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Cover photo:
Memorial service at
White Point, Royal
Palms State Beach,
San Pedro, CA,
arranged by
Rice Mortuary.
See page 4

Selected Independent Funeral Homes

BULLETIN

July-August 2015

Creating Unique Experiences for Families



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Selected Independent Funeral Homes
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July-August 2015



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Is Your Firm a Contender?

By Denise Zoepfel, Assistant Executive Director

Okay, I admit it. I am a Chicago Cubs fan. Each and every year I wonder out loud, maybe, just maybe, this will be “the year.” It’s not easy being a fan of a franchise with more than a century of losing. Over the years, the players and personnel have changed. There have been some exciting moments, but in the end, always the same outcome. No World Series title since 1908. Yet, things feel different these days. Why?

The Chicago Cubs ownership decided it was time. They could no longer continue to simply apply paint on a cracking frame. So what did they do? They overhauled their business. They created a plan which looked at each and every component of their operations. Then, they embarked on the short and long-term changes that were needed to put them in a position to compete and create a perennial contender. They have put strong, confident leaders in place who are taking risks, engaging their fans, showing the effort and, most importantly, making each move count. They are doing what they need to do to modernize and thrive. And, yes, they have stumbled a few times but that hasn’t stopped them from working their plan. As a result, everything appears to be lining up for an organization that really couldn’t afford to “wait until next year.”

As you work on your business, know that Selected strives to offer opportunities to help you with the problems you are trying to solve, the needs you are trying to meet and the outcomes you are trying to achieve. We listen, we learn and we care. We co-create with members to make sure that each benefit, educational program, product and service has value and is a solid resource for you, your firm and those you serve.

Our newest programs, Selected’s Leadership Academy and Selected Study Groups, offer participating members a powerful experience including meaningful exchanges that foster personal and business growth. The Selected Leadership Academy offers a unique and rewarding opportunity for members interested in further developing leadership skills. This program will encourage and challenge you to overcome barriers standing between you and where you want to be.

The Selected Study Group program allows you to work collaboratively with your fellow members to gain new perspectives, break down walls and work on your business in creative ways. Participants not only share best practices but they help each other solve problems, assess opportunities and risks and work on an assortment of strategic and operational issues.

These programs are a commitment, but I assure you that the benefits they provide can significantly enhance your personal and professional growth and help you improve your business.

In addition to the above programs, know that there are many opportunities available as a result of your membership in Selected. Whether your firm is taking a step-forward or a huge leap, I encourage you to reach out to me, contact our staff team, go online to Selected’s website or talk with fellow members in order to make the most of your membership investment. It will make a difference in you and your business. I look forward to seeing you at a future Selected event or at the ballpark! ▲

Denise



Selected Leadership Academy Capstone Presentation Offers a Fresh Look at Creativity and Personalization

Christy Taylor Chaney is a fifth-generation funeral director at Glenn Funeral Home and Crematory, Owensboro, KY. She graduated in 2014 from the inaugural class of Selected's Leadership Academy. Her capstone presentation was voted by her peers to be the best. The following are excerpts from her presentation.

When I was twelve, I decided I wanted to be a funeral director, just like my grandmother, Lucy Glenn Taylor, and my dad, Glenn Taylor. I spent endless hours with my grandmother, watching her meet with people and cultivate relationships. What I learned is that funeral services *are* relationships—that they need to be captured and maintained creatively.

I've always had strong interest in creativity, so it was natural for me to earn a Bachelor's degree in art. But my plan was always to come home and work at the family funeral home. My first role was as a secretary at the front desk, but my first creative moment came when I realized our register books were out-of-date. I knew families wanted more, and I was given the task of putting together a program to offer a variety of new books. I know it's not rocket science, but at that moment at my firm, in my little hometown, I was a creative genius, and I wanted to take it further!



Christy Taylor Chaney

I wondered what we could create for client families that they were not expecting, that would cost us little or no money, that they would appreciate and would add value. I wanted to go beyond the conventional concept of *grandpa's favorite candy in a bowl* during visitations.

I believe when a family walks into your visitation room, it can either be your best or worst moment, depending upon how welcomed and loved they feel. And I realized that by designing the space for that first viewing moment, we can improve the outcome of any service.

So we started staging the room just like you would stage a house for sale—arranging the flowers,

Concludes on next page

furniture, displays—in fact, there's nothing in my facility that I cannot turn into something else for interior design purposes.

Now, we all use the word personalization and try to incorporate it into funerals. But I want to clarify that personalization is not creativity. A design on a corner of a casket or a picture in a frame are just that. But creativity is so much more. It requires you to open your mind to the possibility of what can be and not let the magnitude of that get you down.

So how do we cultivate creativity in funeral services and lead our employees to embrace it? How do we take creative ideas and then make them happen in 72 hours? This requires innovation, and the key to innovation is coming up with an idea the customer didn't anticipate. That should be the goal of every good funeral director.

To be creative and innovative, you first have to listen. A family will tell you what is important to them. If you ask them to tell you about their loved one before you ask for the social security number, you'll get a glimpse into the life of a family that can start your creative journey. *She liked hot air balloons* turns into a balloon ascent over the gravesite. *He liked John Wayne* turns into Westerns playing on several televisions throughout the visitation. The smallest hint can make a big difference.

We have a slogan we've used for years at our funeral home—*How would you like the story told? We're here to help.* Listening is creating; telling is innovation. But you have to be prepared. I know where I can obtain things in my hometown. I've cultivated

“...personalization is not creativity... creativity is so much more. It requires you to open your mind to the possibility of what can be and not let the magnitude of that get you down.”

relationships with florists, event planners, caterers, costume shops, everyone. I always have a plan and a backup because, as Mike Tyson said, “Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the face.”

To be innovative, you must be prepared to get punched in the face. So think *beyond* the box, not outside of the box. Because with what we do, the box is important. How can I tell a story in a room full of people without saying a word? Push beyond the box with displays, interactive events, music and lighting. Listen, be prepared, think beyond the box; and don't be afraid of the time press.

But how do we teach our staff to do this? Often the spark of creativity is dimmed by criticism or hidden under a flaming pile of professionalism. I want them to step outside their comfort zone, and I want them to enjoy it. But they will never move, if I don't create for them a feeling of participating in the change. Because the best way to cope with change is to help create it.

We need to shift their mental landscape. Let employees think outside the chapel, and lead them on a path of *what would happen if*. We do this by brainstorming. There are no limits or bad ideas. There's no criticism when we brainstorm. Take notes and keep a record of all the ideas, because thinking about being creative is the first step towards being creative.

Give them autonomy and the freedom to create. Give them

permission to make your families feel good. Set a budget but be flexible. And live the example yourself by treating your staff creatively. You must be the change you want to see in your funeral home.

Perhaps most importantly, you need to support your team's efforts. Praise is more than money. When they see that a job well done will get them further than anything else, they will begin to appreciate the efforts they put in.

My staff has been led down the path of creativity, and the outcome is innovation. They know I support any ounce of creativity they give. And they know if a funeral is going to be highly creative, they can come to me for help. And the best part is, they do!

As an exercise, we put 10 scenarios into a bowl and drew out two. We gave ourselves 72 hours and a very limited budget to transform one casket in creative ways. [A video of Christy's Leadership Academy capstone presentation is available at vimeo.com/98289945. The process of transforming the casket begins at 12:48 into the video.]

Now that you better understand creativity, you have seen it explode before your eyes and you've learned about being an innovative leader; how do you feel about that old bowl of candy? ▲

Visit selectedfuneralhomes.org/leadership-academy to see highlights from all the capstone presentations.

Off-Site Venues Are Becoming More Popular for Memorial Services and Receptions

Best Practices Competition Winning Idea Shows the Way

The winners of the first annual Best Practices Competition at last year's Annual Meeting in Philadelphia were **John Kirk** and **Jean Mathis** of Rice Mortuary in Torrance, CA. Members in attendance at the meeting voted their program of planning memorials and receptions in unique venues a standout idea in face of changing consumer preferences. John and Jean recently spoke to *The Bulletin* about their program and its updates since the Annual Meeting.

Can you recap your utilization of unique venues?

John: "As we shared at the Annual Meeting, we increasingly find that people in Los Angeles County are not always interested in having a service at a church, a cemetery or at one of our mortuary chapels. They're often looking for something unique and different—such as having it outdoors, on the beach, at a favorite restaurant or at some other special location.

"So, we decided to develop the capability of planning and delivering these kinds of services. We scouted spectacular and memorable locations in our area that have good parking and allow us to have a ceremony in one area and then transition to another area within walking distance for a reception."

Jean: "In our presentation, we talked about some of the additional equipment and resources needed and the staff training required for conducting events in these new places. We established additional vendor relationships for rental tables, chairs, tents, outdoor lighting and heating, videography, parking attendants, musicians and, of course, caterers.

"And we are continually researching and finding new venues to suit our client families' needs. Now, any

time discussion of a unique location comes up during an arrangement conference, we have a lot of ideas to share, as well as experience. We've developed great relationships with the more frequently used venues, and this just makes it so much easier. The same goes for rental companies."



Jean Mathis and John Kirk present their best practice idea at the 2014 Annual Meeting.

Are there other updates to share since your presentation?

John: "We are working on keeping our equipment up to date. We've replaced the video projection system we talked about at the meeting with a large

flatscreen TV that mounts on a tripod. This gives a much better presentation, doesn't take much effort to set up, and we can use it outside in places we hadn't been able to previously.

"Another update is we have taken the variety of pictures we have from past events and incorporated them into a video presentation that's shown on monitors in our lobbies. So, we are continuing to get the word out about these options. Many people still see us as being just a funeral home, and they assume we have a limited offering of services. But a growing number are becoming aware of what we can do and just sort of expect it from us. So hopefully the video presentation is planting the idea in people's minds for future use."

What is your philosophy toward providing unique experiences for families?

Jean: "I think a big part of it, like John has said, is making sure families are aware of all we can do for them. When a family sits down in our arrangement room, they can immediately see all the ideas, venues and options displayed on our slat walls.

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Off-Site Venues, from page 4

“Our arrangers always encourage families to bring in pictures, music and personal items that were special to their loved one. So we are always looking for ways to help them personalize the service. But beyond that, I think convenience for the family factors heavily into providing unique experiences.

“For example, one of our arrangers called me in recently to talk with a family that was considering a unique place to have a reception. We offered a couple of suggestions, and they immediately liked one of them. We talked about what they could do and some of the venue’s requirements. We determined the date, and I found the venue was available. Within minutes, I had pricing information for the family and the application started. They also asked me about hotels in the area, and I was able to check with our preferred vendors and immediately got the best rates for a block of rooms for the family.

“My point is, because we have made great connections and have a system in place to handle unique venues, we make it very easy of families. They have to do little more than just tell us what they want.

“As John said, more and more people are coming to expect this level of service from us, so we don’t often get pats on the back. But they do say things like, ‘I can’t believe how much time you saved me; I didn’t want to have to deal with this.’ ”

John: “Another example of convenience is our portable sound and video system. Instead of the family having to figure out how to show a video at an off-site venue and incurring the set-up cost, which can be a significant; we can do it all for them. We’ve set up in restaurants, hotels, meeting halls and lodges. Our portable AV equipment and generators save the family time and money, and our staff has learned how to manage it efficiently.”

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Printing of Photo Collages Provides New Service That Supports Importance of Gathering Together and Sharing

Dale Clock, President of Clock Life Story Funeral Homes, Muskegon, MI, was one of four finalists in the Best Practices Competition at the 2014 Annual Meeting. *The Bulletin* recently followed up with Dale to learn more about his idea of printing photos collages in-house for families.

How does your idea work?

“We were already scanning anywhere from 50 to 150 photos for most of the families we serve. But now, we organize the photos, create digital collages, print 22 x 28-inch posters of them in house and display those posters in snap frames during visitations. Clients get to keep the posters after the services, and they also receive digital copies of all the photos to share with other members of the family.”



Dale Clock speaks to members at the 2014 Selected Best Practices Competition.

What does a firm need in order to do this?

“There is some equipment involved. First, you need a high-speed scanner. If your firm does not already have one, I highly recommend it. They are fast and well worth the money. Next, a large-format printer is required that uses rolls instead of sheets of paper. There are several companies you can buy from. I happened to find ours on special

at an NFDA convention. It prints up to 44 inches wide, and the machine is eight feet long, so some space is needed.

“Obviously, you’re going to need a computer and the software to make the collages. We use a free program from Google called Picasa. You just download it, create some templates and it will automatically create the collages for you.

“The front-loading snap frames we use are by PosterGrip®. We mount the posters in these frames and display them either on easels or on the slatwalls in our visitation rooms.

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A video of Dale Clock introducing his printing services is available at [youtube.com/watch?v=auWZDC3nee0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=auWZDC3nee0).

Client Families Can Have their Words or Poems Transformed into Special Songs of Remembrance

Unique Service Says Anyone Can Write a Song

David Hawkins is the founder and chief creative officer of Songmaker Productions, a company that creates original songs based on customers' poems and writings. Richard Wilder is president of the company and is responsible for its vision, strategy and service delivery. They recently spoke to *The Bulletin* about their creative songwriting services and how they can benefit bereaved families.

Why did you start this service?

David: "I've been a musician and a composer since I was 12 but, as an adult, I was looking for a unique way to help other people enjoy music as much as I do. I had been thinking about it for months when, early one morning, the idea came to me about creating songs based on customer's poems. Soon, I had a fully formed plan, and I founded the company, Make Your Poem a Song, in 2007.

"We've really grown since then, but we continue to take people's writings, poems, stories and letters and turn them into professional-quality songs. Through an exclusive, patent pending menu system, customers get to choose exactly how they want their songs to be created. Not only do we use their words but also their choice of vocal style, beat, genre—everything is tailored to their preferences.

"Most of the time, people have their own words, usually in the form of a poem—which doesn't have to rhyme—and we can make a great song out of them. But if they don't have anything written down, we can help them write the words through our Song Coach service, where one of our producers works with them to bring out their emotions and what they're trying to say."

Richard: "When you read a love letter or poem, it's very nice, but it's one dimensional. When you set those words to music, it becomes a whole new experience. When you think of your favorite songs, they usually mean something to you because they remind you of a special person or event in your life. So what we do at Songmaker Productions is bring your own words to life in music in a way that is unique and affordable."

David: "Music touches us in a way that almost nothing else can. It's something deep within us, and it's a very powerful way to communicate how we feel about someone we love or someone we've lost."

Richard: "Throughout history, music has played a big role in people's lives, especially for life events like weddings and funerals. David



David Hawkins



Richard Wilder

once shared a quote by lyricist E.Y. Harburg with our team that sums it all up, *Words make you think a thought. Music makes you feel a feeling; and a song makes you feel a thought.*"

David: "A good example is a client who had us create a song about his father when he passed away. He felt that the funeral service would benefit from a personal song the whole family could relate to. So, he wrote a poem that included phrases his father had used. One of the ways his father would encourage the children growing up was by saying, You've got to continue on with your life, no matter what happens, no matter what struggles come along. You've got to hit play and continue to move forward. He loved that phrase, *You've got to hit play*, and he incorporated it into the poem. In fact, the song we created from his poem is titled *Hit Play*. When the family first heard it at the service, they knew exactly what it meant, and it really touched them."

Richard: "Another customer lost his son early in life due to a tragic accident. Although the son had severe challenges, he also was a gifted writer. The father was looking for a way to celebrate and honor the good parts of his son's life, so he sent David a book of his son's poems. We are now on the tenth song that has come out of those poems."

[Continues on next page](#)

How is your competition reacting?

John: “A few are starting to try this, and I think it’s slowly becoming more common. But in terms of having the capability to offer unique venues on a regular basis and the experience to coordinate all the details for families, I haven’t detected any of our competitors making an impact.

“We feel this is something we need to continue to do in order to stay relevant. As people opt away from using the funeral home or a church for a funeral service, we have wondered what else they are doing

Songs of Remembrance, from page 6

“In one of the most touching of those songs, David overdubbed the actual voice of the son rapping. The father had found an old cassette tape the son had recorded. David, with the help of one of our producers and one of our composers, found a way to remove the hiss and background noise and actually layer in the voice. So the father will always be able to hear his son singing in this song. In situations like these, our songs can really provide a healing component for grieving families.”

Can you tell us more about your process?

Richard: “One of our core values is the belief that anyone can write a song. It may not end up on the radio, but if they have words that convey an emotion, we help them craft it into a song that’s personally meaningful and great to listen to.

David: “A lot of people question themselves when they think about writing the words of a song. But the truth is, if you can put your thoughts on paper, you can write a song. That’s what make this so powerful.

“On our website, yoursongmaker.com, we post helpful tips for people. For example, in answer to the question, How many words should it be?, we suggest, ‘You don’t really want to apply science to this process, but usually a good song is about 2.5 to 3.5 minutes long. Generally, you want to try to describe what you are saying in the least amount of words, while still conveying your message. Less can be more. The most important thing is that the words encapsulate the emotion you are feeling.’

“We also offer a free review service. If someone has gotten started on some words and wants professional

and where else they are going. Wherever it is, we need to be there with them. I can’t say this type of business is growing by leaps and bounds, but it is progressing. And I think it will become even more important in the years to come.”

“Related to this, we have just put a big effort into renovating our facilities to make them more comfortable and to add modern amenities. That helps set the tone, when families come in and see ours is not an old fashioned place. And when I say renovation, I mean every aspect of it. So I hope we are setting the standard in having more comfortable spaces, not only for the people we serve but also for their guests.” ▲

feedback, we’ll tell them what we think and offer suggestions and encouragement.”

Richard: “One of the things that really impressed me about the way David built this company was his focus on quality and affordability. There are other music services out there, ranging from one person with guitar, where every song sounds the same, to high-priced companies that expect thousands dollars up front.

“What David did, which was incredible, was balance structure and creativity. The structure is the blueprint—a consistent, reliable framework in which to create. When the customer goes to our website to place an order for a song, they have the ultimate freedom of choice. Do they like rock, country, smooth jazz, rap? Do they want a male vocalist, or do they want a singer that sounds like their favorite female artist? Which instruments do they prefer?

“David then works with our network of talented composers to create unique songs. They’re not computer-generated. Instead, human composers read the words, follow the customer’s choices and create custom music. We send a 45-second preview of each song to the customer by email, so they can approve it or make changes. Ninety-five percent of the time, people are extremely happy with the preview. The other five percent might want a little different phrasing or a change in tempo—that kind of thing. Then, five days later, the full song is delivered, just the way they want it.

“Our goal is to create the best possible sound at a very affordable price. It’s something we love to do, and we take great pride in it.”

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Slatwall panels provide an elegant solution for displaying family pictures and mementos in the visitation rooms at Clock Life Story Funeral Homes.



Photo Collage Printing, from page 5

“Why is this new and innovative? We took two activities that we already are doing at the funeral home—scanning families’ photos and displaying personal items during visitations—and combined them to create a new service.”

You mentioned slatwalls in your visitation rooms. Do those work well?

“Absolutely, we purchased several panels from a local home improvement store and installed them in all of our visitation rooms. A lot of funeral homes use them in arrangement areas to display merchandise. But by having them in visitation rooms, it allows us to readily display the personal items that families bring in. Our poster collages, other photos and memorabilia are all placed around the room in different locations, properly lit and properly displayed. They look like they belong in the room. And that’s a big difference from having aluminum easels scattered around or having knick knacks sitting on various tables. Our approach looks more like a fine museum.”

“We installed the panels about 10 years ago and are very pleased

with them. It’s a great idea when when it comes time to remodel a facility. We recently turned a small branch into an event center, and we installed slatwall panels all the way around the main room and added special lighting.

“An important part of personalization is encouraging people to bring in their loved one’s personal items. Our approach allows us put these items on display quickly and properly. In our main visitation room, we have eight slatwall panels around the room, so it makes people ‘work the room’. I’m not a fan of receiving lines. So, displaying memorabilia throughout the room allows people to wander and look around until they have a chance to talk to the family.”

What has the response been to your photo collages?

“Our families are very happy we provide this service. When we first started, I was concerned that the creative types would feel we were invading their space. But that has turned out not to be true. Well over 90% of the families are thrilled to give us their pile of photos and let us do the work for them.

“I want to emphasize that this is not a product that we sell individually; it is a service we

provide to our families. We’ve streamlined the process, so our cost is minimal; and we’ve bundled the collage posters into our existing print package.

“An added benefit of having a large-format printer is you can use it for other purposes around the funeral home. We create signage, informational posters and even casket and merchandise displays. Multiple types of roll papers are available: photo paper, canvas, sign material, PVC. So when we want to do a banner for a special event, we just crank one out.

“There also is a vinyl paper with adhesive backing. We can affix prints to the wall and change them any time. They come right off and leave no residue. This works very well for casket displays and other on-premise awareness material that we used to buy from manufacturers and suppliers. We also do a lot of photo enlargements for families. Instead of them having to go elsewhere, we can conveniently do it for them.”

What is your approach to value-added services?

“There definitely is a balance to be maintained between serving

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Photo Collage Printing, from page 8

families in unique ways and the company's bottom line. But like I said, this is a service we provide for people, not a product we are trying to sell.

"Many funeral homes give their directors a certain allowance to do something special for families or to enhance the service, whether it's food, snacks, trinkets or handouts. If we print up five posters for a family, I just consider that part of the cost of doing business.

"I'm not looking to make a profit on it, but it's something that definitely sets us apart. As competition increases and more families choose cremation, I feel we must find new ways to distinguish ourselves and make our services unique."

Your firm is a member of the Life Story Network. Why is that important to you?

"We have been part of the Life Story Network for 10 years, and more than 50% of the families we serve choose to have us capture

their loved ones' life story in print. I truly believe that a written life story—printed on paper and combined with photos—gives families something tangible that will be treasured for generations. There is just something about the written word that I don't think will ever go away, no matter how electronic our world becomes.

"Most funeral directors talk about the need for asking the family deep, probing questions. And when they do that in their conferences, they might be able to pick out something with which to personalize the service. But most of the time, funeral directors don't have a way to use all the information they receive. Life Story gives them an effective way to utilize it for families.

"The process we go through to capture a life story has changed how we communicate with our families and has made us better funeral directors. It made me realize that the true value of any funeral is the gathering together of people and the sharing of stories.

Those two things—gathering together and sharing stories—are the focus of what we do every day here at Clock's, no matter whether the family chooses to do a Life Story or not. And the photo collage posters are just another part of helping families share their stories in a convenient and cost-effective way."

"Our community is more casual than most, so we've backed away from the straight, formal aspect of funeral. Our cremation rate is close to 70%, so the importance of the body and the traditional funeral service have definitely moved to the back. We have to realize that in order to keep the people coming to see us, we have to figure out what is value to them.

"Everything we do for families—the life stories, our pet services, holiday programs, having a therapy dog on staff, our veterans programs—all work as a whole to further show that we care. They all tie in to create an atmosphere of comfort and personalized service for families." ▲

Don't miss the 2015 Best Practices Competition to be featured September 19 at Selected's 97th Annual Meeting, selectedfuneralhomes.org/annual-meeting.

Songs of Remembrance, from page 7

What kind of feedback are you receiving?

David: "It's been amazing. We have some brilliant composers, sound engineers and musicians working for us; and they really do high-quality work. Nine times out of 10, our customers are not just happy, they're astounded. That's one of the reasons we have such a high number of repeat customers. One song gets them thinking of all the other ways they can use our service."

Richard: "In the end, it's great to hear people saying, 'I wrote this song!' because they did. It's their story; it's their song.

What one thing do you want people to know about your service?

Richard: "In one word—trust. We realize this is a very personal undertaking for people. They are entrusting us to bring to life what they've shared with us. And we take that very seriously. We want people to know they can trust us with their stories and their feelings; and we're going to give them back something they'll be proud of!" ▲

For more information, contact Songmaker Productions at 888-484-3512 or richard@songmakerproductions.com.

Discovering the Pathways to Experience

Sensory Experiences Differentiate in a Competitive Market

By **Kristen Payne** of **ScentAir**,
a **Selected Preferred Partner**

Our society has shifted to an experience-oriented culture as consumers yearn for a unique experience, whether walking into a restaurant, a dentist appointment or a funeral home. Much of this has to do with the rise of Millennials who crave more in everything they do. But a lot of it can be attributed to competition. As markets continue to grow, competition is fierce which is causing business owners to differentiate in creative ways.

Enter sensory experiences. Our senses are the only pathway to experience. Sensory experiences generate emotions and trigger the senses, and can help you create a unique story and identity for your brand experience. After all, a brand is much more than a logo; it's everything your customers experience associated with your business. It's essential that a brand appeals to the senses so that your customers remember you for months and years to come.

Already a sensitive experience for visitors, the need for a comforting, relaxing feeling during funeral services is a must-have. Let's take a look at how your firm can be transformed through three of our most powerful senses.

Sense Of Smell. *Our smell is the most powerful of the senses when it comes to emotion and memory.*

Did you know that 75% of all the emotions we generate every

day are due to what we smell, not what we see? So while the look of your firm is essential, the nose actually makes the most lasting impression on families and friends. The right scent in a funeral home can welcome people, giving them a more positive first impression and help them feel relaxed and at home. Research indicates a 40% improvement in mood when exposed to a pleasing scent.

“As Selected Independent Funeral Home members, we are all striving to create more meaningful and impactful funeral experiences,” shares Mel Pennington, funeral director at Brown-Pennington-Atkins Funeral Home in Hartsville, SC. “Doing so means that we must touch on all five senses for our customers and scent has helped us do that in a powerful way.”

Scent marketing can help businesses engage their customers' strongest sense to create tangible, positive results. It is a concept that is revolutionizing marketing today. Popular fragrances for funeral homes include light and refreshing scents such as white tea and fig, as well as gourmand scents such as sugar cookie.

Sense Of Sight. *Seeing is such a big part of everyday life that it requires about half of our brainpower.*

Ensuring that your brand is represented through sense of sight involves several key elements of your business: your website, décor and staff. It begins with your online presence because when

scentair®



For more information, contact Selected's representative at ScentAir, Catarina Richardson, at 281-904-4458 or SIFHservice@scentair.com.

consumers begin funeral home shopping, the first place they land is the Internet. It is important that your brand identity is portrayed through your website and social media so that your cyber appearance as a whole represents the key objectives and goals for your business.

Once families and friends arrive at your place of business, it's essential that everything they see from furniture to décor makes them feel comfortable. Some funeral homes today are “boutiquing” their business with modern and trendy furniture, creating a relaxed vibe. At first glance, it could be mistaken for a restaurant or lounge. This is a growing tactic to help people feel more comfortable about end-of-life planning and rid the negative aura that often comes with visiting a funeral home.

The staff employed at your business also should represent the key objectives of your firm. Ensure that customer service is great so

Concludes on page 18

Baue and Billow Chosen as New Board Representatives

Selected Independent Funeral Homes announces that Lisa A. Baue and Charles M. “Chip” Billow have been chosen to serve on the association’s Board of Directors. They will officially join the Board during an installation ceremony at the 97th Annual Meeting later this year in New Orleans, LA.

Lisa Baue will be the new Group 4 representative. She is President and CEO of Baue Funeral Homes, Crematory and Cemetery, St. Charles, Missouri. Her grandfather, Arthur C. Baue, served on the Board of National Selected Morticians (NSM), 1951-54; and her father, David C. Baue, also was a Board member, 1963-66.



Lisa Baue

“I’m so honored and humbled,” Lisa said. “This association really helped me as a young funeral director. I’m very grateful for what I’ve learned from fellow members and how that has helped me grow my business. So I’m eager to do what I can to help Selected and the next generation of its members be successful. Selected continues to evolve and position itself for a positive future. It’s been working hard to control costs and to stimulate membership growth.”

Chip Billow is President and CEO of Billow Funeral Homes and Crematory, Akron, OH. He will represent Group 2 on the Selected Board. Chip’s father, Charles W. Billow, served on the NSM Board, 1981-84.

“We are in a difficult and changing business,” Chip said, “and it is so important that we in Selected have each other to lean on for guidance and new ideas. The association is very in-tune with the needs of today’s funeral directors, and the plans and strategies of the Board are focused on propelling us into a strong future.



Chip Billow

“I think it’s important that we stay rooted in our best traditions while continuing to reach for the stars. We need open minds and big hearts as we evaluate current trends, establish best practices and look for new ways to improve.”

Nominees for the new Board positions were interviewed in early April by the Board Director Appointment Committee. ▲

Neuswanger Joins Selected’s Headquarters Staff

Patty Neuswanger has joined the association’s staff as Marketing and Communications Manager. She will be responsible for overall marketing strategy, media relations, website and social media as well as building Selected’s brand.

“We are excited to have Patty join the staff team to help us organize and enhance our marketing and communications efforts,” said Executive Director Rob Paterkiewicz. “She will play a key role in helping Selected celebrate its first 100 years and prepare for our next century.”

Patty has an eclectic background of experience in both the corporate and nonprofit

sectors. One of the first priorities for her at Selected is to streamline the member communication process. A recent survey was completed by the association to solicit feedback about communications with Headquarters.

“The members have spoken, and we are responding,” said Patty. “We are currently revising our messaging plan to focus on weekly summaries which will consolidate the multiple emails members receive weekly. I really want to ensure that all members are fully aware of the multitude of



Patty Neuswanger

meetings, programs, services and products Selected provides and make them more easily accessible, which translates into some enhancements to our website.

“Additionally, I hope to serve as a marketing resource to members by sharing their news and successes through our channels and providing quick tips and ideas.

“I’ve already witnessed firsthand the camaraderie of Selected members and their sincere desire to help one another. This is a family of the highest caliber professionals who are truly invested in the work they do and are committed to the families they serve. I feel honored to be part of the staff team!” ▲

Providing Superior Online Experiences to Mobile Device Users

During the May 14th Group 4 Roundtable Meeting in Appleton, WI, part of the discussion focused on responsive website design and mobile-friendly sites. Members may not be fully aware of responsive design and its importance, so Selected is sharing information in this article to help its firms stay competitive.

With the increasing use of powerful smartphones and tablets, there has been a push toward creating mobile-friendly websites—ones that can be navigated and used effectively on smaller screens. Initially, these were secondary sites dedicated to serve only mobile devices, and they essentially duplicated a company's existing web content. Most recently, an approach called responsive design is overcoming the technical challenges of being mobile friendly. It allows a single website to dynamically adjust to any screen size or orientation used by the visitor.

Paul Apostolos, web application developer and consultant to Selected, explained that responsive design provides three main benefits.

1. It allows content to flow automatically to any size screen but not extend beyond the browser's edge.
2. Special coding instructs the browser to apply specific styles and positioning depending upon the user's device.
3. Scripts can transform site elements, especially menus and navigation tools, so they are most suitable for each individual viewer.

“Retrofitting an existing website to be responsive can sometimes be straightforward, but often it involves completely redesigning and reengineering a site,” said Paul. “The two biggest issues we typically encounter when making existing sites responsive are the lack of a consistent template or stylesheet, and page content that is difficult to resize, such as tables and columnar data.”

At the Group 4 Roundtable, an article, *Responsive vs. Mobile-Friendly Websites: What's the Difference?*, by Nick Kosanovich of Tungsten Creative Group, Erie, PA, was referenced. It provides a clear synopsis and is available at atomic74.com/click/responsive-vs-mobile-friendly-websites-whats-the-difference. Also, the sidebar on the next page, *A Mobile Site vs. Responsive Design*, lists the key differences.

One of those factors is performance with online searches. In April, Google launched a new mobile-focused algorithm that updates the way it ranks search results based on the mobile-friendliness of websites. This means sites with a good mobile experience will be ranked higher than those without.

In a blog post for Google webmasters, Takaki Makino, Chaesang Jung and Doantam Phan stated, “We will be expanding our use of mobile-friendliness as a ranking signal. This change will affect mobile searches in all languages worldwide and will have a significant impact in our search results.”

What Does This Mean for Selected Members?

To learn how responsive website design has impacted one member firm, *The Bulletin* spoke to Luke Densow, third-generation funeral director at Wichmann-Fargo Funeral Homes, Appleton, WI.



Luke Densow

“About three years ago, we began diligently tracking our web traffic with an emphasis on mobile,” said Luke. “Two years ago, we noticed an increase in our mobile traffic from 15% to about 40%. That was when we added a mobile-friendly website. But when our traffic hit 50% mobile, about a year ago, we started making the move toward building a new, responsive website from the ground up.

“A big benefit of a responsive website is that you have only one set of content to manage that serves all devices. There's no compromising, and you don't have to worry about coordinating multiple sites.”

When asked if he thinks it has been worth it to make the switch, Luke responded emphatically.

“Absolutely!” he said. “In May, we had more than 75% mobile traffic on our site. We know those users are getting the full content and experience they expect from a modern site in 2015. We had more than 8,000 unique visitors in one day and, of those, 82% were on non-traditional devices.

“We know a lot of our families expect a website that can keep up with the major sites they frequently visit,” Luke continued. “Ideally, it's something that people shouldn't even notice, because the experience doesn't

[Concludes on next page](#)

change when going from a desktop computer to a phone or tablet. But we do get feedback about how easy our content is to find and navigate on any device.

“For example, a few weeks ago we learned that a young woman had done research for her father’s funeral before he passed. One of the first things she did was an online search for funeral homes. In the arrangement conference, she told me how easy our website was to locate and navigate. She also said she could tell ours is a local website, because all the content is tailored to the Appleton market.

“I think that’s one of the most important things a website should do—identify your firm as local. We’ve done that by using our own pictures and personalized content. We also love the fact that our obituaries rank right up there with some of the huge companies specializing in online death notices. We don’t want any compromises for our families when they use our website.

“So has it been worth the investment? We couldn’t be happier with our results. I look at it this way; a website is an additional front door to a funeral home. We all update our interiors, remodel our buildings and enhance our physical amenities. But it’s just as important for us to continue doing that with our online presence.

Test if your website is mobile-friendly at google.com/webmasters/tools/mobile-friendly.

“I know a website can be quite an investment in terms of both money and time. Those funeral homes coming up on the time for a website update should consider all their options—not just the most affordable ones. A responsive site may cost more up front but will be worth it in the long run. You’ll never have to worry about technology outgrowing your web presence for many years to come.

“A great website is an ongoing process, so we always are working on our search engine optimization. But we also are continuing to build and develop within our site, tailoring new content to our client families and to our communities. We’re looking into hiring a professional photographer to take pictures of landmarks and landscapes in our area that people can identify with on our website.

“We feel we are currently years ahead of our competition. And if we continue to build our site, we will maintain that lead, so families always know we provide superior professional services and superior online experiences.” ▲

A Mobile Site vs. Responsive Design

	Mobile Site	Responsive Design
Rendering Experience	<p>A mobile site is essentially a copy of your website, where the server does the work to deliver an optimized page that’s smaller and easier to navigate.</p> <p>The solution can really customize a unique experience for mobile users.</p> <p><i>A good choice when it might be too expensive to redesign responsively.</i></p>	<p>In responsive design, the device does the work and automatically adjusts according to a device’s screen size (large or small) and orientation (landscape or portrait). It switches between these options on-the-fly.</p> <p><i>A very good and flexible solution.</i></p>
Domain Protection	<p>With a mobile site, you must create a different domain (many companies choose to differentiate theirs by <i>m.domain.com</i>).</p> <p><i>Can dilute domain and hurt organic search traffic. Can add to website management because you have to maintain two separate silos of content.</i></p>	<p>Responsive design lets you keep your own domain—nothing changes except code on the back-end.</p> <p><i>Google thinks this is the better solution. Maintaining a single shared site preserves a canonical URL, avoiding any complicated redirects, and simplifies the sharing of web addresses.</i></p>
Link Equity	<p>Because a mobile site uses a separate domain, links shared from mobile browsers will not count as search link equity toward your primary site.</p> <p><i>Not as good for search.</i></p>	<p>Since responsive design simply embeds new code on the back-end of your website, your company’s link equity is preserved.</p> <p><i>Better option for search.</i></p>
Future-Ready	<p>Re-working of a mobile site might be needed in order to stay current with next-generation phones and mobile browsers.</p> <p><i>Could require higher maintenance and expense.</i></p>	<p>The technology is more forward-thinking because once added to site it will work on next months and next year’s devices without having to be programmed further.</p> <p><i>A better return on your investment.</i></p>

Courtesy Smart Solutions web marketing and development, smartz.com

Registration Now Open for 97th Annual Meeting

Take Advantage of New Early Bird Registration Rate, Plus Secure Your Hotel Reservation

The countdown has started for when Selected members will gather in New Orleans for the 97th Annual Meeting, September 16-19! This premier gathering of the best and brightest funeral professionals offers a unique fusion of content, conversation and culture. An informational booklet about the meeting is available to download at selectedfuneralhomes.org/2015-AM-promo-booklet.

Be Part of the



For complete details and to secure your plans, simply take these steps.

- **Make Hotel Reservations** at aws.passkey.com/g/35973153, or call 800-WALDORF
- **Register for the Meeting** with registration form, selectedfuneralhomes.org/2015-AM-form, or directly online at selectedfuneralhomes.org/2015-AM-register.

See you in New Orleans!

Laissez les bons temps rouler!

(Let the good times roll!) ▲

Calendar of Upcoming Meetings

Visit selectedfuneralhomes.org/events-calendar for the latest listings.

June 19

Group 1 Roundtable, Kennebunkport, ME

June 23

Group 3 Roundtable, Greenville, SC

June 27-30

European Conference, Plymouth, England

July 31

Group 6 Roundtable, Vancouver, BC, Canada

September 16-19

97th Annual Meeting, New Orleans, LA
Pacific Group Meeting, New Orleans, LA

November 4

Group 2 Roundtable, Grandville, MI

November 5

Group 1 Roundtable, Yonkers, NY

January 24-28, 2016

NextGen Seminar, St. Croix

September 14-17, 2016

98th Annual Meeting, Orlando, FL

September 10-13, 2017

99th Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL

Members Choose St. Croix for 2016 NextGen Seminar

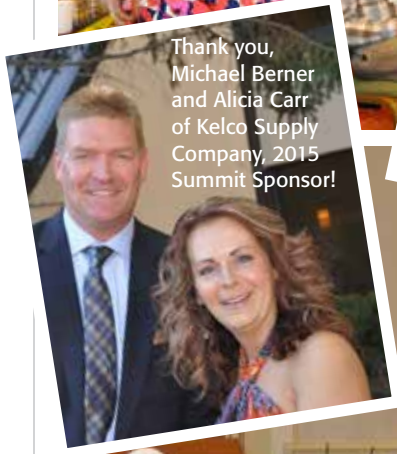
Selected NextGen members overwhelmingly have chosen to meet at the beautiful Renaissance St. Croix Carambola Beach Resort & Spa for the 2016 NextGen Seminar, January 24-28, 2016, selectedfuneralhomes.org/nextgen-seminar.

The NextGen Advisory Group will create the meeting agenda this summer. Anyone interested in volunteering to serve on the NextGen Advisory Group can contact Amy Hunt at 800-323-4219 or ahunt@selectedfuneralhomes.org.

NextGen Professional Of The Year. Nominations are being accepted for the 2016 NextGen Professional of the Year award. Visit selectedfuneralhomes.org/nextgen-program for complete details or contact Stefanie Favia at 800-323-4219 or stefanief@selectedfuneralhomes.org.

Photo Highlights of the 2015 Spring Management Summit

April 29 to May 1, Denver, CO



Thank you,
Michael Berner
and Alicia Carr
of Kelco Supply
Company, 2015
Summit Sponsor!



Congratulations Selected Leadership Academy Class of 2013!

Graduating on April 20, 2015, back row (L-R): Scott Beinhauer, Tiffany Hofer, Bob Gilbert, Robert Nunnaley, Tiffany Gorman Dean, Kyle Trimble, Dave Wise, Brittany Foster, Nicole Mothe Lawson. Kneeling (L-R): Steven Mailloux, Polly Parras, Joel McCaw. Seated: Academy Dean Marguerite Ham. Not pictured: Kevin Schoedinger and Helen Loring Dear.

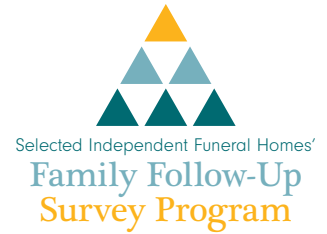


Welcome Selected Leadership Academy Class of 2015!

Standing (L-R): Cade Williamson, Michael Mientkiewicz, Todd Deibert, Academy Dean Marguerite Ham, Abby Sweeney, Eric Bliley, Fidencia Diaz, Tony Garcia, Olivia Starks, Paul Burton, Stoney Ponders, Barry Donewar. Kneeling: Bryce Bunker. Not pictured: Ashley Fryer.

Reputation, Experience and Location are Top Reasons Selected Firms Are Chosen

Courtesy of Staff Rated 4.96 out of 5.00 in Annual Family Follow-Up Survey Program Summary Report



Selected's Family Follow-Up Survey Program helps firms survey their families about their level of satisfaction with the services provided. Participating members recently received their Annual Summary Report detailing their results from the 2014 program year, as well as benchmark data on how their firm compared to fellow Selected members.

There were 336 members who participated in the 2014 program.

A total of 12,302 surveys (12,030 paper and 272 online) were completed by client families and individuals during the program year of March 2014 to February 2015. Online form completion dipped from 280 in 2013 to 272 in 2014.

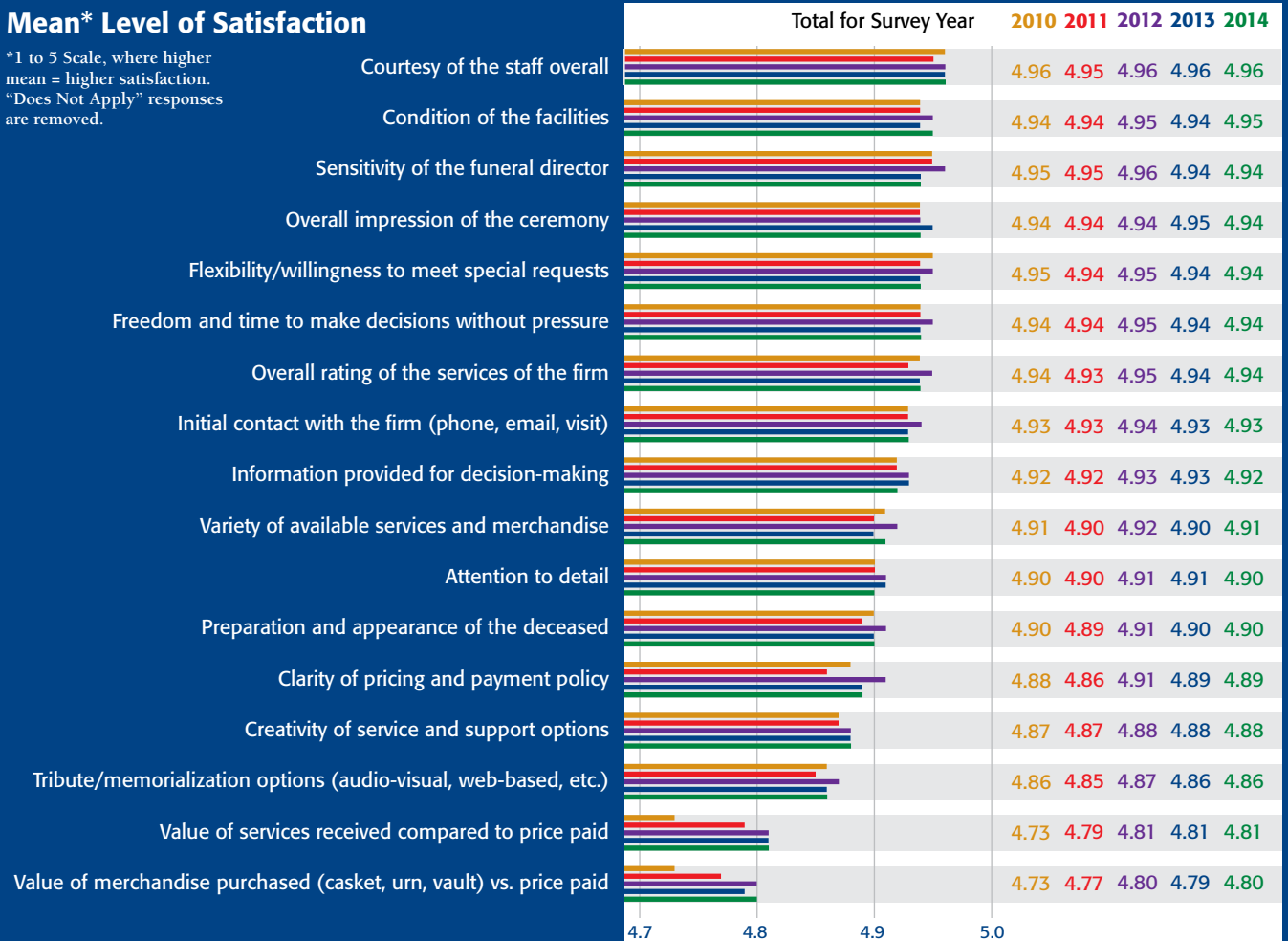
Overall Satisfaction Levels Remain High. Satisfaction levels remain high for all operating characteristics, with average ratings in the 4.9 range on a five-point scale. Overall numbers for

all operating characteristics either improved or stayed the same in 2014. Courtesy of the staff ranked highest at 4.96 while value of merchandise purchased came in at 4.80. [See Mean Level of Satisfaction chart below.]

Advertising, Website and Personal Recommendation Ranked Lowest as Reasons Firms are Chosen. Respondents chose a funeral home based on reputation, previous family experience and

Mean* Level of Satisfaction

*1 to 5 Scale, where higher mean = higher satisfaction. "Does Not Apply" responses are removed.



location. One-third of respondents indicated the choice was the wish of the deceased, while one-third also reported attendance at previous funerals played a role in their decision. [See Main Reason(s)

Why The Specific Funeral Home was Chosen chart below.]

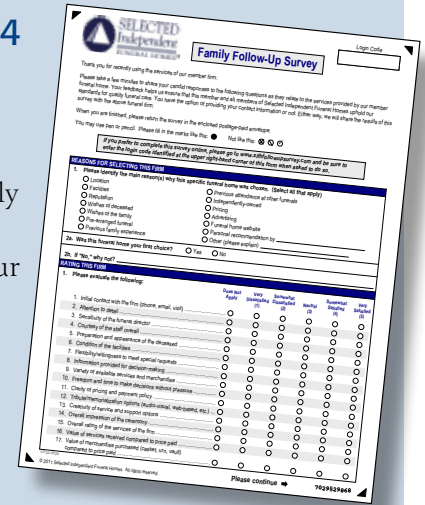
Not Using Selected's Family Follow-Up Survey Program? As a Selected member, your firm can opt in to receive 100 free surveys, monthly activity reports and the annual report. Using another survey program? You can "test drive" the program, mixing it in with whatever other program you are using. Contact Donna Anderson or Denise Zoephel at 800-323-4219 with questions or to sign-up for the program. ▲

Need More Family Follow-Up Forms?

Special Limited-Time Offer:
Free Shipping Until August 14

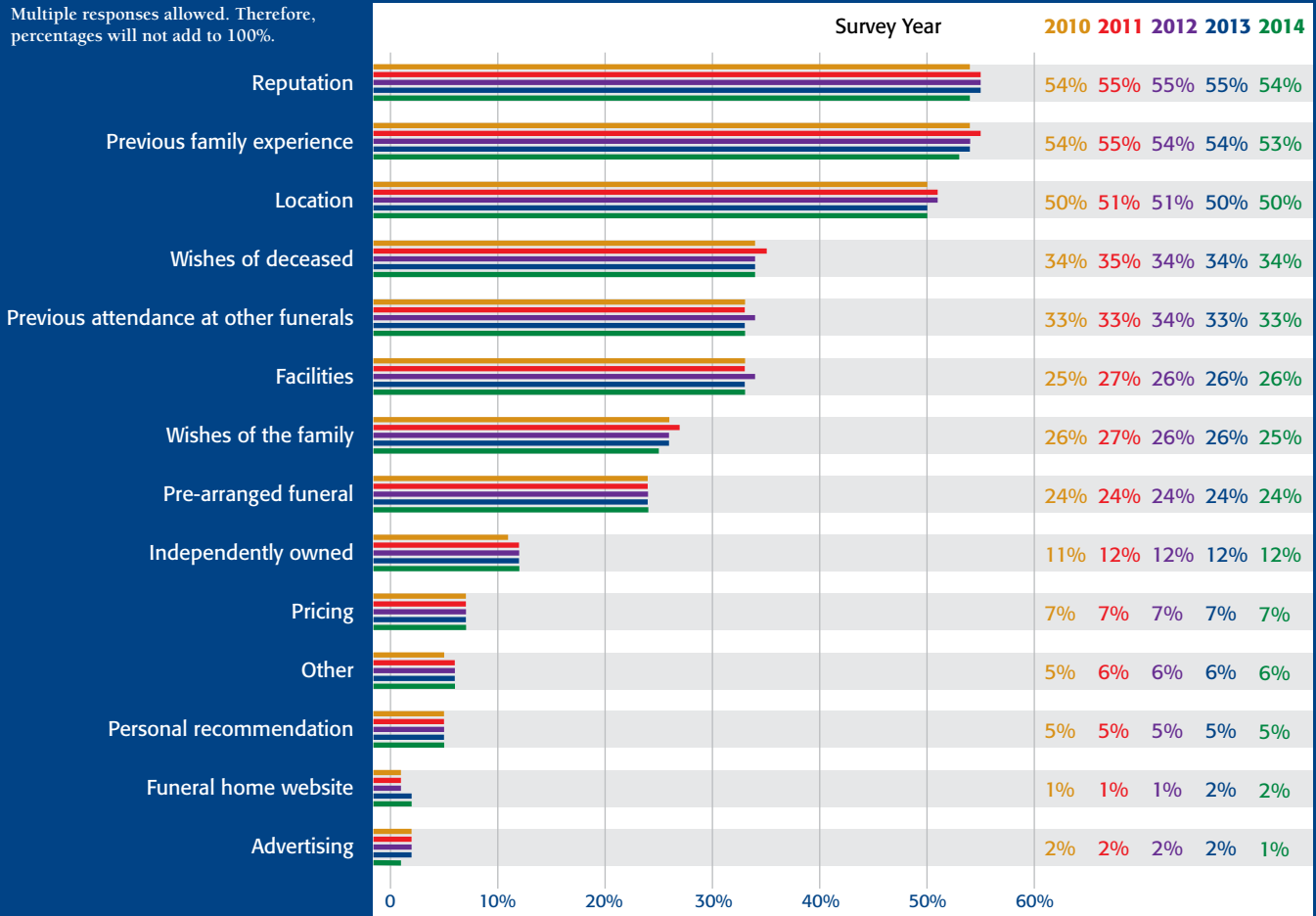
For a limited time, Selected is offering free shipping for firms needing to replenish their survey forms. The Family Follow-Up Survey Program runs until the end of February 2016, so check your blank survey supply to make sure that your firm has enough to last until the end of the program year.

The order form is available on Selected's website in the Family Follow-Up Survey Program area at selectedfuneralhomes.org/family-followup, or you can contact Donna Anderson at danderson@selectedfuneralhomes.org or 800-323-4219 for pricing and to place an order. ▲



Main Reason(s) Why The Specific Funeral Home Was Chosen

Multiple responses allowed. Therefore, percentages will not add to 100%.





More Than a Quarter of Funeral Homes Fail to Make Adequate Price List Disclosures in 2014 FTC Undercover Sweeps

By Sarah Pojanowski, Selected's General Counsel

This time of year the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) typically issues a press release announcing that funeral homes in a number of states have a "significant violation" of the Funeral Rule and have entered the Funeral Rule Offenders Program (FROP). Markedly new in this year's press release is the level of detail provided by the FTC regarding what those funeral homes are doing wrong. It is exactly what I have warned you about in my previous *Bulletin* articles about failing to hand out price lists at the correct time: Sep-Oct 2013, p12, selectedfuneralhomes.org/bulletin965, and Jul-Aug 2012, p11, selectedfuneralhomes.org/bulletin954.

The FTC has made no secret regarding the fact that this is the root of the problem when it comes to most of these violations. Firms wishing to avoid a Funeral Rule violation absolutely must train their staff to hand out the GPL at the start of in-person discussions of arrangements, and the CPL and outer burial container price lists before viewing those items, respectively. These documents should likewise be handed out before packages are discussed, and should be placed prominently, not tucked away behind several other documents. It should be clear to the consumer that he or she is receiving your full itemized price list, even if part of that list includes some packaged offerings. At the same time, it is perfectly appropriate to include packages as part of your GPL, as long as you also include a full and complete itemized list of your goods and services, as well as all required disclosures.

Pathways to Experience, from page 10 that when customers arrive on-site, they immediately see an endearing face that will help them through this difficult time.

Sense Of Hearing. *Your ears never stop hearing, even when you sleep.*

Studies show that music can improve people's moods and relax

their senses. Particularly in a funeral home, choosing the right music is critical. Research indicates that music with a slower tempo helps slow people down, relaxing them. The right music in your firm can show respect for families and friends while adding meaning to their experience.

While these three senses seem simplistic and habitual, they are

so important to the cultivation of your brand and ensuring families and friends return to your location for all of their end-of-life needs. Bring new life to your funeral home through complete sensory experiences. After all, with more than 19,000 funeral homes throughout the United States, differentiating from competition is essential. ▲

Results of 2014 FTC Regional Inspections

Funeral homes failing to make price list disclosures, out of those inspected

Northwest Arkansas - 5 of the 16
Bakersfield, California - 7 of the 11
Annapolis, Maryland, and vicinity - 4 of 13
St. Louis, Missouri - 3 of 16
Westchester County, New York - 3 of 29
Seattle, Washington - 5 of 15

The regional results of the 2014 FTC inspections are shown in the box at the top right. These funeral homes are permitted to enter FROP, which is run by NFDA and designed to provide training, monitoring and compliance with the Funeral Rule. Funeral homes also make a voluntary contribution to the U.S. Treasury in lieu of a fine. Repeat offenders are not eligible for FROP and will be pursued in federal court.

In addition, the FTC identified a number of homes, within the six states, with only minor compliance deficiencies. In such cases, the FTC requires the funeral home to provide evidence that it has corrected the problems.

If you have questions about how to comply with the Funeral Rule, do not hesitate to contact me at 800-323-4219 or sarahp@selectedfuneralhomes.org. You also can find great information on the FTC website, ftc.gov, including a business-directed PDF entitled *Complying with the Funeral Rule* and a video regarding the same subject at ftc.gov/tips-advice/business-center/selected-industries/funerals. ▲

Why Should You Contribute to the Selected Educational Trust?

By **Buz Buzogany**,
Educational Trust Director

Every charitable organization has its hand out, and most of them represent very good causes. There are charities for heart disease, cancer research, childhood leukemia, starving children in a foreign land, ending malaria, supporting school lunch programs and on and on. Then there are the religious and fraternal organizations who represent the hereafter and the here-and-now of restoring eyesight, ending polio, supporting hospitals and so much more. Academic organizations want to keep building their endowments.

So why should you contribute to the Selected Educational Trust when there are literally thousands of organizations that could use the money for their cause or organizational efforts? We'd like to think it's because our efforts are industry-specific, to support and sustain independent funeral professionals and independently-owned funeral homes throughout the world. The essence of why associations exist today is to make their members more successful through education, networking, trade shows and embracing the

unique nature of their members. By design, it is both personal and professional growth that your association hopes to help its members achieve. The same is true of the Trust.



Lifelong Learning Starts Now

Funeral service is not just a unique profession, but its very vitality helps reflect the vitality of the communities our members serve through their care, respect and support in a time of need. The Trust is a reflection of the generosity of spirit and the appreciation of commitment to supporting Lifelong Learning by our membership and outside partners/vendors.

We don't think for a moment that the Trust will be the primary organization that you commit your hard earned dollars to, now or in the future. But we would like the Trust to be in the mix. Most individuals contribute to 15 to 20 non-profit organizations a year, with religious organizations receiving the largest amount of money.

In an eNews article, I recently asked readers to consider making the Trust "one of your top three non-profit choices." But we would be thrilled to become part of the contribution mix each year, no matter the size of your gift. Awareness creates interest, interest creates knowledge, knowledge creates passion and passion creates contributions.

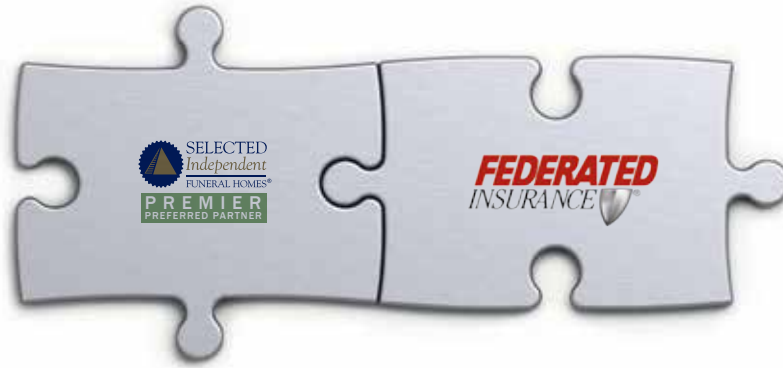
Why should you contribute to the Trust? That's a personal decision, but I can say that, to a person, those who have received scholarships to be part of the Leadership Academy, Spring Management Summit, or Second Career program have expressed incredible gratitude and appreciation for the financial assistance and the learning opportunities they have received from the Trust. All of them feel that they are, or will become, better at their chosen profession of funeral service because of the opportunity.

We are in the fifth year of "The New Trust," and our active commitment and support of Lifelong Learning for the independent funeral professional. We hope that you'll join our effort to make the industry we serve stronger through education, research and outreach to the communities we serve.

Go to selectedtrust.org for more information on all of our activities and the various ways that you can contribute (monthly through PayPal, credit card or simply sending a check). Thank you in advance for your consideration. ▲

New Night. New Pricing. New Location.

The Selected Educational Trust's Annual Gala will be held on a Thursday (for the first-time ever), September 17, at Pat O's on the River in New Orleans. Ticket prices to attend this special event with colleagues and peers have gone down to \$195 per person to encourage everyone who attends the Selected Annual Meeting to take part. Great food, an open bar, music and dancing all overlooking the Mississippi River in one of the loveliest venues in all of New Orleans. Put it on your calendar today! ▲



A Perfect Fit

Relationships take work. Sometimes things go smoothly, sometimes not so much. But a winning relationship—like the one between Federated and your association—is worth the effort. The result? A solid partnership built on a foundation of mutual respect. That partnership has one primary goal: helping you build the business you imagined.

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Tom Johnson



Jake Johnson



Bill Cutter



David Adams

The first rule of selling your business: make sure you have the best advisor.



Bob Horn

*The Best Team... The Best Results...
The Best Price...
For the Lowest Fees in the Business!*



Karen McCurdy



Todd Lumbard

“
Selling our company after 120 years of family ownership was a very difficult decision. Johnson Consulting Group’s advice and counsel were invaluable in helping me reach my decision, which resulted in several very serious offers and maximized the value we received. JCG helped secure my family’s future and we are forever grateful.
Blair Nelsen, Former Owner – Nelsen Family Funeral Services, Inc.
”



Rich Sells



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Frank R. Smith and Frank E. Smith Funeral Home & Crematory

Frank R. Smith, CFSP, is owner of Frank E. Smith Funeral Home & Crematory with locations in Lancaster and Baltimore, OH. The firm was invited into membership in Selected in 1970. It has eight full-time and three part-time employees and handles about 350 calls per year. Its crematory operation handles more than 400 cases annually.

What is your guiding business principle?

“Our business motto is Respect for Tradition...Regard for Change.”

Of what aspect of your firm are you most proud?

“Our process called *Caring Cremation* which we have trademarked. It is how we present cremated remains to our families and the process in which we obtain 38% more remains from each body. This reduces commingling and requires urns. Cremation is the growth area in this profession. Our goal is to better serve those families with various memorialization options and services. We built our crematorium in 2001 and have served more than 4,000 families to date.”

What is your firm’s greatest challenge?

“Finding licensed personnel who meet Ohio’s BA degree requirement plus schooling and internship from mortuary schools that are graduating less than 50 students per year.”

What is the best way to stay competitive?

“By attending as many Selected meetings as possible and participating in its programs; they pay for themselves. By listening to the women of Selected. Also by interviewing families served by other funeral homes—What did you like best, least? Did you feel under-served or over-served? Did you receive value? This is fun and takes a life of its own. I offer a large, pre-cooked ham for completing our survey.”

What is the best way to network with people in your community?

“Through various service clubs. I also am a member of a speaking group called Symposiarchs.”

What is the best way to spot new trends?

“Again, through interviewing families you did not serve. I also participate with a ‘9-11’ group in the Columbus, OH, area that is my sounding board. We have met monthly since 9-11. It is composed of a dozen various business men and woman who share their thoughts on all aspects of personal and business operations.”

What is your favorite form of communication?

“Face-to-face, one-on-one. That way, you can understand the



Frank Smith

body language that impacts the verbalization of the comments.”

Whom in funeral service do you most admire and why?

“John Schoedinger taught me about variable costs per service. The Schoedingers also sponsored our funeral home in membership to National Selected Morticians (NSM) in 1970. Thanks John! Mentors Dick Criss, Don Finefrock, and the Kepners, Buschs, Arnolds, and Groffs shared various nuisances of their styles of funerals. We formed the largest private preneed trust in Ohio, Assured Protection, run by funeral directors for funeral directors. It is still in business today and doing well. The late Bob Breitenbach of Middletown, OH, got me involved to start our local hospice, FairHoPe Hospice & Palliative Care, *fairhopehospice.org*. What a fabulous era for our profession to have all these special personalities. They also stirred up the Early Bird discussions to get communications flowing.”

What previous jobs did you have prior to your career in funeral service?

“I came out of the Army a demolition expert. I love the Fourth of July. I helped formed a Fourth of July committee in Lancaster for the fireworks display at our fairgrounds and a huge parade. The parade route just happens to go by the funeral home, hmmm.”

Why did you seek a career in funeral service?

“It seemed to be a ministry for me to serve and help people

through the worse time of their lives with meaningful services. As a fourth-generation funeral director, the staff at our firm nurtured my skills, and they were honed by members of Selected.”

What are your proudest achievements?

“Not giving up in a five-year monetary drive to build a six million dollar hospice unit serving three counties—FairHoPe Hospice. Helping my brother, David, be elected Mayor of Lancaster. He will be retiring as Mayor at the end of 2015. I started the youth exchange program in Rotary in 1976. I also ran the Bicentennial Committee that year. I successfully created and started the commercial division of United Way for solicitation.”

What has been your best business decision?

“Building our crematory. It was a political dance of permits and politics plus getting the historical committee to approve. We later added a monument business to supplement income.”

What is your favorite part of the job?

“The satisfaction of seeing the results fulfilled of many efforts of staff and community to meet the needs of families served.”

And your least favorite part?

“Embalming and restoring the remains of young children. As a result, I have purchased many swimming lessons for families of

children who do not know how to swim.”

What is your biggest professional pet peeve?

“Families not contacting us first when there is an immediate need out-of-town, especially in Florida.”

What is your next major project?

“My estate planning with proper financing to permit the next generation, my son, F. Eric Smith, to absorb the idiosyncrasies and nuances of this profession and the family business.”

What is your favorite way to relax?

“Target shooting. Reading mirage and wind values at 600 meters. Scuba diving, skiing. I also am instrument-rated for single-engine aircraft.”

What is the last book you read that you found very interesting?

“My ongoing reading and study of the Holy Bible. *The E-Myth Revisited: Why Most Small Businesses Don't Work and What to Do About It* by Michael Gerber and *Breakthrough Advertising* by Eugene Schwartz.”

What is your favorite community cause?

“I serve on the board of our local Maywood Mission, a Christian outreach program. We give away more than 700 coats for children at Christmas time and 500 turkeys and meals

to preselected families in the community. Also, the FairHoPe Hospice ministry.”

What would be your second career choice, if you were not in funeral service?

“I would probably have continued as a medical technician and possibly a pharmacist.”

What famous person would you like to have a conversation with?

“Jesus and also Abraham Lincoln who started the funeral service profession by repatriating war-time dead.”

What is something you would like to do, if you could or had the time?

“Working with exchange students at our local high school to broaden their horizons.”

What is your favorite Selected program, benefit or service?

“I pestered former Executive Director Fred Bates into starting the Under-Forty group in NSM, which is now NextGen. I highly recommend it to breathe new life into your thinking from this group.”

What did you gain from your last Selected meeting or activity?

“Learning more about how to measure and quantify staff and its training. If you don't attend Selected meetings, you are missing the finest association of men and women bar none.” ▲

REMEMBERING OUR COLLEAGUES

Visit selectedfuneralhomes.org/obituaries for more information.

Melody S. Anderson, funeral director at Anderson Funeral Home, Franklin, OH, died May 27. anderson-funeral.com

Ken Williams, funeral director at Thompson Funeral Chapel, Goodyear, AZ, died on May 27. thompsonfuneralchapel.com

Alysia D. Porter, Vice-President of A.D. Porter & Sons, Inc., Louisville, KY, died May 21. adporters.com

Steve Aldridge Jr., Secretary-Treasurer of Stanly Funeral Home, Inc., Albemarle, NC, died May 16. stanlyfuneralhome.com

Lois E. Geib, mother of Richard Geib II, former President of Geib Funeral Homes, Crematories & Remembrance Centers, New Philadelphia, OH, and grandmother of Anne Geib, President of the firm, died May 16. geibfuneral.com

Richard T. Harris of Powell Funeral Home & Crematory, Southern Pines, NC, died April 26. pinesfunerals.com

Marcene W. Busch, wife of Past Selected Secretary-Treasurer John Busch, Busch Funeral and Crematory Services, Cleveland, OH, died April 16. Mrs. Busch also is survived by her children, James, President of the firm and Secretary-Treasurer of Selected, and J. Mark, Vice-President at the firm. buschcares.com

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Dingmann Funeral Care, Annandale, MN
Heavenly Grace Memorial Park, La Feria, TX
Heer Mortuaries & Crematory, Brush, CO
Hoening Family Funeral Homes, Fostoria, OH
King Funeral Home & Cremation Services, Ludington, MI (new location)
Leevy's Funeral Home, Columbia, SC
Panbaker Funeral Home, Hanover, PA
Reger Funeral Home & Cremation Services, Huntington, WV
Walker Funeral Homes & Crematory, Toledo, OH

EDUCATIONAL TRUST CONTRIBUTIONS

The Selected Educational Trust thanks the following contributors for their generous support.

IN-MEMORIUM CONTRIBUTORS

Jack Bauer and Jennifer Eroh, Bauer Funeral Home, Kittanning, PA, in memory of Marcene Busch

Charles M. Billow, Charles W. Billow and Family, The Billow Funeral Homes & Crematory, Akron, OH, in memory of Marcene Busch

Busch Funeral and Crematory Services, Cleveland, OH, memory of Lee Allen

James H. and J. Mark Busch, Busch Funeral and Crematory Services, Cleveland, OH, in memory of Lois Geib

Dawson Funeral Home, East Liverpool, OH, in memory of Marcene Busch

Haisley Funeral & Cremation Service, Fort Pierce, FL, in memory of Maurene Dunning

The Keohane Family, Keohane Funeral Home, Quincy, MA, in memory of Marcene Busch, Fonda Stuhr

Carl J. Mowell & Son Funeral Home, Inc., Fayetteville, GA, in memory of Fonda Stuhr

William A. Pumphrey, Robert A. Pumphrey Funeral Home, Bethesda, MD, in memory of J. William Dolan, Fonda Stuhr and Marcene Busch

Tufts Schildmeyer Funeral Home, Loveland, OH, in memory of Marcene Busch

Selected Group 1, in memory of Eugene Chandler and J. William Dolan

Selected Group 3, in memory of Fonda Stuhr, Lee Allen

Selected Past Officers' Spouses Council, in memory of Marcene Busch and Fonda Stuhr

GOLD PATRON CONTRIBUTORS

Charles M. Billow, The Billow Funeral Homes & Crematory, Akron, OH

Thomas R. Morris, Downing & Lahey Mortuaries, Wichita, KS

Speaks Family Legacy Chapels, Independence, MO

SILVER PATRON CONTRIBUTORS

Steve Pierce, Muehlebach Funeral Home, Kansas City, MO

Rob Paterkiewicz, Selected Independent Funeral Homes, Deerfield, IL

SUSTAINING PATRON CONTRIBUTOR

Tiffany A. Hofer, Reck Funeral Home, Miller, SD

NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS

Jan Smith, Vice President of Funeral Operations for Flanner and Buchanan Funeral Centers in Indianapolis, IN, was one of four funeral directors who served as a mentor for the NFDA *Meet the Mentors* program, March 16-18 in Atlanta, GA. Smith presented on generational differences in the workplace and she discussed strategies for utilizing the strengths of each generation to create a better understanding of how they can benefit the team and the families served.

Trimble Pointe Companies, family of businesses in Moline, IL, has received the 2015 Innovation Award from the Quad Cities Chamber of Commerce. The awards honors the individuals and businesses that are helping bolster the Iowa-Illinois Quad Cities as a creative and prosperous place to live and work.

Trimble Pointe Companies reinvented its entire business model when a bridge project required it to change locations. The four-company group consists of Trimble Funeral Home & Crematory, CityView Celebrations, Watermark Corners and Veterans Funeral Care. Trimble Pointe, a two-story event center opened in August 2014 and is designed to provide complete facilities for all of life's events.



“We are seeing a dramatic change in the manner in which families want to celebrate their loved one’s life,” said President Eric Trimble. “The award for innovation is particularly meaningful to our family because, at 141 years, we are one of the oldest family-owned businesses in the region—in an industry that is slow to change. We are gratified that the community has endorsed our vision of a multi-use facility. ▲



(L-R): Amy, Eric and Barbara Trimble; Aiden Landman of the Quad Cities Chamber; Jennifer and Reid Trimble

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