



ASSOCIATION OF  
**WOMEN**  
FUNERAL DIRECTORS

*Strengthening the Presence of Women in Funeral Service*

## ***AWFD Connections***

***February 14, 2010***

***To avoid having your notification of publication end up in your spam folder, please take a moment to “white list” our email address, [info@wfdconnect.com](mailto:info@wfdconnect.com). Thank you!***

### ***From the Executive Director***



#### ***Happy Valentine's Day!***

I'm utterly delighted to wish all the wonderful women of AWFD the happiest Valentine's Day possible! May it be exactly what you want it to be; whether you're lounging at home, or out-and-about, please do exactly what you want to do; eat what you want, listen to your favorite music, and dance in your stocking feet; whatever nourishes your spirit, and brings you joy.

Me? What will I be doing? Hmm...sitting by the woodstove, reading a good book, I think. I've just started *Immigrant, Inc.*; a fascinating look into the values and characteristics of the immigrant entrepreneurs who are changing our country – for the better. I heartily recommend it (no pun intended!)

### ***Big News from Advisory Board Member, Daisy Kelly***



In this case, big news comes in a sweet, small package! Daisy and her husband are now the proud parents of Luke Brian Kelly, born to them on February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010. She shares a photo of this remarkable being; who has already enriched our lives, just by his very presence! Welcome, Luke – and congratulations, Daisy!



---

ASSOCIATION OF  
**WOMEN**  
FUNERAL DIRECTORS

---

*Strengthening the Presence of Women in Funeral Service*

### ***Another Call for Photos!***

Ok, women friends. Last month I asked that you send images of you in your funeral home/office setting – or at play with your family. Do you remember why?

Well, many of you have commented on the rotating gallery of photos on our association home page. I've bounced this idea off of a few members, and we've come to the decision that we'd all like to see *pictures of our members, in their funeral homes, or at play with family and friends.*

If you have a picture you'd like to share, please send it to me at [kim@wfdconnect.com](mailto:kim@wfdconnect.com). I so look forward to seeing pictures of all our members, doing what they love to do – and our site visitors will be inspired by your presence. *Thank you!*

### ***February's Event: We're turning to Podcasts!***

Ok. Here's the skinny. So many of you desire to attend our teleseminars, but then find your schedules too crowded to do so. Part of the role of the AWFd is to reduce the stress in your lives, not create stress – so I've decided to use the podcasting model instead. That means no cluttered schedule for you – I'll let you know when you can access the audio file on your member's page, and you can listen in when you have the time. Nice idea, huh?

This month, I'll be joined by Kristan McNames, of Grace Funeral and Cremation Services. We're going to be talking about the ins-and-outs, pros and cons, joys and frustrations of starting your own funeral home. You may remember that she and her husband started their firm in 2009 – and what she's got to share will inform, inspire, and educate us all. We'll touch upon what it's like to work side-by-side with your spouse, too; that's going to be enlightening, and funny, I'm sure.

Kristan's got a rollicking good sense of humor – so stay tuned for the Podcast availability email and blog post.



---

ASSOCIATION OF  
**WOMEN**  
FUNERAL DIRECTORS

---

*Strengthening the Presence of Women in Funeral Service*

## ***Marketing: Facebook Anyone?***

Is your firm on Facebook? You should be! But...there's a right way, and a wrong way to go about it. Our Strategic Partner, Rob Heppell, known as "Hepp" to his friends, is an expert in funeral home marketing. *(If you're a member, you've got access to four DVDs chock full of Hepp's wisdom. Be sure to order your set from him today - see your Member Benefits page for details. If you're not a member - that's one good reason why you should be!)*

In an online article dating from May, 2009, Hepp notes the *7 Mistakes Funeral Directors Make with Facebook*:

### **1. Not on Facebook Yet: Sign Up For Facebook**

It's not too late, [sign up today](#)

\* When you do sign up, please add me as a friend: <http://profile.to/robinheppell/>

### **2. Non-Passionate Status Updates:**

"Monday again, Hump Day, TGIF, Work Sucks" plus others that I can't repeat

\* I know that it's not all about work, but as funeral professionals we are always in the public eye – even online; keep the venting to private conversations – you never know if a family member can see your status even when your privacy settings are set.

### **3. Not Showing Families How to Add Obits to Their Profile:**

Let family members promote your online obits to their Facebook community

\* Whether you have a Facebook profile or not you can harness the power of Facebook to drive traffic to your online obituaries by teaching families how to add their loved one's obit into their profile so that all of their friends can see it, and then go to your site to leave a condolence

\* When I look at my clients' Google Analytics (website stats) I am amazed that Facebook is usually in the Top 5 Referrers category

\* View video on McCallBros.com: [Add an Obituary to Facebook](#) for more insight on this.

### **4. Creating a PROFILE for the Funeral Home instead of a PAGE:**

Profiles are for People and Pages are for Businesses

\* If you have your Profile as your Funeral Home and not you personally, here's what you do:

o Create a Profile under your Personal name and once you have built up your profile, then invite all of the Friends from the first profile to your new one

o Create a Page under the Funeral Home name and copy all of the pertinent information over – then once it is established you can start to invite people to become a "Fan"



---

ASSOCIATION OF  
**WOMEN**  
FUNERAL DIRECTORS

---

*Strengthening the Presence of Women in Funeral Service*

### **5. Not “Claiming” your Memorable Web Address for your Profile and Business Page:**

Do not let your competitor “Claim Your Name”

\* Here are my Memorable Web Addresses:

- o Robin Heppell (Profile): <http://profile.to/robinheppell/>
- o FuneralFuturist.com (Page): <http://companies.to/funeralfuturist/>

### **6. Having A “Profile” Picture that is Too STIFF:**

Is your profile picture with you in your “Stripes” or other Funeral Attire?

\* You want to connect with your “Community” – the more they can relate to you (as a parent, spouse, soccer coach, etc.) the better – could you change your picture so that you could be “more like them?”

\* NOTE: “But Hepp, your profile picture is you in a suit!” Exactly – see the previous bullet point – ... connect with ‘your’ community

### **7. Do Not Actively Build Your Friend List:**

The more people that you can connect with in your community, the better – it will not hurt you to have too many friends on Facebook – well, until you hit the maximum of 5,000

\* Here are 3 ways to grow your “Friends” list:

- o Upload your “Contacts” from your Outlook or Outlook Express
- o View the Friends of the Most Popular people in your community and “Add as Friend” if you think that it is appropriate to do so
- o Search Groups and Fan Pages for Local Organizations like Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, Church Groups, etc.

\* NOTE: Just a little bit of advice – create Lists to segment your Friends such as Family, School Friends, Funeral Peers, [Your Town's Name] Connections, etc. You will thank me later.

*For more help with Facebook, and social media marketing, visit Hep's Funeral Futurist site, [www.funeralfuturist.com](http://www.funeralfuturist.com).*



ASSOCIATION OF  
**WOMEN**  
FUNERAL DIRECTORS

*Strengthening the Presence of Women in Funeral Service*

## Grace Funeral and Cremation Services – On Facebook!

The screenshot shows the Facebook page for Grace Funeral & Cremation Services PC. The page header includes the Facebook logo, a search bar, and navigation links for Home, Profile, and Account. The profile header features the company logo and name, along with tabs for Wall, Info, Photos, Events, Links, and Video. A post by RAC is visible, discussing a seminar. The sidebar on the left includes a 'Fans' section with photos of Sandy Finch, Love Aghes, Kristan Lappe, Robin Heppell, Tessa Carter, and Natalie Hastings, and an 'Events' section listing upcoming seminars and trips.

Yep, Kristan and her husband Bob have a Facebook page for their firm. If you, or your firm is on Facebook, let's all get connected! Please send me an email: [kim@wfdconnect.com](mailto:kim@wfdconnect.com). I'll make a list of firm pages available, so we can become supportive "fans" of one another's work. And, I'm pretty sure you've seen the AWFDF Facebook page, but if not, search on Facebook for [Association of Women Funeral Directors](#). If you're not a member, then become a fan. I'd love to know you support our work.



ASSOCIATION OF  
**WOMEN**  
FUNERAL DIRECTORS

*Strengthening the Presence of Women in Funeral Service*



### ***Member Lapel Pins: They're on Their Way***

I've ordered them, and they're due to arrive on my doorstep on February 15<sup>th</sup>. All current dues-paying members will receive their pin by the end of February.

I've ordered both gold-toned and silver-toned pins. If you have a personal preference, please email me at [kim@wfdconnect.com](mailto:kim@wfdconnect.com).

If you're not currently a member of AWFd, why not join us now? You'll have access to all the audio files, resources, and benefits of membership, including \$100.00 in free credits from funeralOne, for use with their *Life Tributes* personalization software, and a listing in the *Women in Funeral Service Locator*.



Click on the image on the left to be taken to the Web site where you can join. We'd love to have you!

### ***Funerals Today Magazine: a True Gift to the Consumer***

From the AWFd Blog, February 8, 2010

I received my first print issue of this landmark journal. *Funerals Today Magazine* is the FIRST magazine "geared toward educating the public about the funeral industry." According to the editor, "our goal is to educate, encourage and enlighten you every day, and hopefully remove your misconceptions about death." BIG GOALS, and so very worthy of our attention!

The editor-in-chief, Muneerah N. Wagner, a new member of AWFd, is a bright, energetic young woman. She is the leader and driving force behind the Warner Funeral Home, in Philadelphia. You can visit her Web site at: [www.thewarnerfuneralhome.com](http://www.thewarnerfuneralhome.com).

I'm very impressed with the flagship issue I received in my mailbox. As a firm believer in consumer education, I think she's got a great start on a valuable enterprise...the article on Unusual Funerals was a compendium of observations and experiences garnered by the editor, including one which described a phenomenon I'd not heard of: "destination funerals." There's



ASSOCIATION OF  
**WOMEN**  
FUNERAL DIRECTORS

*Strengthening the Presence of Women in Funeral Service*

also a lovely feature article on a new (up and coming) first-generation funeral director, Laura McCorkle; currently studying at [Mid-America College of Funeral Service](http://www.midamericacollege.edu). It's really a nice way for consumers to "meet" the new face of funeral service.

I heartily recommend that you subscribe to the journal, published bi-monthly. At only \$18.00 per year, it's a valuable addition to your life – and will make interesting reading for those families who may come to you for ideas and inspiration. Subscribe today at: [www.funeralstodaymag.com](http://www.funeralstodaymag.com).

Nice work, Muneerah! We, at AWFD, are proud of you!

*Article of Interest: Morticians Draw New Blood: Females*

by Justin Nobel



*The Call of Death:* Caitlin Doughty left a career in theater to study mortuary science. Four decades ago 95 percent of mortuary students were male, with the majority from funeral home families. (Photo by Justin Nobel)

How Caitlin Doughty came to a career in death is unusual. At the University of Chicago she studied medieval history and crafted plays from Victorian poems and obscure Edgar Allan Poe stories. After graduation she moved to San Francisco and produced theater.



---

ASSOCIATION OF  
**WOMEN**  
FUNERAL DIRECTORS

---

*Strengthening the Presence of Women in Funeral Service*

“That’s what I thought I wanted to do,” said Doughty. “Then I thought, ‘you know what I have also wanted to do,’ work in a funeral home.”

Mortuary science was once a stiff calling, a trade passed from grandfather to father to son. Non-white morticians were rare, as were women. In 1971, 95 percent of students entering mortuary schools were male, and the majority of them were sons of funeral home directors, according to statistics from the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE). Now, nearly 60 percent of enrollees are female. At Cypress College of Mortuary Science in Los Angeles, where Doughty is in her first semester, three-quarters of the students are women and not one is from a traditional funeral family. This year a new demographic has emerged: laid-off workers looking for a second career.

“Now that they have been let go from the financial industry or the mortgage industry they have the time to seek retraining and go into funeral service,” said Jolena Grande, a professor at Cypress, which will accept 50 percent more students this fall to accommodate for new interest.

But many newcomers arrive deluded about the profession that lies ahead and unprepared for the rigors of mortuary science itself. Some believe a job in the funeral industry will bring instant wealth. Goths with tongue rings and bodies decorated in tattoos are drawn to the profession’s dark subject but must be reminded that the bereaved want a friendly face, not a pierced one. The heavy science curriculum sends other students packing. “I figured it was just going to be some learnin’,” said Doughty. “It’s actually incredibly difficult.”

There are 56 accredited funeral service schools across the country and in 2007 they graduated 1340 students, according to ABFSE figures. The road ahead for graduates is difficult. Death comes at all hours, which means directors are always on call, and constantly caring for the bereaved can be emotionally draining. Only 5-10 percent of graduates will still be in the field ten years out, notes a popular funeral directing textbook.

Jolena Grande’s career has tracked another trend in the industry, corporate ownership. In the early 1990s, Grande left a family funeral home in California to work at one in Oklahoma, which was bought by Service Corporation International (SCI) while she was there. By the time she returned to her former funeral home in Los Angeles a few years later that too was under SCI. Now one in ten homes are owned by either SCI or Stewart Enterprises, Inc. Across the Desert Southwest and Southeast that number can be much higher, Grande says.

But families usually keep the home’s family name; often all that changes is bodies are taken to a central facility for cremation or embalming, rather than prepped at each individual funeral



ASSOCIATION OF  
**WOMEN**  
FUNERAL DIRECTORS

*Strengthening the Presence of Women in Funeral Service*

home. “Most people don’t know that the family-run funeral home across the street is no longer family-run,” says Grande.

Geographic differences exist from home to home, said Dr. Michael Smith, Executive Director of ABFSE, but overall the industry remains relatively uniform. “As the baby boomers die off there may be slightly more demand,” said Smith, “but I think the future will be pretty stable.”

But as a new generation of mortuary students, with diverse backgrounds and no family funeral roots, enters the profession, the industry may begin to change. “What is interesting about America now is that we are sort of in a post death culture,” said Doughty. “It’s an exciting opportunity to create new rituals.”

*From the blog entry: <http://blogs.funeralwise.com/dying/2009/04/15/mortuary-science-school-no-longer-a-bunch-of-stiffs/>. With permission of the author.*

---

### ***Mortuary Management Columns***

Those of you who subscribe to this print journal may see the column I write each month. Naturally, I’m honored to write for them – and my intention is to build interest in our organization while hopefully entertaining the readers. The best thing would be to change minds, and give people something to think about. I thought you might like to read a column I wrote last October.

If you’re not a subscriber, I suggest that you make this journal a part of your monthly enrichment. There’s a lot in there – I always enjoy reading the contributions of the various columnists, including those of Ron Hast, the publisher. Go to [www.abbottandhast.com](http://www.abbottandhast.com).

### ***Stressing the Value of Ceremony***

As client families stream in through your door, some with absolutely no idea what you can do for them –or *should* do for them – how do you describe the importance or relevance of ritual and ceremony? Being able to illustrate the power within the act of gathering family and friends together can make all the difference in the overall quality of experience for your client families – and your firm’s client retention rate.

Certainly, when revenues from traditional services and related products are down, and direct cremations are on the rise – giving families information on the inherent value of ceremony can shift things for them, and provide you with the perfect opportunity to showcase your skills.



---

ASSOCIATION OF  
**WOMEN**  
FUNERAL DIRECTORS

---

*Strengthening the Presence of Women in Funeral Service*

### ***So, What's the Big Deal about Ceremony?***

As an anthropologist who's spent her life studying funeral rites around the world, I've learned one central truth from the countless facts and figures: human beings organically create *ceremony* when faced with change. And when that ceremony becomes formalized over time, it takes on a deeper cultural significance – it becomes a ritual; commonly understood, and accepted as an essential emotional anchor for the group as a whole. (For our purposes, we're going to use the words interchangeably.)

A ceremony, then, is an action performed to *acknowledge* a social shift or change. It may be performed on specific occasions, or at the discretion of individuals or communities. It may be performed by a single individual, by a group, or *by the entire community*; in arbitrary places, or in places especially reserved for it; either in public, in private, before, or (in this case) *after* an life-changing event (such as death).

When left alone to face challenging situations of loss and change, human populations (both large and small) spontaneously create a symbolic process, a *ceremony*, to help them understand and deal with the new reality.

### ***Today's Situation***

What's happened, it seems, is that our society is in a quandary as how best to honor and show respect for a life recently lost through incident, accident, or natural causes. There are fundamental differences in social expectation, depending on geographic location. Some of our members quote a cremation rate of over 90%, while others have less than 10 such disposition requests per year. Others find that commonly families want a truly traditional service, with visitation and funeral, and in-ground burial. The name of the game today is one of individual choice, even when it just means direct cremation and the return of the cremated remains to the family.

In a casual conversation with some of our members, I discovered that, when the opportunity arises, sharing what you know about the power of ceremony to begin the healing process can help families to better know 'what they may be missing' by opting for the 'less is more' attitude.

Honestly, social perceptions can be skewed; people often don't realize the *flexibility* in the concept of ceremony. It can be a simple, small gathering, sharing of a memory or two; a toast of champagne (my mother-in-law's home funeral). Or, it can be a full-feature funeral, with all the bells and whistles (and in this day and age, there are a lot of them!) Or, it can be anywhere in between.



---

ASSOCIATION OF  
**WOMEN**  
FUNERAL DIRECTORS

---

*Strengthening the Presence of Women in Funeral Service*

The fundamental truth is, ceremony *empowers* people to heal; to move forward in their lives. Those AWFD members who have the highest job satisfaction and the highest client retention rates, take the time to offer their valuable opinions on the value of ceremony; and they listen closely to what's being said. No canned speeches; just an open dialog with people who are turning to them for their expertise.

“Nine times out of ten,” one member said, “when given the opportunity and the knowledge they need to make the decision, families will choose to ceremonially celebrate the life of their loved one. This doesn't always increase our revenue significantly; but I know it increases the value of our services enormously – their thank you notes tell me as much. And I also know they'll be back when they are once again faced with the loss of a loved one.” And, isn't that what it's all about?

---

### *Some Final Notes*

Well, I'm excited to tell you that our podcast in March will be recorded on March 25 – late in the month I know, but it's for a good reason. Way back in July of 2009, I decided it was high time I did some international traveling again, and I've got a trip to China scheduled for March 12 through March 21...it's a short tour of Shanghai and Beijing. And, it was quite a bargain, through [SmarTours](#).

Some of you know that I spent six years in Iran, way back in 1966-1972. I was just a teenager, but those years were remarkably important in my personal and professional lives. I traveled so much, all on “daddy's dime.” But, let's face it, times have changed. Back then, I could travel independently, but today...all I can afford are tour groups. It's a new way to do things, for me; I'll be one of those middle-aged women, on tour. ☺Wish me luck!

Certainly, the newsletter for March may be late, or may be a combination March/April issue. Hopefully, I'll have a few wonderful photos to share.

Love, joy and deep appreciation,

Kim Stacey  
AWFD Executive Director



---

ASSOCIATION OF  
**WOMEN**  
FUNERAL DIRECTORS

---

*Strengthening the Presence of Women in Funeral Service*

P.S. If you know someone who'd enjoy seeing this newsletter, please forward them your copy, or send them to the AWFDF Web site to subscribe.