



ASSOCIATION OF
WOMEN
FUNERAL DIRECTORS

Strengthening the Presence of Women in Funeral Service

AWFDConnections

August, 2010

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From the Executive Director



Happy Birthday to Us!

That's right; we're almost one year old! I've learned so much during these first 12 months – and I know I will continue to learn about how to grow and strengthen our organization.

It is my intention that our second year will be one of phenomenal growth in membership, and expansion of our services, publications, and programs. The ultimate goal of everything I do, as I've said many times, is to

inspire and support the women of funeral service – because I know that their feminine attributes are the perfect complement to any funeral home. To use a metaphor from the kitchen; their inner strength, resiliency, wit, compassion, and nurturing natures are the perfect blend of spices to flavor any moment experienced within the walls of a funeral home. Ella Fitzgerald, the First Lady of Song, said “Just don't give up trying to do what you really want to do. Where there is love and inspiration, I don't think you can go wrong.” I know the truth in her words.

There is much this organization *can* do, *should* do, and *will* do, to strengthen the presence of women in funeral service. If you're not a member of the AWFD, I urge you to [join](#). Our future will be brighter with your energy and enthusiasm.



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Surveys...Just a Few Questions to Help Shape this Second Year

Recently I created some very short surveys, to understand two things. Number one, what was preventing women from joining; secondly, I wanted to get a deeper understanding of what benefits members (and prospective members) were looking for. I've got the links to these surveys here. Please consider taking a couple of minutes to help steer the AWFDF into the future.

What's Preventing You From Joining?

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/FTF56D3>

What New Benefits Would You Like to See?

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/FTF56D3>

Dues and Benefits Survey

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/J8R9SPV>

As some respondents to the first survey noted cost was a factor in their decision not to join, I ask questions about affordability. I also revisit the elements of the second survey, focusing in on those specifics of preferred rent-a-car agencies, hotel chains, and airlines. I also ask for more details on desired online workshop topics.

Funeral Advertising...Does it Make Your Head Hurt?

I 'met' (if you can use that word as it applies to Internet-based relationships) Dan Katz through *LinkedIn*. He writes the blog, [Funeral Advertising for the Perplexed](#). Dan is President/Creative Director of [LA ads – A Marketing Agency](#), in Northridge, CA, with a specialization in creative marketing within the deathcare industry.

He's one really creative guy, who understands the changes in funeral service. I recommend reading [his blog](#), or viewing the creative advertising on [the firm's website](#). I absolutely love what he's doing for funeral homes, both in print and on the screen. Nice work, Dan! Thanks for being an ally to funeral service professionals.

Warm and Welcome Words from Our Newest Member

Some days are just phenomenally good, aren't they? Like one day last week, when I received an email from Caroline Flanders, our newest member. She is the owner of [Agape Family-Directed Funerals](#), operating in the San Diego/Riverside area of Southern California. Here's what she had to say to me...



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“Please allow me to express my sincere gratitude to you for the work that You are doing to empower women in this service profession. This is truly a "niche" that has not been covered until by you. I encourage you to hold fast and true to this calling ~ it is already bringing forth a tremendous good for all... I like to envision the women in the mainstream/corporate funeral homes feeling this empowerment and inspiration: to know that they too can achieve anything that they set their mind to...I will wear my pin proudly and I will tell all of the women that I know to become involved. While I do operate my own funeral establishment, I interact with many other establishments in my role as a Celebrant. Conventional or alternative, everything serves. Let's get the word out!”

Thank you, Caroline, for warming my heart; and thank you for requesting a logo graphic to put on your website! If anyone else would like to have an AWFD logo for your firm's site, just write me at kim@wfdconnect.com.

158 Posts...and Counting

If you've been keeping up with the AWFD blog, you may be aware of that “magic number.” But, if your schedule is just too busy to stop by the site, then you're just not aware of all that's there. Our latest post is the podcast with Adrienne Crowther, of [Shine On Brightly](#). As CEO of this innovative memorialization company, Adrienne has combined her background in the arts with her desire to help families honor their loved ones. Be sure to [stop by the blog](#) to listen in. While you're there, take a few minutes to read an earlier [post on the memorial jewelry](#) created by artist Angela Bubash.

Have You Been Spreading the Word?

Help make our second year a remarkable year of growth, for the association, and for our members as individuals. What about the other women in funeral service you know? Have you invited them to join? At the very least, they could become a fan of our [Facebook page](#)...in the meantime, stay in touch, stay happy, and enjoy life!

“Success is a state of mind. If you want success, start thinking of yourself as a success.” ~ Dr. Joyce Brothers



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How Many Hats Are You Wearing?

By AWFD Strategic Partner, Karen Bayer

As a Funeral Director, you are many things to many people and the demands are high. You are spread thin and probably overwhelmed. May I ask?

“How well are you coping with your work load?”

“How well are you coping with your life?”

“How many hats are you wearing?”

Let's begin with discussing the internal issues that affect people in your profession. There seems to be an unwritten rule that suggests it is not wise or professional for Funeral Directors to feel or express emotions over their clients' losses. It seems to be a part of your professional culture. Everything is very polite. You are expected to be strong enough to deal with whatever you see or hear. An emotional response may be viewed as inappropriate. Under the most sorrowful of circumstances, it is the Funeral Director's job to be the reasonable and supportive component in an avalanche of emotions. Wow! That is an enormous responsibility.

Creating a shell and detachment may become ways of coping with the trauma of the job. But I question how well these tactics serve you - And - Are there enough or any resources readily available to help you manage the emotional impact of dealing with and carrying out the functions of a funeral, while compassionately dealing with your distraught families? It has to be difficult!

Now let's address the more mundane functions like running a business. Funeral Directors are listeners, advisors and supporters helping families deal with their loss – But they are also administrators, sales people and public relations directors who complete all of the other duties necessary to keep their businesses afloat. I am tired just thinking about the around the clock obligations.

How many hats does a funeral director actually have to wear to be successful? I suppose the answer depends on the size of their business and their definition of success. One thing is for sure, your job can become all encompassing and resources are needed to help you balance, unload, share, evaluate and live in harmony.

If you are becoming increasingly frustrated at the way your work impinges on the rest of your life, here is a strategy that may help you reclaim your overall wellbeing:



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1. Join a Funeral Directors Association where you can share your experiences and feelings with other professionals in your industry. These types of groups offer support, guidance and endless resources on anything from how to cope with emotional overload to how to sell the latest product.
2. Create boundaries and learn how to delegate. No matter how hard you try, you can't be perfect and all things to all people. Learn when to stop and STOP. Learn when to say no and mean it.
3. Commit to a schedule. Decide how long you will spend working each day and each week. Make arrangements for someone to handle the overflow.
4. Learn to differentiate between urgent and important; urgent and not important; and that which is neither urgent nor important – And who else is able to deal with these issues?
5. Place enough importance on your personal life so that it is not neglected. Create and commit to a schedule that includes family time, fitness, quiet time and fun.
6. Commit to completing a Grief♥Recovery Program®. It is important for funeral professionals to provide their families with the most effective tools to help them move beyond their grief. It is equally important to overcome your own. Grief is an occupational hazard in your line of work. You are not exempt.

Self care is important for anyone who wants to live a fulfilling and prosperous life. It is wonderful to love what you do and be committed to your work- But there is nothing noble about neglecting your health and personal life. So for those overachievers out there, I challenge you to take off one of your least favorite hats today, and give it to someone who will wear it well. Clean out your closet and make room for something new like a little free time to experience the joy in life.

Karen Bayer is a Grief Recovery Coach, and the owner of [Next Stage Coaching](#). She is a Strategic Partner of the AWFDF, and eager to help us to help our client families. Feel free to contact her with questions about grief recovery, or refer your client families to her website.

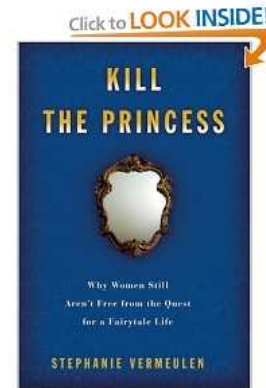


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Kill the Princess: Notes from Radical Feminism

I picked up this book from our local library recently – mainly because the title was so intriguing. Written by Stephanie Vermeulen, the subtitle is insightful: *Why Women Still Aren't Free from the Quest for a Fairytale Life*. While the review on Amazon was harsh, there are some nuggets in the book well worth sharing.



My days of radical feminism are long over; it was the vogue in college, but now I see that ‘extreme philosophies’ don’t help us navigate through life – they set us up for confrontations (and being older, confrontation and argument have lost their charm). Ms. Vermeulen is still willing to “take it on,” and as many feminists, she can be...unyielding in her views. Enough about that; here’s what I wanted to share.

She quotes another writer, Harriet Rubin, who penned *The Princessa*. “Practicing men’s power only makes you more subject to them, because you can never be as good at it as those born to it.” Instead, Harriet recommends “creating a new playing field built from the material women find important, like their individuality, their creativity, and their wisdom.”

Ms. Vermeulen continues. “When we stop labeling ourselves, we are released to try new things. Instead of being harsh...we’re free to experience the real strength and range of our womanhood.”

Wow! I love that. Both comments resonate with me, in that – as women in funeral service – we can’t opt to ‘practice men’s power,’ but rather we should “create a new playing field build from our individuality, creativity and wisdom...to experience the real strength and range of our womanhood.”

This is why I started the AWFd – to create that new playing field, honor the women of funeral service who are trying new things; new ways to serve their clients families and new ways to balance the elements of their lives.

I believe in you, and in me; to be the remarkable women we were born to be. Not replicas of the men around us, but rather our authentic, successful selves.

With more love, and appreciation, than you can realize,

Kim



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