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NFDA to Launch National Emerging Leaders Program

Brookfield, Wis. – The National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA) is set to launch the National Emerging Leaders Program on April 12 to help funeral service professionals develop leadership skills that will serve them well in any setting they may find themselves – their funeral home, their state or national association, their community, and beyond.

“The National Emerging Leaders Program will help developing professionals who will one day carry the torch in our profession, our businesses and our communities cultivate the skills necessary to lead with integrity,” said NFDA President R. Bryant Hightower Jr., CFSP. “Helping funeral professionals build sustainable businesses and become pillars in their communities is an integral part of NFDA’s mission and this program will go a long way toward developing future leaders.”

The NFDA National Emerging Leadership Program is open to all licensed funeral professionals, regardless of NFDA membership, from the United States and Canada who are still early in their careers (first-career funeral directors licensed 5-10 years or second-career funeral directors licensed 3-8 years).

This year-long program for 20 select individuals will start and end at the 2021 and 2022 NFDA Leadership Conferences (the 2021 NFDA Leadership Conference is scheduled for August 1-4 in Charleston, South Carolina; 2022 dates will be announced later this year). In addition to meeting during the Leadership Conference, participants will meet virtually approximately eight times throughout the year to learn from experts, both from within the profession and from outside authorities.

The program features a practical and theoretical approach to advanced leadership topics. The curriculum, which is being developed in partnership with an expert consultant in leadership development, will cover topics such as mentorship, ethical leadership, employee relations, collaborative decision-making, strategic planning, servant leadership, communication skills, small business ownership, and more.

Participants will also have access to mentors, engage in high-level networking, and work with fellow program participants on a group project that will teach them to apply the skills they are learning in real-world scenarios.

NFDA thanks the Funeral Service Foundation and Live Oak Bank for their generous sponsorship of the National Emerging Leaders Program.

“The Funeral Service Foundation is honored to serve as a sponsor for this landmark program that benefits the profession,” said 2020-21 Foundation Chair, Anthony Guerra. “The robust curriculum centers on developing confident, focused and adaptable leaders, which directly aligns with our mission of investing in people and programs to strengthen funeral service and lift up grieving communities.”

“Live Oak Bank is proud to sponsor the National Emerging Leaders Program because we are passionate about educating small business leaders,” said Tim Bridgers, senior vice president and head of Funeral Home & Cemetery Lending, Live Oak Bank. “Our team of industry experts understands the nuances of the funeral profession and we want to invest in you because we know you’re ready to make an impact. As non-commissioned lenders, our motivation is to help you thrive with access to capital and genuine partnership. We know that education and support are crucial for long-term financial and operational success. This educational approach fuels our commitment to current and future small business owners in the funeral service profession.”

The National Emerging Leadership Program requires an investment of \$1,500, which includes the registration fee for the 2021 and 2022 NFDA Leadership Conferences; approximately eight virtual sessions led by quality speakers and trainers; printed educational materials; CE hours; high-level networking with leaders in the funeral profession; and more. Participants will also receive up to a \$1,000 travel stipend to cover their travel and accommodations (i.e., airfare, hotel, meals) for the 2021 and 2022 Leadership Conferences.

Preliminary information about the NFDA National Emerging Leaders Program is available on the NFDA website, www.nfda.org/emergingleaders. Additional details, including information on how to apply for the program will be available on April 12. Applications are due May 15. Selected participants will be announced in early June.

NFDA is the world’s leading and largest funeral service association, serving more than 20,000 individual members who represent nearly 11,000 funeral homes in the United States and 49 countries around the world. NFDA is the trusted leader, beacon for ethics and the strongest advocate for the profession. NFDA is the association of choice because it offers funeral professionals comprehensive educational resources, tools to manage successful businesses, guidance to become pillars in their communities and the expertise to foster future generations of funeral professionals. NFDA is headquartered in Brookfield, Wis., and has an office in Washington, D.C. For more information, visit www.nfda.org.

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