



The Southerner

Issue 50

Winter 2016

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Kyle Nikola
Savannah Family of Cemeteries, Savannah, GA



Wow, your Board of Directors just finished up a very productive meeting in Chattanooga ahead of our Annual Conference in June. First thing we all noticed was the beautiful convention center that is connected right to our hotel; a place that should make for an absolutely wonderful convention for 2017. Plans are well under way for a great cornhusk tournament and the convention center will allow for additional events within the room as we keep our vendors and program all in one central location.

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We discussed as a group a large pool of fantastic potential speakers and wanted to narrow down to some new and fresh topics. Our focus is to "Lookout to the Future" and in doing so that meant two things, technology and cremation. We found great speakers on topics such as cost effective technology to use that is readily available and easy to use. We have a speaker to talk about online marketing through video and search engine retargeting that is turnkey and cost effective. Lastly we have a speaker who is a cemetery owner who built a cremation garden and will speak from the unique perspective of someone who is doing it and can speak to what went right, wrong and the big question we all want to know, would he do it again!

Due to the increased success and feedback given in Charleston for our Sales School, we are looking to do a single day registration for sales counselors and managers to come and learn as a group about latest and best practices within our profession. Lookout on your registration forms for details and look to send counselors to grow and help protect the families in your community.

In addition to our plans to give everyone a first class convention, we also spoke as a Board on how to better assist our regional associations as they focus on protecting and informing our legislators about our profession. We are in the works of creating a Legislative Relief Fund to offset costs to our states in their efforts throughout the Southeast. It is our hope as the regional association in our profession, to help give guidance and assistance where we can for all the states we work with.

Big things are happening and we are here to help and serve each and every one of you as we move to the future. I love working in this profession and the opportunities that are just over the horizon.

Stay Southern,
Kyle Nikola

BEST PRACTICES

By John Gouch, Jr

Gethsemane Cemetery & Memorial Gardens, Charlotte, NC

When I was asked to write an article on best practices, my mind went initially to sales, as it usually does, and what best practices could be followed to maximize ones selling potential. I jotted some ideas down. Then I went another direction, I wrote down some ideas about best practices in managing a cemetery. But given that I feel as though I am still a novice in many ways there, I thought it best to give some time to that topic. But as I thought more about best practices at a cemetery, my mind kept circling around one of the practices that I feel sets our cemetery apart from the average graveyard. If I had to boil it down, the essential, best practice that we at Gethsemane do is our WOW service.

Even though we have been doing what we do for almost 10 years now, it is still considered a new concept with those I share it with – but especially with the families that experience our services. We continue to get over-the-top comments and praise from our families, and the word of mouth we get is priceless. I can't point to any other singular practice that has had as significant an impact on our business.

I have been speaking now for several years at the ICCFA University, sharing how we do our service. And for those of you that have heard me speak, you know that it is basically a 90-minute Q&A time. Seeing the pictures and hearing the stories always lead cemetery professionals to ask a ton of questions. But an article is not a lecture, and there will be no section for questions at the end of this article. So, what I want to do is pull out two highlights from our WOW service that I believe anyone at any cemetery, corporate or private, can do. If you put these into practice, I can promise that you will see the same kind of accolades and results that we have seen. All I ask in return is that you drop me a line and share those stories with me.

Ok, here we go!

The number one best practice that I want to stress, and if you don't do any of the other practice I'll share, please, you owe it to yourself and your families to do this. It is the Life Review. We have a four-page document that we have created where we gather information about the deceased. (I use the phrase "we have created" loosely, because like most documents in this industry, it is a collection of good ideas that we have gathered from several sources through the years.) In this document we still take down the standard information and statistics that everyone else does, but after that is where the magic happens. In the Life Review we are asking questions to find out about this person's mom, for example, that we are about to have a service for. We want to know how her family would describe her; what her proudest moments would have been; what her passions are; what her favorite color or food is; favorite vacation spot; favorite movie; what hobbies she has. We want to find out what made their mother special. And everyone is special. Everyone has something about them that is unique and interesting. It is our job to find that out. From that information we are able to craft a truly personalized graveside service. Whether it is a craft they have made, or a favorite candy, or a special skill they had, the options are as endless as your imagination; something that sets them apart...and that will set your service apart.

We preface the Life Review by letting the family know that we believe a cemetery should be a place of permanent, historical record for everyone that is buried or entombed there. And so we will fill out this record to go in their permanent file for future generations to know more about their great-grandmother other than just the years she was born and died.

The Life Review gives you so much power to create something that can be truly meaningful...an experience that they will likely not get at any other cemetery...an experience that they will absolutely share with their friend and family. The eulogy that you are able to craft from the stories that the family shares with you, help you to connect with them and any that attend the service. Even though you may be "just a cemetery," you will have created something that goes beyond digging a grave. EVERYBODY does that; customers expect you to be good at digging graves. The WOW doesn't happen until you go beyond their expectations.

Another benefit of the Life Review that happens even before the burial, is that by asking about their loved one and truly taking an interest in what makes them special, you have connected with that family and there is a

LEGISLATION

By Wini Hemphill
South-view Cemetery Association, Atlanta, GA

The SCCFA is in the unique position of associating members located in up to 16 states. Individual state laws and regulations govern the member organizations. Neighboring states often take notice of changes and address similar issues in their legislative sessions. As another benefit of membership the SCCFA seeks to be a source of information for member organizations affected by such changes directly or indirectly.

Currently, we are aware of legislative action in several states within the territory of membership. South Carolina and Mississippi may be facing Perpetual Care and the Annual Reporting requirement changes. Kentucky may modify the definition of a Death Care Designee. North Carolina is facing potential legislative action to merge the existing Cemetery Commission with the Board of Funeral Service. Merging the two entities generally doesn't benefit the cemeteries or cemetery consumers. The distinctions between cemetery and funeral home operations and perpetual care requirements are often blended such that neither entity is addressed properly.

If there are other states facing legislative action this year, please let the members of the Legislative Committee of the SCCFA know so that the information can be gathered and shared. Through this multistate association we may have a bigger voice in creating positive legislative changes for our industry.

Best Practices continued from Page 2

level of trust that begins before you even take them on a tour of your cemetery. So that when you are making suggestions for locations, you can intelligently suggest areas that align with what you now know about their loved one. And the greater the connection, the greater the sale.

But more than the marketing affect and more than larger sales, I feel it's just the right thing to do. As I mentioned earlier, each person that we are caring for, was unique in their own way, and therefore, I believe that each service should be unique as well. Losing their loved one will happen only once for this family, it is our job to make the experience memorable.

The second best practice that I want to highlight deals with the aftercare. And this one is so simple, I am still amazed that more people aren't doing it.

Take pictures at the graveside.

Buy a nice looking camera that takes good pictures. Get a photo printer. Now you have the makings of a really great aftercare package. Sure the next of kin is probably happy to get that CD or booklet that has all the forms needed for after a death filled out for them. But their face doesn't light up like it does when you hand them a picture album and they start to flip through it. They start talking about who all was there at the service; who was there but they didn't even realize it at the time; and how fabulous Aunt Gertie looked that day. It is a tremendous conversation starter for aftercare and an incredible lead source. It's a lead source because as they tell you about the people in the pictures, ask follow-up questions; who they are, where they live. Point to people in the pictures and ask them to tell you about them. They'll probably tell you a story that you can then retell with that person when you have the referral appointment you are going to set with them.

There's much more that I could say about just these two practices, but for the sake of the length of this article, I will stop it here.

Please, use these two best practices in your cemetery and let me know the results!

SALES

“Sales, Having a Daily Game Plan”

By Tony Peterson

Service Corporation International, Roanoke, VA

A basic fundamental item when talking about sales is “A Daily Game Plan.” If you think about it, we plan for most everything we do like grocery shopping, buying a house, weddings or even vacations. Preparing a daily game plan is no different and it can determine whether or not you will be successful. It affects your family, your retirement and your destiny so it just makes good sense. Any good salesperson will tell you they must have a chance for success every day. Does this mean we will make a sale every day? No, but it will increase your chances of having that opportunity. Let’s face it, commission sales people have chosen sales as a profession not only to provide peace of mind to the families we serve but also to provide an income for our own families as well. A quote from the famous motivational speaker, Zig Ziglar is, “You can get anything you want out of life, only if you help enough other people get what they want.” This is a very true statement. Sales people are paid in direct proportion to what they do. If you work hard your rewards can be great but if you don’t, the rewards can be much less. You are in control of your own destiny which is why sales people love what they do.

Most companies try to keep things simple by asking the sales professionals to focus on getting at least five new leads and two presentations each day. Some days it may take a little more time than others but that doesn’t matter because a salesperson knows if they focus on an activity, which is the only thing a salesperson can control, everything will come out in the wash. The law of averages takes its course.

The simplest way of developing a game plan is to have your set of appointments, including a back-up plan of 20 to 25 families in a consolidated area, which saves you time and fuel, that you can go see on any given day in the event of any cancellations or no shows. When you set your appointments, you should naturally have a few evenings planned during prime time (6-9 p.m.) when most of your families are home. There are always exceptions to the rule. A few large cemeteries have a lot of daily traffic and it is a nine to five operation, but even then, a lot of business can be missed by not having evening appointments.

If you are a properly trained sales person and not making much money in this profession then this could be one of the main reasons you are not successful. To be a top producer, focus on activity, sales and the results by having a daily game plan. By taking this step, which may be something new for you and outside your comfort zone, you can say as Zig Ziglar says, “I will see you at the top!”

NEW 2017 ONE-DAY SALES SCHOOL REGISTRATION

Do you have counselors or managers who could benefit from a one-day program that focuses on sales? The school will concentrate on some of our industry’s best practices which they can take back and implement at your location.

This is a great opportunity to have your counselors or managers attend a program that highlights on one subject and gives them a larger understanding of how to be successful in sales.

All this for only \$100 for each participant when someone from your company attends with a fully paid registration. Just mark on your registration form in the Optional Events section how many will be in attendance and submit along with your information.

This is a Win — Win for you, your counselor/manager and your location!



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FUNERAL HOME

“Good Storytelling Begins with Great Story-listening”

By Mike Hayes, VP Funeral Operations

The Family Legacy and Harpeth Hills Companies, Nashville, TN

For at least two decades, funeral professionals have been talking about the importance of sharing Life Stories in the course of funeral events and ceremonies (although it's always been done by close families). We've developed our favorite recommendations, to add value for our families, and we've naturally relied on the powers of video and customized print material—after all, “a picture speaks a thousand words,” right? As human beings, we have responded to those powerful, life-story events ourselves; we've known when we've done a great job—and our families have expressed their appreciation for those efforts. All good.

However, as the chief trainer, teacher and coach of funeral directors with the Family Legacy and Harpeth Hills companies in Middle Tennessee, my team and I are constantly working to understand what betters the arrangement conference for families and **why**. We want to know the “secret sauce,” if it's out there, so we can deliver consistently with this “high impact” aspect of our work.

My research has made me to understand that anthropologists have been telling us for generations (not just a couple of decades) that stories form and change the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of entire civilizations. The neuroscience has been more recently developed. Very recent medical studies, including one by the Harvard Medical School, have revealed that both when we tell a story and when we actively listen to one, our brains actually demand a number of physical responses—our heart rates may go up or down; the palms of our hands may sweat, respiratory function may be altered. In fact, in the Harvard Medical School lab, it was discovered that a neurochemical, a hormone, called oxytocin, is released during storytelling and “story listening.” Oxytocin is a hormone produced and also released during childbirth. It stimulates the production of breast milk in females; it aids in the “bonding” between mother and child.

Now, I'm not trying to conjure an image of any sort for your next arrangement conference. However, we have to nurture our families or we'll soon see them beginning to explore alternatives to our offerings. The fact is that stories have a way of helping you to bond with others—even customers—and there is real science behind it.

This hormone, oxytocin, has been found to reduce fear and anxiety, promote “pair bonding,” which is the choice of a life-long sex partner; it has been proven through neuro-economic studies to enhance “generosity” in people and it is the key neurochemical factor in the human ability to “empathize” with others. Does that sound like something we need in our arrangement conference rooms or what? Here's the kicker: studies have also proven that oxytocin enhances our ability to trust one another!!!

Need some of this remarkable hormone? Just start telling or listening to a story; it's a proven force of nature. It's the “pixie dust” of human interaction; it will carry you away on the adventure of a lifetime. You funeral home brand needs some of this “secret sauce” and funeral directors need to be the best story-tellers and story-listeners they can be.

Now, do you know the most-dreaded thing I've heard from arrangement counselors over the years? It's usually spoken after a family's dissatisfaction or complaint has filtered back to the funeral home, through whatever channel, weeks later: **“I don't really remember much about that family.”** Oh, my! That tells me the funeral director failed to establish any level of intimacy with the customer. He or she obviously didn't listen, or perhaps didn't even ask about the life of the loved.

Is it possible to get so process-oriented, so caught up in the task of collecting photographs, creating collages, printing fancy memorial folders and making memorial videos that we forget to slow down and ask, “Will you please help me to know something more about your loved one? What were her accomplishments?”





**COMING
TOGETHER**

ICCFA connects a diverse array of members to bring light and new ideas to deathcare. From suppliers to service providers, to support services and partners, we are the only international trade association representing all segments of our profession. By coming together, we create better solutions to problems, learn how to better serve our families, and create life-long connections with peers. Together we will light the way for future generations.

Give yourself the gift of becoming an ICCFA member today at iccfa.com/join

iccfa.com/join Membership That Matters.

FUNERAL HOME Continued from Page 6

What did he love to do?" I'm sure of it; I've seen it, and it must be avoided at all cost. We never want all of the personalized "stuff" we deliver for a life celebration to be more valuable to the family than we are—because (guess what?) they can get the "stuff" from our competitors!

I'm not diminishing the importance of personalization; in fact, I'm saying it's indispensable these days—but you've got to let the oxytocin flow! The pictures, the videos, the ceremonies you design will surely facilitate and inspire the storytelling between family members and guests, but unless you are listening and participating – especially through the arrangement conference – you will miss your opportunity to bond intimately with the client. Instead of just giving them an envelope in which to put their pictures, thinking "how soon can I get these fed through my scanner," slow down. Spread those pictures out on your conference table; pick one of them up and ask, "Will you tell me about this day? Why was this moment important to your mother?"

The point is: if you want to effectively tell the life stories of the loved ones your families entrust to your care, you must first be a great story-listener. You have to inquire, stay attentive, lend an ear, and connect. Otherwise, you are just another funeral director. No product, no technology, will ever replace the satisfaction families derive from knowing how much you care, and you will experience no greater reward in your career than hearing, "We felt like our funeral director was part of the family."

2017 CONVENTION UPDATE

You do not want to miss this super event!

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

Who, Where, When, What, Why & How? These are the six questions that must be answered in order to arrive at a reasonable solution. Investigators, scientists, investors and military leaders all use this proven method in order to make progress.

When we meet in Chattanooga, TN next summer the SCCFA will have already passed through one-sixth of this century (time flies when you're having fun, right?). Once again, you may ask, why should I attend our SCCFA Summer Convention? What's in it for me? Let's investigate.

WHO: You are the WHO of this great organization. Yes we have a Board of Directors, an Executive Committee and many volunteers who make these events happen. There is one indispensable person who makes this organization have purpose; YOU. You work in this industry, you love it, you sweat for it and some have risked their fortunes and lives for it. This convention is for YOU!

WHERE: Your worker-bee team just met in Chattanooga to make sure everything is right just for you. You're going to find wonderful accommodations, a super-convenient location, a variety of off-site food venues, entertainment galore and one of the most beautiful views in America. President Kyle Nikola has chosen just the right place for YOU!

WHEN: Sunday June 25 through Tuesday June 27, 2017. The weather average in the upper 80's and lows in the upper 60's. There is so much to do during free time within walking distance; just minutes away. You'll find so many individual, couple and family things to do in the general area that you'll want to plan on coming a little earlier and staying a little longer. Why not make it the whole week. Your committee worked hard to pick the right time just for YOU!

WHAT: Providing the very best educational sessions, ensuring the most satisfying food and presenting a long-remembered grand banquet are the three driving forces of this SCCFA Summer Convention. You can count on qualified speakers bringing the very best information that will positively affect your business back home. You're going to find numerous opportunities to develop new ideas first-hand from your peers as you share meals together; one idea that you take from this convention could help your business year a huge (should I say "yuge") success. Last year Larry Nikola started a two-hour conversation with me (one-on-one) about his industry journey; his enthusiasm had a positive impact on me and I intend to hear "the rest of his story" in June. This is an opportunity to share the story of YOU!

WHY: Well, to have fun, to be excited, to accept new challenges, to be better prepared for the future and to be in a better place to serve your families when you return home. You also have official business to conduct; the election of new board members. David Whitener said to me. "Mr. Case why do you want to eat chicken wings when you can eat a chicken legs? If you're going to eat, eat good!" I believe that were going to give you a big fat chicken leg experience just for YOU!

HOW: The preparations have been made, the planning has been implemented and only one more thing needs to happen; our industry needs YOU! Write the dates in red ink on your calendar. Enter the times and location on you smart phone. Tell your employees, family and friends to come with YOU!

See you there for the greatest SCCFA CONVENTION EVER, just for YOU

BE THE FIRST TO REGISTER WHEN THE PACKETS COME OUT! YOU'LL LOVE IT!

ICCFA UNIVERSITY 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:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1. 21st Century Services</p> <p>2. Cremation Services</p> <p>3. International Studies</p> <p>4. Funeral Home Management</p> | <p>5. Land Management & Grounds Operations</p> <p>6. Leadership, Administration & Management</p> <p>7. Sales & Marketing</p> |
|---|--|
-

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?

B. Personal Data

Name: _____ Home phone# (____) _____

Home Address: _____

Member Firm: _____

Address: _____

Firm telephone #(____) _____ Firm Fax # (____) _____

Current Position _____ Title _____

Length of employment _____ E-Mail address _____

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 _____ Completion Date _____

School _____ Location _____

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 Association Scholarship application has been personally completed by myself, and to the best of my knowledge, the information contained herein is correct and complete.
- B. If awarded the 2017 SCCFA Scholarship I am able to attend the ICCFA University program in July at the Fogelman Conference Center at the University of Memphis, Memphis, TN and I am still employed by the sponsoring member firm on that date, or I will forfeit the scholarship.

SIGNATURE _____

SCCFA Scheduled 2017 Calendar of Events to Date

April 5 – 8: **ICCFA Annual Convention & Exposition**, Nashville, TN

May 23 –25: **Texas Cemetery Association Convention**, Allen, TX

June 1 – 4: **Virginia Cemetery Association**, Boston, VA

June 11 – 13: **North Carolina & South Carolina Cemetery Associations Convention**, Myrtle Beach, SC

June 22-24: **Florida Cemetery, Cremation & Funeral Association Convention**, Miami, FL

June 25 – 27: **SCCFA, Cemetery Association of Tennessee, Kentucky Cemetery Association and Georgia Cemetery Association Annual Convention**, Chattanooga, TN

July 16 – 19: **Tri-State Cemetery Convention (Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi)**, Biloxi, MS

July 20 – 25: **ICCFA University**, University of Memphis, Memphis, TN

=====

If you do not see your Association listed, please contact the SCCFA Office (985-206-5606), so that we can update our records and add you to the Event Calendar.

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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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Our vault dealer suggested we visit a funeral home that had just updated their selection room, and what we saw was inspiring. I immediately went back to the office and made the call to get a new custom Trigard display. Now that it's in place, I realize, I should have done this years ago."

Robert Miller, Owner, Miller Funeral Home, Washington, Missouri

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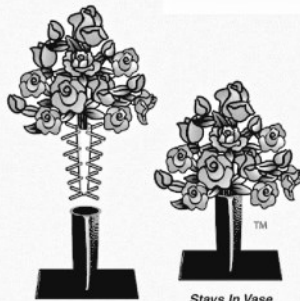
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F: (770) 422-4720

*2.5 - 3.5in Diameter Bronze Cemetery Vases
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SCCFA Advertising Opportunities!!

Banner Ads on Website!

- ▶ Ad will run January 1 – December 31 \$650.00
Will have access link to your website

Now is the time to submit your advertisement for the SCCFA 2017 Newsletters.

- ▶ *The Southerner* Newsletter is published four (4) times per year:
March - June – September – December
- ▶ Your advertisement can be e-mailed to the office at sccfa@bellsouth.net
- ▶ All advertisements will be black & white.
- ▶ The newsletter is now on our website (under Events) so your advertisement will be seen by all who visit our site and read the publication online.

Advertising Rates include all (4) four issues:

- Full Page (8" wide X 10 1/2" high) \$625.00
- One-Half Page (8" wide X 5 1/4" high) \$425.00
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- One-Eighth Page (4" wide X 2 1/2" high) \$125.00

Payment is due **February 15, 2017** to ensure placement of your ad in the 2017 issues.

Please send check made payable to: Southern Cemetery, Cremation & Funeral Association

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Thank you for your support to the Southern

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE
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E-mail: scfca@bellsouth.net
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We're on the Web

www.scfca.info

A special THANK YOU at Christmas...



*To let our Southern members know how much they are appreciated
and to wish you a Merry Christmas and may your
New Year be Happy in every way.*