

The Southerner



NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHERN CEMETERY CREMATION & FUNERAL ASSOCIATION | FALL 2019



SSCFA President
Lauren Blevins

Presidents Message

A message from Lauren,

I am nothing but excited for this year. I am honored to serve and represent The Southern, an organization that is continually willing to grow and learn.

Atlanta's 2020 "Getting into Focus" continues to turn into an impressive lineup. The partnership with Tennessee, Georgia, and both North and South Carolina Associations, should prove to be a beneficial partnership for all involved. Our call for presentations will go out in the next few months as we begin our search for unique speakers to represent our organizations.

Our board is working this year to establish processes for the future to ensure consistency in our organization for years to come. On top of developing procedures, we are also working to reach out to our partner organizations to decide how we can support those organizations in the most effective way.

Follow us on Facebook, The Southern @THESCCFA to stay updated on convention news and current articles from our region and members. If you would like to contribute to the Southern, please let us know. We are always seeking input for growth.

I am excited about the movement we should see this year and the progress we should expect for our organization. I invite you to both participate in the growth and experience it with us. Please join us in Atlanta to network and contribute. Let us share with one another to grow our businesses and better our profession.

Life's short - be Southern

WWW.SCCFA.INFO



Argent is the provider of choice for funeral and cemetery trust and investment management services.

Argent's Funeral & Cemetery Trust Services:

- Pre-need Trusts
- Perpetual Care Trusts
- Merchandise Trusts
- Pre-construction Trusts
- Investment Management
- Customized Services



Mark Milton
Institutional Services Manager
(504) 291-8810
mmilton@argentfinancial.com



Jim Breaux
National Sales Executive
(504) 291-8840
jbreaux@argenttrust.com



Debbie Holmes
Trust Officer
(318) 251-5856
dholmes@argenttrust.com

ArgentTrust.com

3102 West End Avenue, Suite 775
Nashville, TN 37203

201 St. Charles Ave., Suite 2420
New Orleans, LA 70170

500 East Reynolds Drive
Ruston, LA 71270

2602 Iron Gate Drive, Suite 202
Wilmington, NC 28412

Sales - Quick Tips

Active Listening QUICK TIPS



By: Spencer Hines

NorthStar
Memorial Group

Vice President
of Service Sales

Limit your own talking...Tune in to the other person...Put yourself in the other person's shoes ...Don't jump to conclusions too soon...Listen for ideas and emotions, not just facts... turn off your own concerns or worries...Prepare questions in advance.

Most of us assume we are good listeners, but recent research shows that poor listening habits and skills effect more than 70% of all employees, resulting in misunderstandings, errors, missed opportunities, arguments, stalled projects and damaged relationships.

Listening is something that most of us do every day, so it would be reasonable to assume that we're all pretty good listeners, right? Well, most of us assume we ARE good listeners, but few of us actually are. The average person who hasn't worked to develop good listening skills is likely to understand and retain only about 50% of any conversation, and that's IMMEDIATELY after the conversation - 48 hours later, average retention drops to less than 25%!

Recent research has shown that poor listening habits and skills effect more than 70% of all employees, resulting in misunderstandings, errors, missed opportunities, arguments, stalled projects and damaged relationships. But if all of these negatives result from ineffective listening, why don't we put more effort into becoming MORE effective listeners?

1.EFFECTIVE LISTENING ISN'T EASY.

It's more than just keeping quiet. Medical studies show that someone who's truly putting mental energy into concentrating on another person and listening ACTIVELY actually has increased blood pressure, a higher pulse rate, and more perspiration. So Active listening is hard work - mentally AND physiologically.

2.INFORMATION OVERLOAD IS RAMPANT.

In today's modern world, there's enormous competition for our attention from advertisements, radio, TV, movies, the internet, books and with all these incoming sources of information, we've learned to screen out irrelevant data, but in the process, we sometimes also screen out things that SHOULD be important to us.

3.WE THINK FASTER THAN WE SPEAK.

There is a considerable difference between speaking speed and thinking speed. The average person speaks at about 135 to 175 words a minute but can listen up to 400 or 500 words a minute. So, when someone's talking, the impatient listener spends all that time between the listener's fast thinking speed and the speaker's slow talking speed on thoughts of what to say next, or in mentally arguing with the person who's talking. It can be like listening to two voices at the same time; the speaker's and your own internal dialogue.

4.LISTENING ISN'T SOMETHING WE TEACH.

Lack of training contributes to poor listening skills and habits. Most of us, to do our jobs right, should be doing more listening than speaking, reading, or writing, yet they receive almost no formal education in listening.

The benefits of Active Listening

Listening well - listening ACTIVELY - is obviously important, and can provide HUGE benefits to most people: Active listening helps to identify deeper customer needs, it establishes a more comfortable relationship with the customer, reduces the likelihood of misunderstandings or tension, makes problem solving easier and ultimately - leads to increases sales and profits.

But what do we mean exactly by the term ACTIVE listening? And how is it different from just plain old listening? Active listeners take the art of listening to a whole new level of effectiveness. Active Listeners are not only paying attention to the CONTENT of a conversation, but also the other person's INTENT and the underlying EMOTIONS expressed. They listen for what's NOT being said, and they know that HOW a person expresses themselves can tell you as much as WHAT they say. Active Listeners ask great questions, and they follow up on the answers, drilling deeper with additional questions to make sure their understanding is clear, complete and mutual.

QUICK TIPS

Don't just pay attention to the CONTENT of a conversation, but also focus on the other person's INTENT. ...Listen for the underlying EMOTIONS expressed...Listen for what's NOT being said...HOW a person expresses themselves can tell you as much as WHAT they say...Ask good questions, and drill deeper with to make sure your understanding is clear, complete and mutual.



GREEN BURIALS

BY: DYANNE MILLER - **MANAGER**
PINE FOREST & GETHSEMANE MEMORIAL GARDENS, WAKE FOREST, NC

Green Burials have been overlooked by many cemeteries—some because they aren't sure what they are, or some think the cemetery will lose money, and still others don't think there is any interest by the public.

I have found that many of my green burial families are those that would have been cremated and scattered—never coming to a cemetery at all! But, when they found the green alternative, they chose this noninvasive, environmentally friendly practice. They also find a healing through the embracing of grief by completing the circle of life. And, there is the added bonus of not adding to the world's pollution through embalming and cremation emissions.

You don't have to have a huge area to try your hand at going green. Often times a cemetery has some woods or a field that would lend themselves for green burial--perhaps along the edge of an existing garden or on the wood line. Start small if that feels safer to you—I started with only 20 spaces and have now done close to 80 burials!

The basics for offering a green area, according to the Green Burial Council, would be requiring an unembalmed body, a biodegradable container, and prohibition of a burial vault. This would yield your basic Hybrid as defined by the GBC. Having GBC approval is important so that your families know what you stand for and the criteria that you are expected to adhere to. Memorials can be simple stones that may be sandblasted with names and dates.

Check out www.greenburialcouncil.org and you can get some great ideas and guidelines.

The addition of a Green Burial area to your cemetery can yield increased profits, and be a benefit to the environment.



The Successful Group Presentation

By: Sam James
Owner, James Funeral Home & Northlake Memorial Gardens
Huntersville, NC

This year we decided to be more intentional about offering presentations that are open to the public. Of course, as a funeral service professional, I see people that are well prepared and those that have made zero preparation. Some have not even had the most basic conversation—cremation or burial. We saw consistently that families who had preplanned were much more satisfied in the end. They gave us the push to educate our community on the value of preplanning. We have always hosted church groups and those that would come to us asking for information. This year, we set quarterly lunch and learn dates that are open to anyone who would like to attend. They have been fantastic!

We are a combo, thus we have a funeral home in which to host the event. Our funeral home is well suited for hosting a lunch and learn because we have a reception room that is always set up. If you do not have a space like that, find a room in a local restaurant. The main way we advertise the event is via social media. We post the link to register from our website. By the way, when they register we get email, address and phone so we do not have to obtain that at the seminar. I typically boost the Facebook post to a certain area. We also do a small ad in the local paper with the information but most come through social media. Global Atlantic, our preneed insurance provider, tell me that many lunch and learns get 5-10 people and that is considered a success. So far, we have had no less than 30 attend our lunches.

We keep the whole event to one hour. We do a 30 minute presentation on preplanning. Half of that is Q&A (which has always been fantastic!). We have a buffet already set. It does not have to be fancy but we always provide a nice lunch (it typically costs us around 10.00 per person). While they are eating, we try to set appointments. If they do not want to set an appointment then, we follow up after the event. We have had a fantastic success rate. And even if they do not prefund their funeral, we have gotten them in our building, answered their questions and we will be the call they make when the time of need comes.





HISTORY

A long proven
history

CULTURE

A culture
that cares

SUPPORT

Dedicated
service

BRONZE

Industry
leading quality

YOUR PARTNER FOR BRONZE MEMORIALS

Working with Coldspring, you'll deal with someone passionate about memorials. Someone with deep knowledge of our products, and the processes involved in bringing them to you. You'll have a direct line of contact to a problem solver. An honest, hard-working American dedicated to delivering superior bronze memorials that are built to last. Because at Coldspring, we're committed to doing the right thing, the first time. For you and your customers.



COLDSPRING®

SPEAK WITH ONE OF OUR BRONZE MEMORIAL SPECIALISTS

BRONZEMEMORIALS@COLDSPRINGUSA.COM • 1 800 328 2312 • COLDSPRINGUSA.COM

BRONZE MEMORIALS • GRANITE MEMORIALS • COMMUNITY MAUSOLEUMS • COLUMBARIUMS • PRIVATE ESTATES® MAUSOLEUMS

Management Best Practices Regarding Multiple Locations

By Rita Augenstein
Louisville Memorial Gardens

As a manager of multiple locations with many moving parts, I find one of the most important things you can do is to make sure that everyone is on the same page. Meaning that all the paperwork, procedures, etc. are uniform throughout the company. It is important to be able to go to any office, at any location and perform the necessary functions of the job. For instance, the flagging of the graves should be done the same way, no matter if you are a combo location or a stand alone cemetery. This makes understanding the files, as well as the customer needs much easier.


Just as important as the uniformity in procedures, is the hiring and/or promotion of an outstanding management team within each location. The department Administrator/Manager is instrumental in making sure all the working parts are working together to form a good solid team. They are your eyes and ears as well as your back up and support. You should also always maintain an "Open Door" policy. As a member of upper management, your various locations should always feel comfortable enough to come to you with any kind of concerns or questions. A happy employee is a productive employee and will be an asset to you in each location.

It's important to have regular department/location meetings, not only are these meetings informative, but they are great team building experiences. A lot of times, although the various locations may talk on the phone regularly, they have never met in person. It's always nice to put a name to a face and to meet your co-workers no matter what location they are based out of.

I've learned the hard way that you have to delegate responsibilities. You are only one person, so you have to figure out which of your team members are qualified to do the task you need done. Not only does this help to lighten the load but it also shows your managers that you trust them to be able to take care of the job. This can also bring out someone's "hidden talent". You never know where you will find the next Superstar. While you're delegating, don't turn into an absent manager. Keep the lines of communication open without micromanaging and hopefully you will end up with a fantastic group of people who while working separately, are still working together.

Thank you

TO THE BOARD OF THE SOUTHERN,
THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR SELECTING ME
AS THIS YEAR'S SCCFA SCHOLARSHIP
RECIPIENT FOR THE ICCFA UNIVERSITY!
I JUST RETURNED FROM THE EXPERIENCE
IN MEMPHIS AND AM ALREADY
APPLYING WHAT I HAVE LEARNED. IN
MY COURSE OF STUDY I LEARNED FROM
CEO'S, CFO'S, IVY LEAGUE GRADUATES, AND
LEADERS OF FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES.
THE UNIVERSITY PROVIDES AN INTENSE
AND INCREDIBLE EDUCATION ON THE
CEMETERY AND FUNERAL INDUSTRY. I AM
GRATEFUL FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY!
SINCERELY,
NICK STARTUP



Have you ever wished you could attend the annual ICCFA University?
The SCCFA Scholarship Program awards a scholarship to cover all registration fees, housing and meals for the ICCFA University (ICCFAU) for the calendar year in which awarded. The ICCFAU is a 5 day course, with several different course options to choose from and will be held in July at the Fogelman Conference Center in Memphis, TN. The deadline for applications is March 1st, and the recipient will be notified by March 31st in the year the scholarship is awarded. The Scholarship Program Guidelines and Application can be found on the SCCFA website.

The Southern is STRONG today, because of our Foundation

By: Richard F. "Dick" Perl SCCFA Past President



SSCFA Past President
Richard "Dick" Perl

We all know a house is only as strong as it's foundation. Scripture tells us to build our house upon a Rock and it will sustain the storms. This is true about relationships as well. There were times over the past 86 years the SCCFA had to ride out storms. The storms may have come in the way of poor leadership, financial short falls, lack of membership and of course, lack of Purpose/Mission. Guess what? We survived those storms and we are stronger today for it. As you all know from your own personal lives, storms can come when we least expect them.

The Southern was built on a relationship of which we called Family. Matter a fact our conventions were referred to as our Annual Family Reunions. Many of you reading this article grew up coming to the Southern Family Reunions with your parents. Yes, the ICCFA has its appeal, but so does the Southern. Southern Charm is still real in the south!

Let me be a weather person for a moment. Are storms coming our way in the future? We/I would be naïve if we think not. So what may these storms look like?

1st. Drop in Membership: Today's members must ask the question, "What will I get out of joining the Southern?" If the answer is not apparent to them, they will not join. The old question still exists, "What's in it for me?" That's funny. It's the same question families are asking you as a business owner.

2nd. Financial Responsibility: Everyone cannot afford to stay in a high-end hotel. "I'm not saying Motel 6" (even though Mary and I have stayed in them). We must Treat the Southern's money as if it were our own, because it is. When we were almost broke 20 plus years ago, it was because of poor oversight of the Southern's spendings.

3rd. Elect Board Members that are willing to serve and sacrifice their time: Being a SCCFA board member is a privilege, not a slot on your resume. Members should elect Board Members who want to work and commit. I can remember a time when we went through the convention hall begging people to run. Guess what? We got exactly what we asked for - runners not workers.

4th. Listen to the Suppliers: They need and want the Southern to be successful. We need them and they need us. It should be a win win situation for everyone. Please remember the more money you ask from them, the more their prices have to rise. Like you, they have Financial Responsibility to their owners. So encourage the attendees to visit supplier booths and place orders.

The SCCFA as you all know is near and dear to my heart, so my remarks are meant from my heart and experience. I started this article by talking about the Southern Family. Like any strong family there needs to be communication. I commend President, Lauren Blevins and Executive Director, Susan Mena for reviving the newsletter. I believe there is something special about receiving something in-hand that I can read, pass on and refer back to.

To my fellow Past Presidents, get or stay involved. There is wisdom in aging.

Thank you for your time and being a family to Mary and I.

Dick Perl



Ready for a succession plan? Look to the brightest star - NorthStar

You've spent your career building a reputation for caring – caring for your families, your staff and your community. When it's time to start a new chapter in your life, you want to know that your legacy will continue.

NorthStar Memorial Group's mission is captured in three simple words: Care. Comfort. Plan. When you trust your business to us, you can be confident that the staff, families and community you've served will continue to be cared for. We'll honor the unique history that defines your business while investing in the people and property to help it grow to its highest potential.

Call for a confidential consultation.



Tim Birch
Executive Vice President,
Corporate Development

Direct line: 203.559.4911



PLANTS FOR SCATTERING GARDENS

By: Miles Tolen Penn | Lexington Cemetery Co, Lexington, KY

More and more cemeterians, funeral homes, and churches are installing areas on their properties to scatter cremated remains. You ask what are cremated remains or cremains? Cremains are mostly made up of dry calcium phosphates with other minerals including potassium and sodium, cremated remains also do not decompose in the soil. Scattering gardens are made to be an area where people can scatter their loved one's cremains in a landscaped and aesthetically pleasing environment where family can come and visit. As a Horticulturist trying to pick plants that will co-exist with cremains is sometimes a problem.

In order to understand the modus operandi behind the scattering of cremains it is helpful to understand the makeup of cremated remains. Cremains are very alkaline and salty, and since they contain high levels of calcium, phosphorus, potassium, and sodium they are toxic to plants. Although plants need these nutrients, the levels are so high and the pH is so high that they are unusable by the plants. I will stop and give you a brief chemistry lesson. The pH chart runs from 0-14 with 0 being very acidic and 14 being very alkaline, and 7 the neutral. Most plants grow best in the pH range of 6.2 to 7.5.

So, what options do you have to have a successful union between plants and cremated remains? There are two options that you must help plants survive and thrive and both should go hand in hand. The first thing that you should look at is amending the soil. There are several options to use when amending your soil, and how quickly you are wanting to change the pH determines what additives that you will use. The fastest way to lower pH is by adding aluminum sulfate, this is a chemical compound that can be purchased at most garden stores. You would need to mix ½ lb. per 10 square feet to lower your pH ½ a point. Be cautious when adding aluminum sulfate, do not try to add more than is recommended to lower the pH faster, this can be just as detrimental to plants as a high pH. Another additive is sulfur coated urea; this is a common ingredient in many slow release fertilizers. The urea does not change the pH as fast as the aluminum sulfate, but it is a more forgiving alternative to use for most gardeners. The last additive that I would recommend is organic matter. This could be anything from compost, manure, peat moss, or even chopped up pine needles. This would be my choice for most people trying to lower the pH of their soil. I would recommend that after you have a scattering service that you mix a 5-gallon bucket of compost or other organic material in the soil. This is the slowest method for lowering the pH, but also the easiest and safest for novice gardeners. The second thing that you should consider is choosing the right plants to plant in your scattering garden. There are some plants that do tolerate a higher level of alkalinity and sodium, and these plants will differ depending on what part of the country that you live in. I am going to list some plants that have worked for me in our scattering garden. I will break the lists into perennials (herbaceous plants that lives for more than 2 years), shrubs, and trees. The lists below are a guideline, it would be good to check with your local extension agent or garden center and see if these plants will grow in your area.

PERENNIALS

Italian bugloss | Candytuft | Daylilies | Maiden grass | Lavender | Bearded Iris | Catmint
Easter lilies | Foxglove Salvias | Black-eyed Susan | Columbine | Elijah Blue Fescue | Goldenrod
Shasta Daisy | Yarrow | Boston Ivy (vine) | Winter Jasmine (vine)

SHRUBS

Arborvitae | Cotoneaster horizontalis | Lilac bushes | Weigela florida | Boxwood 'Suffruticosa' | Deutzia Smooth sumac
Taxus yew | Contorted filbert | Euonymus 'Emerald Gaiety' | Viburnum | Yucca

TREES

European Beech | Mugo Pine | Bur Oak | Ironwood (American Hophornbeam)
Ginkgo | Ornamental cherry | Honey Locust | Horse chestnut | Austrian Pine | Buckeye

All these plants are recommendations, do not be surprised if you have to replace some of the plants in your scattering garden every 5 to 6 years. The bottom line is, plants and cremains are difficult to have in the same area, but with a little work and some planning you will enjoy your landscape for years.





SAVE THE DATE
JUNE 28TH - 30TH, 2020

MAKE PLANS TO JOIN US IN ATLANTA GEORGIA FOR OUR
ANNUAL CONVENTION EXHIBITS & SALES SCHOOL

BRINGING
OUR VISION
INTO
FOCUS
2020

**SCCFA - THE SOUTHERN
GEORGIA CEMETERY ASSOCIATION
CEMETERY ASSOCIATION OF TENNESSEE
NORTH CAROLINA CEMETERY ASSOCIATION
SOUTH CAROLINA CEMETERY ASSOCIATION**

MORE DETAILS WILL BE AVAILABLE ON OUR WEBSITE SOON
CONTACT SUSAN MENA AT 770-880-7210 - SCCFA.OFFICE@GMAIL.COM

WWW.SCCFA.INFO