A Quarterly Publication of the Southern Cemetery, Cremation & Funeral Association

# The Southerner

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE By Kyle Nikola

Savannah Family of Cemeteries, Savannah, GA

Life's short, be Southern. Southern Cernetery, Cremation and Funeral Association

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Hello All from beautiful Cannan Valley in Davis, West Virginia. This is my second time making it up to this beautiful destination for the West Virginia Cemetery and Funeral Association's Annual Convention and it is such a wonderful time. They have some great programs and traditions that remind me the value of sharing ideas to help continue to grow all of our region's state associations. I especially liked the recognition of

their members sales accomplishments from the previous year and the accompanying awards that were given out. It is a great program that I plan will bring to other association's throughout my travels.

I also had the pleasure to attend the Tri-State Convention in Orange Beach, Alabama and got to see some fantastic speakers while enjoying the beautiful beach! I had the pleasure to sit down and speak with such past Southern Presidents as Jimmy Tindol, Larry Chedotal, Ken Stephens, Harry Sharp and Shelly Holloway while in attendance and came up with some great ideas that we hope to share with our membership as a whole in the coming months.

Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to attend the Florida Cemetery Cremation and Funeral Association's meeting or the Cemetery Association of Tennessee's joint convention with the Kentucky Cemetery Association but heard great things about both from our members!

I look forward to our next Board of Directors Meeting in October to discuss some of the opportunities I have come across and to see the great venue we have picked out for our next gathering in Chattanooga, TN.

Warm regards,

Kyle

## **SALES** "An Inside Look at Sales from an Outside View" By Tamala Randolph

Stonemor Partners, Lyman, SC

Being asked to write this article was a little shocking at first. I have not "officially" been in the sales department in 10 years. However, I realized that statement is not true; we are all in "sales" every day. We "sell" just about everything, our opinions, our products and we ask people to buy into us constantly. So, while I was thinking about this article, I tried to look at sales in the big picture and asked myself what is the KEY component to sales. The answer that I came back to every time is Y-O-U!

In today's high tech world and availability of instant satisfaction, what are we doing as an industry to keep up? What sets you or your location apart? Why you? What gives you the right or the reason to ask for the "buy in"? Where are we getting our customer base from? Below you will find an outside view of the answers to some of these questions.

So let's be honest, heritage is not what it used to be. Families are not as neat and tidy as they were years ago, with the current divorce rate at 40-50% (<u>http://www.apa.org/topics/divorce/</u>) and subsequent remarriage divorce rates are even higher, there are additional children involved, and the family tree branches can scatter all over the map. On top of this, cremation rate are on the rise, in some parts of the country it is over 75%. Many people take this route because it is easier, so the question is where does this leave us? Where does my next customer come from?

The one thing that we continue to have in our favor is the fact that EVERYONE will need a form of our service one day. So with this in mind let's start at the beginning. You have just answered a first call: Now what?

First and foremost, **REMEMBER THIS IS A LOSS TO SOMEBODY**! In this industry we have a tendency to focus on the business aspect of this and not the personal aspect of this transition. Who are you servicing, the funeral home, the family, the deceased, or the community that their life has touched? The honest answer is all of the above. It is important that we remember that not only is the family suffering a loss but in turn this is our stage to show what we do and how we do it. In a nut shell the people at the service are looking at you and what you have to offer. This is the time that most people think about what loss would mean to their family. Are you putting your best foot forward? How long would it take to ask a simple question about the deceased? Making it personal? Yes, we have paperwork to complete and "boxes to check off", but are we using this paperwork as a tool or as a necessity? Why would I not want everyone that is willing to sign off on the burial? It gives me a form of contact.

Now that we have made our first impression and meet with the family, it is time that we do what we do best and service them. On the morning of the service, reach out to the funeral home to ensure that the time of arrival is still going to be as scheduled. Has anything come up with the family and they now need an additional podium? This is the perfect time to let them know that you will be the last person that speaks at the service. The funeral home's job is approximately 48 hours of service and we are the people that will service the family for a life time. The quick safety reminder that you give at the end of the service does a few different things: 1) People in attendance know who you are and not some stranger just hanging around. 2) Speak of the deceased by name, talk about the honor of servicing the family (by name), retell a memory that the family gave you, let them know that you are there for questions, give them something to "remember" the service by, and finally remove the doubt that it is all about a sale and not about the service. 3) Let all in attendance (the community in which you serve) know that you are there to serve, this is your lead pool, most are local and all have been touched by a loss. What are you doing to get the names and the contacts so they are prepared when they experience a loss in their own family?

Finally, and to me the most important, your service does not end at the grave. FOLLOW UP! Do not make a promise that you cannot keep, don't see the file as a "dead file", don't just move on to the next sale. You have opportunities in front of you. It is up to you with what you do with them. Are you looking at all angles? We all have a script to follow, the success comes from you and what makes you different! I attended a

#### **LEGISLATION** By Linda Mayle

Stonemor Partners, Mt. Clare, WV

Legislation and any bills being introduced should be of interest to each and every one of us in the industry regardless of where it is being introduced because what happens in one state today could more than likely have an effect on those of us in another state tomorrow. While not part of the SCCFA, Pennsylvania has a bill that has passed the Senate and still pending in the House Consumer Affairs Committee that if passed will harm consumers who are making funeral and cemetery arrangements by taking away their choices and will affect our industry by limiting preneed sales which will result in the loss of jobs in an economy that is already struggling.

Here in West Virginia, our Cemetery Association is fortunate to have a Legislative Liaison who is always at the State Capitol when the Legislature is in session and keeps the board of directors updated on anything that is being introduced as a bill that would affect our industry. He goes to battle for us when necessary to keep bills from being passed and becoming law or simply making sure the verbiage is appropriate when necessary.

Every year there are issues that arise across West Virginia in Legislative members districts where a family member has trouble either accessing a family cemetery or maintaining a family cemetery. Currently we have no law specifically outlining the do's and don'ts of a family cemetery.

**SALES** continued from Page 2

speech at the beginning of the year that really made a difference to me and the way that I look at our industry. The one thing that I hear in my head over and over again is "This was my only son, not a business transaction." When

asked he could not even recall the names of the people that had helped him at the cemetery, yet he could recall everything about the funeral director. WOW! What a powerful message. It is true that "Your customer does not care how much you know until they know how much you care" – Damon Richards.

We all know that there are things that are out of our control, flowers blowing out of the vase, grass not growing, too much rain and the grass is too high, the vendor messed up a marker, and the list goes on and on. With that being said I think the most important word in sales is "RESPONSIBILITY" not because it is all yours but because YOU have the ABILITY to RESPOND. What an amazing gift. How are you going to use it?

In closing, please remember that customer service is not a department; it is the culture of who you are. Do you service together? Does each department know and understand the personal experience of each family? Have you set the culture to serve or collect a paycheck? Again, buy in happens with Y-O-U from every experience you encounter, not just the outside families we serve but the families inside our walls as well. When you think of our motto "Life's short, be Southern" it rings true. Life is short. Are you showing everyone you come in contact with that "Southern Hospitality?"

"Friends are angels who lift us to our feet when our wings have trouble remembering how to fly"

## FUNERAL HOME

"What is You Opinion on Cremation?" By Larry Chedotal, Jr Natchez Trace Funeral Home & Cemetery, Madison, MS

It's coming to a funeral home near you. I have spoken to many funeral home operators and cemeterians in the south. The answer I continually hear are "the percentages are low here" or "there are not enough to worry about it". Well they are coming. At a recent convention I heard something that well, "blew my mind". It was that there will be more deaths in the next 20 years than in the previous 100. That is frankly amazing. They also suggested that the cremation rate among this group of people will go threw the roof. The traditional funeral call is projected to go down not up.

Based on this information I ask you this. Is it time to embrace the cremation consumer? I think so. Do I need to put a crematory in my funeral home or on my property? Well that's for you to decide. This is what we decided to do. We where doing 68 calls a year (18-20 cremation). Our 3rd party provider was going up on our charges, so we evaluated our expenses on this and came to this conclusion. We already had a place to put a retort. So we bought one and came to that based on this information.

Based on the charges the 3rd party was going to charge us we could pay a monthly payment on the unit based on our 18-20 cremations a year.

My manager and I were on a church service with the cremated remains of the deceased. While greeting guests walking in the wife asked "how do you know that is Jim in that urn". After gaining our composure and giving her the best answer we could we knew something had to change. This single event was probably the most significant reason we installed a crematory. We would be in complete control of the process. With all the negative cremation news like Noble, Georgia and right here in Jackson, Mississippi, we wanted that control. If you are in doubt ask Poul Lemasters his opinion on this.

We no longer had to travel across town to transport the deceased or pick up cremains from our third party. There are no third party providers that deliver or that are nearby our establishment. So we had to drive across town to pick up cremains putting where a tear on vehicles, burning fuel and wasting valuable time.

Here are the results of our decision. We had a 43% increase in call volume once we put in the crematory. Yes our cremation numbers have gone up significantly. We have also done more visitations with cremation following. We provide a rental casket at no charge to these families if they choose embalming with a viewing. As I explained to my dad, I was not just trying to save the 3rd. parties charges, I was going after the entire service charge on these consumers. In fact the year after we installed the crematory was the first year we made a real profit. I also wanted to become the cremation expert in the community.

Another miscalculated result was our cemetery. Numerous cremation funeral home customers have decided to place there loved ones cremains in our cemetery. We have sold more cremation related products in our cemetery since the crematory was placed than the previous 50 years combined.

I am not saying you need to go out and buy a crematory. What I am saying though is there is significant revenue to be made with the cremation families if you choose to look at it that way.

We make a *Living* by what we get.

We make a *Life* by what we give.



ARE YOU STILL RELEVANT TO TODAY'S CREMATION FAMILIES?

MAPLE GROVE CEMETERY . KEW GARDENS, NY

Matthews can position you for success in today's growing cremation market by giving cremation families the unique memorialization options they desire.

With unmatched craftsmanship and expertise, Matthews makes it simple to transform your space with a glassfront niche, available in bronze, aluminum and stainless steel. From consultation and design through installation and effective selling, we provide complete and sustaining support to deliver a strong ROI.

Contact Lisa Bijold for more information: 412-439-5980 • Ibijold@matw.com



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## BEST PRACTICES

**Exceeding Expectations** 

By Spencer Hines

Service Corporation International, Pensacola, FL

Communication is key when it comes to exceeding our customers' expectations. One best practice before the arrangement conference is to send an email to the family of items to remember. When we schedule the arrangement conference appointment with the family, we ask the family to think about how they would like their loved one remembered.

I've attached a sample letter that we send to our families:

In order to better serve you and your family, we have created a list of items to bring to our meeting that will help complete your arrangements and honor your loved one's memory and life.

For your loved one:

- Clothing (including undergarments) (if applicable)
- Shoes and socks or hosiery (if applicable)
- Eyeglasses and jewelry (these items may remain with your loved one or be removed and returned after the service) (if applicable)
- Dentures (if applicable)

To help with arrangements:

- A recent photograph
- A collection of valued photographs (20-40) for memorialization through printed materials and video tributes
- U.S. Armed Forces serial number and veteran's discharge papers (if applicable)
- Your loved one's Social Security number
- List of 6-8 pallbearers (if applicable)
- If applicable, cemetery arrangement information

To gather for newspaper notices/obituaries:

- Date of birth
- Place of birth (city, state/province)
- Education/work history (resume or professional bio if applicable)
- Mother's full name (including maiden name)
- Father's full name
- Name of place of worship or religious affiliation
- Place and date of marriage
- Organizations or memberships
- Special achievements



- List of those who recently predeceased your loved one

- Name(s) of surviving relatives and the cities in which they live (include daughters, sons, brothers, sisters, and number of grandchildren and great grandchildren)

When the family comes in to make arrangements, we can now focus on celebrating the life of their loved one like no other. The staff collaborates and shares ideas on how to make the celebration of life, unique and special. The morning of the celebration, the funeral director who met with the family, calls them to see if they have any questions about the celebration of life service before they arrive. After the service, the family receives a hand written thank you letter from the Funeral Director. In addition, the manager calls the family and has a meaningful conversation to ensure we exceeded their expectations. An aftercare appointment with the family has taken place within five days after the celebration of life service. It reiterates that we have a continuing relationship with that family we are honored to serve.



2016 CAT Installation of Officers

## SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT TESTIMONY

By Michael Higgs, Foundation Manager

Cave Hill Cemetery, Inc., Louisville, KY



#### Dear SCCFA Family,

Thank you very much for the opportunity that was afforded in providing a full scholarship to attend the ICCFA University in Memphis, TN. This is the third year that I have attended the University; and, it is always a tremendous experience. It is an unforgettable exercise of camaraderie building, communication enhancement, and the sharing of best practices and modes of operation to further enhance your professional abilities and further increase the profitability of your firm. Todd Van Beck provides the perfect overview as he often reminds us to know your 'acres of diamonds', hence, your business, and develop a strategy to make it successful. The university teaches you this strategy!

This year I chose to attend the J. Asher Neel College of Sales and Marketing. Under the leadership of Gary O'Sullivan, we carefully navigated the course of study, paying close attention to the necessity of creating an appropriate company culture, creating and utilizing an effective metric to gauge success and opportunities for improvement in the sales environment, and much more. As Gary O'Sullivan relayed, there are two very critical items that a company must soon realize before any measure of success can be noted. These are: **The firm must know WHY they do** 

what they do; secondly, organizations/sales never 'get better', but people do. Therefore, it is very important to make sure you are making the right investment to communicate the right message internally and externally.

Using this information as my guide, I can safely say that I am walking away from my experience this year even more prepared to tackle the challenges ahead of me. In my three years attending the University, I have been fortunate to study under the leadership of three distinctly different Deans. But, each of them was focused on the importance of making sure that you are driven internally to make a difference in your community. You simply must know what to do, how to do it, and most critically, understand why you are doing it. Without this knowledge, your purpose is seemingly lost.

The Professors and Deans have devoted a tremendous amount of time to make sure that the experience is worthwhile and the best educational opportunity in the industry. I look forward to graduating next year, and continuing to be involved with the University throughout my career in funeral service. Thank you, again, for providing this opportunity!

#### YOU TOO CAN BE THE NEXT RECIPIENT OF THE SCCFA SCHOLARSHIP TO THE

#### **ICCFA UNIVERSITY.**

All you need to do is fill out the enclosed Application and send it back to the SCCFA Office and you may be on your way to the July 2017 ICCFA University in Memphis, TN .

You can't win if you don't try.

## ICCFA SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY

The ICCFA University is a five-day program designed to offer intensive instruction and networking opportunities in a college-campus setting. It is located at the Fogelman Executive Conference Center at the University of Memphis, Memphis, TN offering six colleges and two graduate programs.

There are seven colleges to choose from:

- 1. 21<sup>st</sup> Century Services
- 2. Cremation Services
- 3. International Studies

- 5. Land Management & Grounds Operations
- 6. Leadership, Administration & Management
- 7. Sales & Marketing

4. Funeral Home Management

## SCCFA SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM — Please give out application on page 10 to all qualified employees

**THE GOAL:** The Scholarship covers all registration fees, housing and meals for the ICCFA University for the calendar year in which awarded. The ICCFAU will be held in July 2017.

#### THE RULES:

- 1. Applicant, or the firm with which the applicant is affiliated, must be a current member of SCCFA in good standing for the fiscal year.
- 2. Applicant must have been employed with a member firm in the cemetery, cremation or funeral industry for at least one year.
- 3. Only completed applications will be considered by the selection committee. Missing information on the Personal Data, Scholarship Questionnaire, or Certification of Intent form or failing to sign it will disqualify the applicant.
- 4. Alternates will be selected in the event that the scholarship recipient is unable to attend ICCFAU, or is no longer employed by the sponsoring member.
- 5. Applications must be received no later than March 1, 2017; SCCFA scholarship recipient will be notified no later than March 31, 2017.
- 6. Only the individual award recipient is eligible, and the award is nontransferable.
- 7. All award decisions of the SCCFA Scholarship Committee are final.
- 8. Award winner will be publicly announced in the June *Southerner* Newsletter.

**HOW TO APPLY:** Carefully read and complete the entire three part application.

A. Scholarship Questionnaire B. Personal Data Form C. Certification of Intent

After completing the application, please review, sign it and return to: SCCFA Scholarship Committee, 69057 Taverny Court, Madisonville, LA 70447.

#### **SCCFA 2017 SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION**

#### A. Scholarship Questionnaire

- B. Submit all answers on a separate sheet of paper. Answers must be typed and double spaced. Identify each question below by number, and repeat the question prior to answering.
  - 1. Why did you enter the cemetery or funeral industry?
  - 2. Describe the duties and responsibilities of your current position.

3. List any community service or professional associations in which you are currently active and explain your participation.

- 4. What continuing education courses have you taken in the past year?
- 5. Describe your philosophy of customer service.
- 6. What are your long-range professional goals?

D. Tersonal Data				
Name:	Home phone# ()			
Home Address:				
Member Firm:				
Address:				
Firm telephone #()	Firm Fax # ()			
Current Position	Title			
Length of employment E-Mail ad	ddress			
Previous Employment:				
Employer	Telephone ()			
Address				
Length of time employed	Position			
Employer	Telephone ()			
Address				
Length of time employed	Position			
Education (include current courses of study if applicable):				
School	Location			
Course of Study				
School				
Course of Study	Completion Date			
School	Location			
Course of Study	Completion Date			
C. Certification of Intent				
Name (Please Print)				
I hereby certify that:				
A. This Southern Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral As myself, and to the best of my knowledge, the informati	sociation Scholarship application has been personally completed by on contained herein is correct and complete.			
	If awarded the 2017 SCCFA Scholarship I am able to attend the ICCFA University program in July at the Fogelma Conference Center at the University of Memphis, Memphis, TN and I am still employed by the sponsoring member firm o that date, or I will forfeit the scholarship.			
SIGNATURE				

ISSUE 49

## ARE YOU GOING TO THE CONVENTION?

By Bob Case – SCCFA President-Elect, Holly Hill Memorial Park- Thomasville, NC

A typical conversation overheard every spring...

"You going?"

"Where's that?"

"The Convention, the Southern."

"Anything happening there this year?"

AND THAT IS WHEN THE DECISION IS MADE BY TOO MANY PEOPLE!

#### Charleston, SC 2016 SCCFA – WOW! A homerun, a powerful, dynamic, better than ever!

Chattanooga, TN June 25-27, 2017 SCCFA – You're going to experience even more WOW and education, knowledge, excitement, fun, energy and involvement that will make lasting memories. You, your family, kids and grandkids will have the opportunity to enjoy like never before. Lookout Mountain, Creative Discovery Museum, Lake Winnepesaukah, Ruby Falls, the Tennessee Aquarium, the Chattanooga Riverboat, the Chattanooga Brew-Choo Tour, Raccoon Mountain Caverns Go-Karts, The Escape Experience, the Farmers Market, Minor League Baseball, Tennessee River Kayaking and more.

Your SCCFA Board of Directors, along with the Executive Committee, is committed to bringing you more of what you want, need and continue to request; training, education, practical knowledge, dynamic engagement with people in-the-know.

President Kyle Nikola, Executive Mary Perl and your entire Southern leadership team will provide you with a wonderful experience that will be long remembered. You'll take home practical knowledge that will make your firm more productive.

In the past two years we have generated more than \$5,500 in scholarship monies. Guess what, we've also given away more than \$5,500 in prize money through the 50/50 Scholarship Fund ticket sales. We expect to do even more for the Fund and you in Chattanooga in 2017. Today's business operations can feel like walking through a maze, but you don't have to feel lost. Make your plans now to attend and learn and have fun. Dynamic speakers, educators, trainers and leaders await your arrival.

Then, the family dinner where even more memories are made will bring us to a grand finale. Make your plans now. Make this a family event. Plan on coming early a couple of day early and staying a few days later... you'll be glad you did.

Don't wait until next Spring to make your decision. Get your ticket for The Chattanooga Choo-Choo because we're going on a fun-filled adventure "Lookout to the Future." Be there or be square,

Bob Case (I'll be there at your service)

It's never too soon to make your final decision.

Make your plans to attend the 2017 SCCFA Convention in Chattanooga, TN



### **SCCFA LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD QUALIFICATIONS**

To be considered a Lifetime Achievement Candidate, One Must:

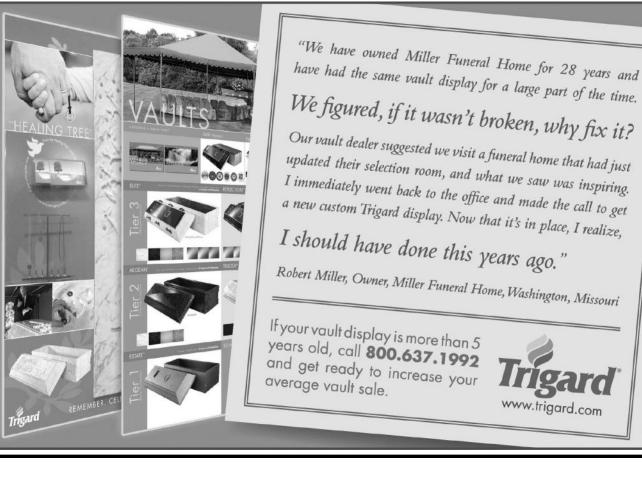
- •Have been in the Death Care Industry at least 25 years.
- •Have been an active member of the Southern during these 25 years, along with making a measurable contribution to the Southern organization and the Funeral Industry in general.
- •Have been active in the Community where they live or have lived.
- •Have been well respected by his or her peers.

**Election Process:** 

Any current dues paying member can submit a candidate's name and address, along with a description of the qualifications you feel make this candidate worthy of this honor, to the Ethics and Inquiry Committee. This Committee is made up of the Immediate Past President and the current three Board Past Presidents. Recommendations can be mailed to the SCCFA office, 69057 Taverny Court, Madisonville, LA 70447 / email address: sccfa@bellsouth.net.

They must be received no later than December 31st to be considered for the 2017 year's award. The Ethics and Inquiry Committee will then review the candidate's qualifications and make a recommendation to the SCCFA Board of Directors. If no qualified nominees are submitted, then no award will be presented.





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Nomination for Lifetime Achievement Award				
Name of Applicant for Nomination:				
Company:				
Address:				
City:	State:	Zip Code:		
Years served in the funeral industry:				
Years active in the SCCFA:				
In a short summary tell why you are presenting this person for nomination: (You may use additional pages if necessary)				
Submitted by:				
Company:				
Address:				
City:	State:	Zip Code:		
Please submit Nomination Form to: SCCFA OFF sccfa@bellsouth.net	ICE, 69057 Tave	rny Ct, Madisonville, LA 7044	7 or email to:	

