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David Root

ON THE COVER:

- 6 Living with Purpose and Passion
AFSA president David Root
by Lisa Johnston

FEATURES:

- 10 What's Your Type?
by Jeffrey Chancellor, CFSP
- 14 It's Hard to be Humble!
by Dr. Bill Webster
- 16 Thinking Outside the Box
BCFA shares insights on education and the labour shortage
by Lisa Johnston
- 22 The SFSA AGM: A Successful Return
by Nerissa McNaughton
- 27 NETWORK

REGULARS:

- 26 Upcoming Events
- 37 Buyer's Guide

Canadian FUNERAL NEWS

"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself
in the service of others." ~ Mahatma Gandhi

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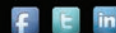
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Pat Ottmann

HUMAN OR MACHINE

by Pat Ottmann

"To point with pride, view with alarm and occasionally recommend."

I had the opportunity to visit with a funeral director at a convention some years ago who shared he would never hire a staff member who didn't go to church on a regular basis. He just felt the connection to something bigger than we are and the connection to the community was incredibly important to being in the funeral profession; meeting people in a place of faith and prayer gives a human connection that is very real and important in being human. He was also a big proponent of service organizations and volunteerism with his staff in his community. I suppose we can all look at this gent and smile at how old school and dated his ideas were. Yet, I would venture to say the services he and his team provided on a human level were far more meaningful and professionally rewarding than today's machine transactions.

Now, of course, in the world we live today, even making a statement like that would land you in some kind of hot water. Yet, to my thinking, what he said made sense. He wasn't trying to convert anyone, nor did he even care about their actual faith base. Just that they cared about something bigger than themselves and their community.

I now sit at conventions and listen to the gurus share secrets of connecting through social media and Google Ads and, and, and.... I find it somewhat amusing that the only way we want to connect with our communities is through a machine (computer, phone, etc.). Yet, when that family walks through the funeral home door, we expect some magical transformation in which they become community-minded individuals who care about all the things that a "traditional funeral service" provides.

Transactional versus personal. If the only way we are seen is through a machine, then why would this suddenly change when our services are needed? The machine world

is incredibly distant. For all the good it has done, perhaps far more harm has been done to humanity. How else can we account for the absolute vitriol that is spewed 24-7 through social feeds? There must be a human disconnection that allows this, and yet that is where we are trying to attract our next client family.

Artificial intelligence and machine learning are coming our way. One step farther from community and faith that we will soon have with the families. "Talk to our AI and make an arrangement." As silly as that sounds, we are already moving in that direction. If your vision is to depersonalize, make it transactional and remove all emotion, then this looks like a good path to generate calls. I would imagine the spend per call will follow the complexity with which the call was generated and with the heartfelt human connection that has been employed in making this connection.

I still am of the school that we only get out what we put in. No effort, no reward. No passion, no connection.

When we take funeral service away from everything it stands for – when we move away from our core reason for being – then we should not be too surprised when people walk through our doors with a different reason for being there. We are contributing to our own demise as we lose the purpose in what we provide families.

The trend is clear as each year we have fewer funeral homes providing service to more families. The difference in hours is well understood based on the services and there is no magic as to what is happening. The only real question is: what do you want your firm to look like in the future?

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LIVING WITH *Purpose and Passion*

AFSA PRESIDENT DAVID ROOT

by Lisa Johnston

For current Alberta Funeral Service Association (AFSA) president David Root, there is nothing better than a day spent interacting with people and helping others. It is the philosophy that carries him through life and is evident in his passion for funeral service – whether working at Pierson’s Funeral Service, teaching the next generation of funeral professionals or leading the provincial association.

Root’s beginnings mirror the stories of many third-generation funeral professionals across the country. The grandson of company founders, Ches and Joan Pierson, Root was exposed to funeral service at an early age. Although he initially dabbled with the idea of becoming a pharmacist following high school, it did not take him long to realize the desire to serve grieving families was deeply embedded in his DNA.

“Once I started doing actual funeral work, more than mowing lawns, I decided this was meant for me and I was meant for it,” says Root. “I think the key to being a good funeral director is the ability to connect with the family in a short time frame to help lead them through the process in a humble way. I enjoy the challenge of being able to walk into a room with complete strangers and ideally walk out a friend or an essential part of their family.”

Today, Root serves as general manager and co-owner of Pierson’s Funeral Service, alongside his uncle, Michael Pierson. In addition to the family’s long-standing principal location in southeast Calgary, the Pierson family owns Cochrane Country Funeral Home, Pet Heaven Crematorium & Funeral Chapel, and is part owner of Country Hills Crematorium in northeast Calgary.



David Root

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With the goal to always give back – a trait instilled in him by his family and his long involvement with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints – Root has jumped at the opportunity to serve in leadership roles. Not long after graduating with his funeral director licence in 2007, he joined the Mount Royal University (MRU) Alumni Council. His connection with the school led to the opportunity to teach the introductory funeral course. Thirteen years later, he continues passing his vast experience on to students and currently serves as the instructor for both funeral directing theory 1 and funeral trends and regulations.

“Two things led me to want to join the Mount Royal team,” recalls Root, who also played a role in redeveloping the MRU funeral service education program over the years. “First, I love public speaking and that one-on-one interaction with others. Second, I’m very passionate about funeral service and I think we need to show that enthusiasm more. I’m not saying we’re not passionate, but we need to be more public about it. Sometimes we get a negative connotation in the media. People need to start recognizing how important our profession is. We need to spread the positive message because there is so much wonderful work being done on a daily basis.”

It is this same passion of wanting to give back and help others that led Root to the board of AFSA. “My Uncle Michael is a past president and he spoke highly about all the things he accomplished and the people he met along the way. It’s been a wonderful part of his history in funeral service, so when the opportunity arose in 2017, I let my name stand for election.” Even in the early days, Root was eager to move up the ranks to president, something that came to fruition at the Alberta AGM this past April. “I am happy to serve in this role for so many great reasons which includes getting to associate with all the professionals across our beautiful province.”

A detailed-oriented leader, Root hopes to continue the work of the past boards while making progress on government negotiations. “We have been working with the government to try



David Root with his family: children, Kayla, Kyara, Alexa, and Riley, and wife, Marysol.

to sort out some issues that have come up with our funeral benefits program. We have made a lot of progress with the help of a lobbyist and we are definitely further along, but we have to keep the momentum going.” Other tasks on the AFSA radar will include discussions with membership regarding the medical examiner’s contract and rural transportation, and conversations with the regulatory board to hopefully modernize the act to reflect today’s funeral service landscape.

In addition, Root stresses the profession needs to address the labour issue and the increasing lack of funeral directors

“I have a wonderful team here at the funeral home and I really rely on them to pick up the slack when I’m busy with my other commitments,” says Root. “I also have a very supportive family. My wife, Marysol, and the kids (twins Kayla and Kyara, 12; Alexa, 10, and Riley, 3) know that some of my free time will be taken up with discussions concerning funeral service or my other commitments.”

across the country. He believes part of the solution lies in growing the interest of the public as a profession through positive messages.


“One of my favourite educational sessions was presented by Todd Van Beck at a conference a few years back,” says Root. “One of the things he kept asking was: ‘who is speaking for the funeral profession?’ He pretty much said, ‘no one was.’ We are letting others carry the narrative about funeral service, and a lot of people in the social media world are very negative about what we do, how we do it and why we do it. Anything that is going to positively promote our profession is also going to increase people’s interest.”

Root adds that people are out there, many of whom might consider a career in death care. “In one of my Mount Royal classes last year, I had 80 students. Enrolment is quite high and there is definitely an interest in the profession. People are

wanting to get into it. It is just finding the right path for them which is sometimes a challenge.”

It is one of the challenges Root is looking forward to tackling during his one-year term as AFSA president. He has a lot on his plate, but still finds time to help his church and the Calgary Stampede Parade committee, where he has donned his cowboy hat for the past 13 years as a volunteer member.

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It is all in a rewarding day of work for Root. One filled with a passion for funeral service, teaching, family and faith. 

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Jeffrey Chancellor, CFSP



WHAT'S YOUR TYPE?

by Jeffrey Chancellor, CFSP

As an embalming lecturer and demonstrator, I travel a lot and get to embalm with many different people. Recently, while on a tour lecturing and demonstrating embalming techniques in Australasia, I had the chance to prepare multiple remains in multiple cities. Imagine small preparation rooms packed with as many as 20 guests. All gathered closely around the table. Each participant bringing with them their own habits, perspectives, favourite fluids and questions.

As usual, we began with a thorough pre-embalming analysis of the remains followed by the question: "if this guest was in your care, what would you do?" We went around the room and got virtually the same responses regardless of the city or subject. Don't get me wrong, these are great people! Super caring. Very competent and they keep their premises spotlessly clean and organized. What was their common response? Restricted cervical injection, co-injecting and the solution strength dependent on two factors: the presence of edema and how long until final disposition.

Three very diverse participants stood out in the audiences. One fellow was a seasoned veteran of funeral service who had sold his firm and retired after more than 50 years of service. Another participant was an experienced lady who had seen me demonstrate back in 2003. The final was a young woman brand new to death care who donned her first pair of gloves in April. She had not yet entered the educational program since New Zealand has been without an embalming school for almost four years.

Let's start with our most senior outstanding guest. During the tea break, he stated quietly to me that this looked like a type two case. I smiled and agreed. "What do you mean by type two case?" asked a close by eavesdropper. We both chuckled and explained it was either a type one case that was not "cooperating" with our techniques and mixtures or a case where the deceased had been in storage longer and had more albumin due to infection than a type one case. We both laughed again

nostalgically, but it brought up a good point to me. Case typing is a very valuable tool to understand treatment options.

Case typing is not a new idea. I remember an old embalming textbook (circa 1920s) where bodies were classified by type based on their length of time dead, age, size and medical conditions. It was popular in the 1950s with some embalming fluid manufacturers even providing charts to hang on the wall of the prep room. You could simply look at the chart and refer to the treatment guide for a mixture, injection point, pressure and flow suggestion.

One of these case typing systems was very thorough with six case types and even included considerations like "insanity" or "institutionalized cases." A type two case, as an example, was defined by 12 factors of consideration and then there were 11 pages of treatments and mixtures. Voila, no need to guess or think! Just a need to read 12 or 13 small print pages in a manual.

Case typing was abandoned about 50 years ago as the embalming rates began to plummet and refrigerators replaced early care. Is it time to bring it back? I dare say no because there are way more than six types of cases. Every body is unique and requires a solution, injection point, drainage point, pressure, flow and volume unique to the individual for best outcomes. It is, however, time to abandon the one-size-fits-all approach that restricted cervical injection has brought with it.

When I selected injection from the external iliac artery and drainage from the right internal jugular vein combined with a vascular flushing treatment and a pH adjusting, moisture-enhancing mixture followed with a two per cent preservative solution while preparing one of our guests, I received a lot of attention from attendees. "We don't have time to pre-inject!" was the first cry. We started the stopwatch feature on one of their smartphones. Our primary mixture was one bottle of Gold, one bottle of Nutralize, 15 millilitres of Red and 15

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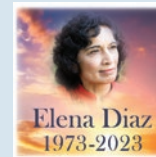
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After a mere three months, the booklet is already in second edition in the U.K., and has been described as "... a masterpiece, covering all aspects of grieving in a most practical and helpful manner." (J. West, West & Coe, London)

Dr. Bill will introduce this product to the Canadian market in the fall of 2023, at less than the cost of a sympathy card.

To receive a complimentary copy for your consideration, please email Dr. Bill Webster (info@griefjourney.com) with your name and funeral home details.

Visit www.griefjourney.com for more grief support resources.

Let me ask you, are you using a lot of fluid, makeup and time? Try employing a vascular flush, a moisture building or reducing treatment and then add your preservatives. You just may save time, money and have happier clients! Happy embalming!

millilitres Tan Kosmetint dye, and 120 millilitres of Eckolan diluted by adding four litres of water. This made approximately 5.5 litres of mixture.

The face, fingers and opposite foot's toes showed circulation before 1.5 litres were injected. We continued with our vascular flush until the superficial veins in the head showed significant distension after a volume of about 2.5 litres had been injected. We paused for a brief time and added a single bottle of Lanatone to the remaining solution to make a two per cent mixture. Once depleted, we mixed half a bottle of Lanatone and 1.5 litres of water for another two per cent mix. The outcome was splendid and according to the stopwatch, it took 25 minutes to perform the whole procedure.

A guest commented that they were going to save at least 15 minutes in cosmetic application and brush cleanup! All attendees agreed they have enough time to do a vascular flush or pre-injection.

Our second outstanding attendee said, "That's way different than you taught us back in 2003, Jeff!" I agreed with her and explained the rationale for my treatment choices. I asked her to consider that in the 20 years since our last embalming together, there have been many changes in health-care delivery and medications and my personal embalming experience and research has taught me a lot. My recommendations were surely different and as Heraclitus said, "No man ever steps into the same river twice, for it is not the same river and he is not the same man." We also discussed that in 20 years, our chemicals have changed a lot to meet the demands of today's types of cases.

Our next subject was not a type two case. He had been ill a long time and deceased about 40 hours in a chilly cooler. He had very little muscle mass and moderate edema in his legs, particularly his feet and ankles. The process was similar and the mixture slightly different. We injected from the external iliac and our mixture contained one bottle of Gold, one bottle of Nutralize, one-third a bottle of Veloxin for Edema and one-third a bottle of Eckolan diluted with four litres of water.

We'd injected almost three litres of this mixture when one attendee said, "Look at his left ankle and foot; it is already


coming down in size!" We paused a moment and then added a bottle of Nuoxin 24, some tan tint and a litre of water to the remaining solution for a strength of three per cent. We depleted that mixture. Our last mixture was one-third a bottle of Nuoxin 24 and one-quarter a bottle of Veloxin for Edema dissolved with 1.5 litres of water for the right leg.

Our subject absorbed the mixtures evenly and without swelling. The edema disappeared and we were left with a lovely, natural, lifelike colour and texture. The audience began chatting loudly amongst themselves before we left the clinical care suite. That's always a good sign.

At the refreshment gathering, they said things like, "Wow, I can't believe he looks so alive." "I'm stunned." "I'm gob-smacked." "I can't believe you used such a small volume of mixture to relieve the edema."

The last outstanding guest, our newest attendee on my Down Under journey, pulled me aside at the end of the session and said, "Everything I've been taught is wrong!" I suggested that was an overreaction and that she had been taught a lot of good stuff. "That's not what I mean, Jeff. You used the wrong arteries and the wrong veins and you only used half of the bottles of chemicals my mentor uses. Your case looks so beautiful and won't need any makeup!"

She explained she has really only seen "hard, grey, concrete statues that need an awful lot of makeup to look great." She has had to become a master of the airbrush. She said she used to help a relative who was a house painter. He taught her that if you make sure the wall is clean and dust free prior to painting and use a primer, you will use a lot less paint and the results will be much better and longer lasting. With paint costing upwards of \$100 New Zealand dollars for a four-litre can, you can't afford to waste it. She went on to say that if your paint job doesn't last or has flaws, you'll never get called back and in such a small market that can really hurt you.

Let me ask you, are you using a lot of fluid, makeup and time? Try employing a vascular flush, a moisture building or reducing treatment and then add your preservatives. You just may save time, money and have happier clients! Happy embalming! 

Jeff Chancellor serves as director of education, training and research for Eckels and welcomes your opinions.



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Dr. Bill Webster

IT'S HARD TO BE HUMBLE!

by Dr. Bill Webster

“**O**h Lord! It's hard to be humble, when you're perfect in every way.”

Mac Davis's famous song could be the international anthem for narcissists, and it doesn't stop there.

“I can't wait to look in the mirror 'cause I get better looking each day. To know me is to love me. I must be a heck of a man. Oh Lord, it's hard to be humble, but I'm doing the best that I can.”

C'mon now, how many of you were singing along?

And if you think there are not people in our world today who actually believe these lyrics, you just haven't been paying attention.

Narcissism is often regarded as the opposite of humility, but in fact, the two often work hand in hand. Narcissism, in and of itself, is a normal personality trait. In the history of psychoanalytic theory, a healthy and modest amount of narcissism is seen as an essential component of mature self-esteem and basic self-worth, which we all need.

However, when that balance is out of whack, high levels of narcissistic behaviour can be damaging, and is considered a personality disorder. Common symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) include a need to seem or appear superior to everyone else. It's a pattern of self-centred, arrogant thinking and behaviour, a lack of empathy or consideration for other people, and an excessive need for admiration. Extreme level narcissists believe that others should be obedient to their wishes, and that the rules don't apply to them. They manifest manipulative or controlling behaviours; are exploitative of personal relationships for their own gain; and have a preoccupation with power and success.

In the history of psychoanalytic theory, a healthy and modest amount of narcissism is seen as an essential component of mature self-esteem and basic self-worth, which we all need.

Recognize anyone?

In the 1970s, a popular business approach forwarded by Robert Ringer was *Winning by Intimidation* (1973). But while the philosophy is still embraced in many quarters, this somewhat narcissistic approach has more recently been linked to a variety of leadership problems, ranging from poor motivational skills to risky decision-making and even white-collar crime.

Surely, there must be a better way.

I enjoy watching the TV program “Undercover Boss.” Each week, it depicts a high-positioned executive, CEO or owner of a major business deciding to go “undercover” as an entry-level employee to identify flaws or weaknesses in their company. The executive changes appearance, assumes an alias and creates a fictional backstory.

The explanation for the accompanying camera crew is that they are being filmed as part of a documentary about entry-level workers in that particular industry, usually someone changing careers. They spend approximately one week undercover, working in various areas of the company's operations, with a different job and location each day.

The key is self-control. It has to do with whether our characteristics arise from our own selfish needs, desires and greed, or whether we practice traits like empathy, kindness, charity and compassion.

The “boss” is exposed to a series of predicaments and tasks, often with amusing results, and invariably spends time getting to know selected company employees, learning about their professional and personal challenges. It impresses me that these management leaders, searching for a way to improve effectiveness and efficiency, are willing to become humble and act as servants to their employees.

Business guru Simon Sinek expresses it: “Humility, I have learned, must never be confused with meekness. Humility is simply being open to the ideas of others.”

But sadly, that is not always the way we treat other people.

Humility is different from humiliation. To humiliate is to cause a painful loss of pride, self-respect or dignity to someone. Humiliation is the shame you feel when someone makes you appear foolish or unintelligent, or when you yourself make an embarrassing mistake in front of others. In contrast, humility means a modest and realistic opinion of one’s own importance.

However, there is a very thin line between humble and humiliating behaviours. While both words come from the same root, the effect is very different. The key is self-control. It has to do with whether our characteristics arise from our own selfish needs, desires and greed, or whether we practice traits like empathy, kindness, charity and compassion.

“Just knowing you don’t have all the answers is a recipe for humility, openness, acceptance, forgiveness and an eagerness to learn – and those are all good things.” Actor, Dick Van Dyke.

Jim Yong Kim, 12th president of the World Bank (2012-19) observed: “No matter how good you think you are as a leader, the people around you will have all kinds of ideas for how you can get better. So, for me, the most fundamental thing about leadership is to have the humility to continue to get feedback and to try to get better.”


Some people regard their job as helping others get better. The narcissist, however, sees their job to make others look worse

so that they can look better. If that narcissistic attitude does not define insecurity and self-doubt, I don’t know what does.

Which one are you?

Real growth and maturity happen when you start checking and correcting yourself first before addressing someone else. Instead of blaming others or circumstances, you take your power back by being responsible for your life.

True humility is intelligent self-respect which keeps us from thinking too highly ... or too meanly ... of ourselves. It makes us modest by reminding us that as human beings we all come short of what we could be, rather than deceiving ourselves just because we can’t handle that reality.

“Oh Lord, it’s hard to be humble, but let’s do the best that we can.” 

Dr. Bill Webster is the director of the Centre for the Grief Journey, and can be reached at www.GriefJourney.com, and on Twitter @drbillwebster.



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THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

BCFA SHARES INSIGHTS ON EDUCATION AND THE LABOUR SHORTAGE

by Lisa Johnston

Funeral service education in British Columbia is unique compared to other parts of Canada. The British Columbia Funeral Association (BCFA) is the school – with instruction contracted to the Canadian College of Funeral Service (CCFS). There are two entrance streams for the apprenticeship program: licensure for current funeral home workers and foundation for those new to the profession. Most of the education is online, but students meet three times a year at Simon Fraser University’s downtown Vancouver campus.

According to Jason Meidl, chair of the BCFA education and apprenticeship committee, the program is in high demand and receives a guaranteed \$193,000 grant to operate through SkilledTradesBC.

“In the past two years, we have seen an increased demand to the point where we have wait lists,” says Meidl. “As a result, we have made applications to SkilledTradesBC for an increase in funding. We have been successful for the last two years, which provided an additional \$46,000 each year in funding for 15 more student seats.”

The high demand has caused BCFA to forgo their foundation program for 2023, only accepting students currently working in funeral homes. The change may also help with attrition rates, as those entering the program already know what to expect. According to Meidl, the attrition rate – the number of students reaching graduation – has improved in recent years. Compared to the 2020-22 class which saw 14 graduates (just under half who began the program), 38 of 46 students from last year’s intake are poised to enter level two this September.

“At BCFA, we are constantly looking at the education platform and discussing ways to ensure we have graduates entering the field to help our member firms,” says Meidl. “One thing we’re considering is bringing in a consultant to look at our program and determine the areas where we can improve.”

BCFA has provided extra guidance with student logbooks in recent years, something that president elect Shane Dickson believes is helping keep students in the program. “One of the biggest roadblocks have been the logbooks,” says Dickson, who served on the education committee for several years.



Jason Meidl

“They are a lot of work and not something you can do every two or three months. We have put together some training to help with this component so it is one less thing for the students and mentors to worry about.”

Dickson adds BCFA is also looking at getting accredited, so students can use RESP savings toward their funeral education. As the apprenticeship program operates as a private school, it is currently ineligible for RESP contributions.

While education reforms are one way to address the funeral director shortage, the labour challenge exists in all facets of death care, from administrative staff and cemeterians to cremationists and pre-need sales. Shortages can be felt in the cities across the province where cost of living is high and in smaller centres where it’s hard to attract new workers.



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COMPARISONS WITH OTHER PROVINCES

“We would also like to look at our current legislation to help mitigate some of these issues,” says Meidl, owner of Creston Valley Funeral Services. “In B.C., our licences are tied to a funeral home, so for instance, I can only work at Creston Valley Funeral Services. To have someone cover me during my vacation, I need to transfer their licence and then transfer it back [all with added costs and paperwork delays]. We would like to investigate how to make that process simpler to allow for funeral directors to move around to where help is needed.”

The ease of transferable licences also ties into allowing available retirees to return to the workforce. With many funeral homes stretched thin – and owners and managers working extra hours to pick up the slack – having the ability to bring in a tenured funeral director when needed would go a long way to easing the staffing shortage.

“Right now, to keep our licences, we are required to do our CEUs every cycle,” says Meidl. “There is also a requirement to have your licence hung at a funeral home and you can’t let your licence lapse for over two years. If you let your licence lapse, trying to get it back is not an easy task.”

As a result, BCFA has started conversations with Consumer Protection BC – the regulator of funeral service in the western province – to see if a new process can be drawn up that will allow retirees to come back to work part time after their licence has lapsed.

“As an example,” says Meidl. “I have a retired funeral director who is helping on services. He has been in the profession for over 40 years and his licence lapsed just over five years ago. We aren’t able to get his licence back without him returning to school for the full two years and completing an apprenticeship. He would be interested in coming back part time as a funeral director, but has no interest in going back to school.”

Dickson agrees finding part-time help in the big cities is a challenge. An employee with SCI Canada, he says the company provides incentives to fill part-time positions, including benefits packages. “Funeral homes struggle to find part-time workers for backup roles like drivers and assistants,” he says.


Ontario: There is no requirement for funeral and transfer service professionals to be employed in the sector in order to hold a personal licence. However, if they would like to practice, they would need to do so on behalf of a licensed operator. They must continue their CEU requirements and submit their renewal application. If a licence has lapsed, there are different requirements to get it back based on the established timeline.

Alberta: The funeral director licence is tied to a facility; not to the individual. It is possible to be held at more than one business, allowing for work at more than one facility or company. If a licence lapses after two years, funeral directors are required to take their licensing exam and fill out the regular application, criminal records check and licensing declaration. They do not need to return to school. Upon retirement, they can keep their licence active by completing their CEUs and paying their fees.

Saskatchewan: Any licensee can continue to be licensed, whether or not they are actively working in the profession. However, they need to ensure they meet their educational requirements. If they let their licence lapse, they can reapply and pay the applicable fees. The reinstating of a licence is on a case-by-case scenario and based on what the bylaw reads at the time.

“Most people living in the city can’t afford to work part time unless they are students or retirees.”

In addition, Dickson is seeing a change in what people are looking for today regarding work-life balance. “There is a definite shift in the sacrifices people will make. We bring people in, but after a few months they realize they want Monday to Friday, nine-to-five, but our profession doesn’t work that way.”

It’s a long road ahead for many professions needing to hire qualified workers, but BCFA remains committed to finding solutions, whether through updates to licensing, education or other solutions currently being investigated. 

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2023 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING CONCLUDES SUCCESSFULLY FOR GFD



The GFD board at the annual general meeting.

GFD, a leading financial services company specializing in the bereavement sector, held its annual general meeting (AGM) on June 7, 2023. The AGM proved to be a significant milestone for the company, featuring the unveiling of a refreshed brand strategy, election of a new chair and the addition of prominent business and sector professionals to its esteemed board of directors.

Lucy Lombardi, an accomplished chartered accountant, was elected as the new chair of the board of GFD. With her extensive experience and deep understanding of the bereavement sector, Lombardi brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to the position. Her strategic insights and leadership acumen will undoubtedly contribute to the continued growth and success of the organization.

Commenting on her appointment, Lombardi states, “I am honoured to assume the role of chair of the board for GFD. This organization plays a vital role in supporting the bereavement sector and ensuring the financial well-being of funeral homes and the families they serve. I look forward to working closely with the board, the president and CEO, Heather Kite-

ley, and the dedicated team at GFD to further enhance our services and meet the evolving needs of our members.”

In addition to the election of the new chair, the AGM also witnessed the welcoming of two new board members: Olya Sanakoev and Doug Pierson. Sanakoev, a seasoned professional from Rogers Communications, brings a diverse background in innovation and digital transformation. Pierson, currently the chair of the cemetery committee for Holy Trinity Anglican Church, has enjoyed a multidisciplinary career with experience in operations, compliance, fiscal oversight and marketing.

The additions of Lucy Lombardi as chair, Olya Sanakoev and Doug Pierson to the board of directors further strengthen GFD’s leadership team. Their extensive expertise and fresh perspectives will bolster the company’s ability to navigate the evolving landscape of the bereavement sector.

GFD also announced the unveiling of a newly refreshed brand identity, born out of extensive research and consultation with a variety of stakeholders, including, its members. “Our renewed brand identity is an extension of our efforts to



GFD president and CEO Heather Kiteley.




The Honourable Vic Fedeli, Ontario's minister of economic development, job creation and trade, spoke at the AGM.

modernize our business and adapt to changing market conditions. We believe that this identity will help us build a stronger connection with our members, partners and employees, and enable us to more clearly communicate the direction we're headed," says Heather Kiteley, president and CEO of GFD.

The updated brand identity expresses the evolution of GFD and their commitment to serving the bereavement sector, while staying true to their core values. It is both modern and timeless and more accurately reflects the spirit of the organization and the sector served.

Outgoing chair Bill Denning says, "This renewed brand identity truly reflects our values and our vision for the future: member-focused, trustworthy and innovative. It is an extension of our efforts to pivot GFD and adapt to changing market conditions and the evolving bereavement sector."

GFD plans to continue to invest in the pillars of their strategic plan by investing in their digital capabilities, expanding their business nationally and creating new and diversified product offerings. These three strategic pillars will further differentiate GFD and provide a path forward that ensures GFD will continue to be a leader in the bereavement profession. 

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THE SFSA AGM: A SUCCESSFUL RETURN

by Nerissa McNaughton

With a sigh of relief and with many happy smiles, funeral professionals from across the province arrived in Saskatoon for the Saskatchewan Funeral Service Association’s (SFSA) first in-person golf tournament, AGM and trade show since COVID pushed such events into the digital realm. For an association that is just now setting up a website – and an association that values personal connection among members and the families its professionals serve – the return to an in-person event was very well received.

“It was a great three-day event and we are glad for the success of it,” says John Schachtel, past president.

The Texas Scramble golf tournament kicked ... or better said, teed ... things off on May 10.

“It was held at the Greenbryre Golf & Country Club,” recounts Schachtel. “It was a four-person-per-team tournament and we all played 12 holes. Suppliers sponsored each hole. We had 42 golfers out for the day, playing from the 1:30 p.m. shotgun and ending at 5 p.m. for a happy hour reception.”

About 90 guests attended the reception and a number of awards were presented, including longest drive, closest to the pin, most honest score and highest foursome score.

Schachtel smiles, “Patrick Grondin was the MC. He handed out the awards and told jokes. It was a warm day without much wind – just a fantastic day all around that set the tone for the rest of the event.”



John Schachtel

The next morning, the SFSA activities moved on with trade show, in conjunction with the Funeral and Cremation Services Council of Saskatchewan’s Spring Symposium and continuing education seminars.

“We had 20 vendors this year and we were very happy with the suppliers that came to show their products,” says Schachtel.



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“SFSA currently does not have a website; that is on the agenda for next year. It is very important to stay connected to bring people into the association. We’ll start with the website and go forward from there.”

“Some came from as far away as Quebec. The trade show was very successful, despite some challenges caused by growing pains from the previous years.”

Continuing ed wrapped up the next day by noon, and then it was time for the SFSA AGM.

“The AGM was attended by about 35 people, of which 21 were voting members,” reports Schachtel. “In addition to the election, important issues were discussed.”

This included the move to opening up membership outside of Saskatchewan so anyone involved in the funeral profession can join SFSA.

“The new membership program rolls out on January 1, 2024,” he explains. “Until then it is still an ownership group, but we are moving towards individual voting. We are also working on other incentives for our members, such as discounts at the pumps for licensees, discounts for clothing and options for group health care for funeral homes that have three or fewer members. Not everything has been finalized yet; we are in the preliminary stages, but it is a work in progress.”

Discussions at the AGM included coming up with a new policy alongside the Ministry of Social Services, and a discussion with chief coroner Clive Weighill about transport concerns.

“With social services, some things had been working but there were some glitches. The new policy allows us to hear how things are going at each location and ensures the right representatives provide better, more accessible communication. Our delegate, Jeff Christiansen, will meet with the ministry again to review the policy and timelines and to ensure we have better communication.

“The one-on-one talks with Weighill were very productive. He answered our questions and listened to our concerns; we are very happy about how open he was to the discussion of who is responsible, and who gets paid for, taking possession of and transporting a body. There was a lot of good dialogue that strengthened the relationship between SFSA and the coroner’s department.”

As Schachtel wound up his term, making way for Trevor Watts as the new president, he reflected on the overall goals of the association and its path forward.

“For a strong future, we need continuity, which is why we are in the midst of hiring a part-time administrator for SFSA. The new assistant will assist the treasurer and help us better respond to emails, membership renewals and more. SFSA currently does not have a website; that is on the agenda for next year. It is very important to stay connected to bring people into the association. We’ll start with the website and go forward from there.”

During the event, the weather was warm, the sun shone and a lot of progress was made. As the professionals said their goodbyes and left for home, the weather turned and smoke from the wildfires rolled in. A coincidence, to be sure, but for the first in-person SFSA AGM since COVID, the nod from the weather was a nice touch and felt like a little more than pure happenstance.

Schachtel says it best with his closing remarks, “We are just grateful it all worked out so perfectly and we look forward to the next one, next year in Saskatoon.”

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The Gravure-Craft and Vaella team with, left to right, Mark McCaffrey, James Allen, Kelly Murphy, Jean Vaillancourt, David McCaffrey and Laura McCaffrey.

With the retirement of David, Mark and Laura McCaffrey, Gravure-Craft is transitioning to new ownership. Following 82 years of McCaffrey family operations, the funeral stationery and urn supply business has been acquired by Vaella Consulting. According to Vaella president and owner Jean Vaillancourt, it will be business as usual for both staff and clients at the two Canadian locations.

“We’ve been talking about this for several years,” says Laura McCaffrey, who has worked alongside her father, David, and her brother, Mark, for the last 38 years to meet the stationery, sundry and urn needs of Canada’s death-care profession. “Neither Mark nor I have any children, which means we needed to find someone who shares our same values and passion. It’s bittersweet. Our family has been doing this for over 82 years. I worked side by side with my grandfather until he was 99. I feel very fortunate to have had that time with him.”

According to McCaffrey, the Gravure-Craft and Vaella merger is a win-win situation for everyone involved. “The experience with stationery that Jean brings to the table was a big consideration for us,” says McCaffrey, who will stay on as a consultant for the foreseeable future. “We felt it was a really great match as Gravure-Craft offers products that Vaella doesn’t, and vice versa. It’s hard to let go, but I feel the company will be in excellent hands. Vaella is a Canadian-owned family business with the same values and passion.”

While Vaillancourt has known the McCaffrey family for close to two decades (16 years as president of Vaella), their bond was solidified during the pandemic.


“During COVID, I was having issues getting cardboard and other product,” says Vaillancourt. “We were competitors, but we’d always been friendly competitors, so I reached out to ask how they were doing. We had a nice 45-minute conversation and it ended with us both offering to help each other

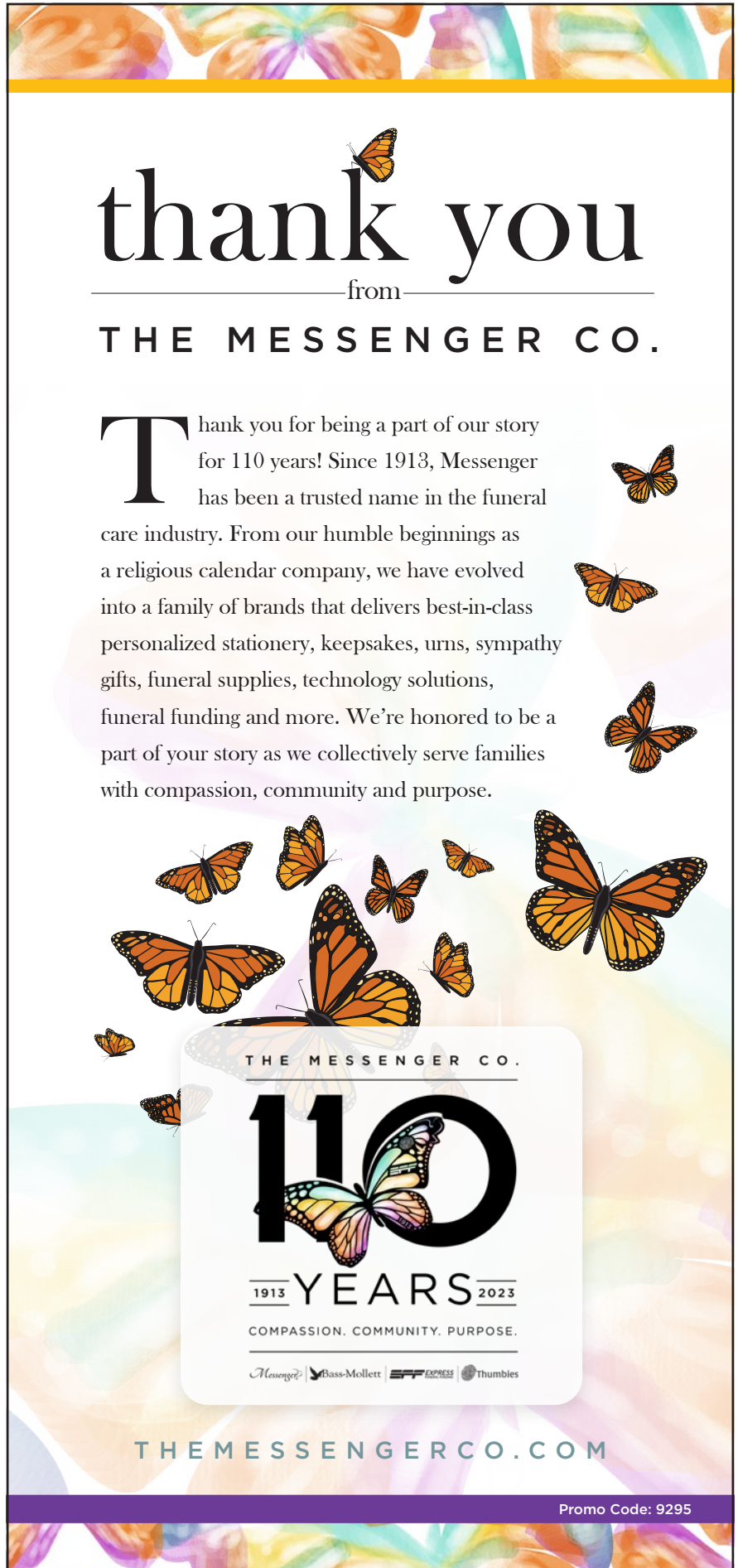
where we could. It was a wonderful spirit of collaboration even though we are competitors.”

The conversations that started last fall have now come to fruition. It will be business as usual at both Ontario facilities. Gravure-Craft will continue operations out of its 15,000-square-foot Toronto facility while Vaella will remain based in Alexandria, Ontario. The transaction makes the group the largest manufacturer and supplier of stationery and paper products for the funeral service profession in Canada. Combined, they will be able to maintain ample stock levels and effectively supply the marketplace.

“At the core, we have stationery products in common which is where the main efficiencies will be found,” says Vaillancourt. “Beyond that, Vaella specializes in print software. We have graphic designers who work seven days a week, 365 days per year, who are basically an extension of funeral home staff. As far as Gravure-Craft goes, they do urns, jewelry, sundry items and crucifixes. We have a core that is common but we have our areas of expertise that will continue to grow together.”

Kelly Murphy, who is new to the company, will bring a strong operation background in the manufacturing and service sector and will serve as the company’s new vice president. “Being family owned, we’re hoping to continue the family feel and tradition that the McCaffreys have developed and will be retaining every staff member. I look forward to working closely with Laura in building new relationships with our team and existing clients, and forging new friendships as we embark on this chapter.”

It is a match made in Canada that will continue two long-standing family traditions. 



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Harald Gunderson Memorial Golf Tournament
September 19, 2023
River Bend Golf & Recreation Area
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BRITISH COLUMBIA FUNERAL ASSOCIATION (BCFA)

Graduation Ceremony
September 16, 2023
Delta Hotels Burnaby
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CREMATION ASSOCIATION OF NORTH AMERICA (CANA)

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February 14-16, 2024
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NEXT-OF-KIN MEMORIAL AVENUE

National historic site in Saskatoon celebrates 100th anniversary

What's Inside?

Vol. 37 No. 5 • September 2023

2 Cover Story
Next-of-Kin Memorial
Avenue

6 OACFP
Association Update

8 WCCA
Association Update

9 Business Index

Photo courtesy of Terry Hoknes.

Lieutenant-Governor Russ Mirasty speaking at the event after he unveiled the 100th anniversary plaque.



NEXT-OF-KIN MEMORIAL AVENUE

National historic site in Saskatoon celebrates 100th anniversary

By Lisa Johnston

In 1914, over 650,000 Canadians and Newfoundlanders left home to join the war effort. Many never returned. They were buried where they fell in countries such as France and Belgium, leaving loved ones back home with no place to mourn. As a result, memorials were erected across Canada. In Saskatoon, the oldest of these is the Next-of-Kin Memorial Avenue of Trees located in Woodlawn Cemetery.

According to City of Saskatoon archivist Jeff O'Brien, two residents started the idea of a Memorial Avenue in 1923 to beautify the city, but it quickly morphed into something much more significant.

"Prior to Memorial Avenue, there were no trees in Woodlawn Cemetery," says O'Brien. "Except for the river valley, Saskatoon in its natural state is bald prairie, tall grass and gophers. However, as Jean Jarvis and Margaret Hanson were both members of the IODE (Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire), the project quickly became a war memorial of living trees, where people could pay a modest sum – \$7 in those days – to have a tree dedicated to an individual soldier. That is what sets us apart from other memorials. It is not a public commemoration, but a personal one dedicated to a loved one who is never coming home again."

On June 17, 1923, in front of a crowd of 8,000 people, the first 266 trees were dedicated on the grounds of Woodlawn Cemetery. Planted at the gates on 33rd Street, the trees run northwards to a paved circle surrounding the Soldiers' Cairn. Through the years, almost annually, more trees have been added. Today, over 1,200 trees currently stand tall in memory of Canada's fallen soldiers.

"The trees are all American elms and were chosen for their elegance, stateliness and longevity," says O'Brien. "It's a living memorial in the sense of being a tree but also in the sense of continuing to be increased every year with the addition of more trees."

Every June, Saskatoon's Decoration Day ceremony takes place on the grounds of Woodlawn Cemetery. This year's event – held June 18, 2023 – was extra special as it was combined with an anniversary celebration to mark the planting of the first 266 trees. All the components came seamlessly together through a joint effort organized by the Next-of-Kin Memorial Avenue Centennial Committee composed of the City of Saskatoon in partnership with the Decoration Day Service Committee, Saskatoon Heritage Society, Parks Canada and the Friends of Forestry Farm House.



Memorial Tree Certificate #130. Photo courtesy Local History Room, Saskatoon Public Library.



Memorial Avenue in the early days. Photo courtesy City of Saskatoon Archives.

Chris Zerebeski, superintendent of cemeteries for the City of Saskatoon, led the centennial planning committee, but says it all started when Peggy Sarjeant, from the Saskatoon Historical Society, went to city hall in early January. “She requested the city form a partnership to celebrate the event and then following the mayor’s directive, we all came together – much like back in 1923 – to plan the centennial celebration in conjunction with our annual Decoration Day.”

Malcolm Young, a veteran who represented both military organizations and the Royal Canadian Legion, played a key role in bringing the anniversary celebration to life. “Following the mayor’s directive, we decided we would hold one event in June with three ceremonial activities. The first was the unveiling of our 100th anniversary plaque to re-dedicate and commemorate what took place on June 17, 1923. The second activity centred around conducting our annual Decoration Day service that happens across Canada every year. Lastly, we unveiled three pedestals at the Soldiers’ Cairn, dedicated to those who served in NATO operations, United Nations operations and the war in Afghanistan.”

Zerebeski notes the ceremony this year also honoured the 4,000-plus indigenous and Métis soldiers who served in the First World War. During the conflict, more than 300 indigenous Canadians were killed while an unknown number of Métis lost their life. Today, memorial trees #3 and #25 commemorate those soldiers from the Saskatoon area.

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Photo 1: Saskatoon Mayor Charlie Clark with veterans unveiling a cairn dedicated to United Nations operations. Photo 2: Anniversary celebrations occurred in conjunction with Decoration Day. Photo 3: Over 400 people attended the historic event.

“Under Chris’ leadership, we went through a consultation with both the indigenous and Métis communities, in terms of their cultural and military representation,” says Young. “That manifested in a couple of ways. We made sure we highlighted the names of the soldiers in both the video we created and during the ceremony. Speaking their names out loud is an important part of their culture.”

While the majority of trees are dedicated to individual soldiers, some have been donated in honour of specific groups. For example, one plaque commemorates all the nurses who lost their lives during the First World War while another is dedicated to the boys from Christ Church Anglican. Every tree has a plaque, containing information such as the soldier’s name, rank, unit, where they died, date of death, and who donated the tree on their behalf. Most of those commemorated are from the Saskatoon area, but others are from across Saskatchewan, Canada and even other countries.

Young references one such tree dedicated by Canon Frederick Scott in memory of his son, Henry, killed in the line of duty during the First World War. While the renowned chaplain and poet was not from Saskatoon, nor was his son, he still wanted to purchase a tree at Woodlawn Cemetery. “I can only assume he did this for one of two reasons,” notes Young, “the project in Saskatoon was one of the largest of its kind and it was well supported by the community.”

In 1994, the Next-of-Kin Memorial Avenue received special recognition when it was designated a national historic site – the only one of its kind in Canada.

“Our Memorial Avenue of trees is unique, but that wasn’t always the case,” says O’Brien. “Several such avenues were created in the 1920s across Canada but have fallen victim to indifference, public apathy or a failure to remember. If a city built their Memorial Avenue on a street somewhere, well one day, they probably decided they needed to widen the street and as a result took down the trees. Our is in the middle of a cemetery – a place dedicated to memory. Those two concepts piggyback on each other to ensure our Memorial Avenue still exists exactly like it did 100 years ago.”

Saskatoon’s Next-of-Kin Memorial Avenue is a unique memorial that has stood the test of time, honouring soldiers from all Canadian conflicts. The words from the IODE letter sent out to encourage people to purchase a tree back in 1923 sums it up best: “A tree is a thing of beauty and inspiration. A living token of the wonder and glory of nature, and a symbol of service. For the life of a tree is a life of service. Even the end of life is not the end of a tree’s service. Therefore, is not a tree a fitting symbol for those valiant men who gave their lives for the service of their country, and who died that humanity might continue to live in civilization, in culture, and in happiness?” **N**

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OACFP

ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF CEMETERY
AND FUNERAL PROFESSIONALS



Allan Job

ASSOCIATION UPDATE

The Retention Conundrum

By Allan Job, President, Board of Directors

A previous boss of mine would often say “Everything is great ... until it isn’t.” This statement was meant to relate to situations that we take for granted when things are going well, but where we might also anticipate problems should conditions change.

The current labour market and our sector’s challenge to produce licensed funeral directors is exactly one of these situations.

While mass retirements have created labour shortages in most sectors, the bereavement sector is unique in that at the same time as we are facing labour challenges, we are also facing a tsunami of deaths that will occur as the baby boom generation nears their final years.

Simply put, replenishing our aging workforce is not keeping pace with increased service demand. Recently, the Bereavement Authority of Ontario (BAO) reported that the province has experienced a decrease of 272 (or 9.8 per cent) of funeral director licences between March 2017 and March 2023.

When discussing this issue, OACFP is often asked about our role in mitigating this problem. As a trade association, OACFP has three key responsibilities:

- To provide broad awareness of sector issues that affect members’ ability to do business.
- To provide valuable education for our members.
- To lobby government, guaranteeing our members’ voices are heard.

Awareness: For almost two years, OACFP has been discussing our labour concerns with anyone willing to listen. For over a year, OACFP has been discussing this issue directly with the BAO. Additionally, we have written about it in trade magazines and journals, all in the hope of making sure this issue is top of mind for all stakeholders.

Education: OACFP’s strength is in the quality of the education we provide. Following is a small list of the educational endeavours put together by OACFP to specifically target recruitment and retention within the sector.

- Multi-year NSERC research project in partnership with Collège Boréal to study the post-pandemic attitudes toward the provision of bereavement sector offerings, resilience and the public sentiment regarding the services we provide.
- Enrolment in ChatterHigh, an award-winning platform that engages thousands of students across Ontario, promoting the bereavement sector as a possible future career path.
- The creation of an online survey designed for any member of the public to evaluate their suitability for a career in the bereavement sector.
- Multiple sessions on resilience, recruitment and retention during educational events such as our Women’s Symposium, front-line training events and the upcoming conference.
- Presentation of a special webinar this fall specifically on the topic of burnout as it relates to retention.

- Understanding the increased importance of the role of an FDA, OACFP has now created, for the first time, a front-line FDA training event.

Lobbying Government: For the past 12 months, OACFP has been actively engaged in lobbying government on behalf of its members. Our lobbying efforts have included the management of excess soil for cemeteries, cremation emission standards and priority of persons legislation. More recently, we have engaged with the ministry on red tape reduction, requesting sensible change to how licensure is awarded in Ontario. The following items were included in that engagement.

• **Apprenticeship Programs** – Currently, the BAO approves two educational institutions for funeral service education: Humber College in Toronto and Collège Boréal in Sudbury. The existing educational system creates obstacles and limits those individuals who desire to enter a funeral service career. Individuals in northern Ontario, individuals for whom funeral service is a second career and individuals currently employed face barriers related to the associated costs of travel to attend training in another city, tuition fees and lack of income.

Proposed Solution: To create a new pathway to licensing and increase new entrants into our profession, we are suggesting that Ontario adopt an apprenticeship training model.

Such programs create flexible training options, improve the recruitment and development of a skilled workforce, and increase retention during and following the apprenticeship. Additionally, both students and employers receive tuition and employer benefits that currently are not accessible to those attending funeral service programs that are recognized by the BAO.

The ability to “learn and earn” is an attractive component of an apprenticeship program when recruiting and growing the workforce.

• **Licence Class** – Currently, there are two classes of licences for funeral directors. Class 1 (embalming) and Class 2 (non-embalming). Both allow funeral directors to contract funeral services and supplies as well as arrange and direct funeral rites and ceremonies on behalf of funeral establishments.

Proposed Solution: To attract more individuals to this profession, non-embalming licensing should be made broader and more accessible. We suggest exploring the possibility of establishing a Class FD2 licence in a purely online environment. While our focus has been on recruitment, the issue of employee retention has come to the forefront. Statistics are being used to highlight the number of newly graduated individuals who decide to leave the sector, five to 10 years after graduation.

In general, isolated statistics are very difficult to use to properly evaluate the true situation. Maybe individuals are leaving the sector in greater numbers compared with past experience,

but to evaluate this, don't we need to know how our sector compares against other similar service-oriented professions? How do we compare against the retention statistics for teachers, nurses, hairdressers, etc.? Does today's youth change careers equally across many different professions? Might these retention statistics be the new normal?

Having had the opportunity to speak with many business leaders, it seems to me that everyone is working diligently to create the best possible work-life balance for their employees in what is a demanding yet truly rewarding profession.

Is it possible that our system of licensure, which was adequate in the past, is now under stress because of a massive post-pandemic push to retirement, an increased need for our services, and a dramatic shift in the nature of those services? Let me elaborate. Currently, the process to get a funeral director's licence in Ontario consists of an eight-month formal education program and a one-year internship. In other words, 60 per cent of the education is provided by private businesses (under direction from the colleges) while 40 per cent of the education is held at an educational institution.

Businesses today are facing many challenges, and most are trying to survive by doing more with less. The additional burden of taking on and training an intern is a bridge too far, for some. This, combined with the fact there are fewer funeral homes today, means there are simply fewer internships available.

Educational institutions have often cited the challenge of finding internships as a limiting factor in their ability to increase enrolment.

If the internship portion of the licensure process was reduced to six months, what would happen? Here is what I think is possible:

- Businesses who currently budget to take a certain number of interns could take more interns for the same cost.
- Smaller businesses that could not manage the responsibility of a year-long internship may be open to reconsider a six-month internship.
- Educational institutions could then increase enrolment because of the increased capacity for internships.

So, what does this have to do with retention? Recruitment and retention are inextricably linked. Whenever businesses have little choice over who they hire, retention will be negatively affected. Having an increased talent pool to choose from will ultimately lead to businesses being able to select individuals who have the “right fit” for their organizations which will lead to greater retention.

What do you think? Let us know at info@oacfp.com, or directly online at: Funeral Licence Employee Retention & Recruitment (www.surveymonkey.com/r/GS7HYXW). **N**



Ken Munday



ASSOCIATION UPDATE

By Ken Munday, WCCA President

As I write this article, our annual conference is shaping up to be the best one in many years. Thanks to all the hard work from our board, sponsors and, of course, WCCA administrator Lorraine Piller, we have a very exciting list of speakers and a great tour scheduled. We already have more registrations (both delegates and suppliers) this year than we had last year! It's great to see so many people attending conferences again.

While we are seeing an increased attendance for our conference this year, we are finding some cemeteries are still recovering from the financial impact of COVID-19. We have had a few cemeteries reach out to let us know they cannot attend and we look forward to seeing them next year.

It certainly is no longer a hot news topic, but COVID continues impacting people and businesses. I rarely see anyone wearing a mask these days, even at the airport and on a plane. Don't get me wrong, I'm really happy to see people getting back to almost what life was like pre-COVID, but I do hope people continue to understand that there are those who need to be extra cautious and will continue to wear a mask.

However, it does seem like we have turned the corner and the worst of COVID is behind us (knock on wood). What I am finding most interesting now is watching what changes appear here to stay and what will revert to the way it used to be at both funeral homes and cemeteries. Positive changes such as streaming services (which became popular during COVID) appear to be here to stay with more and more families taking advantage of this type of service. That really isn't surprising though. Streaming was around before the pandemic; it just took off when no one was able to attend services in person. What is surprising, though, is that I am still coming across cemeteries that are closed to the public or open for appointments only.

Please consider joining the WCCA board. This is not only a great way to give back to the association, but an opportunity to grow both professionally and personally.

For those cemeteries boasting regular hours, partitions are often still in place. I'm beginning to wonder if they will ever come down. It will be interesting to hear from cemeteries on what changes are permanent. Maybe this will be a topic for a future webinar or conference.

For now, I look forward to seeing everyone in Edmonton from September 6-8, 2023 for our annual conference! If you happen to read this prior to the event and have not registered, please reach out to Lorraine Piller at administration@westerncemetery.com.

At our annual general meeting, we will be looking for new WCCA directors. Please consider joining the WCCA board. This is not only a great way to give back to the association, but an opportunity to grow both professionally and personally. I have certainly learned a lot throughout my time on the board. I look forward to having you join us and working together to help grow and strengthen WCCA.

If you have any questions about the association or would like more information, please visit our website at westerncemetery.com or send us an email.

Have a great rest of the summer and I look forward to seeing everyone again soon! **N**

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The Ontario Association of Cemetery and Funeral Professionals (OACFP) and EverLearn Associates are thrilled to announce that over 100 bereavement professionals have now completed the Trusted Advisor Certification Program. This milestone underlines the growing recognition of the program as the new standard for arranger training in the bereavement sector.

The Trusted Advisor Certification Program is a one-day training course designed to equip bereavement sector professionals with the skills and knowledge to deliver exceptional client care. The program emphasizes the importance of customer service, leadership and effective communication in both at-need and pre-need settings, for both funeral and cemetery professionals.


“Reaching the 100 certified trusted advisors mark is a testament to the significance and effectiveness of this program,” says Darren Denomme, executive director of OACFP. “We are excited to see this program fast becoming the industry standard for arranger training.”

The curriculum, designed by EverLearn’s Codi Shewan (who brings over two decades of extensive experience to the table in collaboration with the OACFP) encourages participants to lead with their strengths, create meaningful connections with those they serve and elevate their influence with integrity.



Participants learn to transform the experiences of their client families in purposeful ways and employ their unique communication profiles powerfully.

“Feedback from the sessions is always positive with operators and participants sharing how impactful the training was,” Shewan says. “We are immensely proud to have reached this milestone and look forward to continuing to energize and invigorate the passion of professionals in the bereavement sector, and to continue to set the bar high for training in the bereavement sector.”

EverLearn Associates and OACFP are dedicated to the continuous improvement of the funeral and cemetery profession and are committed to empowering more professionals through the Trusted Advisor Certification Program. 

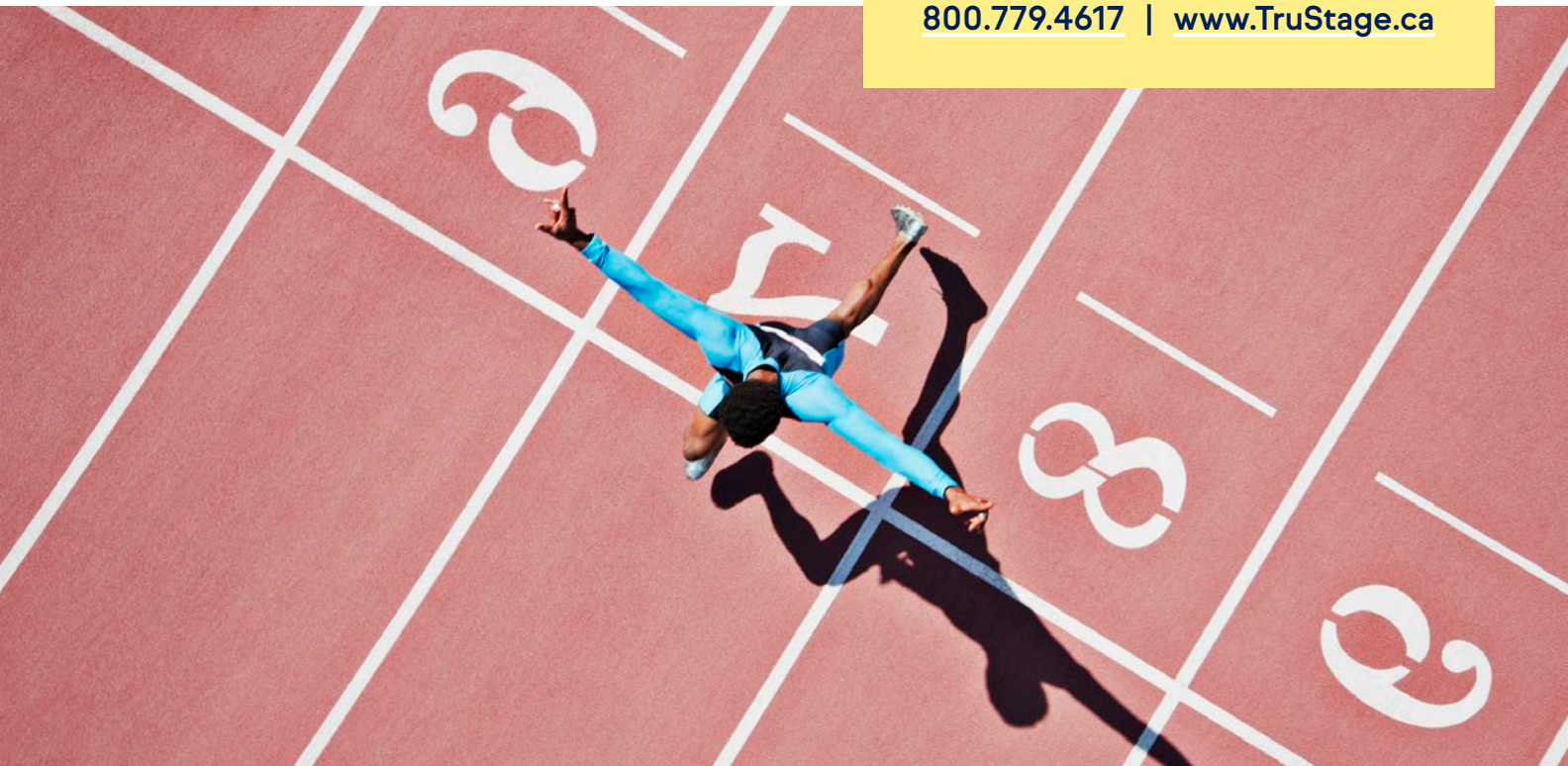


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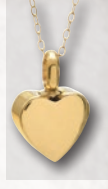
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