

THE THANAGRAM

Fall 2023

Official Publication of the Tennessee Funeral Directors Association, Inc.

President's Message

Mandi Goodrich



Hello TFDA Family and Friends,

It's Fall Ya'll! What a wonderful week of District Meetings. I had the honor of making my way across the state for the first time, and I just want to say Thank You to each District for having me and allowing me to serve as your TFDA President. It was so wonderful to see so many familiar faces, as well as meeting many new people across the state. I especially want to say Thank You to J.A. Bucy for his presentation at all three meetings. His guidance and knowledge of what is going on legislatively is invaluable to our association. Kraig with TN Donor Services was also in attendance at all three meetings. He is a great supporter of TFDA, and he encourages us all to always reach out with any questions or concerns that we may have. Our endorsed companies, Security National and Matthews Aurora were also on hand with new and great information for us. We have set the dates for the Spring Meetings, and I hope all that can, will be able to attend. We will meet in East TN, March 11th, West TN, March 12th and Middle TN on March 14th. Also, just a reminder, our 2024 TFDA Convention will be held June 9, 10 & 11 at the Marriott Convention Center in Franklin, TN. It's going to be a beachy good time, and we can't wait to see everyone there. It's an honor to serve as your TFDA President, and if I can ever be of assistance to you in any way, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Mandi Goodrich

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TFDA TENNESSEE FUNERAL DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION

The Tennessee Funeral Directors Association Board of Directors and Staff are here for you.





Our Mission:

To be the Tennessee Funeral Professional leadership advocate, through communication, education and legislation, thereby empowering the licensed funeral professional the ability to serve at the highest level.

1616 Church Street

Nashville, TN 37203

Phone (615) 321-8792

Email: office@tnfda.org

Web: www.tnfda.org



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2023–2024 TFDA Board of Directors



PRESIDENT

Mandi Goodrich
Williamson Memorial
Funeral Home and
Cremation Services
3009 Columbia Avenue
Franklin, TN 37064
Phone: (615) 794-2289
Email: mandi@williamsonmemorial.com



VICE PRESIDENT

Taylor Moore
Dyersburg Funeral Home
420 Highway 51 Bypass
Dyersburg, TN 38024
Phone 731-285-3021
Email: dyersburgfh@gmail.com



SECRETARY- TREASURER

Greg Rush
Jim Rush Funeral Home
220 Wildwood Avenue
Cleveland, TN 37311
Phone: 423-472-4555
Email: golfingfd@gmail.com



IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Brent McNealey
Brent McNealey
Walters Funeral Home, LLC
509 E Central Ave
Lafollette, TN 37766
Phone: 423-562-2424
Email: Brentmcnealey@bellsouth.net



DIRECTOR WEST

Terry McCreight
McCreight Funeral
Home
160 Hornbrook Street
Dyersburg, TN 38024
Phone: (731) 286-4810
Email: tmccreight2000@yahoo.com



DIRECTOR MIDDLE

Matt Sowell
Oakes & Nichols, Inc
P.O. Box 1015
Columbia, TN 38402
Phone: (931) 388-4711
Email: matthewsowell6@yahoo.com



DIRECTOR EAST

James Staton
Decatur Funeral Home
& Cremation Services
163 Arrants Avenue
P.O. Box 605
Decatur, TN 37322
Phone: 423-334-3661
Email: Decaturfuneralhome@gmail.com



NFDA AT-LARGE REPRESENTATIVE

Chris Christian
Christian Sells
Funeral Home
P.O. Box 775
Rogersville, TN 37857
Phone: 423-272-0555
Email: chris@christiansells.com



DIRECTOR WEST

Joseph Thomas
Shackelford Funeral
Directors
340B Monroe Avenue
Memphis, TN 38103
Phone: (731) 607-0549
Email: joseph.thomas@shackelfordfuneraldirectors.com



DIRECTOR MIDDLE

Jim Cortner
Moore-Cortner
Funeral Home
300 1st Avenue
North West
Winchester, TN 37398
Phone: (931) 967-2222
Email: jim@moorecortner.com



DIRECTOR EAST

Dennis Bridges
Bridges Funeral Home
5430 Rutledge Pike
Knoxville, TN 37924
Phone: (865) 523-4999
Email: dbridges@bridgesfuneralhome.com



NFDA AT-LARGE REPRESENTATIVE

Bobby Steven Spann
Spann Funeral Home
1961 Highway 48 North
Dickson, TN 37055
(615) 446-1123
Email: spann@guptoncollege.edu

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Bob Batson

Tennessee Funeral Director Association
1616 Church Street, Nashville, TN 37203
Phone: (615) 321-8792

Bob@tnfda.org

Office@tnfda.org

TFDA EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

Dawn Elliott

TFDA LOBBYIST

J.A. Bucy

CAPITOL & 5TH PUBLIC STRATEGIES
615-417-3826

TFSI Board of Directors



PRESIDENT

Daniel Ownby

Weaver Funeral Home
630 Locust Street
P.O. Box 324
Bristol, TN 37620
Phone (423) 968-2111
Fax (423) 968-5475
Weaverfh@aol.com

BOARD MEMBERS

Jack Farrar, CFSP

Farrar Funeral Homes
162 East Meeting Street
P.O. Box 1025
Dandridge, TN 37725
Phone (865) 397-2711
farrar3000@bellsouth.net

Tony W. Hysmith, CFSP

Shackelford Funeral Directors - Casey Chapel
P.O. Box 66
Henderson, TN 38340-0066
Phone (731) 989-2421
Fax (731) 989-9213
twysmith@bellsouth.net

Brad Ridgeway

Ridgeway Funeral Home
201 Dunlap Street
P.O. Box 788
Paris, TN 38242
Phone (731) 642-2121
Fax (731) 642-4833
Ridgewayfh@gmail.com

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Farrar & Bates, LLP
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J.A. "Jay" Bucy

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The Thanagram is an official Newsletter published by the Tennessee Funeral Directors Association. Individual written contributions and advertisements appearing in The Thanagram do not necessarily reflect either the opinion or the endorsement of the Tennessee Funeral Director's Association.

Improvements to VA's Casket and Urn Program for Unclaimed Remains of Veterans

Veterans Affairs (VA) has changed the Casket and Urn Program for unclaimed remains of Veterans from a reimbursement program to a flat-rate allowance program.

Effective Date: July 31, 2023

What the program does: Provides an allowance for the purchase of a casket or urn used to inter a deceased, unclaimed Veteran in a VA national cemetery or a VA-funded state or tribal Veterans cemetery if the Veteran died with no identifiable next of kin and insufficient resources to pay for a casket or urn.

Who this affects: Any funeral home, individual, agency or organization that pays for a casket or urn to support the dignified burial of an unclaimed Veteran in a VA national cemetery or VA-grant funded state or tribal Veterans cemetery.

Amount of allowance: VA will pay \$1,199.00 for a casket or \$138.00 for an urn that meets the required minimum specifications to ensure an unclaimed Veteran receives the dignified interment they earned and deserve.

Another key change: VA has eliminated the requirement for caskets to have a gasketed seal as part of the required minimum specifications.

Required Minimum Specifications

Caskets

- Standard Size (generally 82 X 28 inches or larger)
- Constructed of 20 Gauge or Thicker Metal
- Has Fixed Rails or Swing Arm Handles
- Is Not Leaking
- Holds the Weight of the Decedent's Remains

Urns

- Made of Durable Material
 - Plastic
 - Wood
 - Metal
 - Ceramic / Stone
 - Other
- Sealed and Not Leaking

To Request an Allowance:

Complete and sign Part I of the new VA Form 40-10088 (Request for Casket/Urn Allowance) found at <https://www.va.gov/vaforms/va/pdf/VA40-10088.pdf> and bring to the cemetery on the day of interment. Prior to the interment, have a cemetery official complete and sign Part II. Submit the form and any supporting documentation described in the instructions on the form by fax to 314-416-6340 or mail to Dept. of Veterans Affairs, Attention: NCA Finance Services, P.O. Box 141, Triangle, VA 22172.

VA will continue to accept the previous version of the VA Form 40-10088 (Request for Reimbursement of Casket/Urn). However, all requests for interments occurring on or after July 31, 2023, will be processed as requests for allowance.

Congratulations Chris Christian, National Funeral Directors Secretary



To all TFDA Members:

TFDA would like to thank you all for voting in the current race NFDA Secretary. Chris Christian, Christian-Sells Funeral Home in Rogersville, TN, won the election quite handily by getting over half of the nation's votes. TFDA members played a huge role in getting Chris elected and thank the voting members of Tennessee for creating the number one turnout in the nation! No other state came close.

TFDA is confident Chris will excel as a leader of our national association. We can also be assured Chris will always remember where he came from, and never take for granted the people who made this possible.

Thank you again for your efforts and validation in electing Chris Christian as the 2023-2024 NFDA Secretary!

Congratulations Chris Christian, for his victory of National Funeral Directors Association Secretary!



NEW MILITARY HONORS UPDATES

Please note that all requests require a minimum of 48 hours. Also, note that any request that falls on a weekend or following a holiday, needs to be submitted NLT 1000 prior to the weekend or holiday, especially if the holiday lands on a Monday following the weekend. We require as much time to prepare and plan to ensure that requests can be supported. If the request comes in after the cutoff time, there is a likelihood that it might not be supported due to services already scheduled. If we are unable to support the request, we will reach out to Fort Campbell KY (FTCKY), and the 81st Reserves. If they are unable to support the request, a memorial service will be offered and conducted by FTCKY. The NoK will need to coordinate that memorial service directly with FTCKY.

Funeral Honors (tn.gov)

<https://www.tn.gov/military/programs-benefits/military-family-programs/funeral-honors.html>

Contact Info (tn.gov)

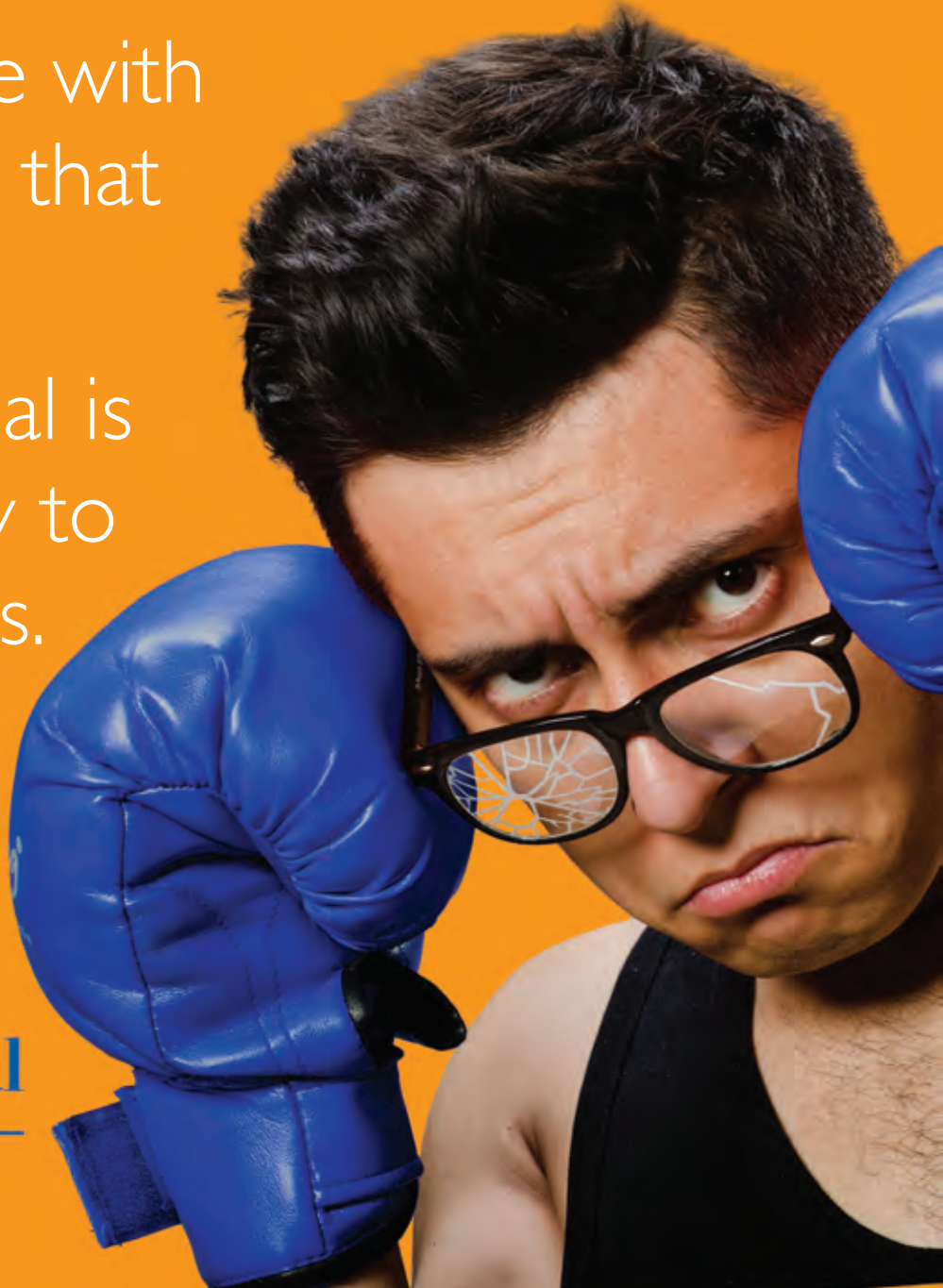
<https://www.tn.gov/military/contact-military-department.html>

TENNESSEE ARMY NATIONAL GUARD
FUNERAL HONORS REQUEST

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The Funeral Director
 LISTENS, HEARS & UNDERSTANDS
 Communicates softly,
a tear, a touch, a smile
 Senses the shock
 and knows the numbness of disbelief and denial
 Understands the intimacy of death
 and quietly responds to each mood and moment
 Knows the many faces of grief
 and helps the family members understand them
 Walks with families
 through the corridors of confusion and despair
 onto the pathway of acceptance and
serenity
 And through education,
 experience and personal compassion,
 is the one most dedicated to helping people
 during this time of pain and sorrow.
 Thus, with GENTLE STRENGTH
 and deep sensitivity,
 the Funeral Director serves our society.

~ Author Unknown



Make It Personal

At Batesville, we don't cut corners. We personalize them.
 Choose from Image medallions, LifeSymbols® designs and more.



Shown: Montgomery casket with Butterfly decorative panel and Image medallion.

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Vaughn Funeral Home Marks 90th Anniversary

This year marks the 90th Anniversary of Vaughn Funeral Home in Spring City.

In 1933, Eldon Vaughn partnered with local businessman Paul Lyons, naming the funeral home Vaughn and Lyons Funeral Home. In 1935, Alfred "Tink" Vaughn began working with them. A few years later, Paul Lyons was bought out by Eldon and Tink's cousin, John Vaughn, changing the name to Vaughn and Vaughn Funeral Home. In the late 1940's it was re-named to Vaughn Funeral Home.

Eldon, along with his brother Tink, operated the funeral home until Eldon's death in 1968. Tink and Mildred Vaughn operated the funeral home until 1986 when they retired and sold it to their daughter, Donna K. Vaughn. Mildred died in 1991 and Tink died in 1993.

Current Owner, Donna Vaughn, has been a Licensed Funeral Director in the State of Tennessee since 1974. She graduated from John A Gupton College in Nashville in June of 1975, and became a Licensed Embalmer later that year. She has been a beloved fixture in the Spring City and Rhea County communities with her dedicated and compassionate care to grieving families with services "as unique as the lives they lived". The staff members of Vaughn Funeral Home are caring and experienced professionals. From requests to traditions, it is their personal goal to ensure family needs are met during a most difficult time. Dean Perry (licensed funeral director/embalmer), C.J. Smith (funeral assistant), Katelyn Grant (apprentice funeral director/embalmer), Emily Jolley (secretary), with Norman Huskey, Lee Miller and Charles Shepherd (visitation members) all understanding the unique and personal needs of each family.

Vaughn Funeral Home is located at 150 New Lake Road, Spring City, TN, 37381, and can be reached by calling (423) 365-5221. For obituaries, call (423) 365-7013.



SAVE *the* DATE

Mandi Goodrich

TFDA President 2023 - 24

Invites you to the 2024 Tennessee Funeral Directors
Association 121st Annual Convention

*"Making Waves While Keeping Up
with the Change of the Tide"*

June 9, 10, 11, 2024

at the Franklin Marriott Cool Springs, 700 Cool Springs Blvd, Franklin, TN



PRENEED FUNERAL TRUST FUND

TFDA is pleased to announce the Tennessee Preneed Funeral Trust Fund is now operational. TFDA members now have a funding option when preneed opportunities arise, Investors Life for insurance funding, and TFDA Preneed Trust to fulfill trusting needs.

The Tennessee Preneed Funeral Trust Fund is a secure pooled trust comprised from TFDA member funeral establishments. Any TFDA member firm may participate in the Trust. Participation in the trust allows TFDA members the ability to deposit funds for an intended funeral beneficiary's preneed arrangement ensuring compliance with all preneed laws and regulations. Those funds earn competitive rates of interest and can be accessed quickly when a funeral becomes at-need.

The Tennessee Preneed Funeral Trust is a service available to all TFDA members in good standing, and:

- Meets all state and federal requirements.
- 2% Minimum Crediting Rate or market value whichever is greater.
- No Minimum Deposit Requirements, Age Restrictions or Chargebacks
- Online Quarterly Reports and Account Balances through Administrative Systems Inc. provides monthly preneed reports,
- Affords access to online account balance information, summary statements and monthly activity reports.

Tennessee Preneed Funeral Trust funds are pooled with many other accounts in secure investments earning the highest possible rate of return. The return earned over time will assist in offsetting rising costs should the price of the future funeral increase. One hundred percent of the principal and interest accrues to the benefit of the intended funeral recipient.

All Tennessee Preneed Funeral Trust accounts are fully portable, meaning you may transfer your account to another funeral home at any time. Some traditional saving accounts may close or become inaccessible at your time of death. Tennessee Preneed Funeral Trust accounts will be available immediately to apply toward or pay for final funeral expenses.

2024 STATEMENT OF DUES FOR TFDA MEMBERSHIP

OCTOBER 2023

The Tennessee Funeral Directors Association has emailed and posted on the TFDA website www.tnfda.org, a copy of the 2024 Statement of Dues for membership, along with the TFDA Benefits. Please watch your email or go the website and renew or become a TFDA member. Do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

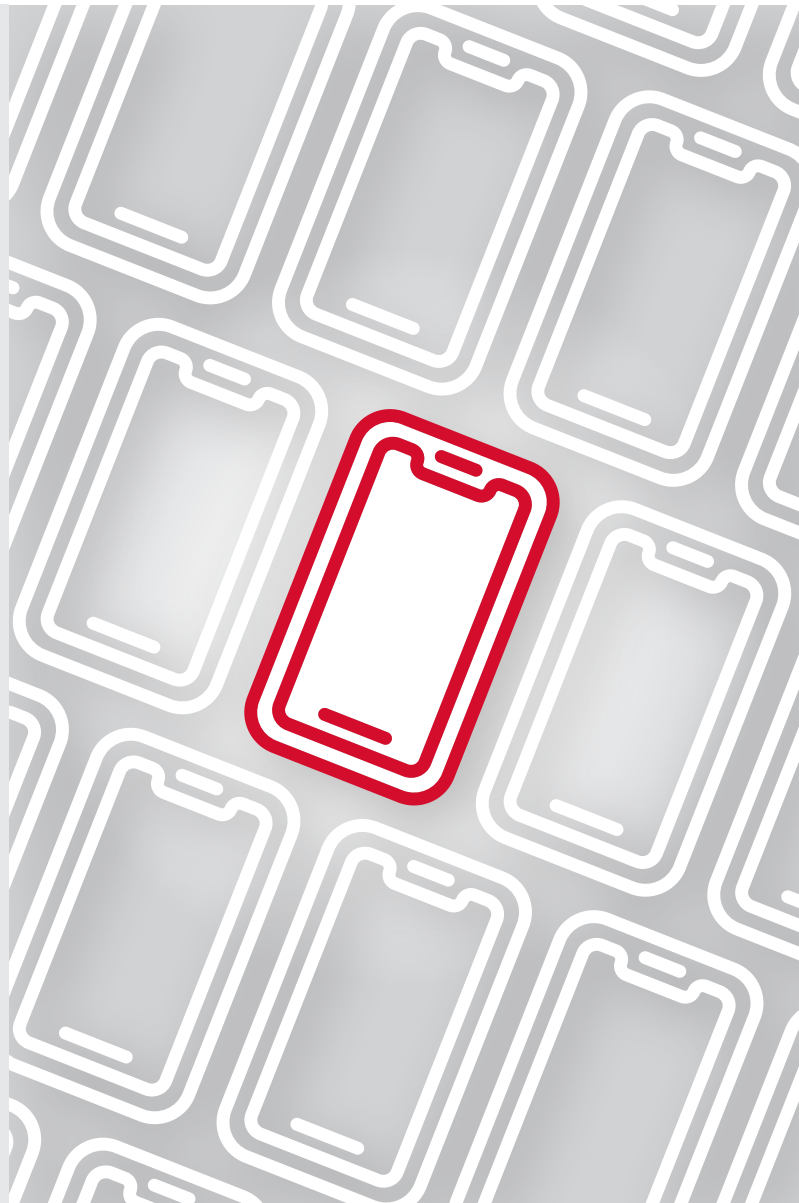


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What is the Matthews Aurora Difference?

As families' needs evolve, funeral technology needs to evolve with them. That's why Matthews Aurora is focused on creating solutions that make it easy for you to serve families in today's digital world. Our *Family Connections* technology enables your firm to help families make arrangements from anywhere. Our *Arranger* software offers a simple presentation system to educate families about all your service and merchandise options. And our Solution Center is your one-stop-shop for quick and easy online ordering, product customization, digital merchandising and much more. Contact us today for a demo and learn how our technology solutions can help you grow your business.



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Please contact us at 1.800.457.1111 to be connected with your Matthews Aurora Funeral Service Consultant.

Obituaries



Long time wife of Clyde Stephens, TFDA President 2004-2005
Mother of Pam Stephens, TFDA President 2013-2014
Grandmother of Mandi Goodrich, TFDA President 2023 – 24

Nellie J. Langley Stephens

March 11, 1939 — April 12, 2023

Bethesda Community

Nellie J. Langley Stephens, age 84 of the Bethesda Duplex Community passed away April 12, 2023. Nellie was a native of Williamson County, TN. She was a servant to so many. She and her husband were the original owners of Williamson Memorial Funeral Home, Williamson Memorial Gardens and Spring Hill Memorial Park, Funeral Home and Cremation Services. Nellie's role with the funeral home was to support all of the families alongside of her longtime husband Clyde Stephens. Both Nellie and Clyde are legends in the funeral industry. She was the one that was at all of the community

meetings and funeral conventions by supporting her husband and family. She loved to entertain and make sure the family home was always open to her children's friends and her grandchildren's friends. She was the Mama and Memaw that made sure her family had what they needed at all times. Her Nellie isms will be remembered forever. One in particular was "You are allowed one mistake a day, but if you make the same mistake twice then it becomes a choice". She and her husband loved to travel and enjoyed their motorhome, their Florida home, later their home on Normandy Lake, their precious memories at Tim's Ford Lake and Percy Priest Lake on Pier 7. So many friends experienced their gracious hospitality, their open arms to love and to take care of so many people. Her feisty personality and attitude will always be remembered. Nellie was an amazing person and will be sadly missed by all. She now can breathe freely and walks the streets of gold in Heaven. Well done, thy good and faithful servant. Preceded in death by the husband and man that she dedicated her life to, Clyde Stephens; parents, Albert Eugene and Lela E. Gardner Langley; brothers, Alvin "Pete" Langley, Thomas "Buck" Langley, sister, Thelma Jean Byrd; half-brothers, Tyree, Perry, Bill and William "Mum" Langley and half-sister, Polly Burt. Survived by daughter, Pam (Tim Kalthoff) Stephens; sons, David (Dawn) Stephens and Gary (Pam) Stephens; grandchildren, Matt (Paige) Martin, Mandi (Clarke) Goodrich, Casey (Cristy) Stephens, Chris Stephens, Marlee (Austin) Donoho; great grandchildren, Stirlin, Langley, Matti, Sam, Addy, Everett, Nolan and Wyatt; several nieces and nephews and other loving family members. WILLIAMSON MEMORIAL FUNERAL HOME, 615 794-2289 williamsonmemorial.com



Ms. Mosley is the mother of Mark Mosley co-owner of Edmaiston Mosley Funeral Home in Union City, TN

Ms. Glenda June Mosley, 82, of Hickman, Kentucky passed away 6:45 p.m. Sunday, April 30, 2023, at AHC Union City.

Edmaiston Mosley Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

June was born June 8, 1940, in Hickman, Kentucky, daughter of the late Porter and Lillie (Hodges) Gaddie. She worked as a nurse for 32 years at the former Fulton Hospital and Parkway Regional Hospital. She was a member of West Hickman Baptist Church. She was known as Nana to her grandchildren.

She is survived by one daughter, Cathy Kimbell (Danny) of Fulton, Kentucky; one son, Mark Mosley (Anna) of Union City; one sister, Jo Grissom of Hickman, Kentucky; seven grandchildren, Jason Brann (Kimberly) of Fulton, Kentucky, Jeremy Moreland (Brandee) of Union City, Tyler Mosley (Rachel) of Jackson, Shelby Mosley of Jackson, Kristen Rushing (Michael) of Murray, Kentucky, Emily Kimbell of Frankfort, Kentucky and Sam Kimbell (Krissy) of South Fulton; eight great grandchildren, Alaina Brann, Mia Moreland, Brody Moreland, Avery Moreland, Jaxen Moreland, JP Mosley, Madison Rushing, Delaney Kimbell, Madalyn Moore, Dylan

Roberts, Kenzie Curry, Kylie Curry and Chase Curry; nephews, Greg Grissom (Denise) of Cadiz, Kentucky and Lynn Grissom of Gilbertsville, Kentucky; best friend and cousin, Joy Kemp of Hickman, Kentucky and cousins, Tom Hodges of Hickman, Kentucky and Jenny Carol Hodges of Texas.

She was also preceded in death by one sister, Nadine Gaddie.

Allen Edmaiston, Edmaiston Mosley Funeral Home, 1200 South Miles Avenue, Union City, Tn. 38261
731-885-1033



VAN BECK, Todd Wesley. Passed away on Tuesday, May 23, 2023. Beloved father of Thomas Van Beck. Loving son of the late Thomas Anthony "Tony" and Norma Jean (nee Feekin) Van Beck. Dear brother of Scott (Sarah) Van Beck; and uncle of Wesley, Helen, Sam and Neil Van Beck.

Todd was a person who had a half-century love affair with both funeral and cemetery service. He willingly admitted that he was, "no expert!", but also quickly admitted that there was nothing about this work and life that he did not enjoy, and have intense interest in. Todd had said: "have never done a day's work in my life, it has all been fun and interesting."

Todd earned his Professional Diploma in Mortuary Science in 1973 from the New England Institute of Funeral Service Arts and Sciences (MA), his Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and Psychology from Mount Mercy University (IA), and his Master of Arts in Religion from Athenaeum of Ohio (Mount Saint Mary's Seminary). In 2005, he was awarded the Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters Degree from Commonwealth Institute of Funeral Service, (Houston, TX). Todd held several certifications and licensures, including the Certified Funeral Service Practitioner (CFSP), Certified Funeral Executive (CFE), and licensure in several states.

Prior to his employment as Program Director at Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science (CCMS), Todd served as Faculty/Director of Continuing Education at John A. Gupton College (TN); General Manager of Forest Hill Funeral Homes & Memorial Parks (TN); Director of Family Funeral Care and Public Relations at A.S. Turner & Sons Funeral Home (GA); President and CEO of the Commonwealth Institute of Funeral Service (TX); and Director of Education for the Loewen Group, Inc. (OH). His academic career began at CCMS in 1982.

Todd was an active writer and speaker internationally for many decades covering most every topic that is relevant to our profession. He authored 8 books and over 400 articles on death care topics. A historian and academician, Mr. Van Beck grew up in Southwestern Iowa and declared at the young age of 5 years old that he would become a funeral director when he grew up. As he often said, he was still growing up, still learning, still trying to make some kind or worthy contribution to his beloved profession. Todd operated funeral homes, cemeteries, and mortuary colleges during his career. Todd selflessly served the death care profession in many arenas across the nation and internationally, which satisfied his desire to see the world. He was thrilled and humbled to return to CCMS where he planned to continue his mission until retirement.



A former member of our staff and member of TFDA, Willard Hayes, passed away on Saturday. He worked for Hunt Funeral Home and later Shelton-Hunt Funeral Home in Humboldt, TN from 1949 until 2020. The following is his obituary along with service times.

Robert Willard Hayes

Humboldt, TN

Mr. Hayes, a long time member of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Humboldt, TN, passed away on Sunday May 21, 2023 at NHC Health Care at Milan, TN.

Mr. Hayes was a funeral assistant at Hunt Funeral Home and later with Shelton-Hunt Funeral Home in Humboldt, TN for over 70 years retiring at age 91. He also was employed with Gibson Co. EMS as an EMT for 18 years.

Mr. Hayes enjoyed raising tomatoes and having a vegetable garden. Mr. also loved the West Tennessee Strawberry Festival Horse Show and helped with the show for 70 years.

Mr. Hayes was preceded in death by his wife of 68 years Marie (Stanford) Hayes; his parents Robby Alexander and Carrie

(Baker) Hayes; two sisters Maggie Gross and Jewell Brown; two brothers Edgar and Wyman Hayes.

Mr. Hayes is survived by a daughter, Jennifer Brandon and husband Jim of Humboldt, TN; a son, Robert Willard Hayes II of Humboldt; four grandchildren, Jeana and John Turnbow, Trey and Ashley Hayes, Caleb and Shelby Brandon and Meghan Dorrough; and four great grandchildren, Will and Matthew Turnbow, Sadie Hayes and Paxton Dorrough.



Jim Cortner, Moore-Cortner Funeral Home & TFDA Director Middle, Uncle John David "Dave" Cortner.

John David "Dave" Cortner passed away suddenly on Sunday, June 25, 2023. The youngest son of the late Clarence Cortner and Edna Prince Cortner, born on November 15, 1945. He is survived by wife, Jane; daughter, Yvette (Wade) McCallie of Tullahoma; sons, Alex Cortner of Roswell, GA and John Cortner of Tumwater, WA; brother, Bob (June) Cortner of Winchester; grandchildren, Maddie and Colin of Tullahoma; nephew, Jim (Holly) Cortner of Winchester and Jeremy (Emily) Donaldson of Huntsville, AL; brother-in-law, Murrel (Kim) Donaldson of Huntland. He was in the United States Navy for four years and his business career consisted of being a funeral director, banker and Nationwide Insurance agent. His true passion was flying, duck hunting, reading, and RVing. He will truly be missed by family and friends.

Moore-Cortner Funeral Home 300 1st Ave NW, Winchester, TN 37398, (931) 967-2222, www.moorecortner.com



Robert "Bob" Hart, age 69 of Newbern, TN passed away on Thursday, August 17, 2023 at his residence surrounded by his family and friends.

Robert was born on May 14, 1954 in Dyersburg, TN to the late Robert and Helen Thrasher Hart. He retired from Dyersburg Funeral Home as a funeral director after 40 plus years of service to the families of Dyer, Lake and surrounding counties. Robert had previously worked as a Funeral Director at Curry Funeral Home for many years. He was honored to serve as an Alderman for the city of Newbern for over 24 years. Robert was a member and served on many committees over the years including the membership & education committees of TFDA, the Aircraft Owners & Pilots Association and the Experimental Aircraft Association. He at-

tended the University of Tennessee at Martin and Middle Tennessee State University Aerospace Program. He loved to fly and was proud to be a licensed private pilot since 1974. Robert was a member and attended West Dyersburg Church of Christ.

Survivors include his wife of 46 years, Demetris Miller Hart of Newbern, TN; one son, Jeff Hart (Keri) of Newbern, TN; one daughter, Jennifer Hart Holder (Darrin) of Clinton, KY; one brother, Dickie Hart of Dresden, TN; and four grandchildren, Makayla Grace Hart, Landon Heath Holder, Rylee Claire Hart and Miller Aaron Holder. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his sister, Carol Ferrell.

The family request that memorials be directed in his honor to St. Jude Research Hospital or West Dyersburg Church of Christ.



Mr. Billy Clark McKinney, father of Clark McKinney, Ligon & Bobo Funeral Home, Lebanon, TN

Mr. McKinney, age 76 of the Elmwood Community passed away Tuesday, September 5, 2023, at St. Thomas West Hospital in Nashville.

Born July 10, 1947, in the old McFarland Hospital in Lebanon, he was the only child of the late Walter James "Jim" and Pauline Vaden McKinney. He was saved in 1960 during a revival meeting at Caney Fork Missionary Baptist Church. He was baptized in the waters of Peyton's Creek into the fellowship of New Salem Missionary Baptist Church by the late Eld. Kenneth Gibbs. He overcame polio as a child and a very serious car accident in 1969. He made the Nashville papers

at five years old while a polio patient at Vanderbilt he was presented a king size all day sucker by then Isaac Litton High School Tackle John Gordy. He often laughed at the photo of him in only his underwear and leg brace.

He attended Carthage Elementary School and was a 1966 graduate of Smith County High School. An outdoorsman, when he was a young man, he enjoyed hunting and fishing and became an avid golfer. He enjoyed politics and the occasional argument with his friends. He enjoyed catching up on all the latest news at the Hardees Roundtable. He was a member of the Smith County Board of Education representing District 8 during the 1980's. He worked for the Tennessee Department of Transportation for over 31 years before retiring. He then went to work with his lifelong friend Steve Armistead, Wilson County Road Superintendent. His job with the Wilson County Road Commission would last for nineteen years before his final retirement due to multiple back surgeries.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his grandparents, Walter and Alma Clark McKinney and Merideth T. and Virginia Dickens Vaden; father and mother-in-law, Hilary and Edna Massey Hesson; and sisters in law, Nancy (Frank) Fowler and Paulette (Mack) Metcalf.

He is survived by his wife of over fifty-three years, Judy Hesson McKinney; and son, Walter Clark McKinney; several cousins, nieces, and nephews.

Memorials may be made to New Salem Missionary Baptist Church or to the Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt.

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Holly Cortner, (Jim) Moore-Cortner Funeral Home, Winchester, Grandmother, Martha Holly Parkes, Death Notice

Martha Holly Parkes, age 93 of Fayetteville, passed away on Saturday, September 16, 2023, at Lincoln County Medical Center. A native of Lincoln County, she was born on May 24, 1930, in Fayetteville to the late Jim Bell and Lula (Anderson) Holly. She had previously worked for NASA at the arsenal in Huntsville but had been a dedicated homemaker for many years. A devoted Christian, Martha loved the Lord. In her spare time, she enjoyed reading and listening to music. But most of all, she enjoyed spending time with her beloved family and cherished the time spent with them, especially at family events and holiday gatherings. Her family will remember her beautiful soul, contagious smile, and sassy nature. Known as "Nannaw," she truly was a wonderful wife, mother, and grandmother. In addition to her parents, she was

preceded in death by her infant son, James Phillip Parkes Jr. Martha is survived by her loving husband of seventy-three years, James "Skippy" Phillip Parkes; daughter, Rebecca Parkes (Bill) Pyron of Christiana and Sebring, Florida; granddaughters, Holly (Jim) Cortner of Winchester, and Erin (Heath) Patterson of Christiana; great-grandsons, Robert (Emily) Cortner of Winchester, and William Patterson of Christiana; and several nieces and nephews. Moore-Cortner Funeral Home, 300 First Ave NW, Winchester, TN 37398, (931)-967-2222, www.moorecortner.com.

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FUNERAL SERVICE EDUCATION: “WHAT HASN’T BEEN SAID?”

BY: TODD W. VAN BECK

In honor of Todd Van Beck

What does a person say concerning the subject of funeral service education that has not been said already? I know in my own career countless articles, meetings, conferences, and efforts have been made in a big way to describe, to analyze, to assess, to argue, to praise, to criticize, and to evaluate this intensely important subject.

In fact I have concluded that funeral service education has been hashed over, then re-hashed, and then hashed over again about the re-hashing. So what should we center on in this article?

Possibly a commentary should be made concerning the ever increasing number of mortuary science programs in the United States. However, I remember very well that way back in the early 1980’s David Fitz Simmons, who at the time was the President of the Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science, published a great article entitled “The Proliferation of Mortuary Programs in the United States.” His conclusion way back then was that there were too many mortuary science programs – when he wrote this article there were less than 25 programs, today there are over 55 programs. I personally still agree with David’s observation 30 plus years later; there are too many programs.

Everybody appears to know that there are too many schools, but as with many aspects of mortuary education, a solution concerning this particular issue seems out of our grasp. However on the plus side, all schools must pass a rigorous accreditation process so who am I to question the validity of that process which results in having so many mortuary science programs? I will leave that one alone.

Possibly I ought to address the interesting topic of the mortuary science curriculum. Many people have harsh things to say about the seemingly lopsided subject matter, the relevancy of certain courses to the reality of 2016 funeral service demands, and the myriad of licensing requirements that are in place in every state except Colorado

Ah, the sensitive subject of the mortuary science curriculum! Since time began I believe that mortuary science students have chanted over and over the same phrase, “Why do we have to know this stuff?” I know I asked this exact question when I was a mortuary science student back in the Middle Ages. Looking back the truth was I most often was asking this immature question about a course that I was having big trouble in, such as chemistry. In the courses I was doing great in, I never asked the “What do we have to know this stuff for?” never, not once!

Looking back at this, after more than four decades in funeral service I have concluded that it was easy and terribly immature on my part to ask the “why” relevance question when failure in a particular course is looming on my horizon. Asking that pesky “why” question and then getting immature reinforcements from my other college friends just made me feel a little more in control of an academic situation that was in truth spinning out of control. It was a pretty pale type of psychology, and it still happens to this very day. I passed chemistry but just by the hair on my chinny chin chin – more on this in a minute.

Now on second thought reading what I just wrote I think I will leave the mortuary science curriculum alone also. Not because I don’t have opinions about it, but really because I like mortuary science professors, no matter what subjects they teach, and I don’t want to unduly upset anybody in this article. The juice just doesn’t seem worth the squeeze.

OK here is an educational topic possibility to write on. I will write on the benefits of requiring a bachelor’s degree in all states as a minimum academic requirement for licensing. I will write on the benefits of creating a uniform licensing system that would eliminate reciprocity, endorsements and the hoops that are too often in place and have to be jumped through simply because a person wants to improve their stock in life and by chance the golden opportunity requires them to relocate to another state. No, I will leave this subject alone also. I am too old and too worn out to expect that anybody could accomplish the uniform licensing task, so I will let sleeping dogs lie.

Possibly the reader would be interested in reading some thoughts on the state of the world in funeral service apprenticeships? Would it be helpful to relay the challenges of young entry level people in funeral service who just might be confronted with a not too friendly work environment where the “boss” expects the new person to know way too much, know it way too fast, and then when the apprentice does not meet that ridiculous watermark, (that the “boss” could not have done either when they were 20 years old) becomes the object of scorn and ridicule. No, best leave that alone also, I have good friends who are sponsoring apprentices and they are trying their level best at doing a great job.

I have as you can see, for variety of good solid political reasons decided not to address the following educational topics in this article. 1. The number of mortuary science programs, 2. The mortuary science curriculum, 3. Enhanced academic requirements for licensure, 4. Uniform license, and 5. Apprenticeships/internships. I don't want to offend anyone and the harsh truth is I have written on these topics in the past and have gotten into trouble.

So what's left? I won't talk about having too many schools, I won't talk about the lopsided curriculum, and I won't talk about the state of the apprenticeships, so what's left?

I will leave the criticisms, opinions, and judgements of these avoided subjects to other individuals who are smarter, more insightful, more talented, and more articulate than I am.

I think, however, that I will write about a philosophy of education. Not immediate gratification education, not quick education, not vocational-technical education, not "will I actually use this stuff?" education, and not let's get out of here as fast as we can education, but I take the risk will write about a great honorable and noble subject: The Philosophy of Education.

There is a sentence from **Dr. Samuel Johnson** (1709 – 1784, Dr. Johnson was an English author who made lasting contributions to literatures as a poet, essayist, moralist, biographer, editor and literary critic) that points to a persistently important subject in all professional educational endeavors and one that I feel is particularly important for our beloved profession, funeral service: ***"Integrity without knowledge is weak and useless, knowledge without integrity is dangerous and dreadful."***

In contemporary funeral service education I often hear students speak of education as if it were an end in and of itself. I read and hear people debating in our contemporary times the question as to whether funeral service is a profession, a trade, a ministry, or a business?

A philosophy of education is in the end not concerned with proving or disproving anything concerning the sand traps of evidence that people get caught up in and addicted to concerning academic elitism, intellectual snobbery, or a general attitude of affectation of the self.

A philosophy of education instead is a process of living life and searchingly asking one specific question: "What is the aim of education?"

I believe very much that if those important people who are charged with and who have earned authentic funeral service influence would center their vision solely on the high level moral and non-political ideal of education simply for the sake of education, we would see some impressive and much needed changes and improvements. However, this sounds easier than it is. Education to what end, for what purpose, are always compelling questions and are very difficult to answer.

These are difficult questions to answer to be sure, but they are not impossible to answer.

Here is how one arrives at an answer about the philosophy of education as reflecting the worthy ideal of education simply for the sake of education.

I mentioned before that I did not like chemistry in Mortuary College. I didn't like anything about it and I really didn't like the chemistry professor in a big way! He was obnoxious, ego driven, rude, unreasonable, and he made me work like hell. The first day of class he looked at our entire class and announced in a loud aggressive voice that "When I finish with this class we will hold commencement in a telephone booth." Do you know many people can you get in a telephone booth?

I hated him.

Add to this annoying situation was the fact that all the student's sat back and complained and complained that nobody uses chemistry to embalm a body - nobody! The mortuary students in my class were devoted to the idea that the embalming chemical companies mixed the fluids and all we had to do was add water.

This was NOT a philosophy of education.

This was just a bunch of young funeral professional wannabes who were immature, insecure, who were just possibly going into the wrong profession, and who certainly had horrible attitudes toward the very purpose of their even being in the Mortuary College program in the first place!

And still against all these wacky student protests and odds our dedicated but annoying chemistry professor kept pounding away at us week after week, and the more he pounded the more I hated him.

Of course the glaring problem was that TVB was too young and too stupid to even remotely understand what a philosophy of education even was! I missed totally what the chemistry professor was trying to do.

However, when I earned my highest mark on the National Board in chemistry a miraculous thing happened to me, I had a sudden and utterly fickle change of heart, I now was in love with the chemistry professor – it was psycho I

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know but that is what happened. After doing really well on the National Board I felt great appreciation to my chemistry professor, I even had a fleeting mature moment where I actually went up to him and thanked him, and I began to have the sneaky suspicion that he just might have known what he was doing.

Looking back, my old chemistry professor at the New England Institute of Anatomy, Sanitary Science, Embalming and Funeral Directing truly possessed a very effective philosophy of education. He had it, I didn't! He lived by example the power and truth of education simply for the sake of education – period! No argument, no debate, just educational action!

The marvelous consequences of any human being implementing future academic decisions based first and foremost on a true, solid, and authentic philosophy of education is that it works!

Here is how it works, it is simple.

OK I admit it, I don't use chemistry theory to embalm with, per se. I don't actually use anatomy theory to raise vessels. The truth is I have forgotten all the linear and anatomical guide's in embalming theory decades ago. However, just because I have forgotten the written theory is not synonymous with being embalming or chemistry illiterate. Far from it!

Here is an example. When I watch a program with my father on the Discovery Channel and the program is about finding a cure for some dreaded disease because I was educated in chemistry theory at Mortuary College I can follow the contents of the program much better than my father can. My father would not know the atomic chart from a pipe organ.

Now my father is extremely bright, but he was never college educated in chemistry, not a day in his 90 years of life. Sure I don't use chemistry to actually embalm, per se, but I still calculate the HCHO demand, and overall I do use chemistry every day of my life. Because of my education in Mortuary College in chemistry I do know something, I have some level of knowledge, about what is going on in a great big world that is made up of chemicals all over the place.

So my friends in funeral service the ideal end of the philosophy of education for just the unblemished sake of education is, of course, to increase knowledge and skill over a lifetime, to increase competence and understanding over a lifetime, and to increase character and integrity over a life time. These ideals about life are not things we are born with, they are developed, and if a philosophy of education is anything it revolves around human development, and the experience at Mortuary College, mirrors this reality.

Education is a powerful tool for good and for bad. I have worked with students whose life experiences, their life education, taught them to deceive and take the easiest way out. I have seen students in my career who had great talent and intelligence, but their life education taught them the lessons of deviousness and destructiveness even unto themselves.

Education is surely not a substitute for morality, but in teaching and attempting to communicate with students, I have found that moral, ethical and – yes – even spiritual elements must be added to give philosophical character and balance to their lives. These are elements that go immediately to the bottom line in their abilities to function in the “real” world (whatever that is these days) as caring, concerned and compassionate funeral professionals. This is not easy, particularly in the cynical and complicated period in which we live, but it is a worthy ideal which is worth discussion and holding onto as a vision of the future.

“The end of education,” said President Nathan Pusey of Harvard University, “is to see men and women made whole, both in competence and in conscience. For to create the power of competence without creating a corresponding direction to guide the use of that power is bad education. Furthermore, competence will finally disintegrate apart from conscience.” I personally believe that mortuary science education truly accomplishes this, even though the frenzied focus, temporarily for most students, is on performance on a major life changing examination.

The examination is vital, but it is a learner's permit. The license is vital, but it is a learner's permit. What I learned from my obnoxious chemistry professor in Boston forty-seven years ago has been a part of my life ever since; I am way beyond the learner's permit stage.

In the end my annoying and weird chemistry professor was right and I was wrong. His philosophy of education and his dedication to his philosophical ideal of education for the sake of education helped create in little old immature and dysfunctional me a career that is now well on its way to the half-century mark. I was smart enough to thank him, he is now dead, but I am still beholding to him – always will be. Beholding is a humble feeling that feels good and helps people grow up.

So my friends in funeral service let's return to our beginning questions I asked a moment ago that at that time I didn't have the guts to confront. I will try now to be a little more courageous.

Based on all this educational idealism, what then could be some answers to the questions I poised in the beginning? Well, being grounded in the philosophy of education for the sake of education the potential answers become simple, evident and relevant for 2016. Let's give it a try to arrive at our answers through the filter of the philosophy of education as was presented in this humble attempt at writing. Ready? Let's go!

- Too many mortuary schools? You bet there are, so select the best, not the closest.
- Too much science in the curriculum? Nay, not true. Any science is good; learn it for the life-long enhancement of your brain.
- The bachelor's degree in funeral service? – It is ideally a good idea, it could be a great idea, a few states already | can attest to this truth, so let's do it.
- The apprenticeship/intern experience? Choose your mentors very carefully, and don't pick the one who promises you that you will own the funeral home someday. (That is supposed to be a joke, but possibly there is nothing funny about this statement in the least?)
- Is funeral service a profession? Of course it is. But then that is my personal opinion of which I believe strongly I can back up.

Even with education idealism, not all will be the way it could, should or would be. That is impossible. However, in 2016 the simple fact of life is that when funeral service or any other profession stagnates in the stale pool of education paralysis, then the world, our families, our consumers, and our communities quickly and permanently pass us by. I see this happening right now.

Let us, then as a true professional calling ground our educational decisions around the philosophy of education which centers its visionary decision on the philosophy of education simply for the sake of education. Let us abandon territories, egos, and personal agendas and educate simply for the sake of education. Let us continue to include, as difficult and as controversial as it can be, a moral and ethical content way beyond just what is needed to pass a board.

The long and rich history of our beloved profession has been a consistent effort waged by diligent and dedicated people to raise the level of funeral service to humanity in our work of ministry, of teaching and of learning. This is indeed a worthy ideal.



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Membership Development

Why??

Why do I want to be a member of an association of funeral directors?

Government Affairs

The Tennessee Funeral Directors Association is Tennessee's largest funeral organization for legislation that is introduced for the success of funeral service and to protect the consumer. It is also a watchdog for legislation that is introduced to protect.

Professional Website

TFDA now offers vital information for members all at the touch of a button. A TFDA membership entitles you to everything from government compliance forms to dues structures when you want it. This website is also designed to update you on the latest information concerning funeral services. Our website also offers members state approved forms for all your preneed requirements. Please visit us at www.tnfda.org.

Educational Opportunities

Continuing education credits are available throughout the year with various opportunities to achieve the credits required. In addition to CEU's, it is a time to learn from your colleagues.

Professional and Ethical Practices

Identifying that you are affiliated with an association that has a common goal for best practices of professionalism and ethical practices for families that we serve.

Professional Communication

Anytime events unfold in the funeral profession TFDA members are instantly informed. Information on breaking news, updates on coming events, or even the death of TFDA members through the TFDA obituary Eblast system are all immediately conveyed via broadcast email or fax from the TFDA office.

The Thanagram

The 5 issues a year TFDA magazine. The Thanagram is designed to keep you updated on the most current information in funeral service.

TFDA Annual Convention

The TFDA Annual Convention with exhibits is held in June of each year to advance the funeral profession through educational opportunities and recognizing both funeral and funeral supply providers. The exhibits are designed with state of the art information regarding funeral service. Tennessee's convention has been recognized nationally as one of the nations best.

District Meetings

Held twice annually in West, Middle, and East districts for the advancement of Association business. Each District Meeting also offers CEU approved educational seminars as well as networking opportunities.

Legal Advice

TFDA annually retains the law firm of Farrar and Bates, LLC, for any funeral related issue requiring legal consultation.

What has TFDA Done for Me?

TFDA has been in existence as an association of professionals for over 100 years. You don't stay in business that long without accomplishments beneficial to the survival of the profession. Most of these accomplishments, although subtle, make a huge impact on allowing funeral professionals the freedom to care for giving families with the least amount of outside interference.

There are too many achievements to list in such a short space; listed below are just a few of the most recent actions. TFDA sponsored legislation:

Reduction of legal liability — Funeral directors cannot be sued, criminally or civilly, when following instructions from someone acting as next of kin, with no reason to believe otherwise.

Majority of legal next of kin — Now cremation can be performed with the majority of next of kin, i.e., siblings, as opposed to every next of kin, with no legal backlash.

Disposition of unclaimed cremains — Funeral establishments are responsible for 180 days, and a standardized procedure of disposal, for unclaimed human cremains where before there was no time limit on possession.

Increase of Available Funds for Funeral Expenses — increased the amount from \$10,000 to \$15,000 that a bank may pay for funeral expenses when no executor or administrator qualifies, and from \$7500.00 to \$15000.00 for insurance claims with a copy of death certificate and funeral director statement.

Reinstatement Insurance Assignment to Funeral Establishment

At one time TN law prohibited the assignment of proceeds from a life insurance policy to any funeral establishment; TFDA was responsible for removing this prohibition.

Professional Educational Seminars

TFDA Education Committee annually provides TFDA members the opportunity of learning from nationally and internationally funeral professionals and providing additional continuing educational opportunities in more technical areas.

Leadership Opportunities

As a member of the Tennessee Funeral Directors Association, you are presented several opportunities to enhance your leadership abilities.

- * Committee Involvement
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- Guy V. Winstead, VP of Sales, Security National Life Insurance Company.

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- Exclusive C&J Financial funding rate

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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