

THE THANA GRAM

Summer 2024

Official Publication of the Tennessee Funeral Directors Association, Inc.

IN THIS ISSUE

Convention HIGHLIGHTS

President's Message

Greetings to all our TFDA members, vendors, and supporters. I wanted to take a few minutes to recap our recent convention and talk about our upcoming year.

First and foremost, I want to thank Past-President Mandi Goodrich for her leadership and service over the past year as well as our Board of Directors. I also want to thank her convention committee for their hard work in planning and carrying out a very successful gathering of funeral professionals. It was a great time of fellowship and networking, education and inspiration. It is my hope, whether it was your first or fortieth TFDA Convention, that you made connections and took home ideas or material to improve your service to families in your community.

As your 2024-2025 TFDA President, I'd like to introduce myself. I grew up in funeral service, mainly in an outside supporting role. During my college years, I got to work more in the service of families and operations of the funeral home. This led me to return to Dyersburg upon graduation for full-time work. After a few months, I enrolled in mortuary school to further my professional education. In 2002, I was granted my licenses as a funeral director & embalmer. Over the past 25 years, I, like all of you, have seen changes in business trends and demands, family preferences and dynamics and worked through whatever life brought along the way. What has remained the same is the care and support that families deserve in all the small things that we coordinate while working with them, along the way.

As a small-town operator, in a vast state, it can feel like you are a little isolated. What makes TFDA, in my mind, is the community we create and ability to connect with directors across the state. Over the next year, I want to promote and celebrate the theme of "TEAM TFDA". It is my belief that in any relationship that we share as funeral service providers, we are better together! I would ask each of you a question: "What does TFDA mean to YOU?" How can we foster community, bring in younger professionals, mutually interact with suppliers and continue to build on the 122-year history of our great association? If you have questions, suggestions or ideas of how we can do these, please reach out to our association or leadership. Let's make this a great year for TFDA!

Taylor P. Moore, 2024 – 25 TFDA President



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.

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2024 CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS

SUNDAY, JUNE 9TH, 2024

Jim Taylor began the convention with an Interfaith Service. We were so grateful to have Jim as the TFDA Convention Chaplain.

The seminars began at noon with Tiffany Gleeson presenting a preneed seminar sponsored by Park Lawn Corp. Joseph Thomas was up next as a motivational speaker exhibiting a comical presentation with an educational note. Valerie Wages presented a phone etiquette seminar and was sponsored by the Heritage Family Group.

Every seat at the memorial service was full. Joe Copolo and Scott Fowler sang uplifting songs to make the Memorial Service even more special.



Jim Taylor presented a portrait of Clyde Stephens (TFDA President 2004-05) to Pam Stephens (TFDA President 2013-14) & Mandi Goodrich (TFDA President 2023-24) honoring the three generations of TFDA Presidents.



The TFDA Business meeting brought in two special guests, State Rep. Sam Whitson and Franklin Alderman Brandy Blanton. The new TFDA Board of Directors were installed Taylor Moore, TFDA President; Greg Rush, TFDA Vice President; Matt Sowell, TFDA Secretary/Treasurer; Tom Creech, Middle Director; and Jenni Bryant, East Director.



Mike Keith spoke during the Joint Luncheon describing his lasting success from his beginnings in radio to becoming the "Voice of the Titans" and sharing some of the greatest plays in Titans history.

The exhibit hall opened after lunch and was well attended by all.

The weather was perfect for the outdoor dinner and auction Monday night. There were steel drums playing, and a DJ in the background, to set off a great night for the TFDA PAC Fund. Robbie Beal, the auctioneer, was quite the entertainer, keeping everyone's attention by providing many laughs. He did a wonderful job helping us raise money for the TFDA PAC Fund.

2024 TFDA SILENT AUCTION

Item	Donated by	Winner	Winning Bid
Beach Towel Picnic Basket	Clayton & Kimberly White	Pam Stephens	\$90
Ping Golf Putter	J. Bucy, TFDA Lobbyist	Ali Ridgeway	\$175
Relax Bathtime Basket	Yarbrough Mortuary Services	Isabella Cain	\$221
Wine Collectors Basket	Jim Cortner	Jeff Duffer	\$1,000
Yeti Backpack and Tumblers	Ridgeway Funeral Home	Jennifer Jeffers	\$425
Titleist Wedge & Goodies	Ridgeway Funeral Home	Jennifer Jeffers	\$225
Yeti Bucket, Bottle, & Ramblers	Dale Layne	Sharron Jeffers	\$260
Red Yeti Cooler	Shields Coach	Eric Carpenter	\$250
Garden Basket	Jeffers Mortuary	Justin Jeffers	\$100
Football Package - UT / Chattanooga Tickets	Pam Stephens & Tim Kalthoff	Taylor Moore	\$250
Tennessee Shine Co. - Basket #1	Farrar Funeral Homes	Meryl Spann	\$60
Tennessee Shine Co. - Basket #2	Farrar Funeral Homes	Meryl Spann	\$45
Childress Travel Basket	Oakes & Nichols Funeral Home	Terry McCreight	\$145
Game Night Basket	Karnes & Son	Garett Jeffers	\$200
Relax Tote & Basket	Ridgeway Funeral Home	Mattie Moore	\$240
Plasencia Toro Cigars	Homesteaders Ins.	Robbie Deal	\$125
Roll Tide Basket	Karnes & Son	Angie Ridgeway	\$75
Pet Care Basket	Directors Answering Service	Todd Yates	\$50
Yeti Wine Chiller	Precoa	Emily Layne	\$140
Craftsman 83pc Set	McCreight Funeral Home	Jack Farrar	\$125
Leather Portfolio	Don Lucas / Atlantic Coast Life	Taylor Moore	\$80
Greer's Country Ham / Cheese / Preserves	Williamson Memorial F H	Bob Childress	\$135
"Take Me to Napa" Basket	Jeffers Mortuary	Dale Layne	\$275
Case Knife	Ridgeway Funeral Home	Langley Marlin	\$130
"Summer in a Boat" Basket	Williamson Memorial F H	Todd Yates	\$100
Cherished Candles - 5 Personalized	Cherished Candles	Angie Ridgeway	\$115
Drink the Night Away	Karnes & Son	Sharron Jeffers	\$165
4 VIP Tickets to Havana Nights and Wine	A Vintage Affair	Terry Cain	\$150
4 Tickets to Grape Stomp and Wine	A Vintage Affair	Josh Long	\$150
Date Night Basket	Karnes & Son	Mattie Moore	\$80
Doggie Basket	Karnes & Son	Isabella Cain	\$100
Orange Yeti Cooler	Precoa	Jim Cortner	\$350
"A Day at the Beach"	Dyersburg F H	Susie Sowell	\$260
		SILENT AUTION TOTAL	\$6,291

2024 TFDA LIVE AUCTION

Item	Donated by	Winner	Winning Bid
Week in Paradise at Pinnacle Port	Jim Cortner	Fred Berry	\$3,000
		Jay Slatton	\$2,500
DeWalt Cordless Drill & Impact Driver w/ Batteries, Charger, Bag, and 110 piece Bit & Drill Set	Ridgeway Funeral Home	Taylor Moore	\$300
Vince Gill Signed Guitar	Williamson Memorial F H	Murray Moore	\$1,700
VG Signed Print	Williamson Memorial F H	Justin Jeffers	\$600
VG Lyrics	Williamson Memorial F H	Clayton White	\$1,500
Luke Bryan Signed Guitar	Williamson Memorial F H	Clayton White	\$600
Randy Travis Signed Guitar with Book	Terry Cain	Tiffany Gleeson	\$1,700
Tennessee Woods Rocker	Cripple Creek Casket Co	James Sutton	\$325
Tennessee Woods Glider	Cripple Creek Casket Co	Murray Moore	\$375
Bat	Cripple Creek Casket Co	Brent McNeeley	\$400
Tennessee Woods Table	Cripple Creek Casket Co	Jay Slatton	\$175
2 Homemade Pecan Pies	Rosemary Harrison	Pam Stephens	\$250
Vizio 70" UHD Television	The Wilbert Group	Pam Stephens	\$950
Matthews Casket	Matthews Casket	Tony Sowell	\$1,800
Batesville Casket	Jeffers Mortuary	Randy Nash	\$1,400
SouthernCraft Casket	Dale Layne	Brad Ridgeway	\$500
Casket Spray	Something Unique	Justin Jeffers	\$1,300
Urn Spray	Something Unique	Laura Farrar	\$700
Atlanta Braves Tickets	Homesteaders Insurance	Dale Layne	\$450
		LIVE AUCTION TOTAL	\$20,525
		GRAND TOTAL	\$26,816

THANK YOU to Karnes & Son Funeral Home who donated \$500 to put the PAC Fund over \$27,000!

Matt Smith’s embalming seminar had some dedicated embalmers in attendance.

We had a total of 51 exhibitors and approximately 500 in attendance with 114 TFDA Members and several non-members making it a very successful convention!

This year’s winner for the best decorated booth space is Something Unique!
They will win a free booth space for the 2025 TFDA Annual Convention.



Congratulations to the exhibitor and sponsor "Something Unique, Custom designer R. Michael Sims", the winner of the "2024 Best Decorated Booth Space"!



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TFDA Wall of Fame Induction June 2024

TFDA Wall of Fame honors Mr. Bob Cortner, Moore Cortner Funeral Home

Several years ago, we established a wall in our TFDA office where hangs the pictures of those who have served our association; pictures of those we honor who have exemplified what a true funeral director is; and pictures of some giants in our profession. Tonight, we add another honoree to that wall of distinction.

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As a teenager, our honoree told his father, “I think I’m interested in becoming a funeral director.” His father introduced him to a funeral director friend who answered many of the young man’s questions about funeral service, and needless to say, a great interest was sparked. Our honoree spent most of his summer vacations with his extended family in a beautiful town that is still his favorite place to be to this day. One afternoon while walking off the town square with some friends, he told them “I’d love to work in that beautiful white building as a funeral director one day.”

Back in his own home town, he finally got the courage to start his journey in the funeral business. In his best blue jeans and white t-shirt, he walked into the funeral home and asked for a part-time job. He figured by their reaction that he was not going to be getting a phone call when he got home, so he took the approach of, “I’ll just show up every day and help, and if the right situation comes up, I’ll be there ready.” It worked! After seven months of good “experience” from mowing the lawn to ambulance calls, he was presented his first check of \$10 and the great employee perk of moving into the upstairs of the funeral home to be right there ready for a call. This continued throughout high school. After that he moved on to mortuary school where he later graduated and officially became a licensed funeral director & embalmer.

Remember that “beautiful white building?” In the summer of the next year, the owner of that funeral home called our honoree and asked if he could come to the hospital for a bedside visit. Our honoree quickly headed to the hospital to meet with the unwell funeral director. The two men shared niceties for a short time before the older gentleman got to the point, saying “A lot of things have changed since we last spoke. My dad has passed away and I have had a heart attack, and the doctors are telling me that I will not be able to work anymore.”

The older funeral director asked our honoree what it would take for him to come to town. The young man said, “I’m not looking for a lot of money, but a good future.” He agreed to take a pay cut from \$60 to \$50 and that was his last conversation with the older gentleman, who soon passed away. By the next year our honoree’s funeral home was formed and continues today. Over the years it has seen additions of a Memorial Garden, two other funeral homes and a Memorial Park but it is still run today with the same mentality that started from the beginning, in that “white building off the town square”!

Our honoree has served TFDA as a Middle Director, a founding committee member of the TFDA Group Health Insurance Program, and a founding member, stockholder, and Board Member of the Independent Funeral Group. He has said many times he was never supposed to own a funeral home but gives credit to the good Lord, and the wonderful people of his beloved county, that are all family to him!

That bedside interview, and that beautiful white building brings us to where we are tonight. Jack Farrar says, “When I think of our honoree; he reminds me of the Energizer Bunny, he never runs down. He just keeps on going. Even with his experience and wisdom, he continually stays abreast of things going on in our industry.”

Albert Atchley says “Our honoree is a true professional funeral director. I have spent a lot of time with him over the years and I have a great deal of respect for him. One thing that stands out is that he personally makes the first call when he can. He feels that first contact is very important to the family.”



Bob Batson says “I have known our recipient for over thirty years; wise and accommodating come to mind when I think of him. I have never been around this man when he was anything other than pleasant and obliging. When talking to him I always feel somewhat envious. He has the unique ability to treat grieving families with old school respect, while operating his funeral homes as a modern-day business. I like to think of him as my friend.”

Steve Spann says of our honoree “I think of a gentle giant, a master undertaker, and one that lives and breathes his profession. He is a man that would help anyone, night or day, and expect nothing in return. I want to thank him and June for adopting Madison as a granddaughter while she is attending College in his area, taking her to lunch on Sunday after church and making her feel welcome.”

The TFSSC Honoree was Charlotte Williams. In her absence, her son received her award. The Sales Club also recognized Tim Kalthoff.

From the TFDA Office:

The State of Tennessee has changed their method of documenting who attends continuing education seminars. The sign-in sheet at the beginning of each seminar is the only documentation. There will no longer be any yellow slips to pick up at the end.

The TFDA Office would like to thank the 2024 Convention Committee for the wonderful job they did.

Greg Rush, Roger Balentine, Eric Carpenter, Brad Ridgeway, Binh Morris,

Rosemary Harrison, Marc Sims, Angela Sims, Michael Sims, and Michael Smith.

So many great comments were made about how smoothly the convention ran this year!

This convention could not have been a success without these hard-working people!

CONGRATULATIONS STEVE SPANN!

NFDA Secretary



Steve Spann, John A. Gupton College & Spann Funeral Home won the position of NFDA Secretary!

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

2025 TFDA 122nd Annual Convention

June 8 – 10, 2025

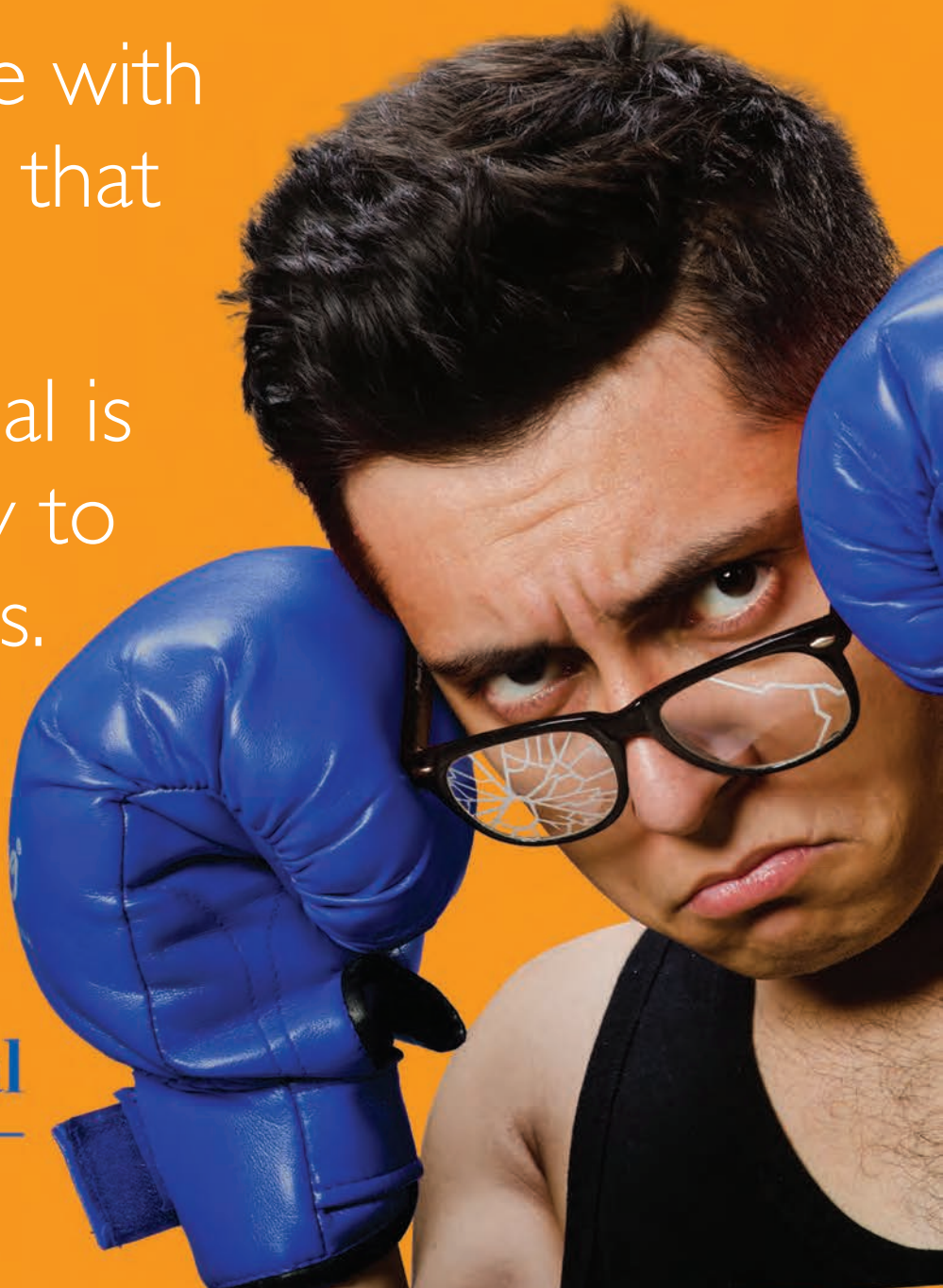
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2024 TFDA & TFSSC 121st Annual Convention

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OBITUARYSHARE.COM: THE DIGITAL CONNECTION

With the changing landscape of communication, social media has become the primary means for families to share news and information about the passing of their loved ones. The decline in the popularity of newsprint led to the birth of ObituaryShare.com, a revolutionary platform designed to help families honor their departed in a more effective and targeted way, especially through Facebook.

ObituaryShare operates by receiving obituaries through its portal, analyzing the content, and determining the most relevant audience for each obituary. The platform then actively targets and promotes the obituary to that specific audience, ensuring maximum visibility. Unlike traditional methods where viewers have to search for obituaries, ObituaryShare takes the proactive approach of sending the obituary to interested potential readers.

The success of ObituaryShare.com is evident in its exceptional engagement and click-through rates. While the average rate from Facebook to corresponding websites hovers between 1%-2%, ObituaryShare boasts an impressive **13%-15%**. Additionally, the platform encourages longer stays on funeral home websites, with an **average visit duration of 56 seconds** compared to the industry average of 42 seconds.

The platform's continual improvement is evidenced by incorporating user feedback and offering features like a text notification service. ObituaryShare's commitment to evolving with technology has garnered a significant increase in followers over the past three years.

Since implementing ObituaryShare.com, Arrington Funeral Directors has experienced remarkable growth, with website traffic more than doubling. Their **overall market share has increased by 8%**. ObituaryShare.com not only benefits families and communities by disseminating information effectively but also aids funeral homes in building their brand and expanding services.



**THE STRATEGIC PROMOTION
OF OBITUARIES
FOR YOUR FUNERAL HOME**



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Since implementing ObituaryShare.com, website traffic has more than doubled, and overall market share is up 8%.

Bob Arrington, Arrington Funeral Directors
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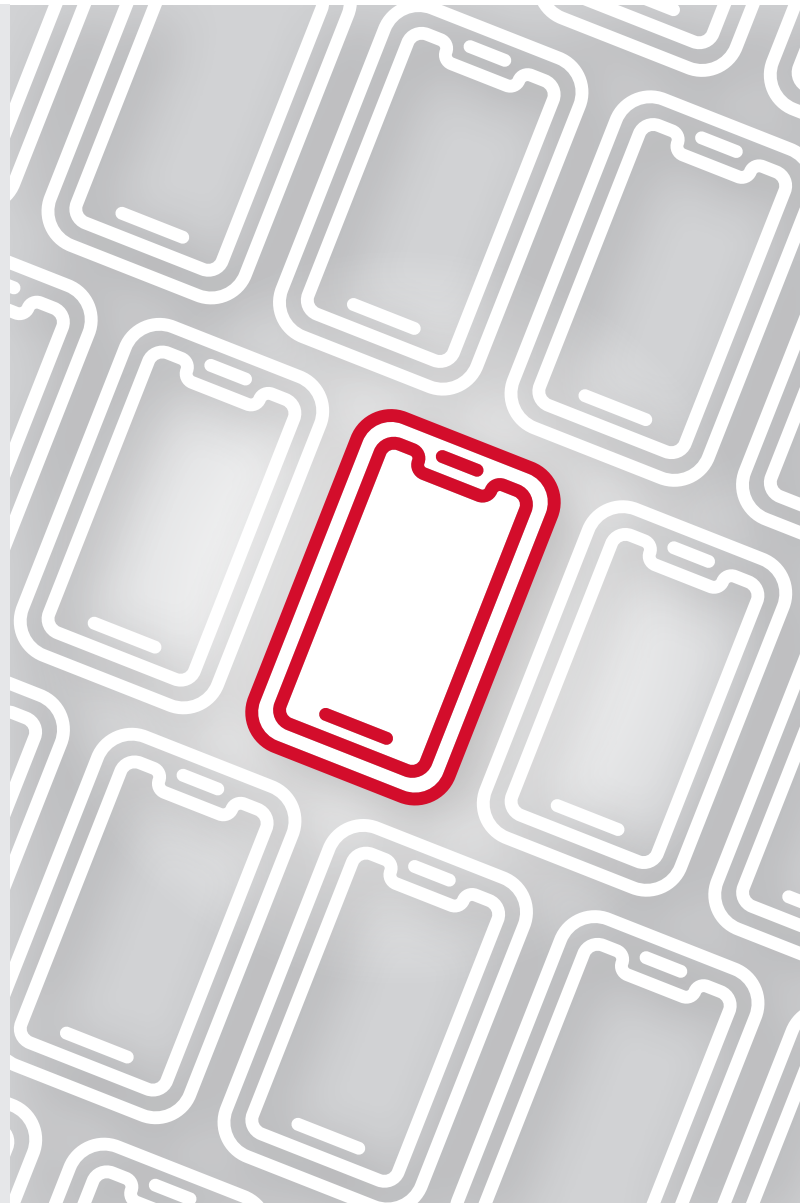


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What is the Matthews Aurora Difference?

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.



Discover Matthews Aurora Funeral Solutions.

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





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Funeral home transportation leader announces best-in-class extended warranty coverage program

Marietta, GA – Shields Professional Vehicles is proud to announce the launch of two innovative programs designed specifically for the expectations of funeral home owners nationwide: the Shields Advantage. Covering both new and pre-owned vehicles, these programs are crafted to provide unparalleled support and peace of mind for funeral home operators seeking reliable and prestigious transportation solutions.

“We are thrilled to introduce these comprehensive coverage programs, which represent our commitment to excellence and our dedication to our exceptional customer,” said Julie Shields, third-generation CEO of Shields Professional Vehicles. “With a more than 200-point inspection, we know each Shields Advantage vehicle will withstand the demands of our customers.”

The New Car Advantage Program offers an exceptional five years of unlimited mileage coverage, tailored specifically for new limousines, hearses, and first-call vans. This program ensures that vehicles meet the rigorous demands of funeral services and uphold the elegance and performance synonymous with the Shields brand. It includes 24/7 roadside assistance, comprehensive tire and wheel protection, and an environmental protection package to maintain the vehicle’s pristine condition. It further includes Dent and Ding as well as Windshield Damage Coverage.

For pre-owned models, the Certified Pre-Owned Program extends three years or 75,000 total odometer miles of coverage to meticulously inspected and certified pre-owned vehicles. This program guarantees that each vehicle delivers performance and reliability far past the date you purchase one. It encompasses detailed inspections, repairs, and certifications, providing funeral home owners with a cost-effective solution without compromising on quality or customer satisfaction.

“My grandfather started this company 55 years ago with one goal: to make sure every customer had support from our family long after the cars were delivered,” says Shields. “This tradition continues today with our industry-leading warranty program, and we can’t wait to see how it continues helping our customers serve their families.”

Shields Professional Vehicles invites all funeral home owners to explore our extensive and growing offering of qualified vehicles. Visit us online at myhearse.com to discover how our New Car Advantage and Certified Pre-Owned Programs can enhance the services you offer to your communities.



Security National Life Insurance Company Endorsed by the Tennessee Funeral Directors Association (TFDA) as Preferred Preneed Provider.

Security National Life Insurance Company is pleased to announce its new relationship with the Tennessee Funeral Directors Association. This endorsement aims to provide funeral professionals across Tennessee with access to Security National's preferred preneed insurance products and services.

"I'm excited about our endorsement opportunity with the great funeral professionals in Tennessee! We are equally as excited about the ability to partner with the TFDA to continue to provide unparalleled insurance funded prepaid funeral products and marketing support solutions to fit each potential funeral home's wants and needs."

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

The benefits of this new partnership include.

- Preneed products and services tailored for TFDA Membership
- Customized marketing solutions for partner funeral homes
- Exclusive C&J Financial funding rate

"C&J Financial is thrilled to partner with the TFDA as the endorsed supplier for insurance assignment funding. With Security National's pre-paid funeral products, with C&J's Quick Claim™ assignment funding and TFDA exclusive discount rates, this partnership provides the ultimate funding solutions for its members."

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

Security National Life Insurance Company is a market leader in preneed insurance products and services. We are a publicly traded company (NASDAQ: SNFCA) that provides strength and security for more profitable prepaid funerals. Our company has enjoyed impressive growth over the past few years and is ahead of last year's record-breaking sales. Let's share our success together. More information available at www.snlprenneed.com.

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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