



By Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

## ARE YOU PASSIONATE ABOUT Funeral service?

I always feel tremendous joy when I meet an authentically passionate funeral director. I can literally feel the commitment they have made to help families create meaningful funeral experiences. Please ask yourself: Am I passionate about funeral service?

Passion for a profession evolves from commitment. How does your commitment create passion for funeral service? It's the conscious intent of committing yourself to something you believe in that kindles your natural excitement, enthusiasm and devotion. The passionate funeral director has a genuine awareness of the significance of meaningful funerals. "Yes, I believe in the value of using elements of ceremony to help families befriend the functions of reality, recall, support, expression, meaning, and transcendence," vows the passionate funeral director.

Why is it important for you to know if you are committed to funeral service? Because it is difficult to feel passionate about anything that you are not committed to. As a matter of fact, it is nearly impossible. In many ways, your commitment to funeral service determines whether you will be what I refer to as a "functionary" or a "facilitator." Functionary funeral directors believe it their job to competently get families through the planning and process. Facilitator funeral directors, on the other hand, believe that they haven't truly done their job unless they've helped families create and carry out meaningful, transformative funeral experiences. The for-

mer is about doing what's necessary; the latter is about doing what's essential.

What if you are struggling with your passion for funeral service? After all, with more people than ever questioning the value of funerals, it is understandably challenging to maintain your passion for this noble profession. If this is the case for you, try this simple experiment: For one day, consciously deepen your commitment to funeral service. Express this commitment through your words and your behavior. Remind yourself of what originally brought you into funeral service. Give 100 percent to everything you do. For example, if you are making an arrangement, slow down and practice the model of information-education-honoring choices in every step of your effort to help this unique family. Put your heart and soul into helping the family create not just a good funeral but an amazing funeral.

You may be astonished how the act of consciously recommitting yourself to funeral service for this one day can transform your experience and relight your passion. Yes, even the burned-out functionary may become an inspired facilitator. Families that are initially defensive in their interactions with you and question the value of funerals may in the end become your biggest advocates. Most importantly, you may unleash your own buried passion, which has been yearning to be released into your daily work life.

Are you passionate about funeral service? If your answer is yes, thank you. The

world desperately needs more funeral directors like you. I hope you are using your passion to create remarkably "wow" funeral experiences for the families in your care. If your answer is no, I beg you to try to rekindle your passion. Undertake daily tasks with more intention, effort, and care in the weeks to come then watch what happens. The glowing feedback you'll no doubt receive from families may help you make an about-face. If you were once passionate about funeral service, you can be again. And if your passion for funeral service is gone for good (or was never there in the first place)? Well then, 2016 is your year to choose a different career. You deserve to be happy and fulfilled, and the at-need families who choose your funeral home deserve better, too.

*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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JOHNSON CONSULTING AWARDS  
MICHAEL SOPER WINS MVP AWARD  
THE RIDERLESS HORSE  
EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR AWARDS  
THE CITY STOOD STILL  
ARE YOU PASSIONATE?

# Legacy LEDGER

Serving One Family at a Time

SUMMER 2016



2nd Annual Crawfish Boil prepared for our Houston staff by our Louisiana managers.



Michael Soper  
Legacy President  
and CEO

## A Passion for the Profession

lies but we can't give you the passion, that's all yours!

As you will note in this edition of the Legacy Ledger my dear friend Dr. Alan Wolfelt hopes that "you are using your passion to create WOW funeral experiences, Todd Beeson of Morrison Funeral Directors stages a riderless horse for a friend, Johnson Consulting honors five Legacy firms for superior customer service, a family receives a touching goodbye in Baton Rouge for a firefighter, and numerous employees are recognized for superior performance with employee of the year awards. God bless you all and please remember "WE MAKE IT PERSONAL™."

How many friends do you have that each morning as they drive to work know that they can truly make a difference in the world today? Do they know that they can be a rock for a family in the worst forty-eight hours of their life? Do they know that their action today will help in the healing process for years to come? As funeral professionals, we have this ability each time we arrange a funeral.

Let us reflect on why we were originally brought to this profession. Was it a loss you personally suffered? Was it a family business in which you were reared? Were you called spiritually or was it the cool black suit? I beg you to reach deep and embrace what called you to the funeral business and go above and beyond for each family. At Legacy we will continue to give you the tools to serve your fami-

## We Make It Personal.™

## Johnson Consulting Group Recognizes Legacy Funeral Homes

Several members of our Legacy family were recently recognized by Johnson Consulting Group with the Excellence in Customer Service Award, achieving the highest levels of customer satisfaction in 2015.

Johnson Consulting Group is a leading nationwide consulting firm that provides management expertise for the funeral and cemetery industry, as well as performance tracking tools to measure a family's level of satisfaction with their funeral home provider. Awards were presented to select funeral homes who achieved the highest Overall Performance Scores from families served in 2015.

Award winners in 2015 included: LaFond-Ardoin Funeral Home in Opelousas, LA; Sibille Funeral Homes in Opelousas, LA; Ascension Funeral Home in Gonzales, LA; and Ardoin's Funeral Home in Mamou, LA.

In addition, for the third year in a row, Emken-Linton Funeral Home in Texas City, TX, was recognized by Johnson Consulting Group for providing excellent service to their families. Upon receiving the recognition, Emken Linton stated, "I'm honored to receive this recognition on behalf of all the employees here at Emken-Linton. We are proud of our 100 plus years of service and strive every day to serve our families with compassion and respect."

Congratulations to all of our Legacy funeral homes who were recognized for excellent service in 2015!



Steve Boudreaux, Regional Manager; Ray Dupre, Manager at LaFond-Ardoin Funeral Home, Opelousas, LA; Pete Cole, Manager at Ascension Funeral Home, Gonzales, LA; Michael Soper, Legacy President and CEO; Lowell Sibille, III, Manager at Ardoin's Funeral Home, Mamou, LA; Lowell A. Sibille, Jr., Manager at Sibille Funeral Homes, Opelousas, LA.



Emken Linton and Scott Walker

## Michael Soper Wins MVP Award



Funeral Directors Life recognized Legacy President and CEO Michael Soper with the Most Valuable Partner (MVP) Award at FDLIC's awards ceremony in Cancun this April.

"The winner of this year's MVP Award is a very close friend of mine, Michael Soper," said FDLIC President and CEO Kris Seale. "I've known this guy for more than two decades. He is an MVP to us because he has used FDLIC exclusively ever since he began owning funeral homes, and he's always been willing to try new things that I bring to his attention. He is truly an innovator in our profession, and I love him like a brother."

## The Riderless Horse



The staff at Morrison Funeral Home in Dumas, Texas, put together a meaningful tribute with a riderless horse for a family up in the Texas Panhandle. Placing the cowboy hat on the saddle was especially touching for the family. "This was some great teamwork on behalf of Todd Beeson and the staff at Morrison," said Bill Wimberly. "Thank you so much for Making it Personal!"

## Employee of the Year Awards

The Employee of the Year awards were established to recognize employees who consistently perform well beyond what their job duties require. Nominees are consistently courteous and helpful to others and strive to improve themselves, their firm, and their communities.



**MANAGER OF THE YEAR**  
**BUFFY JOHNSTON**  
Mobile Memorial Gardens Funeral Home, Mobile, AL  
Bill Wimberly, Buffy Johnston, Michael Soper



**FUNERAL DIRECTOR OF THE YEAR**  
**BILLY VALLIE, JR.**  
Pecos Funeral Home, Pecos, TX  
Michael Soper, Billy Vallie, Jr., Bill Wimberly



**FUNERAL DIRECTOR OF THE YEAR**  
**TIFFANY AGUILAR**  
Palmer Mortuary, Seguin, TX  
Chris Aguilar, Steve Bassett, Tiffany Aguilar



**SALES PERSON OF THE YEAR**  
**JOSEPH MILLER**  
Sunset Funeral Home, Odessa, TX  
Pamela Woodward, Lynette Tucker, Bill Vallie, Joseph Miller, Brian Nichols, Sparky Clark, Dudley Chandler



**ADMINISTRATOR OF THE YEAR**  
**RACHEL RITTER**  
Ardoin Funeral Home, Ville Platte, LA  
Michael Soper, Rachel Ritter, and Bill Wimberly



**MAINTENANCE/OTHER EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR**  
**ISABELO MORALES**  
Highland Memory Gardens, Apopka, FL  
Dennis Sparks, Isabelo Morales

## The City Stood Still...

On a recent trip to Resthaven Gardens of Memory and Funeral Home, I had the honor of attending a funeral that still gives me goosebumps when I think about it.

A young firefighter had passed away, and we had the privilege to lay him to rest. I remember it like it was yesterday. When I got to the funeral home, an American flag waved high from two fire trucks, and first responders were arriving at Resthaven to pay their respects. Before I knew it, there were over 30 firefighters and over a dozen firetrucks at the funeral home.

At the church, firefighters lifted the casket that was draped in an American flag to the top of a firetruck. The pallbearers stood at attention on top of the truck beside the casket. Somehow, in Louisiana's state capital of Baton Rouge, it felt like the entire city had gone silent for one of Baton Rouge's finest.

As the procession went across town, the streets and neighborhoods were lined with people that were honoring him. Students and teachers from a nearby school had made it to the cemetery, all with a small American flag in hand; this is a moment I will never forget.

I have worked in the industry for 28 years, and I must say that it is a funeral like this that makes working at Legacy Funeral Group is so gratifying. Our Resthaven team truly allowed this young family to Make it Personal.

