



funeral service **insider**

independent news & guidance for funeral home owners and operators

Faith, Family and Lots of Hard Work Pave the Way for Soper's Success

Michael Soper knew he had to do something after Hurricane Harvey ripped through Houston and the surrounding area, killing at least 82 people, displacing thousands and causing billions of dollars in damage.

With the damage being so vast, however, the president and CEO of Legacy Funeral Group, LLC, wasn't sure where to focus his efforts. But the 50-year-old executive knew he had to start somewhere.

"I woke up in the middle of the night and thought about the kids in the lower-lying areas that got flooded out," he says. "I thought about how school was just coming back, and how they had lost everything."

Soper couldn't help every child in Houston, of course, but he could help the ones he remembered sporting KIPP Houston Public Schools uniforms when he was volunteering at the Houston convention center to help the displaced. "I thought that these are kids who really need our help and are serious about



Michael Soper, president and CEO of Legacy Funeral Group, hopes to double the size of his company in the next five years.

school," he says. "I think 90 percent of them are on the school lunch program, which means they are at the poverty level."

So he got to work collecting supplies for the students, including pencils, scissors, calculators, highlighters, crayons, folders, notebooks, tissues, backpacks, rulers, erasers, paper, binders, glue sticks, pens and more. Legacy also collected sizable donations, including one from one of its

Last Chance: Save \$100 on the Cremation Innovations Summit

Dan Isard, founder and president of The Foresight Companies, will be among the experts presenting at the Cremation Innovations Summit, Dec. 15, in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

Sign up by Nov. 1 and you'll pay just \$495 per person – \$100 off the regular price. And the hotel room rate is only \$69!

Isard will be talking about "No Frills Cremation: Friend, Foe or Both." He'll examine different pricing strategies for serving cremation families.

"There is no 'cremation business' versus 'funeral business,' and there never was," Isard says. But somehow, that mindset has taken hold of the profession – and it's a mindset he intends to challenge.

Doug Gober, owner of Gober Strategic Capital, will also be speaking – and he plans to be among those taking notes during Isard's talk. "Dan is just a very wise, smart guy," he says. "I've never been in a meeting with Dan Isard that I didn't learn something that I didn't know before I got there."

Isard and Gober will be joined by Coleen Ellis, owner of Two Hearts Pet Loss Center; Welton Hong, owner of Ring Ring Marketing; and Brent Taylor, owner of Brentwood Funeral Services.

Visit www.katesboylston.com/summit to sign up or call 301-591-1847.



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Thomas A. Parmalee

301-591-1847

tparmalee@katesboylston.com

www.linkedin.com/in/thomasparmalee

MANAGING EDITOR

Patti Martin Bartsche

Phone: 301-591-1845

pbartsche@katesboylston.com

www.linkedin.com/in/pattimartinbartsche

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Steve Cronin

Phone: 301-591-1846

scronin@katesboylston.com

www.linkedin.com/in/steve-cronin-7119751b



CUSTOMER SERVICE

800-829-9145

P.O. BOX 433028

PALM COAST, FL 32143-9576

funeralserviceinsider@emailcustomerservice.com

SITE LICENSES AND REPRINTS: It is against the law to forward this to another person. Contact Thomas Parmalee at 301-591-1847 or email tparmalee@katesboylston.com to ask about bulk subscription rates and reprints..

COPYRIGHT WARNING: Copyright violations will be prosecuted. FSI shares 5 percent of the net proceeds of settlements or jury awards with individuals who provide essential evidence of illegal photocopying or electronic redistribution. Contact Tom Parmalee at tparmalee@katesboylston.com or call 301-591-1847 to report violations.



**3349 Highway 138
Building D, Suite B
Wall, NJ 07719**



Staff at Legacy Funeral Home Group collected and delivered 200 crates filled with school materials to help Houston schoolchildren after Hurricane Harvey devastated the area. (Photo courtesy of Legacy Funeral Home Group)

key vendors, Funeral Directors Life Insurance Co., which bought 500 backpacks and stuffed them with school supplies.

Kris Seale, president and CEO of Funeral Directors Life, says he didn't give a second thought to supporting Soper's cause. "I've known Michael for more than two decades," he says. "He is a good friend with a heart of gold, who cares deeply for others."

Soper led the effort and rallied his funeral homes to join the good work of collecting school supplies, toiletries, food and cleaning supplies. "Michael organized the effort, and we were thrilled to contribute toward the cause," says Nadene Smith, executive assistant for Funeral Directors Life. "Funeral Directors Life drove the supplies down to Houston via U-Haul, stopping along the way to collect

over 120 boxes of goods from Michael's participating funeral homes. It was a wonderful team effort."

The initiative was a tremendous success, and many of Soper's funeral director friends wrote him checks to buy uniforms for students, Soper says. "We delivered 200 crates of school supplies and backpacks and sizable donations from all over the country," he says.

Giving back is nothing new for Soper or the members of his team, who he considers his family – and it's one that keeps getting bigger.

Soper founded Legacy Funeral Group in 1998 after he quit his job as an investment professional, taking a mortgage against his house to fund his venture. Today, the firm owns 103 locations, employs more than 700 people and operates in

nine states: Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Kansas and Nevada.

One of Legacy Funeral Group's other big initiatives is giving back to the community on Sept. 11 to honor first responders and members of law enforcement.

"Every year on Sept. 11, we cook barbecue and deliver food to the firehouses or bring in first responders to our funeral homes," Soper says. "This year, on 9/11, we served more than 8,000 plates of barbecue nationwide to our law enforcement community, first responders and even some game wardens came to one of our places in Mississippi. This is really an amazing outreach we do at our locations; there are very few initiatives that I make our places do, but this is one of them as I just feel so strongly about supporting our first responders. Everyone is required to do something on 9/11."

While the growth of the company is impressive, check back in a few years and you may be *more* impressed. "We have a strategic plan that we've put together that we've shared not just with our senior management team but with our regional and location managers, and the plan is to double in size over the next five years," Soper says.

But his proudest accomplishment so far is creating a company where everyone feels like members of the same family, he says.



Michael Soper (pictured in the orange jacket) makes it a point to support first responders and law enforcement. To mark Sept. 11, his locations cook and deliver barbecue to show their appreciation. (Photos courtesy of Legacy Funeral Home Group)

Harry C. Drew, senior vice president and chief financial officer of Legacy Funeral Group, gives credit to the company's chief for promoting such a culture.

"Michael cares for each person in our company like they are part of his family," Drew says. "This has permeated throughout the company. We care about each other as people – not just co-workers. One of the favorite parts of my day is calling someone in the company to wish them a happy birthday or happy anniversary.

Bill Wimberly, senior vice president of operations at Legacy Funeral Group, says he's also impressed with Soper's down-to-earth mentality and ability to be humble. "He is not afraid of rolling up his sleeves and helping with any task at hand," he says. "Regardless of the title and position he holds, he is always willing to jump in."

A Born Businessman

While he's a first-generation funeral director, Soper is a born businessman: His father, Joseph W. Soper, was internationally recognized for his contributions to ophthalmology, including the invention of a corneal mapping device. He was a founding member of the Contact Lens Society of America and wrote or co-wrote numerous books and papers on contact lenses.

From an early age, it was clear that Soper inherited his father's intellect and knack for business.

Soper Wins Prestigious Award



Michael Soper (center) won a prestigious Entrepreneur of the Year award from Ernst & Young. He was joined by members of his team in accepting the award. (Photo courtesy of Legacy Funeral Home Group)

Since 1986, Ernst & Young has honored entrepreneurs whose ingenuity, spirit of innovation and discipline have driven their companies' success, transformed their industries and made a positive impact on their communities. Earlier this year, it recognized Michael Soper, president and CEO of Legacy Funeral Group as the winner in its "services" category for Entrepreneur of the Year in the Gulf Coast area.

The award recognizes entrepreneurs who are excelling in areas such as innovation, financial performance and personal commitment to their businesses and communities. The winners were selected by an independent panel of judges, and the awards were presented at a special gala event June 15, 2017, at the Marriott Marquis Houston.

Soper attended the event with his team and notes how honored he was to receive it. "I think it is a big deal for our industry," he says. "To be recognized outside your industry is a pretty cool thing."

Soper adds, "I think it was a nice little boost for my team as well as it is not just about me but an honor for the whole company – more so than for an individual. I heard that the judges were impressed with the culture we built and how we wait on one family at a time."

“I learned early on to focus on excelling at the things you do well,” Soper says. “The things you don’t do well, let someone else do. I once was fired for cutting a guy’s grass, and I realized early on that I was not a landscaper. I once had a mentor tell me that you can make a lot more money with your brains than your back.”

Soper admits that he’s had other failures, too. “But I’ve always fallen back to being in sales and customer service, which is what I do well,” he says. “I have a great operational team, and many times I just get out of their way. I’m blessed to have the best team in funeral service.”

Unlike his two older brothers, Mark and John Soper, the chief of Legacy Funeral Group did not follow his father into the ophthalmology field. But he cherishes all that he learned from his father, who died shortly before he bought his first funeral home.

“My dad gave me a really good work ethic and taught me that if you focus on the right things, success will come later,” Soper says. “He was very successful in his industry, and I feel blessed to have been brought up around his entrepreneurial spirit. Having that recognition that if you do the right things, good things will come in turn, has been really important in my career. As an entrepreneur, you also have to be willing to take a risk, have a dream and then execute on that dream.”



Michael Soper is well-known for his love of riding cutting horses. He competes annually in the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. (Photo courtesy of Michael Soper)

He adds, “I owe a lot to my father because he ingrained in me since I was a little guy that I could do it.”

It was that type of spirit that allowed Soper to make the most of his opportunity when he began working in the trust business, managing preneed and perpetual care funds, which is how he

discovered the death-care business. He began by working for a trust company, Kanaly Trust, managing a small portfolio of funeral home and cemetery clients before moving on to Southwest Guaranty Trust Co., where he managed a much larger portfolio.

“I ended up being the marketing

person for Southwest Guaranty and traveled all over the country meeting with independent cemetery owners,” he says.

Suddenly Soper found himself in what professional athletes often call “the zone.”

“I loved the business, and I loved the people – especially the rural, small-town people,” he says. “I loved being their investment person, and as I was around them, I learned more about the funeral business and I saw opportunities.”

And so, just a few months after his father died of kidney failure at age 74, Soper made his move, which meant quitting his lucrative job, taking a mortgage against his house and starting Legacy Funeral Group.

“I saw the opportunity especially for my focus, where the owner would stay involved but who needs a succession plan. Being a smaller company that can continue to incentivize those former owners and manage them individually has been a good secret sauce for us,” he says.

Soper is not a licensed funeral director and has no intention of becoming one as he enjoys managing the business side of operations. But he has the utmost respect for his staff, he says.

Growing the Company

While Soper may be a born

businessman, he knows that without God, he would not have been able to succeed in death care. That faith is shared by his wife of 15 years, Andrea, his 13-year-old-son, Perry, and his 7-year-old daughter, Madison. They are members of St John The Divine Episcopal Church in Houston.

“I felt a calling toward this business. It’s rare that you can be in a business where each and every day you know you are going to help a family and make a difference at the worst time of their life – and at the same time make a good living. Not a lot of businesses can say that each and every day you have an opportunity to make a difference in someone’s life ... that is what kind of called me into the business. It’s a great mixture of needing business acumen but also being a caregiver and providing a great service. I found a calling toward that, and I’m glad that I found this business ... or it found me.”

Soper’s faith is important to him and informs how he conducts business. “It’s nice to be the CEO of a large private company and not be scared to bring faith to work with you or allow your employees to do the same – whatever that faith is,” he says.

Finding the right cultural fit when buying firms, in fact, is something that Soper has made a bigger priority as time has gone on.

“As large as we get, we don’t want to lose that small-company

feel, and we focus on serving one family at a time,” Soper says. “Even at our larger places, we slow down the whole process and make the arrangements meaningful.”

Just as Soper focuses on cultural fit, he thinks sellers need to do the same.

“I think all of the companies are good options; they all have great attributes, and I think the reason someone might choose Legacy over the others is that there may be a better cultural fit for themselves and their employees,” he says. “I encourage people to interview all the companies if they are thinking about a succession plan. Pick the one that you feel most comfortable with.”

Asked where he’d like to expand, Soper says he’ll focus on the nine states where he currently does business – and perhaps adjacent states.

“I think just within that footprint, there are two or three states we could bolt on without geographically overextending ourselves, and there is a tremendous amount of growth just in those states where we have the opportunity to continue to push. We would like to grow more in Florida – especially in the Panhandle. We would like to grow more in Alabama, and we could easily bolt on Georgia. We also like southeast New Mexico, which is very much like West Texas. There may be a couple new opportunities in the Midwest as well – but I don’t

see us jumping way out there and going to another part of country. I see us growing in the states where we are in or contiguous to where we are right now.

When buying a firm, Soper takes a close look at the people that are there and how the business has historically performed. “When we buy a business, we base it on five years of historical data. We look at call counts and market share, and we rarely do a pro forma for a business higher than what it has historically done. What I don’t like to do is say, ‘We can do this or do that’ and overpay for the business. We want to buy it based on what it has historically done.”

While Soper and his team try to make transitions as easy as possible, there are always challenges to navigate.

“There is always change,” Soper says. “I’m not one to say there is not going to be any change. There is different paperwork and different processes. But one thing I don’t get involved in is teaching our funeral directors to do anything different as far as arrangement processes. They know more about waiting on families in their small town than I could ever know because they live there.”

As far as where most of Legacy’s deals come from, Soper says, “It’s all word of mouth from my former owners. The best generation of leads is former owners that are happy, and they talk to the guy in the next town and will say, ‘When

you are ready, I’ll get Michael and we’ll figure out something’ – and I’ll parachute in when I hear they are looking to sell. I’ve never hired any corporate development people – I’m it.”

Soper is a bit more selective in the firms he buys now that the company has reached a certain size. “When I first stated, we needed to acquire revenue to pay the bills, but now we can be kind of picky,” he says. “The folks we merge with, we want to make sure they will work well with us.”

Ask Soper about the best deal he’s ever done, and he’s quick to answer. “The deals I have *not* done are the best deals that I’ve done,” he says. “You look back, and the ones I’ve turned down, it’s a blessing I turned them down. But I will tell you, we do not always hit home runs. We’ve had challenges like everyone, and honestly, those places are the ones that were not culturally a good fit. We’ve had a handful of those. I think it’s so important that the right seller pick the right buyer based on the people, the management team and the fiber of the company.”

While Soper hopes to double the size of Legacy Funeral Group in the next five years, he knows he doesn’t have to do so. “The nice thing about being private is you don’t have to grow,” he says. “If I never acquired another firm, it wouldn’t put any pressure on us. But I would like to, because I’m a deal guy.”

He also knows that no matter what he wants, sometimes the deals just aren’t there. “The pipeline is kind of chunky in my side of the world,” he says. “We will get a year where everything will close all at once that we’ve been working on for a long time. This year, we will grow by about 20 firms.”

Operations

If you wonder how Soper has built up such a successful business, it may have something to do with the fact that even after all these years, he looks at funeral and cemetery operations with the eyes of a newcomer.

“Having not grown up in the industry, the increase in the cremation rate has not been as much of a shock to me,” he says. “I look at it more through the consumers’ eyes, and I don’t see a difference whether it is cremation or ground burial – it’s still a funeral. Maybe I have an advantage having not grown up in the industry and not being taught the old way of, ‘If it’s cremation, you just close the book because the family doesn’t want to do anything.’”

Asked about declining profits in the industry, Soper says, “We’ve done this to ourselves. We need to take charge of arrangements and get every family to memorialize regardless of the form of disposition.”

Soper continues, “When a family

comes and says they want a cremation, that doesn't mean that they don't want some form of a service. We need to assume everyone wants a service and gathering. In some of those more mature markets, we have to turn the curve, and the only way to do that in my mind is through personalization because if you have a market like Las Vegas – where now it's the second generation choosing cremation and the first time around the family chose direct disposition – the way to change the curve is by showing them how they can personalize a cremation, and that in turn will help promote a gathering. In our more rural markets, where families are choosing cremation for the first time, I have an open book and assume they will have a gathering, full service and will want to embalm the body and have a ceremonial casket.”

Soper adds, “We are only as good as our arrangers who are waiting on those families. Families are not the problem – it is our preconceived notions of what we think they want.”

Legacy Funeral Group has trademarked the phrase, “We make it personal,” which is emblematic of its emphasis on personalization when serving families.

“It's everything we are about: making each and every service important to that family,” Soper says. “It all started in West Texas with one of my former owners. His father had a boat that he loved, and he put his dad's casket in the boat

and put it on a trailer and pulled it into the cemetery. We have consciously tried to get funeral directors to think outside the box, to get to know their families well and suggest things that they can do during the funeral to personalize that funeral. We have created a whole advertising campaign around that concept with cool, catchy advertisements. Now, people come to us and say they want the funeral with a mariachi band – and they want to know how they can prearrange that. This is how we differentiate ourselves in the community: We are the funeral home that tries to personalize every funeral.”

At the end of the day, that focus on personalization pays off in ways that show up beyond the balance sheet. “Our funeral directors are paid in hugs, and I can guarantee that they get more hugs from a family when the funeral is personalized,” Soper says. “They have seen that if they personalize the funeral, the family will be happier.”

But that focus on personalization doesn't just happen – it's something that Soper and his team work at every single day.

“The biggest challenge we have in our industry is direct disposition: when families decide to have a simple cremation and not utilize the services and facilities we provide,” Soper says. “But when you start talking to families about personalization, a light goes off in their head that maybe they should have a gathering and maybe this is a nice

place to do it.”

“Personalization is especially important for the baby boomer population. They are all about value, and if they see the value, they will spend the money,” Soper says. “It may not be on merchandise – it may be on services and gatherings.”

Beyond cremation without a service, the next biggest challenge is finding the next generation of key staff. “Especially in these smaller towns, because it is so hard to get people to move there,” Soper says. “To be honest with you, what we've had to do at some of these places is to go outside the industry and send people to school, and we've had some success with that – turning preachers, youth ministers and caregivers in other areas into funeral directors. You have to think outside the box.”

As far as staffing his firms, he says it would be easier if the profession were to update its licensing requirements to reflect the increase in cremation.

“I like the ability to have a split license,” he says. “In a larger town or at a larger location like Las Vegas, funeral arrangers need to be very different than the people in your prep room – it's a different skillset. If I'm in a small town, I have to have someone who can do both because I can't afford to have two different people.”

Asked about the rift that sometimes exists between funeral homes and cemeteries, Soper says,

“I think that we have to consciously look at it as the same industry, and that is what I try to do. We are caregivers on both sides of the business, and to be successful, we must operate those together. We are blessed to have a handful of combos, and if you can really operate those as one business, you provide better service for the families, and they have a better experience. We have to realize that whether it’s a family service counselor selling cemetery property or a funeral director making arrangements, both are trying to help that grieving family.”

A Bright Future

While the industry faces

challenges, Soper thanks his good fortune for being a member of it every single day.

“The people that read this ... if they are a little burnt out in their profession, dig deep and find a way to change because we have so many opportunities,” he says. “This is such a great industry. I’d encourage people, if they are reading this article and feel burnt out, go take a vacation and come back recharged. I don’t think that there has ever been more opportunity for the owners of funeral homes than right now.”

He also hopes that businesspeople and investors not currently involved in funeral service discover

all that it has to offer. “There is money out there to borrow and businesses to buy; this is a great small business opportunity. That is a message I would love to leave behind: There has never been more opportunity than right now for good operators,” Soper says.

One day, the next generation of Sopers may take over the business – at least Soper can hope. “My 13-year-old-son went to my last closing with me and helped me hand out all of our new hire information to employees,” he says. “He is still very young, but he knows the business”

Kates-Boylston Welcomes Nicole Breedlove as Marketing Manager

Kates-Boylston Publications, based in Wall, New Jersey, is pleased to welcome Nicole Breedlove to its team as marketing and circulation manager.

Breedlove will be responsible for conceiving and executing marketing strategies and tactics that drive growth. In addition, she will help overall brand development and messaging in the marketplace.

“I’m excited for Nicole to join the Kates-Boylston team,” says Allison Sullivan, publisher of Kates-Boylston Publications, which publishes *American Funeral Director* and *American Cemetery & Cremation* magazines and *Funeral Service Insider*. “Nicole’s experience, energy and creativity will enable us to effectively reach and further expand our engaged audience of death-care professionals.”



Nicole Breedlove

Breedlove comes to Kates-Boylston with more than 15 years of experience in integrated marketing. Most recently, she worked at Thrivent Financial, a finance company that has been successfully providing a variety of financial products and services to its customers for over a century.

Breedlove can be reached at nbreedlove@katesboylston.com.

Everdays Announces Partnerships with Osiris and The Signature Group

Everdays, which offers a free iOS and Android app that helps people notify family and friends when a loved one dies, has announced two new partnerships.

The first one brings the functionality of its notification platform to every Osiris Funeral Home Software customer free of charge. With the integration, users can take advantage of Everdays' cloud-based platform to provide peace of mind to families who want to notify friends and family of a loved one's death, according to a news release.

"We're excited to offer Everdays to all of our homes," says Kris Gray, co-owner of Osiris, which is used by 600 companies and is a product of Funeral Director's Resource. "This partnership will help our directors elevate their relationships with their client families, all without having to disrupt or overhaul their day-to-day operations. It's rare to find that kind of innovation in the funeral profession, but when it comes along, you know it's the real deal."

Every announcement includes a funeral home's brand and offerings, thus increasing its digital reach and footprint, according to Everdays.

"We've already seen that Everdays forms a natural extension to a funeral home's website," says Alhermizi. "And when paired with software as powerful as Osiris, the benefits to directors and their clients multiply exponentially. This partnership is further proof that Everdays is transforming the way we communicate about death."

Everdays also announced that The Signature Group, which owns funeral homes, cemeteries and crematories across five states, will start using the Everdays app at all 21 of its locations after initially testing the service at four of its funeral homes in the greater Kansas City area.

"After seeing how effective Everdays was at helping our client families reach everyone they need, it became clear that offering the service at all our homes was the right next step," says Jay Dodds, president and chief operating officer of The Signature Group. "We pride ourselves on being a communication hub for the community. Everdays aligns with this mission while also helping us achieve our business goals. I couldn't be more excited to have it in place at all our locations."

"We're more than pleased with the results Signature Group has experienced so far, but we're most looking forward to what the future holds," Alhermizi says. "Together we can create a space for families to connect with the larger community during a difficult time."

In other news, Everdays announced that it has joined the 2017 Funeral Service Foundation Golf Classic as a premier sponsor, making a cash contribution of \$5,000.

"With this generous donation, we will be able to continue funding our scholarship and professional development opportunities, commissioning innovative research and assisting communities in crisis," says Danelle O'Neill, executive director of the foundation.

Everdays will be exhibiting at the National Funeral Directors Association Convention in Boston at booth 3237 at which it will be hosting a three-day open bar.

The Latest Headlines from Throughout the World of Funeral Service

It's been another busy week or two for funeral service. Here are some of the latest headlines you may have missed ...

Aftercare.com Launches Free Online Survey Tool

Aftercare.com has introduced a free online survey tool that makes it effortless to get valuable feedback from families after the services are over, the company announced in a news release.

With this tool, "funeral homes and cemeteries can now invite a family by email or text to complete a follow-up survey online," according to the news release. The survey tool is free and surveys are unlimited.

"We've talked with thousands of funeral professionals over the past year about aftercare, and the one constant interest was in having a follow-up survey. It really got us thinking how much value we could provide if we built a tool that made getting feedback super easy and then gave it to every funeral home and cemetery in the country," says Ellery Bowker, founder of Aftercare.com. "We are pleased this tool is now available."

By creating the free survey tool, Aftercare.com said it is continuing to demonstrate its long-term commitment to helping funeral homes and cemeteries stay in touch with their families and build relationships that can often lead to more preneed and at-need opportunities. Visit www.aftercare.com for more information.

FrontRunner Partners with Pierce Chemical on Website Solution

FrontRunner has announced the unveiling of the FrontRunner Lite WebSystem, a website solution designed to help funeral homes avoid the pitfalls often associated with free websites.

The FrontRunner Lite WebSystem is a completely integrated solution that allows firms to have a modern and easy-to-use website, combined with the ability to leverage the MemorialFX tribute video and stationery personalization engine for the new Pierce line of stationery, according to a news release. Customers of FrontRunner Lite will be able to scale up as their needs grow, including access to an integrated funeral management software and other premium services and features offered by FrontRunner Professional.

The FrontRunner Lite WebSystem will be distributed through and subsidized by Pierce Chemicals to ensure that Pierce clients have access to the best technology available at no cost. To learn more about the partnership with Pierce or the FrontRunner Lite WebSystem, contact FrontRunner at 1-866-748-3625, online at www.1fronrunner.com/pierce, or speak with a Pierce representative.

Join Your Funeral Service Peers in Nashville

There is still time to sign up for the Cremation Strategies Conference, Dec. 6, and the Funeral Service Business Plan Conference, Dec. 7-8, at the Marriott Renaissance in Nashville.

Visit www.CremationStrategies.com and www.KBbizplan.com to learn more.

Passare Launches Two-Way Integration with Answering Service for Directors

Passare has announced the launch of a two-way integration with ASD – Answering Service for Directors that is helping funeral professionals improve operational efficiency and service to families, according to a news release.

“We’re thrilled to be working with ASD to help our clients become even more efficient and streamlined in their operations,” says Chris Baber, vice president and chief product officer for Passare.

Passare is a software as a service platform that offers funeral homes an innovative collaboration platform along with a robust funeral home administration solution, accessible anytime, anywhere, from any Internet-connected device. The collaboration platform also provides the industry’s only software solution that allows families to communicate with one another and their funeral director in real time, which enhances customer satisfaction and gives families the tools and flexibility to enter information at their own pace.

Through the integration with ASD, Passare is eliminating the need for duplicate data entry into different systems. In addition, first call information gathered from ASD will be transferred into Passare’s case-management system automatically, ensuring that funeral home clients always have the most up-to-date information at their fingertips.

Sign Up for a Free Webinar: The Importance of Building a Strong Trust Team

Experts from Funeral Services, Inc., Live Oak Bank, Roosevelt Investments and Broad & Cassel, LLP, are teaming up to deliver a free webinar titled, “Building a Strong Trust Team,” at 2 p.m. Eastern Time on Nov. 14.

The webinar will help you: distinguish the duties of all parties of a preneed or perpetual care trust, which include the funeral home or cemetery, trustee, investment manager, trust administrator and attorney; understand the importance of building a full trust team and identifying parties that work well together; and learn about a turnkey solution available that streamlines the process of compiling a team of trust professionals.

Visit www.katesboylston.com/webinars to learn more and sign up.

Sincerely,



Thomas A. Parmalee, Editor
 tparmalee@katesboylston.com
www.linkedin.com/in/thomasparmalee

REGISTER BY NOV. 1 AND SAVE \$100!

CREMATION INNOVATIONS SUMMIT Atlantic City

December 15, 2017 • Claridge Hotel

MEET YOUR EXPERTS



Doug Gober



Welton Hong



Coleen Ellis



Dan Isard



Brent Taylor

DON'T LET YOUR PROFITS GO UP IN FLAMES

Today, more people are getting cremated and “traditional” doesn’t mean anything when it comes to funeral service.

With that comes challenges – but also opportunities. At the Cremation Innovations Summit, you’ll discover how to recognize and respond to both. Learn how to:

- Anticipate the needs and wants of families that choose cremation.
- Create memorable experiences with or without a body present.
- Communicate the value of cremation-oriented products and services.
- Improve search engine optimization to outrank competitors.
- Embrace cremation as a profit generator.

The conference will include keynote speakers as well as mini-presentations from some of the most innovative companies offering new products and services to help cremation families honor loved ones.

BONUS: The Academy of Professional Funeral Service Practice has approved the conference for 6 hours of continuing education.

301-591-1847 • www.katesboylston.com/summit

Sponsors:



100% Money-Back Guarantee

Every Kates-Boylston conference comes with a 100% Money-Back Guarantee. If, after attending the conference, you don't take home ideas that you can put to work immediately, or if you're not satisfied for any reason, we'll refund your entire registration fee.

CREMATION INNOVATIONS SUMMIT Atlantic City

Reserve your place by returning this form today by fax to **301-287-2903** or by registering online at **www.katesboylston.com/summit**

If you have any questions or prefer to speak with customer service to register, please call 301-591-1847.

Registrant's Information: (if registering more than one person, fill out name, title & email for each)

1. NAME _____ TITLE _____

EMAIL _____

2. NAME _____ TITLE _____

EMAIL _____

3. NAME _____ TITLE _____

EMAIL _____

Company Information:

COMPANY _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

TELEPHONE _____ FAX _____

Method of Payment:

TOTAL PAYMENT \$ _____

☐ Bill Me Later

☐ Check or money order enclosed

☐ Please Charge My: ☐  ☐  ☐ 

Card Number: _____

Expiration Date: _____

Signature: _____

REGISTRATION FEES

Cremation Innovations Summit

☐ **Before Nov. 1:** \$495 per person

☐ **After Nov. 1:** \$595 per person

4 WAYS TO ORDER

☐ Web: www.katesboylston.com/summit

☐ Fax: 301-287-2903

☐ Call: 301-591-1847

☐ Mail: Cremation Innovations Summit C1637
3349 Highway 138,
Building D, Suite B
Wall, NJ 07719-9671

Tax ID Number: 26-3623792

Cancellations: If you are unable to attend, you are welcome to send a substitute. Otherwise, you can cancel in writing 10 business days prior to the conference to get a full refund. After that time, there is a \$150 cancellation fee. Registrants who do not cancel and do not attend are liable for the full fee.

C1637