to the families we serve. The Maine Funeral Directors Association exists to protect and strengthen that foundation.

During the upcoming Board months, your Board will begin focusing on long-range planning discussions. This is a deliberate review of where we stand financially, legislatively, and organizationally — and where we need to be over the next five years.

We are examining our mission, reviewing budget projections, and evaluating membership engagement and retention. We are also assessing our legislative priorities to ensure our advocacy remains disciplined, strategic, and aligned with the real challenges facing funeral homes across Maine.

Strong associations do not operate by accident. They operate with intention.

Membership support, sponsor partnerships, and volunteer leadership make it possible to carry out the work that often happens behind the scenes — monitoring regulations, advocating in Augusta, planning education, and maintaining a unified professional voice.

Going forward, you will see consistent communication through this newsletter, particularly regarding legislative updates and planning progress. We encourage every member to stay informed and engaged. A strong association depends on membership support.

Our profession values tradition. At the same time, we have a responsibility to plan carefully and act decisively. The Board is committed to strengthening the foundation of MFDA so it remains stable, effective, and forward-looking for years to come.

Thank you for your continued commitment to the Association and to the families you serve each day.

— *The MFDA Board of Directors*

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## **Legislative Update**

### **Transportation Rate Bill – Advocacy Underway**

The MFDA Legislative Committee is actively reaching out to members of the Appropriations Committee to secure support for the Transportation Rate Bill (LD 562), which has passed unanimously out of committee in both of the past two legislative sessions.

As the bill advances, action at the Appropriations level is critical to ensure funding approval. Conversations are focused on helping lawmakers understand the operational and financial realities funeral homes face when providing transportation services across Maine.

We will continue direct outreach in the coming weeks and will notify members if additional grassroots engagement becomes necessary.

### **Pre-Need Insurance Rulemaking – Status Update**

There has been no change since last month's update. The law allowing pre-need insurance has passed, but funeral establishments may not sell or advertise this option until technical rulemaking is completed by the Maine State Board of Funeral Service. MFDA continues to monitor the rulemaking timeline and will notify members when public comment periods are announced.

### **Mortuary Trust / MaineCare Burial Exemption**

No changes since last month's report. The burial contract exemption limit remains \$18,985 effective January 1, 2026 until 2027 where there will be an additional increase.

### **Natural Organic Reduction (NOR) Rulemaking**

MFDA is still awaiting formal updates on the status of NOR rulemaking. We will communicate developments as soon as additional information becomes available.

Read more about NOR in the article below about New York City's first facility on America's East Coast that will offer NOR or Terramation within its facility. Also below is a link to the Maine Biz article regarding Wend & Root that is working on getting established in Maine.

### **Natural Organic Reduction to be done on the East Coast**

[By Funeral Director Daily](#)

[Green-Wood Cemetery](#), the venerable and historic cemetery in New York City announced last week a plan to become the first facility on America's East Coast that will offer Natural Organic Reduction (NOR) or Terramation within its facility. Legalized in the state of New York in 2023, Green-Wood says, according to [this recent article](#) from the *New York Post* it will be ready for these types of dispositions beginning in 2027.

According to the same article “(Green-Wood) is working with German company Meine Erde to offer “greener end-of-life options.” Again, according to the *New York Post* article, “Meine Erde offers the full service for roughly \$5,000 overseas, and similar companies in the US go for as high as \$7,000 — which is significantly cheaper than the cost of a standard \$21,000 gravesite at Green-Wood Cemetery.” [Here](#) is the website for Germany’s Meine Erde.

[Green-Wood Cemetery](#), says it has 240 inquiries about NOR since its recent announcement. Amy Cunningham, owner of [Fitting Tribute Funerals](#) in New York City seems to concur with that interest when she tells me “Since Green-Wood made that announcement inquiries (about NOR) have picked up for our business”.

**Working within the laws:** To my knowledge, Natural Organic Reduction (NOR) is legal on the East Coast in the states of Maine, Maryland, New Jersey, and Delaware. New Hampshire has had the [bill for its legalization introduced into its legislature](#) in January 2026 and there is bipartisan support so it is conceivable that it will soon be legalized in New Hampshire as well.

Each state sets its own regulations and in New York state there is a couple of interesting laws that will regulate the business as it opens and grows there. For instance, the New York law, at least to my understanding, allows only cemeteries or cemetery corporations to operate NOR facilities. And, according to the *New York Post* article, “The human made soil cannot leave the grounds, per New York State rules“. That is in contrast to many states that allow the “human soil” to be removed to other places such as family yards.

### **Maine Organization Looking to Start Up NOR Facility**

Wend & Root is currently in active development, partnering with experts in engineering, materials science, environmental health, and funeral practice to design a safe, effective, and scientifically validated prototype system.

We are moving deliberately and thoughtfully, with a commitment to:

- rigorous testing
- environmental responsibility
- respect for families and communities
- transparency in development

As our work progresses, our aim is to make climate-responsible human composting systems available widely. Here is the article in MaineBiz

<https://mainebiz.biz/article/top-gun-entrepreneur-aims-to-liven-up-the-green-burial-market/>

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# What Families Should Keep In Mind Prior To Choosing Environmental Burials

*From Newswatch*

As countless families across the United States begin exploring new ways to reduce their overall environmental impacts, end-of-life planning has subsequently become a big part of the conversation regarding sustainability.

Environmental burials, also referred to as green burials, are now offering a legitimate alternative to conventional funeral practices by helping people emphasize simplicity and minimize ecological disruptions. Although this concept is still just beginning to grow in popularity as of 2026, there are now many families that have questions regarding whether or not environmental burials are the right choice for them.

That's why we recently interviewed the renowned environmental burial experts in Yellow Springs OH at Jackson, Lytle & Lewis to get an industry leader's glimpse into the key requirements, differences, and various benefits that can help families make more informed end-of-life planning decisions!

Environmental burials primarily focus on naturally returning a decedent's body to the earth, which generally means foregoing various processes and materials that harm ecosystems and slow down the decomposition process.

[Full Story](#)

## Membership Corner

From MFDA Member Roger Bouffard:

Hired employee in 2000 Roger M. Bouffard remembers

In reflecting further on my tenure in funeral service, I realized I would be remiss if I did not also recognize someone whose contributions have meant a great deal to me and our firm.

In my earlier remarks, I focused on the individuals who joined our firm during the 1980s and 1990s. However, in 2000 we welcomed Roger Therriault as an apprentice.

With prior experience in education and business, Roger brought a unique perspective to funeral service. He became a licensed funeral director and has been serving families for more than 20 years. Today, he remains active as a valued consultant with The Fortin & Pinette Group.

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## Resources: Unclaimed Veteran Remains

Did you know that through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) regional offices nationwide the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) can assist coroners, medical examiners, and funeral industry partners with the burial of unclaimed remains of veterans? Here are some of the ways VBA can help:

- Determining Veteran status of unclaimed remains or cremains.
- Contacting next of kin of record with VA (if available).
- Determining eligibility for burial in a national cemetery if Veteran status is confirmed.
- Filing claims for burial allowances.

If you are in possession of remains that you are hoping to inter, please contact us. Each VA regional office has an Indigent Veteran and Unclaimed Remains Coordinator (IVURC) that can help you learn more about available benefits and assist you in making burial arrangements in a national, state or tribal cemetery for eligible veterans.

To locate a VA regional benefit office near you to visit with your local coordinator, please click [here](#). You may also call the VA's Benefits Hotline at 1-800-827-1000 from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. ET, Monday through Friday. When calling, be sure to do the following:

Select "burial assistance" when prompted.

Enter the decedent's social security number (if known, but not required to proceed). Identify yourself as a coroner, medical examiner, or funeral industry partner.

Request to speak with the IVURC in the city and state the applicable VA regional office is located.

We will ask you for your contact information and refer you to the IVURC, who will complete a return call within three (3) business days.

For best resolution of your case, please provide VA with any identifying information you know about the decedent, including their name, social security number, date of birth, and any identifying military information.

If you have contacted the National Cemetery Scheduling Office or your local state veterans cemetery directly to request the interment of the remains of unclaimed veterans in the past, you are still welcome to continue doing so, but the IVURC at the nearest VA regional office can be a great resource to help facilitate this process. Monetary burial benefits are available to help cover burial and transportation costs incurred by third party custodians who handle the burial arrangements of unclaimed veterans, or when there are insufficient resources available in the Veteran's estate to cover these expenses.

Third party custodians may utilize VA Form 21P-530EZ, Application for Burial Benefits (Under 38 U.S.C. Chapter 23), to submit a claim by mail or online.

Those who purchase a casket or urn for the interment of the remains of an unclaimed Veteran in a national cemetery or a state veterans cemetery may also utilize VA Form 40-10088, Request for Casket/Urn Allowance, to submit a request, by either fax or mail, for an allowance for the casket or urn purchased.

[Click here](#) for more information on indigent Veterans and unclaimed remains.

If you know of anyone else who may be in possession of unclaimed veteran remains (e.g., coroners, medical examiners, other funeral service professionals, etc.), please share this information with them.

# Thank you to our Silver Sponsors:



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## Volunteer Opportunity: 2026 ABFSE/Hilgenfeld Summer Curriculum Review Workshop

Each year, a portion of the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE) curriculum undergoes review. This important process is generously supported by a grant from the Hilgenfeld Family Foundation for Mortuary Education. Volunteers are now being sought to participate. [Learn more.](#)

# From the NFDA

## **When Words Matter: A Must-Read Guide for Every Funeral Professional**

The words we use shape how families experience one of the most vulnerable moments of their lives. That's why NFDA's newest research-based guide, "When Words Matter: A Funeral Director's Guide to Clear & Compassionate Communication," is essential reading for every funeral professional.

Available now as a free download, this groundbreaking resource is grounded in original NFDA research with more than 1,100 consumers across four generations. The findings reveal a striking gap between the language funeral professionals use every day and what families actually understand — especially when emotions are high. For example:

- More than 75% of consumers had never heard the term “direct cremation.”
- Only 16% defined “memorial service” the same way funeral professionals do.
- Younger generations reported the highest levels of confusion and the strongest preference for clear, plainspoken language.

### **Practical Tools You Can Use Right Away**

This isn't theory — it's a hands-on guide designed to improve conversations at every stage of service. Inside, you'll find:

- Side-by-side comparisons of industry terms and plain-language alternatives
- Real consumer quotes that show how words are received
- Conversation starters and roleplay scripts for staff training
- Checklists to improve websites and printed materials
- Team action plans to help implement changes over the next 90 days

Whether you're meeting with families, training staff, reviewing your website or refining your preneed conversations, "When Words Matter" helps ensure families feel heard, understood and supported.

### **Why It Matters Now**

Today's families are more diverse — generationally, culturally and emotionally — than ever before. This guide helps funeral professionals meet families where they are, build trust and strengthen relationships through language that resonates.

If you haven't downloaded it yet, now is the time. Download "When Words Matter" for free at [NFDA.org/Research](https://www.nfda.org/research).

*Share it with your team and start meaningful conversations that make a lasting difference.*

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## Thank you to our Bronze Sponsors:



## NFDA Educational Events

### Digging In: A Deathcare Dialogue

Thursday, March 18 • 6 p.m. CT

Free to Attend

NFDA Moderators: Nicole Krause, Gabe Schauf, Lanae Strovers

The next Digging In takes a deep dive into restorative art. What draws so many funeral professionals to this work? How can we clearly communicate the value of restorative care to the families we serve and consistently deliver on the promises we make to them? You will talk about the fundamentals that should never be overlooked, fresh ideas for the embalming room and ways to continue growing your skill set. Join us March 18 for an open, honest conversation welcoming every perspective – from seasoned veterans to ambitious apprentices and everyone in between. There is no cost to participate in the discussion, but we do ask that you [sign up here](#).

## **Strengthen Your Arrangement Skills From Anywhere**

Arrangements are at the heart of meaningful funeral services, and NFDA's Virtual Arrangement Solutions Academy is designed to help you approach them with greater confidence, clarity and connection. Join us for one of two upcoming live, interactive training sessions in March and April. Led by NFDA trainer Lanae Strovers, the Academy brings together funeral professionals in a small-group setting to explore real-world strategies you can apply immediately. [Learn more and sign up today](#).

## **Upcoming Events**

**Missed a recent NFDA Webinar? Check out recordings of select events [here](#).**

### **Conferences & Events**

- April 15-17, Advocacy Summit, Washington, D.C.
- May 4-8, Embalming & Restorative Art Seminar, Pittsburgh, PA
- May 6-9, Professional Women's Conference, St. Pete Beach, FL
- August 2-5, Leadership Conference, Louisville, KY
- October 25-28, NFDA International Convention & Expo, Charlotte, NC – registration opens June 2

### **Level Up Webinar Series – free for NFDA members and \$79 for nonmembers**

- February 25, Back to the Basics in the Prep Room
- March 25, Safety, Security and Success in 2026
- April 22, Marketing Funeral Homes: Balancing Sensitivity and Strategy
- May 20, Sowing Trust: Harvesting the Benefits of Authentic Consumer Engagement
- June 17, Annual FTC Funeral Rule Review

### **Digging In: A Deathcare Dialogue**

Conversations will, take place 6-7 p.m. CT. [Click here](#) to sign up for free and join the conversation.

- March 18
- April 23

### **NFDA Cremation Certification Program**

- March 3, West Jordan, UT
- March 9, Macon, GA
- April 23-24, Virtual Program
- May 20, Detroit, MI

Find additional dates near you!

Earn cremation certification from the comfort of your home or office with our [online certification option](#).

### **NFDA Arranger Training**

- March 9, 11, 16, 18, Arrangement Solutions Academy (Virtual)
- April 6, 13, 20, 27, Arrangement Solutions Academy (Virtual)
- May 4, Wichita, KS

### **NFDA Certified Preplanning Consultant Program**

Earn your CPC designation from the comfort of your workplace or home with our self-study option.

Other NFDA Events

Visit our events calendar, [NFDA.org/Events](https://www.nfda.org/Events)



## Save the Date: 2026 MFDA Fall Fest

October 13–14, 2026

In 2026, the MFDA Fall Fest moves to the beautiful **Harraseeket Inn in Freeport** — a classic Maine setting that offers the perfect blend of education, connection, and a little well-earned relaxation.

Expect the same strong CEU programming, meaningful networking, and Scholarship Fund support you value — with a fresh backdrop and a few new touches we can't wait to share.

Freeport in October speaks for itself — crisp air, coastal views, and plenty to explore between sessions.

### Schedule at a Glance

**Tuesday, October 13**

- MFDA Scholarship Fundraiser – Val Halla Golf Course (11:30am–6:30pm)
- MFDA Meet & Greet – Harraseeket Inn (7:00pm–11:00pm)

### **Wednesday, October 14**

- MFDA Fall Fest Convention – Harraseeket Inn (7:30am–4:30pm)
- 6 CEUs
- Annual Member Meeting
- Networking, great food, raffles, and time with colleagues from across Maine

This event continues to strengthen our profession while supporting the students preparing to join it.

**More details — including programming and registration — will be coming soon.**

For now, mark your calendar.

You won't want to miss this one!

## **Three Peaks Foundation: Purpose and Impact**

Three Peaks exists to support individuals and families facing mental health challenges and loss. The organization's mission is centered on providing help where it is needed most, during some of life's most difficult moments.

Mental health struggles impact people from all walks of life, including Veterans, first responders, parents, and children. Many of these challenges go unseen. Three Peaks works to assist those in need by offering support, resources, and financial assistance when possible, with a focus on making a meaningful and immediate impact.

Funding for this work comes from community-driven events and the generosity of private sponsors. Events such as walks, runs, strongman competitions, pickleball tournaments, and the annual gala not only raise awareness but also generate the resources that allow Three Peaks to continue its mission.

Funds raised through these efforts are directed back into helping individuals and families within the community.

Three Peaks is operated entirely by volunteers. No board or team member receives compensation. The organization is committed to giving back as much as possible and ensuring that community support directly benefits those in need.

Three Peaks is grateful for the continued support of donors, sponsors, volunteers, and event participants. Their involvement makes it possible to continue helping individuals and families during some of the most challenging times they may face.



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Our mailing address is:  
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