



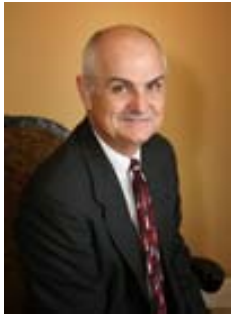
The Fall 2008

Director

ARKANSAS FUNERAL DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Bruce Smithson



Dear AFDA Members:

I am sure you are looking forward to the festive season ahead of us as we conclude a busy summer. I just returned from the NFDA convention in Orlando where I saw many friends from around the country and enjoyed the networking

with our peers. Our NFDA officers are to be commended for the success of their planning for the convention and providing many opportunities for continuing education.

Recently, I was privileged to assist in organizing a golf tournament as a fundraiser for a very wor-

thy cause. Richard Boles, owner of Ozark Embalming Service, has a 16-month-old granddaughter that has spent a considerable amount of her life in Arkansas Children's Hospital. Little Hannah Boles is an adorable baby girl that is valiantly fighting to be a cancer survivor. The majority of the funds from the golf tournament were earmarked to assist the family with the increasing medical costs to help little Hannah with her courageous battle.

I am extremely proud to be a part of such a special group of elite professionals called funeral directors. My heart was touched at the response from funeral directors all over this state as you

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AFDA

Mission

Statement

Inspiring
excellence
in service for
funeral
professionals

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NFDA Lobbyist to Speak at Mid-Winter Meeting

Edward M. Ranier, a registered national lobbyist for the National Funeral Directors Association, will be the featured speaker at the Mid-Winter Meeting of the Arkansas Funeral Directors Association on Nov. 30-Dec. 1 at the Crowne Plaza in Little Rock.

Ranier is a shareholder with Lord & Whip, P.A., a Baltimore, Md., law firm, and also serves NFDA as its U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) counsel. He has defended employers and insurers in matters arising out of workers' compensation claims and manufacturers and funeral service professionals in regulatory and corporate matters. He will address OSHA issues, including Enforcement and Greater Restrictions on Formaldehyde Usage, at the Mid-Winter Meeting.

Through Nov. 21, the Crowne Plaza is offering a group rate of \$99 per night for attendees. Member registration fees are: all inclusive, \$175; guest, \$30; Sunday only, \$85; Monday only, \$100; and affiliate/vendor, \$75. Non-member fees are: all inclusive, \$250; guest, \$50; Sunday only, \$125; Monday only, \$175; and affiliate/vendor, \$100.

Registration forms, which are available on the AFDA Web site at www.arfda.com, and fees must be received in the AFDA office by Nov. 21 to avoid late fees, which are an additional \$50.

President's Message

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responded to our request to assist this family in a time of need. The monetary donations, the participation in helping with the tournament and many other contributions are greatly appreciated.

We had 52 golfers that participated in this benefit. Rev. Don Elmore, one of the local pastors in Northwest Arkansas, began the event with a special prayer for little Hannah. I could not help but shed tears as I noticed our funeral directors and other golfers with hats in hand and heads bowed as they all supported Pastor Elmore's prayer for a miracle. This confirmed one more time that I made the right choice for my career. I am proud to be a member of the AFDA and proud to be serving as president of this great organization.

The Mid-Winter Meeting is coming up soon, and I would like to extend to you a personal invitation to attend this event and see the positive things happening with AFDA.

I want to thank Brent Stevenson Associates for their support and contribution in continuing to build the foundation of the AFDA as established by our former leaderships over the years. Let me encourage you to participate in the ownership of our organization as we work together for a level of excellence.

Thank you for your positive comments to me as your president.

Cemetery Honors Our Veterans, Commemorating Their Service

By Mitch Shelnut

On Nov. 11, 2001, the Arkansas State Veterans Cemetery was formally dedicated as a full-service, perpetual-care cemetery dedicated to serve honorably discharged veterans.

Our goal is to honor veterans with a final resting place that commemorates their service to our nation. The cemetery is located at 1501 West Maryland Ave. in North Little Rock near Camp Robinson. Our cemetery provides the visiting family and friends an atmosphere of peacefulness and dignity. The hours of operations are Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. It is closed all state holidays.

Eligibility for burial is the same as that for a national cemetery. The veteran must have been discharged from active duty under conditions other than dishonorable. Members of the Reserve or National Guard also qualify for interment if they are eligible for retirement pay as a result of 20 years of creditable service. There is no residency requirement for interment. Acceptable proof of service includes military discharge papers (DD-214 or equivalent). Spouses of veterans are also eligible. A copy of the marriage license is required.

All services are conducted at our Committal Shelter area. Interment services are provided free of charge for veterans. Spouses and eligible dependent children are charged \$150. Services include opening and closing of the grave, in the ground, double-depth concrete liners, upright granite headstones, as well as perpetual care. Those who choose cremation have the choice of in-ground burial or placement within a columbarium niche.

Military Funeral Honors must be arranged and coordinated by the funeral home director and/or the family. The Arkansas State Veterans Cemetery does not conduct or arrange these

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Handling Complaints Successfully

Successful complaint management can save a business from dealing with a lawsuit and turn angry, frustrated clients into loyal customers. And yet, how do you approach it successfully?

In his book "Traversing the Minefield," author **Mike Kubasak** writes: "Some of us find it difficult to accept and admit that things occasionally go wrong. We may not be sensitive to a client's need to hear the words 'I am sorry' from their funeral director. The value of these three words cannot be underestimated in situations like this. Saying this should not be construed as any admission of guilt. 'I am sorry' is an expression of empathy offered from one human being to another that helps to retain a personal connection. Saying it to an unsatisfied client can mean not having to say it to an attorney.

"Open and honest dialogue is essential to reducing client disappointment and anger. Sometimes, all that is needed to diffuse a potential landmine are the words, 'I am sorry for any discomfort this has caused you. What would you like me to do?' The key to dealing with the adverse situations is your ability to maintain the trust of the client family.

"My friend James Feldman taught me a three-step Best Practice approach to handling unsatisfied customers that has produced remarkable results in dealing with complaints. The steps are: (1) focus on discovery, (2) reaffirm your discovery and (3) create a joint resolution.

"Focus on discovery means getting all the information; listening and looking at the customer; not talking but taking notes; devoting all of your attention to the customer; not taking other calls or doing other work.

"Reaffirm your discovery means reiterating the critical issue or problem; maintaining a pleasant demeanor; not agreeing or disagreeing, but identifying all issues, asking the customer for their desired resolution; clarifying their needs and wants, offering a resolution amenable to both parties.

***"Create a joint resolution* means getting acceptance, commitment and resolution from the customer, and jointly developing a plan of action to resolve the dispute or unhappiness.**

"Your body language, facial expressions, attentiveness and courteous manner can serve as an all-important indication to the family as to how their concerns will be addressed. Having a solid understanding of the complaint is vital. If necessary, write down the resolution proposed by the family and take it to your supervisor or manager. Employees who give the appearance of taking control and acting responsibly can greatly affect the outcome.

Your goal is to keep the customer your customer. The way in which you come across can mean the difference between keeping a client family forever instead of having someone spread ill will and filing a lawsuit."

(If you have not yet acquired the excellent text by author Michael Kubasak, "Traversing the Minefield," it has been officially endorsed by the Funeral Ethics Association. This bold text, written in conjunction with well-known author William M. Lomers, Jr., M.D., is available through the Funeral Ethics Association. E-mail info@fea.org or call 217-525-1520.)

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Humphrey Funeral Service Receives 'Best of the Best' Recognition From NFDA

Humphrey Funeral Service of Russellville has been awarded a "Best of the Best" recognition from NFDA for an article submitted on its "Build A Bear" Project. It was one of only nine funeral homes in the nation to receive the award.

The article/program was featured at the recent national convention.

Humphrey also is proud to announce that its has been awarded NFDA's Pursuit of Excellence Award once again this year.

West Virginian Is Installed As New President of NFDA

On Oct. 14, John D. Reed Sr., CFSP, CPC, was installed as president of the National Funeral Directors Association during the House of Delegates meeting.

Reed is owner of Dodd & Reed Funeral Home and Adams-Reed Funeral Home, Inc., of Webster Springs and Cowen, W.Va.

Reed is joined on the 2008-09 Executive Board by:

- President-elect William C. Wappner, CFSP, Wappner Funeral Directors, Mansfield, Ohio.
- Treasurer Patrick E. Lynch, Lynch & Sons Funeral Directors, Clawson, Mich.
- Secretary Randall L. Earl, CFSP, Brintlinger and Earl Funeral Homes, Decatur, Ill.
- Immediate Past President Michael R. St. Pierre, CFSP, Wilson St. Pierre Funeral Service & Crematory, Indianapolis, Ind.
- At-large Representative R. Bryant Hightower Jr., CFSP, Martin & Hightower Funeral Home, Carrolton, Ga. (2007-09).
- At-large Representative Robert "Bob" T. Rosson Jr., CFSP, CPC, Waller Funeral Home, Oxford, Miss. (2007-09).
- At-large Representative Robert L. "Robby" Bates, CFSP, De Kalb, Texas (2008-10).
- At-large Representative J. Michael Krill, CFSP, Krill Funeral Service, Edgerton, Ohio (2008-10).

Expanded ADA Has Important Implications

In September, President Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008 (ADAAA). The act makes important changes to the definition of the term "disability" and expands the protections of the original ADA to include more individuals with less-severe impairments.

The act becomes effective as of Jan. 1, 2009; employers with 15 or more employees are required to comply with this federal law. [Click here](#) for more information on the changes to the ADAAA from SESCO Management Consultants, NFDA's endorsed provider to HR consulting services. For advice on how you can ensure you are in compliance with the new ADAAA requirements, call [SESCO's](#) free Human Resources Hotline at (800) 764-4127. In addition to ADAAA compliance, SESCO's experts can answer your questions on a variety of employee-related issues, such as wage and hour regulations, employee policies, employee performance and disciplinary issues and more.

NFDA Releases Results of Member Survey on Health-Care Costs

As part of its ongoing advocacy efforts, the National Funeral Directors Association conducted an informal survey to collect data on how rising health-care costs are impacting the nation's funeral homes.

The results of the poll indicate that while funeral home owners feel their ability to offer health insurance is an important recruiting tool and employee benefit, 51.4 percent of respondents stated that increased premiums have caused problems in hiring new employees and 37.8 percent have had difficulties holding onto current employees.

The results of the survey also show:

- Approximately two-thirds (67.7 percent) of respondents currently offer their employees a health insurance plan. Of those who do not offer insurance, 30.9 percent indicated they discontinued it because of increased premium costs.
- Fifty-four percent of all respondents have seen premium costs increase by more than 30 percent in the last three years.
- Increased insurance premiums have caused 21.6 percent of funeral home owners to ask employees to pay a larger share; 16.2

percent of owners have had to make cuts in their workforce; 16.2 percent have done both.

- Increased premium costs have caused 64.9 percent of respondents to reduce the amount of health insurance coverage they are able to provide to their employees.
- Almost all respondents (92.7 percent) rated having affordable health insurance plans as either the "most important" or a "very important" issue facing funeral service. Similarly, 92.8 percent indicated affordable health insurance was the "most important" or a "very important" issue facing Congress.

"NFDA has been urging action on the health-care crisis for a number of years," said NFDA Senior Vice President of Advocacy John Fitch Jr.

"We have shared this survey data with key members of Congress and the Small Business Administration and will work to find solutions that will benefit the nation's funeral homes."

NFDA members who would like a copy of this survey should contact [NFDA's Advocacy Office](#) in Washington D.C., at 202-547-0441.

REMINDER

All issues of The Director will be distributed via e-mail. Please be sure that the AFDA office has your CURRENT E-MAIL address and the address of anyone on your staff who would like to receive a copy.

Airline Serves Funeral Professionals Nationwide

Frank Kaiser, former aviation professional, recently announced the launch of Eagle's Wings Air to provide targeted air transportation and travel management service to the death care community. They act as a complimentary concierge service for human remains, while also offering bereavement travel assistance to families.

"There is a significant opportunity to save funeral professionals time, while also introducing a higher level of tracking which directly benefits the client family," said Frank Kaiser, founding partner and President of Eagle's Wings Air. For additional information on Eagle's Wings Air, visit www.eagleswingsair.com. Eagle's Wings' headquarters are located in Fort Wayne, Ind., out of which they service funeral professionals nationwide.

State Veterans Cemetery

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services. To schedule Military Funeral Honors, please contact the appropriate branch of service at the following phone numbers:

Arkansas National Guard Military Funeral Honors Program, (866) 280-7542; fax: (501) 212-5843.

Army, Casualty Assistance Center, Fort Sill, Okla., (580) 442-4627; fax: (580) 442-6914.

United States Marine Corps, (866) 826-3628.

Air Force, (501) 987-6317.

Navy, (877) 478-3988.

Coast Guard, (314) 539-3900

We encourage pre-registration of the veteran and their eligible family members. The purpose of the pre-registration for burial is to eliminate the delay in scheduling a burial while waiting for verification of military service. To pre-register, the following forms must be provided: veteran's military discharge papers (DD-214 or equivalent); signed cemetery application; marriage license (if married); and check for \$150 (spouse and dependent only) payable at the time of burial.



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