

THE THANA GRAM

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Dear Colleagues,

Hope everyone has had a great start to the New Year! Spring is upon us, and I know we will be glad when it gets here! Your committee's have been hard at work already this year. The Legislative committee is staying on top of what is going down on Capital Hill. More information will be coming soon. The Task Force appointed to search for a new Executive Director of our Association has completed the first leg of the process. They have interviewed 5 individuals and have narrowed it down to 2 candidates to fill the position. They have turned it over to the T.F.D.A. board to do the final interviews. A big thank you to the Task Force members, Robert Shackelford, Chairman, Randy Nash, Mandy Goodrich, Brent McNeeley, Justin Jeffers and Daniel Ownby for all your time and hard work! All these members have 2 things in common, all are Past Presidents, and all love our Association! Thank you again! Our District meetings are fast approaching as a reminder, East District will be March 10 at Chop House in Sevierville, Middle District will be March 12 at the Farm Bureau Expo Center in Lebanon, and the West District will be March 17 at the Jackson Country Club in Jackson. We will be announcing the new Executive Director at these meetings. Our Convention is just around the corner. It will be held at the Marriott Convention Center in Chattanooga, and the dates are May 31-June 2. More information will be available soon! Thank you for all that you do for your families and your communities. You are the best at what you do! See y'all soon!

Together in Service,
J. Greg Rush

• HAPPY •

Easter

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Bob Arrington Honored with the Funeral Service Foundation Distinguished Service Award

Scholarship established to honor distinguished funeral director

Brookfield, Wis. – The Funeral Service Foundation is proud to announce Bob Arrington as the 2025 recipient of its prestigious Distinguished Service Award, honoring his decades of exemplary leadership, service, and dedication to advancing the Foundation’s mission and strengthening the funeral service profession.

A visionary leader and compassionate professional, Arrington has left an indelible mark on funeral service. His remarkable career began at seven years old in Milan, Tennessee, and has spanned more than five decades of service, entrepreneurship and leadership. In 1995, he founded Arrington Funeral Directors in Jackson, Tennessee, and went on to innovate within the profession through ventures like Corporate Funeral Providers and ObituaryShare.com.

A tireless advocate for the profession, Arrington played important roles at the Tennessee Funeral Directors Association and the National Funeral Directors Association, serving as its 2015-16 President, holding multiple officer roles, and contributing to numerous committees and task forces for more than two decades.

Bob’s contributions to the Funeral Service Foundation have been equally profound. From 2013 to 2023, he served as a Foundation Trustee, including as Chair of the Board from 2017 to 2019. During his tenure, the Foundation’s endowment more than doubled – from \$5 million to more than \$11 million – while nearly \$5 million in grants were awarded to programs and initiatives that support grieving communities.

His leadership was instrumental in the development and rollout of several key Foundation initiatives, including:

- *Youth & Funerals*, a vital resource encouraging youth preparedness and involvement in memorialization.
- *When a Child Dies* and *Grieving Alone & Together*, both of which remain widely used by funeral homes and healthcare organizations.
- Public education efforts such as FAMIC’s *Have the Talk of a Lifetime* consumer outreach campaign and the ZMET research study, *Breaking the Consumer Code*.
- *Journey to Serve*, veteran’s recruitment initiative in partnership with the ICCFA Educational Foundation

Beyond his service, Arrington and his wife Judy Arrington are charter members of the Guardian’s Fund, the Foundation’s planned giving society, demonstrating a deep personal commitment to the future of funeral service.

“Bob Arrington exemplifies what it means to serve with heart, purpose and vision,” said John Heald, Foundation Chair. “His leadership has not only shaped our Foundation but also uplifted countless professionals and families across the country. It is our honor to recognize his enduring legacy with the Distinguished Service Award.”

The Distinguished Service Award is presented to individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the success and growth of the Funeral Service Foundation through acts of service or volunteer leadership. The award will be presented on October 27 during the Funeral Service Foundation Donor Reception at the NFDA International Convention & Expo (October 26 through 29 in Chicago, Illinois).

Bob Arrington Scholarship

In recognition of his lifelong contributions, the Foundation is raising funds to establish an academic scholarship in Bob Arrington’s name. Known for his dedication to helping others, from championing fundraising initiatives to serving as the longtime auctioneer for academic scholarships at Foundation events, this special occasion marks a heartfelt moment where the profession can express its gratitude to a remarkable leader. Gifts and pledges to support the scholarship may be made at FuneralService-Foundation.org/Donate-Now-Bob-Arrington.



2026 Tennessee Funeral Directors Association 123rd Annual Convention

Memorial Service

Chattanooga Convention Center at Downtown Marriott Chattanooga

This year's convention is quickly approaching.

Here is the list of individuals who will be honored at this year's Memorial Service.

If there is someone who needs to be added, please let Lauren Marshall lauren.oandn@gmail.com or Rosemary Harrison rosemary.mc@gmail.com know as soon as possible. Thank you!

Barbara Crox 5/14/25
Garry Hood 5/15/25
Sonia Andrews 5/30/25
Kay Woodfin 8/15/25
Dorothy Leathers 9/12/2025
Bobby Hysmith 9/29/2025
Rev. Timothy Ferrell 11/5/2025
Robert Caldwell, Jr. 11/11/2025
Billy Parmenter 11/13/2025

Joyce Haar 11/30/2025
Eugene Pike, Jr. 12/1/2025
Don Slack 12/30/2025
Jim Sells 1/13/2026
Larry Gandy 1/31/2026
Alanson "AL" Billings Manley, Jr. 3/8/2026
Paula Geraldine "Geri" Brock McDowell 3/9/2026
Mildred "Billie" Hamilton 3/29/2026

Any one who passes away on or after May 1, 2026 will be included in next year's Memorial Service.

*We would like to have all past TfdA Presidents
attend the banquet at the convention.*

Please let Lauren Marshall know if anyone has 50 years of service
that needs to be honored at the Convention.

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Obituaries

Larry Wayne Gandy, 68, of Soddy Daisy, went home to be with the Lord on January 31, 2026. He grew up in the Falling Water Community. Larry was preceded in death by his parents, Luke and Evelyn Gandy, and his sister Jerry Griffith (Tommy).

Larry is survived by his loving wife of 47 years, Middie Gandy, sons Dustin (Karen) Gandy and Tyler (Megan) Gandy of Hixson, TN; Five grandchildren, Gracie, Makayla, Tinley, Lila and Maggie Gandy. Sister, Patty Ryan. Brother, Ronnie (Becky) Gandy, aunts, Janis Gandy, Lynn Gandy, and Lucy Gandy; special niece, Tomesa Johnson. And many other special nieces, nephews, cousins and extended family.

Larry was a member of the Plumbers & Steamfitters, Local 43 for 47 years. He spent much of his working career at TVA Watts Bar and Sequoyah Nuclear Plant. He was a member of the Soddy Masonic Lodge 418 F.&A.M.

Larry's biggest pride in life was his family. He adored his granddaughters and was constantly present in every part of their life. He was so proud of his sons and all they had accomplished and never missed an opportunity to lend them a helping hand. He adored his wife and they spent many years traveling together and spending time with friends that turned into lifelong friendships. He was an avid outdoorsmen, and traveled to many new places with close friends and loved sharing those stories of his adventures.

He attended the Soddy Church of Christ.

In lieu of flowers memorials may be made to Soddy Church of Christ, P.O. Box 187, Soddy Daisy, TN 37384 and The Learning Center at Chattanooga Christian School, 3354 Charger Drive, Chattanooga, TN 37409, or contact jstroud@ccsk12.com.

Visitation was held on Wednesday, February 4, 2026, from 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Williamson & Sons Funeral Home. Visitation was on Thursday, February 5, 2026, from 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Soddy Church of Christ. Services followed at 1:00 p.m. at the church. Masonic services was held during the funeral service. Minister Joe Mallory and Pastor Calvin Nunley officiated. Entombment followed at Hamilton Memorial Gardens following the service. Pallbearers were Dustin Gandy, Tyler Gandy, Blake Gandy, Jonathan Gandy, Josh Roberts, Jared Roberts, Jerry Roberts, Adam Ryan, Steve Brackett and Richard Bookout.

Condolences and memories may be shared at www.williamsonandsons.com.

Arrangements are by Williamson and Sons Funeral Home, 8852 Dayton Pike, Soddy Daisy, TN 37379.



Donald "Don" Eugene Slack, 83, of Etowah passed away Tuesday, December 30, 2025. Don retired from CSX Railroad as well as Thomas & Betts. He was an active member of North Etowah Baptist Church. Don served in the United States Army. He was the son of Herb and Oma Slack. From an early age Don was raised by his sister and brother-in-law, Anna Reba and Carl Conner, whom he loved, honored, and acknowledged as his parents and grandparents of his children.

He is preceded in death by both his biological parents and his parents who raised him. Don is also preceded in death by 13 siblings; grandson, Don-Michael Slack; granddaughter, Abra Perian. Don is survived by his wife of 64 years, Wanda Moore Slack; children and spouses, David and Jan Slack, Michael and Teri Slack, Deborah and Tim Smith, and Charles and Rita Slack; numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren; several nieces and nephews, as well as friends.

Funeral service were held at 7:00 p.m. Saturday, January 3, 2026 at Spirit City Church North Etowah with Rev. Ron Perry, Dr. Gerald Atkins, and Pastor Justin Worden officiating. The family received friends from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. Saturday prior to the service at the church. Family and friends assembled at Bordwine Funeral Home at 1:00 p.m., Sunday, January 4, 2026 and went in procession to Green Hill Cemetery for the 2:00 p.m. committal service. Grandsons Derek Slack, Heath Slack, Marcus Adams,

Travis Smith, Doug Benton, Nick Carson, Zach Burnette, Weston Smith, Malcolm Measles, and Jacob Hicks will serve as pallbearers. Honorary pallbearers were Doug Swayne, Larry Duggan, Paul Coleman, James Janes, Rual Watson, Hershal Casteel, Glen Sisson, Don Bowman, Eddie Randolph, Walter Haggitt, Gary Walden, Dennis Bordwine, Jon Churchwell, and Wayne Davis. In lieu of flowers family request donations be made to Samaritan's Purse, P.O. Box 3000 Boone, N.C. 28607 or St. Jude's Research Hospital 501 St. Jude Place Memphis, TN 38105.

Jimmy Lee "Jim" Sells passed away peacefully at home surrounded by family on the morning of January 13, 2026. Jim was born to Vonsel and Dorothea Barnes Sells on March 24, 1945 in Murphy, North Carolina. When Jim was a young boy, the family relocated to Rogersville as his father worked for the Tennessee Valley Authority. Jim attended Rogersville High School where he was a proud member of the football team. He also met the love of his life there, Margaret Price Sells. They were married in 1963 and spent sixty-two years together.

Jim retired from Bell South after many years of dedicated service. He also became involved in the governing of the Town of Rogersville in 1971 when he was elected as Alderman. In 1978, he was elected as Mayor of Rogersville, a title he held until his retirement in June of 2025. Jim had a love for the Town and earnestly worked to provide a stable, healthy government for the citizens of Rogersville. He also served on various local and state boards, including Chairman of the First Tennessee Development District. While serving, he made many lifelong friends.

Jim enjoyed playing golf, supporting Tennessee athletics, and eating everything that he wasn't supposed to eat. He was a long-time member of First Baptist Church of Rogersville, a 32nd Degree Mason, Overton Masonic Lodge #5 F & AM, Hasson Street OES, Knoxville Scottish Rite, Jericho Shrine Center, and the Rogersville Kiwanis Club.

Jim had a sincere and obvious love for his family. He was devoted to his wife, Margaret. Along with her, he is survived by his daughter, Leigh (Tom) and his son, James (Carla.) He is survived by four grandchildren, Allie June McMakin, Savannah Sells (Hunter), Elijah Sells (Kirah), and James Isaac McNeil; six great-grandchildren, Andrew, Daniel, Rudy, Huntleigh, Silas, and Oliver; sister-in-law, Pam Elkins (Larry), sister-in-law, Carolyn Byrd, sister-in-law, Ann Price, sister-in-law, Monica Price; extended family, Ron and Annette Beach; several nieces and nephews; and the many citizens of Rogersville that he loved to serve.

Receiving of friends was held at Christian-Sells Funeral Home on Thursday, January 15 from 5:00-7:00. Funeral Services followed at 7:00 with Reverend Tim Seaton officiating. Graveside Services were held at 1:00 pm on Friday, January 16 at Highland Cemetery. Memorial contributions may be made to First Baptist Church of Rogersville, c/o Media Ministry. Online condolences may be sent at www.christiansells.com.



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- Jamie Meredith, Executive Vice President, C&J Financial

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Jay Slatton is the Area Sales Manager for Tennessee. Jay lives in Gordonsville, Tennessee with his wife, Leann, and two daughters, Ally Beth, and Ava Grace. Jay is a funeral director, embalmer, and licensed insurance producer. He has been very active in the Tennessee Funeral Directors Association and a Past President of the Upper Cumberland Funeral Directors Association. He currently serves on the Board of Directors for Tennessee Funeral Sales and Supply Club. Jay is active in his community through youth sports with his daughters and has served on the City Council for 6 years. He is a member of the Carthage Masonic Lodge #14 and attends Grant Missionary Baptist Church. Jay and his family are avid Vanderbilt Commodore fans and enjoy camping in their free time.

The Tennessee Funeral Directors Association is a nonprofit organization that seeks to provide Funeral Professionals advocacy through communication, education, and legislation; thereby empowering the licensed funeral professional the ability to serve at the highest level.

For more information, please contact Jay Slatton by email JayS@snlprenneed.com or by calling (615) 418-6276



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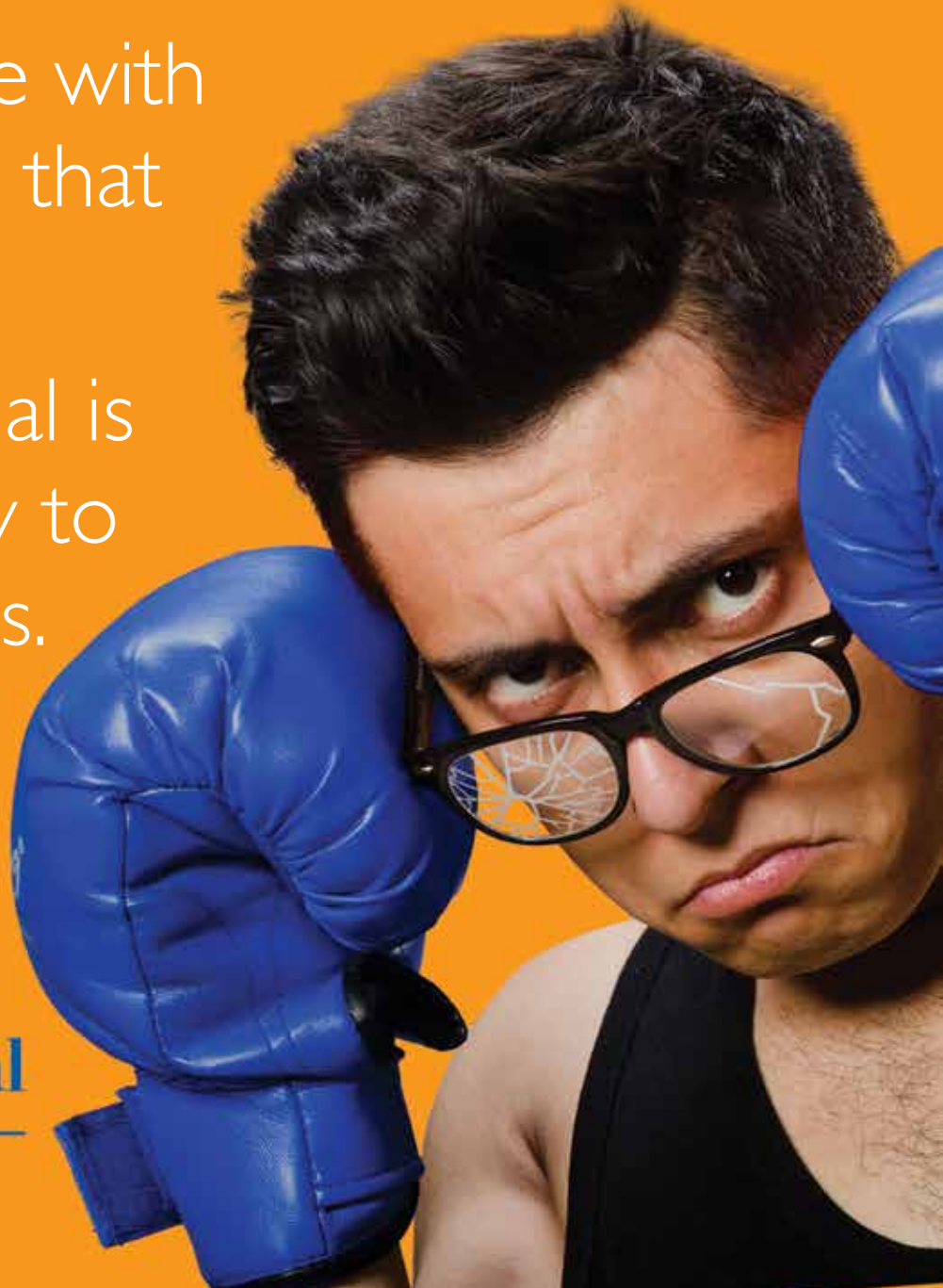
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