

MEMORIAL DAY 2012
ELMWOOD FUNERAL HOME &
MEMORIAL PARK
RESTHAVEN GARDENS
TFDA CONVENTION
FIRST RESPONDERS LUNCHEON
DAVIS FUNERAL HOME
DEATH OF ANDY GRIFFITH

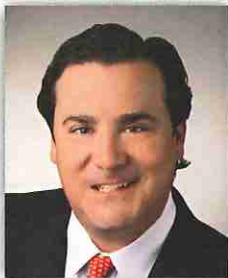
Legacy

Serving One Family at a Time

LEDGER

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LEGACY
FUNERAL
GROUP



Michael Soper
Legacy President
and CEO

How Do We Remain Significant in a Non-Traditional World?



Elmwood Funeral Home & Memorial Park celebrates Memorial Day with a special community reception featuring a ceremonial raising of the flag.

We all come across families who opt for “no service”—it may be that there is no one left who grieves the loss, but this is a small minority. By and large, I believe most families who opt for “no service” do so because they do not want to pay for something they believe has no value. This is probably because we as funeral professionals have not explained creative options that demonstrate value to them.

The problem we are facing is remaining significant in a changing world. It is the same problem that many churches are facing. In the past, tradition was enough to support a church or a funeral home. People went to church or held funerals because that is what everyone did. But now, churches have had to adapt to appeal to audiences that aren't motivated by tradition. They are motivated by authenticity of experience and personal meaning, and churches have responded in a

variety of ways. Funeral service providers must do the same.

To remain significant in a non-traditional world, we have to make each and every funeral a meaningful and personal experience. We have a responsibility to celebrate the “life lived” and not just pause for a moment of silence. We must be educators and explain to our families what funerals are all about. We need to communicate that a personalized funeral has the power to heal and help with the grief process.

Our society does not mind spending time and money to mark significant events, (baby showers, baptisms, 15 year old quinceañeras, graduations, marriages, anniversaries, and retirement parties). Why should end-of-life ceremonies be any different?

As professional advisors, we need to slow down the arrangement process. We need to leave the vital statics questionnaire

in the folder and first get to know the family. Rather than approaching the family from the standpoint of getting the facts and figures, we need to instead approach the family with a question in mind: “Who was this person, and what does this family need to experience healing and closure?” We need to ask as many questions as we can about the deceased so we can suggest service options that will make a difference. Then and only then should we take care of the business of filling out forms and getting basic information. Otherwise we are just order-takers in a dark suit.

This issue of the Legacy Ledger features several community outreach projects conducted by our funeral homes across the country. The above picture was taken at Elmwood Funeral Home & Memorial Park during the raising of the flag at an emotional Memorial Day ceremony. Please also take a minute and read Dr. Alan Wolfelt's article. It drives home the importance of funeral service and the mass void that was felt in Mount Airy, NC after the death of Andy Griffith with NO FUNERAL. As an industry, we have a responsibility to stay significant and bring value to the families we serve. The best way I know how to do that is to wait on ‘one family at a time’ and make each and every funeral meaningful.

2012 Memorial Day Services at Elmwood Funeral Home & Memorial Park

Over 200 attended Memorial Day services at Elmwood Memorial Park this year. Elmwood has hosted Memorial Day services for over 50 years. Many of those attending this service were the familiar faces of the families whose loved ones were killed in action and buried at Elmwood.

Every Memorial Day, Elmwood lines the old entrance and the roadways leading to the "Field of Honor" section. This section is reserved for veterans only and contains the central flag pole in the cemetery. This is the traditional site of our Memorial Day program. This year our services included the singing of the National Anthem, repeating of The Pledge

of Allegiance, a ceremonial rifle salute, the ceremonial raising of the flag, the playing of taps, laying of ceremonial wreaths by the Veterans Auxiliaries, Amazing Grace played by bagpipes and the ceremonial retiring of the colors. Our master of ceremonies was Jimmy DeFoor, the Taylor County Veterans Service Officer and our key note speaker was Downing Bolls, Taylor County Judge. Tricia Hicks, wife of Elmwood Funeral Director Bryan Hicks, was our dedicated photographer for this event.

We were all taken with the emotional image she captured during the raising of the flag. This image speaks volumes about the reverence and respect that our nation's citizens



The Memorial Day ceremony at Elmwood Funeral Home & Memorial Park was an emotional tribute to our nation's fallen heroes.

feel toward our veterans. We at Elmwood feel privileged to host these services every year. From all indications, the people of Abilene also feel privileged to attend.



Resthaven Gardens of Memory & Funeral Home Holds Their First Annual Mother's Day and Father's Day Celebrations

Resthaven Gardens of Memory & Funeral Home held their first annual Mother's Day celebration, which was a great success. "It was a big hit," said Steven Richard, Family Service Manager with Resthaven. "We were so honored to host the service that included a balloon release with personalized notes, refreshments, carnation handouts, and a 10 minute service with Father Jerry Martin of St. Patrick's Catholic Church. Of the hundreds of people that visited the cemetery that day, over 75 were able to participate in the day's activities."

Throughout the celebration, family service counselors were able to assist loved ones in finding grave locations, service requests, and handing out bottled water. "We were overwhelmed by how meaningful this was to families and by the measureless excitement that this small event caused in our cemetery," said Steven. "The service began at 3 p.m. and although it was short, it created a lasting impact in all involved. We cannot wait for next year's Mother's Day."

With the success of the Mother's Day event, Resthaven decided to hold its first-ever annual Father's Day Balloon Release. "It was

exciting to see a crowd larger than the one we hosted for Mother's Day," Steven commented. Light refreshments were served inside the mausoleum, and a short message was again given by Father Jerry Martin beginning at 3 p.m. After the service, guests retired to the lawn with a note to their loved ones and balloon in hand.

"It was truly a beautiful sight to see how touched guests were to remember their lost fathers and loved ones in such a special way,"

Steven added. "For example, one family could not bear the idea of coming to the cemetery alone to visit a gravesite. Upon receiving word of a Father's Day remembrance service, they decided to visit Resthaven, participating in the service and balloon release. Many others that day also expressed feelings of comfort and peace that the event provided them. We could not have had such a great day without the help of our staff. Thanks go out to everyone who was involved."

TFDA Convention in Corpus Christi, Texas



From left to right; Juan Sierra, Margie Sierra, Laurie Howard, Trey Vaughn, Bill Vallie, Lisa Nichols, Brian Nichols, Michael Soper, Cris Garza, Ben Chenault, Emken Linton, Taylor Greene, Calvin Evans

First Responders Luncheon

The staff of Rushing-Estes-Knowles Mortuary sponsored their first annual First Responders Luncheon on September 9, 2011 to honor the 10th anniversary of 9/11. The luncheon was held in the Family Center which is located behind the funeral home. This building is generally used by families who want to have a reception before or after a funeral service. The Family Center was the perfect venue because it seats 82 inside the building and there is additional seating for 12-16 people outside in the smoking area. Barbecue, beans, potato salad and all the trimmings were served to approximately 100 law enforcement officers, firemen, and emergency service personnel from Uvalde, Sabinal, Knippa, La Pryor, Batesville, and Reagan Wells. The staff at Rushing-Estes-Knowles hopes to include a few more surrounding communities next year.

"We are so grateful to all the first responders who keep our community safe 365 days a year. The least we can do is honor them one

Rushing-Estes-Knowles held a special event in honor of first responders in their community including law enforcement officers, firemen, and emergency service personnel.

day of the year in return with good food and fellowship," said Laurie Howard, with Rushing-Estes-Knowles. "Each of the different departments wore their uniforms proudly, and it was wonderful to see all of them shaking hands, laughing, sharing stories, and enjoying each other's company. Our very own Paul Stephens has served as a volunteer fireman for 15 years and EMS technician for 24 years, and my husband has been a fireman for 30 years, so I



know firsthand the sacrifice that the first responders make to protect our community. It was a privilege for our staff to be able to host this luncheon and we look forward to making it an annual event."

The staff at Rushing-Estes-Knowles plans to sponsor a luncheon for hospice and clergy this fall in the Family Center, and they hope to sponsor other luncheons in the future in honor of people who contribute to the community.

Davis Funeral Home Presented Check from Candlelighters of Nevada



The staff of Davis Funeral Home partnered with Matthews International to make a generous charitable donation to the Candlelighters of Nevada, a non-profit organization committed to serving families of children battling cancer.

Davis Funeral Homes of Las Vegas in conjunction with York/Matthews Children's Foundation presented a check for \$1,500 to Melissa Cipriano, Executive Director of Candlelighters of Nevada.

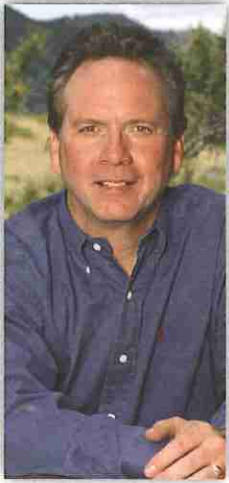
Taylor Greene, Vice President of Legacy Funeral Group, R. Todd Noecker and Allen Kopp of Davis Funeral Homes Nevada, and Wesley Boies and Bill Eaton of Matthews In-

ternational presented the donation.

Candlelighters Childhood Cancer Foundation of Nevada (CCCFN) is a non-profit agency that provides support and services for families of children diagnosed with cancer. Children from birth to 21 years of age who have been diagnosed with cancer or who have survived cancer are eligible for services if they are living or being treated in Nevada.

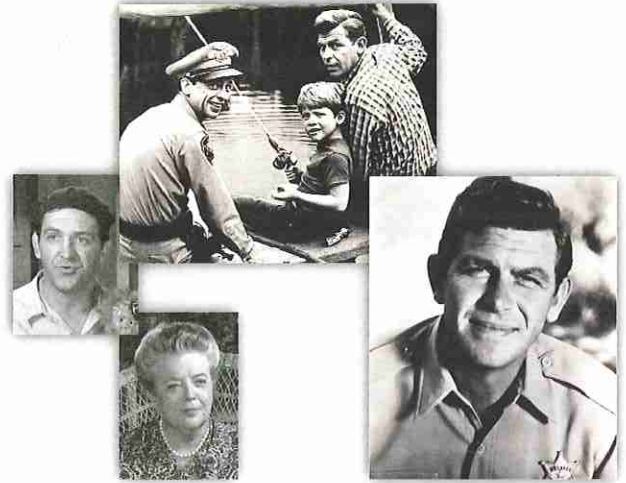
CCCFN was founded in 1978 by two families, each of whom had a child being treated for cancer. They believed that families could find strength, knowledge and comfort by banding together during their most difficult times. They wanted to use their experience to lessen the burden of those they knew would follow. Since that time, over 2,000 children in Nevada have been diagnosed with cancer.

R. Todd Noecker, general manager of Davis Funeral Homes Nevada, was thankful to be able to give back to the community: "We are honored to be partnering with such a worthy foundation. Davis Funeral Homes is dedicated to serving the Nevada community and our families. This donation is in honor of all the families who daily fight this terrible disease—we are grateful for the work that Candlelighters does for our community."



The Irony of the Life and Death of Andy Griffith

Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.



How ironic that a man who was a “symbol of values” was buried with no ceremony just five hours after his recent death. The family noted that this was “just the way he wanted it.” Sadly, as more and more people plan to do it “Andy’s way,” we are reminded that if the profession of funeral service does not educate the public about why we have funerals, nobody else will.

Close your eyes and remember the Andy Griffith Show: the little post office, the fishing hole, the general store, the barbershop, the jail—and the funeral home where people gathered when a member of the community died. Everyone knew and looked out for each other. Kids could play in the street (even though Barney would sometimes ticket people for jaywalking), and there were white picket fences. People gathered on front porches, and there was no Facebook, cell phones, or instant cheeseburgers to be found anywhere in Mayberry.

While even in its prime the show was a step backward in time, the Griffith family’s decision about Andy’s funeral is a glimpse into the potentially tragic future of funeral service. As people are reflecting on the Andy Griffith that they knew and loved, they are describing him as the emblem of the 20th century values they often say they prize most. During the run of the Andy Griffith Show

(1960-1968), we observed the very best of humanity—people who cared, people who cried, people who included children in important life events, people who gathered together for meaningful funerals when someone died.

Decades later the spirit of Mayberry lives on in Andy’s hometown of Mount Airy, North Carolina. Again, how ironic that Mount Airy’s annual fall festival, Mayberry Days, attracts thousands of people who come together to honor the memories that Andy and his cast of characters inspired—yet there was no opportunity to gather and pay tribute to the man who made it all possible.

Yes, change is a constant, but I suggest not all change is good. While we as Americans profess to want friendly communities anchored in excellent core values, we also want funerals that are easy, fast, and cheap—if we want them at all. I don’t suspect the folks in Mayberry would approve of how Andy was “laid to rest within five hours” with no public gathering. You see, those folks understood that you always have to say hello before you say goodbye. They understood that darkness was the chair upon which light sits. They understood the need to have authentic funerals, not to quickly dispose of the dead body.

You may think you should not have to

educate people in your community about the value of funerals. But the truth is that people just like Andy Griffith’s family all across these United States are questioning the very need for funerals. So, I challenge you to consider: What is your funeral home’s cause? Why do you do what you do? And if your why is grounded in the essential healing reasons we as people have had funerals since the beginning of time, remind yourself that even as you face your day-to-day work challenges, you must also keep inspiring the people you come in contact with to learn the value of funerals. If you need help, consider checking out my recent collaboration on the new website meaningfulfunerals.com, which teaches about the importance of the elements of death ceremonies. Or, see my new poster titled “Why We Have Had Funerals Since the Beginning of Time,” available at centerforloss.com

Dr. Alan Wolfelt is the director of the Center for Loss and Life Transition in Colorado. He teaches and writes about the importance of creating meaningful funeral ceremonies and is the author of numerous books on death, grief, and life transitions. He can be reached at DrWolfelt@Centerforloss.com, or, 970-217-7069.



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