

"WE MAKE IT PERSONAL" REVIVAL  
HOT RODS FOR HOSPICE  
MANAGER BOOT CAMP  
PRENEED GUNSLINGER  
LEGACY MANAGER JOINS FCCFA  
BOARD  
IN PRAISE OF SLOW FUNERALS

# Legacy

Serving One Family at a Time

# LEDGER

WINTER 2017

LEGACY  
FUNERAL  
GROUP



the healing process. Be bold and don't be afraid to take control. Live up to the name, Funeral Director, and DIRECT the funeral. Prove to the new generation that "fast food funerals" are a really bad idea, and like my mom told me, "slow down."

This issue of the Legacy Ledger features many examples of how our Legacy family around the country is doing their best to "Make it Personal" and engage with their various communities. Additionally, Dr. Alan Wolfelt praises slow funerals, and the Legacy family gathers in various parts of the country to learn from each other.

In parting, I am so blessed to announce that we have recently acquired a new location! Please welcome Rose Lawn Funeral Home and Cemetery in Gulf Breeze, Florida, to the Legacy family. Our home office staff (pictured below) is excited to serve this new location and all of you in the field. These are exciting times for us, and even though we continue to grow, we are still focused on "Serving One Family at a Time!"



Michael Soper  
Legacy President  
and CEO



minimum to plan a proper goodbye. He asks the family for this block of time and outlines all that they will accomplish in this conference. Sometimes that 2-½ hours ends up being shorter, but many times, it ends up much longer.

I urge you to "put down the pen," get to know the family, and see how we can make their funeral service special. This in turn creates meaningful memories and aides in

Some things you cannot rush: a good bottle of wine, a fine dinner with family, 18 holes of golf with your best buddy, and A FUNERAL!

Everyone is in a hurry; and I am guilty as charged. My mother told me the other night, "Michael, you are always doing so much at one time and always have so much on your plate." I responded, "Mom, I like it that way." Well, this is the world we live in now. As funeral professionals, we need to understand this and take charge and guide our families.

I was in Abilene at our "We Make It Personal Revival," and Todd Beeson, our regional Texas Panhandle manager, told us that the *Secret Sauce* at his six firms is to tell the family, up front, they need to carve out at least 2-½ hours to properly plan a funeral for their loved one. This 2-½ hours is a



Legacy home office staff celebrates Christmas 2016



## "We Make It Personal" Revival

On January 11, 2017, Legacy held a special "We Make It Personal Revival" training seminar at Elmwood Funeral Home and Memorial Park in Abilene, Texas (the birthplace of "making it personal"). Legacy brought together some of our top funeral directors including Gabriel Casaus, Brian Kester, Tiffany Aguilar, Todd Beeson, Lowell Sibille III, and Bill Vallie Jr. to encourage them in continuing to make funeral services personal and to help them spread the word to other funeral directors within our Legacy family. Our goal with the "We Make It Personal" campaign is to personalize services for families honoring the deceased in such a unique manner that when guests leave the funeral they're saying, "When I die, THAT'S the way I want my funeral." We look forward to continuing to hear great stories from each of our funeral directors about how you are "Making It Personal" for each and every family you serve!



Funeral Director Roy Cantu at Turcotte-Piper Funeral Home in Kingsville, TX, performed a personalized service for Alberto "LoLo" Trevino, the last old-time cowboy of the King Ranch who consistently shared the history and stories of the early days on the ranch.



Our top funeral directors gathered at Elmwood Funeral Home and Memorial Park on January 11, 2017 for a "We Make It Personal" Revival training seminar.



Funeral Director Bryan Hicks at Elmwood Funeral Home and Memorial Park in Abilene, TX, performed the service for a young boy who died of kidney cancer. The color orange is representative of kidney cancer and everyone attending the service wore orange including his uncle (pictured) who led the entire congregation in the dance "La Macarena," his nephew's favorite dance.

## Hot Rods for Hospice

Harper-Talasek Funeral Home in Temple, TX, hosted its second annual Hot Rods for Hospice show benefiting Scott & White Hospice on October 1, 2016.

The event was spearheaded by Sabrina Young, FDIC at Harper-Talasek, and raised \$2,500 for Scott & White Hospice. A giant check was presented to hospice staff at the event.

"It was a really good event this year. We had a parking lot full of



Harper-Talasek Funeral Home in Temple, TX hosted a hot rod show with proceeds benefitting Scott & White Hospice.

cars, good camaraderie, and probably 300 people at our property, plus, some very happy hospice staff members," said Doug Ray, regional manager for Harper-Talasek.

"I think the community was proud we were donating everything to hospice, and there were some who came because hospice had helped them during a difficult time," added Doug. "Our relationship with Scott & White has deepened, and their representative said they want to be more involved next year and continue to grow the event with the hope that this will be a large, charitable event showcasing both of our companies."



50 to 60 cars were on display, and over 300 people attended the show.



## Manager Boot Camp in Baton Rouge

Legacy held its second funeral home manager boot camp in Baton Rouge. Participating funeral home managers are nominated by their regional managers for the 3-day training session that covers everything from A to Z on funeral home management.

"Manager Boot Camp really helps to connect the dots and make our participants better managers overall," said Steve Lyon, Legacy Director of Training and Development. "We bring in speakers for each module, from 'Making It Personal,' to financials, to preneed, and much more. Michael Soper and Bill Wimberly come in to speak about the overall vision of the company. We go over the tools we have available, and how to use those tools to get the maximum results. So far, 10 individuals have gone through the program, and it's been really well received."

"We are already looking forward to the next boot camp in March of 2017!" added Steve.



Funeral home managers gathered in Baton Rouge for boot camp training.

## Legacy Preneed Gunslinger

The annual Preneed Gunslinger took place in Galveston, TX, and by all accounts was a great success.

Every year, Legacy brings in sales professionals from our stand-alone funeral homes for a 2 ½ day training event...the Gunslinger! Preneed sales professionals hear from motivational speakers, share ideas, learn new sales techniques and best practices, and enjoy fellowship with one another.

"We had an action-packed 2 ½ days," said Brian Nichols, Legacy VP of Sales. "We brought in some great motivational speakers, both from inside Legacy as well as outside speakers. We recognized our top performers and gained some valuable insights."

"I think the tug boat simulator exercise was the highlight of our trip, though," added Brian. "We went to San Jacinto Maritime College for a team building exercise. We split up into teams and each team had to work together to bring a ship into port. It was a great competition, and we all learned a lot."



The annual Preneed Gunslinger event was kicked off with a cocktail party at Michael Soper's home in downtown Galveston, TX.

## Legacy Funeral Director Joins FCCFA Board of Directors

Rick Prindville, managing funeral director at Carey Hand Cox-Parker Funeral Home in Winter Park, FL, was recently installed on the Florida Cemetery Cremation & Funeral Association (FCCFA) board of directors during the annual convention. Chris Knight, superintendent at Highland Memory Gardens in Apopka, FL, and Dennis Sparks, Legacy regional manager for the Florida market, attended the convention to support Rick's installment on the board. Chris and Dennis are also active in the FCCFA, serving on several committees. Congratulations to Rick on this great honor!



Chris Knight, Dennis Sparks, and Rick Prindville





By Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

## IN PRAISE OF *Slow Funerals*

Have you ever noticed that we are speed-obsessed these days, even though faster is often not better?

A century ago, the Industrial Revolution brought about mass production and with it an emphasis on speed, efficiency, and productivity. Then came the technological revolution, heightening our ability to work faster, travel faster, communicate faster. We have come not just to want but to expect instant gratification—same-day delivery, always-on cell phones, e-mail in a second, fast-casual food prepared before our very eyes, and instant credit.

There is much to celebrate in our progress, of course. Technology has improved our length and quality of life in many ways. But along the way, we forgot to hold onto much of our hard-won, ancient wisdom about loss, grief, and healing. Death and grief rituals used to be given the time and attention they needed and deserved. Multi-day wakes followed by full funerals complete with processions, committals, and extended family gatherings were once typical. Mourning rituals, too, were extended and socially recognized. In short, the death of someone loved was treated as the devastating, life-altering, and time-consuming transition it naturally is.

In recent years I've been noticing that in other life arenas, movements are underway to restore many of the good things that were waylaid during our dizzying decades of progress. The slow food movement, for example, seeks to expose the hazards of globally sourced foods, restore our connection to how and where our food is grown, and resurrect the sustainable, healthy, and community-enhancing farm-to-table practices of days gone by.

In urban design, we are looking to the past at community-building principles like walkability, human scale, front porches, and public gathering spaces. The goal now is to create new cities that blend modern technology with the livability of

old cities.

And in retail, big box stores may be going the way of the dodo. We are reconsidering our habits of shopping at discount stores and online for cheap, generic goods. Instead, we are increasingly spending money on local, artisanal products that are not only more beautiful and interesting but also better support the communities in which we live.

Similarly, the time is right, I believe, to get behind what I've coined the Slow Grief movement. It acknowledges that loss is as much a part of the human experience as love. It recognizes that loss changes us forever and that grief is a normal, necessary, and, yes, *sslllloooow* process. It also proclaims the need for people to express their grief and to be supported by their communities. And it asks us to look to the past to recapture the healing wisdom and customs we have almost lost, including the multi-day funeral.

As gatekeepers of the funeral, funeral directors are essential to the Slow Grief movement. In fact, you are the vanguard of the movement, standing as you do at the entrance gates of grief and the journey to healing.

I hope you will join me in educating families about the importance of the full funeral, complete with all its elements. A full, personalized funeral is a meaningful funeral that helps families mourn well. It creates a tapestry of authentic experience. It sets mourners on a good path toward healing.

I hope you will help create a funeral home culture that appreciates that slower is better. Grieving families need time for education and discussion during the arrangement conference. Grieving families need time to be listened to, without an agenda of completing paperwork or ticking off items on a checklist. Grieving families need ample time and opportunities to be with the body, including before and during cremation. Grieving families need encouragement and the

grace of never feeling rushed during the funeral process so that they can experience their natural grief and mourn openly whenever the need arises. Grieving families need to be wrapped in ritual and care so that they feel supported and guided during those difficult first days, when everyday words are inadequate and they're unsure how to proceed. Grieving families also need reliable and ongoing aftercare that affirms their need to continue to mourn in the months and years ahead.

As you can see, the Slow Funeral is a key component of the Slow Grief movement. Unless you help the families you serve slow down, they will be at risk for mistaking efficiency for effectiveness. They will proceed as if faster is better at a time when what they really need is to slow down and suspend. In part, your role is to be a yield sign when they are hurrying to green light the funeral. Step into your gatekeeper role and help families slow down. They will benefit, and so will our society as a whole.

I hope you and your funeral home will join me in the Slow Grief movement. If you'd like to share with me your ideas or practices for fostering Slow Funerals, I invite you to email me at [DrWolfelt@centerforloss.com](mailto:DrWolfelt@centerforloss.com).

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*Author, educator and grief counselor Dr. Alan Wolfelt advocates for the value of meaningful funerals and is passionate about helping funeral homes enhance customer service. Author of *Funeral Home Customer Service A-Z*, he is also director of the Center for Loss and Life Transition in Fort Collins, Colorado, where he conducts annual training for funeral directors on the WHY of the funeral. If you have stories or examples of how your funeral home has delivered value-added service, email Wolfelt at [drwolfelt@centerforloss.com](mailto:drwolfelt@centerforloss.com).*



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