On Sunday, May 22, 2011 Ballard-Durand Funeral & Cremation Services held our Second Annual Memorial Service & Dove Release. We are often left with feeling of emptiness and uncertainty with the loss of a loved one. A dove is a vivid symbol of hope and healing, and the release of a dove acts as closure - symbolizing letting go of strong emotions.

Funeral home staff members accepted the reservations and recorded the name of the deceased person(s) the family would like to remember. In addition, families were asked to email or mail a photo to be included in a slideshow that was displayed during the memorial service. With a confirmed reservation we reserved a dove for the family to release at a point nearing the end of the service. As guests arrived at the funeral home they were greeted by funeral home staff and seated in our main chapel where the memorial slideshow was being shown.

After a welcome by the funeral home's owner, Matthew Fiorillo the program began. Representatives from Hospice & Palliative Care of Westchester were on hand to speak about grief and to lend support to the attendees. A Catholic Priest and a Rabbi spoke some words of comfort. Afterwards we all moved to the back lawn of the building and each family was given a basket that contained a single white dove. As each dove was released they all joined one another in the sky before flying home. Refreshments were served following the conclusion of the day.

# Angel Statue of Hope

Rockford, Illinois is a, manufacturing community of around 150,000 people made up of many ethnic, religious and political backgrounds. On December 6, 2010 at 6:00 p.m. Fitzgerald Funeral Home & Crematory staff members joined with representatives of Rockford Memorial Development Foundation, Rockford Health Systems, Swedish American Hospital, OSF St. Anthony Medical Center, Haven Network and other community members for a Candlelight Vigil and Remembrance Ceremony. This event is held in the downtown river front area in Millinium Park.

"The Christmas Box" is a book written by Richard Paul Evans in 1996 and is a beautiful tender story about the meaning of life and death and the power of a parents love. This is represented by a beautiful three foot statue with outstretched wings. Fitzgerald Funeral Home & Crematory joined with these groups and other individuals to bring "Angel Hope" to Rockford. She has been placed on a large granite base donated by a local monument company and placed in a wooded setting that was donated by the Rockford Park District. "Angel Hope" is a place of serenity for families that have experienced a death, especially the death of a child, to go meditate, pray, think and just be in a place where they are able to feel connected to their child. Throughout the year family members or friends can be found visiting "Angel Hope", often bringing flowers, notes or small gifts of remembrances to bonor their loved ones.

On December 6" at 6:00 p.m. every community in the world that is fortunate enough to have an Angel statue gathers to light candles and remember their children. We send out invitations to the families that we have served and who have had children die and invite them to join us. As each person arrives they are given a candle. We have also invited them to bring a white flower to lie at the base of "Angel Hope". A Fitzgerald staff member is the Master of Ceremonies each year. A parent, grandparent or family member share their story with us and then their candles are lit while they say the name of their child or children. They are then invited to take their flower up to the statue and a special song is sung by an outstanding local musician. Refreshments are served following the ceremony and everybody has an opportunity to visit with each other.

This is a very significant time for our community, our staff and all other grow Fitzgerable involved with the "Angel Hope". She is precious to us all.

Gorsline Runiman

Supportive Soles is a weekly therapeutic approach to the grief journey. Having offered the traditional support group for more than 30 years, we added an educational 5 week class on grief in 2005. Both of these support venues are well attended, however, it seemed our bereaved families were looking for something "more". "More" appeared to be involvement with others. Our thoughts began to turn to walking and talking together, would this work? Where to walk? Would they come? Did we need food? We selected Fenner Nature Center as our location, centrally located in Lansing. The nature center is maintained by the City of Lansing and hosts several nature camps for children in the area. The nature center works perfectly because the paved walking trail is a figure eight shape and those who have limited mobility walk the small loop and others walk the larger loop and we can join up several times throughout the walk. Wildlife is abundant on the walk: Deer, turkey, turtles, snakes, and frogs, and butterflies to name a few. We cross paths with children almost every week and this is good for all generations.

"Supportive Soles" depicts the unique aspect of our group. We walk and focus on our physical well-being as well as converse and exchange our grief journey. We transition our families from in-bound loneliness to social activity and interaction. Our families find joy in establishing support and friendships too numerous to mention. For example, while walking in the group, one gentleman was sharing how difficult the weekends are; the others listened, a few moments later he asked if anyone knew anything about furnace filters. Someone is the group shared their knowledge of furnace filters. The support is given in all areas of life....not just grief, which is more common of a traditional support group to stay on topic. It seems they are living life out together. One member recently stated that she feels closer to her walking group than to her own family, because of what is shared between them.

The question about food was answered when the group itself started going to breakfast after walking. Some even join for breakfast even though they do not walk with the group. The creatures of habit that we are, the restaurant has the drinks on the table when we arrive. Some sit and chat at the table for more than an hour each week.

In conclusion, to answer the final question, would they come, the answer is yes. Each week we have an average of 10 walkers. When asked what they like about **Supportive Soles** the answer was "it gets us out of the house and around others". We believe this unique group offers "the something more "our families were looking for.

### 2010-2011

### Pursuit of Excellence

## Category I - Basic Requirements - H

## **Grief Support Group**

Henderson Funeral Home has begun a grief support group in conjunction with a local senior citizen's center and a local Hospice. In late 2010, inquiries from area churches, counselors, and community groups led the staff of Henderson Funeral Home to investigate if the community was offering any grief support groups. Our research indicated that of the support groups that had been listed in area directories, none were currently meeting.

Marla Henderson and Mark Wilder began meetings with Jeff Leman of Hospice Compassus to develop a schedule and format for the group. We then contacted Miller Senior Citizen's Center, a local not-for-profit senior activities facility operated by the Pekin Park District, to secure a location for the group meetings. We chose the Miller Center because it is centrally located, well known by the community and has been the host for previous presentations and activities sponsored by Henderson Funeral Home.

Pekin is a community of approximately 35,000 people, located 10 miles south of Peoria and mid way between Chicago and St. Louis in Central Illinois. Our area supports a diverse economic base with a combination of industrial, agricultural and service industries in regionally and nationally known companies. Pekin is the county seat of Tazewell County and has many private law firms and legal support services operating within the community. We are also the location of two prison facilities operated by the Federal Bureau of Prisons. The predominant religious demographic for Pekin is Christian, with a wide variety of denominations represented.

We decided on a monthly meeting format approximately an hour and a half per session. Each meeting would be moderated by either Jeff Leman, Marla Henderson or Mark Wilder on a rotating basis. The format consists of introductions, a topic based presentation, group sharing, questions and answers and refreshments and social time. Topics covered in the meetings range from dealing with emotions following a loss, to practical daily activities for integrating change and moving toward reconciliation. We utilize materials created by Dr. Allen Wolfelt in the design of the group meetings.

The group began meetings in June of 2011 and has an average attendance of twelve participants. The format is designed so that participants can attend those topics which have significance to them and allows for new members to be added throughout the schedule of meetings. The major benefit to the community is that we provide a currently active grief group available to those in need of support following the loss of a loved one.

Mark, Jeff and Marla find this work particularly rewarding because it provides them with an opportunity to assist members of the community in dealing with the many changes that occur when adjusting to life after a loss. In addition, Henderson Funeral Home, Hospice Compassus and the Miller Center also benefit from the additional exposure provided by the advertising materials promoting the grief support group located around the community.

"I don't feel like eating.' That is what she told me." This was the comment my friend told me about his mother. After the loss of his dad my friend said his mother had lost too much weight and now had to see a physician because her health was declining. This scenario has played out over and over. We have heard directly from survivors that they had lost their appetite after the loss of a loved one. It took a little bit to put it together but, finally we recognized a common statement. "I just don't like eating alone." There, we had recognized it, but what could we do about it?

In the spring of 2011 we set out to do something about it. The staff at Johnson-Hagglund started brainstorming ways to assist our families through this very difficult concern. "I don't like eating alone." First, we had to identify why? After some conversations with the survivors, a few common elements were revealed. It is difficult adjusting to cooking for only one person. It is lonely and the loneliness then brings sadness. What do you do with left overs? Many of these individuals do not like waste and would rather do without than be wasteful.

We started brainstorming. One idea was to hold an informational seminar. Teaching people to cook for one would solve their problem. Well, not really. What about the loneliness? We could invite them out for dinner from time to time. That would be nice but it is not feasible to do that many lunches. Also what would they do for all their other meals? If we could somehow meld these ideas together we would be closer to a solution. "Cooking for One" was born.

"Cooking for One" would become a gathering for the people in our community who were struggling with any or all of these concerns. We decided that it had to be something other than a seminar. This had to be a gathering that would address all of the issues. "Cooking for One" would be a time for individuals going through the same grief journey to share their stories and ideas with others. We would invite people to join us for a meal and time of sharing. We partnered with the Meeker Memorial Hospital. They would provide a Registered Dietician, Joanne Searle. This was a wonderful relationship. She helped organize a menu that would be nutritious as well as tasty. She also volunteered to talk to the attendees about the value of food and nutrition in the grieving process. A'Viands, the caterer from the Hospital, would provide the food and the license to enable us to serve a meal. Marcia Provencher, the recently retired Community Education Director was brought on board to talk about cooking in smaller portions and how to preserve and use left overs. As this snowballing idea got bigger, we invited the local Tupperware rep to give ideas for food storage and the Schwan's rep to offer single serving meal ideas. The manager of the Econo Foods, a local grocery store, would be on hand to share all of the availability of smaller packaging. We also invited the director of Senior Dining to share the benefits of her program, a representative from the local health food store and the local Meals on Wheels program. The idea of these vendors would be to gather information in our community and to provide resources to the attendees. Even with all of these vendors on board we only had half of the issue addressed. We still needed to address the loneliness.

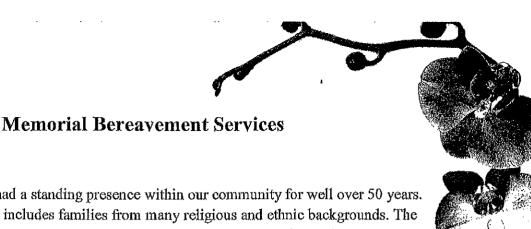
We decided that perhaps the individuals attending could help one another and put together a reply card where attendees could write suggestions for what has helped them. Simple ideas for coping, recipes, and offers to get together to just talk would be written on the cards. We offered to assist the attendees in forming groups for future contact. You could call them "support groups", "lunch clubs", or "friendship



groups". Whatever you called them the premise behind them was the same. They would give an avenue to build new friendships with others going through the same journey. We could not become facilitators to multiple groups but it was decided that we could help get them organized to run on their own. We compiled the suggestions and mailed them to all those in attendance.

The day of the event arrived and the staff was excited to watch how everything would unfold. The vendors were the first to arrive and started setting up and the excitement spilled over from our staff to them. Nobody knew exactly what to expect. As the attendees started to arrive we greeted them and gave them name tags. It was nice to be able to introduce folks that did not know one another and let them greet those they did know. When everyone had arrived, Ray took to the podium and welcomed everyone again and introduced the vendors and the speaker. He spoke about the purpose of this gathering and encouraged everyone to share their stories with one another. He then handed the microphone over to Joanne and she delivered a very helpful message about the value of good nutrition during the grieving process and through the days ahead. While Joanne spoke the staff of Johnson-Hagglund assisted in the kitchen with the food prep. After her presentation Father Joseph Steinbeisser gave a blessing and the meal was served by the funeral home staff. During the meal the room was abuzz with conversation and an occasional bout of laughter. As one participant put it "This is the first time in a long time I had a smile on my face while I ate." If the event had ended right then it would have been a success. Luckily it didn't. The group was instructed to go to the vendor tables and find more information and resources. I have attended many conventions and expos that did not have the same positive energy that was in that room. Our decision to keep a close eye on the amount of time spent at our event was perhaps the only short fall. We had seminars in the past where one complaint was that the seminar was too long and we didn't want to make that mistake again. But, this was obviously not a concern this time. People were enjoying themselves and the company of others. The vendors, who had taken time out of there busy schedules, even commented that they would have liked more time. That hour went so fast.

Since the day of the event we have heard many wonderful things. The attendees thoroughly enjoyed themselves and came away from the event with a few tips and new acquaintances. Some have expressed an interest in forming lunch groups and many have asked if we will be holding another get together like this. To that question we would reply with a resounding yes. We felt the day was a huge success in what we were trying to accomplish and want to provide that resource to many more.



Memorial Mortuary has had a standing presence within our community for well over 50 years. The community we serve includes families from many religious and ethnic backgrounds. The majority of the families we serve are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. However, we have also had the privilege of serving families who are members of the Baptist, Catholic, Muslim, Christian and other religious faiths.

The dynamic of family relationships and the individual attention they require not only demands a need for flexibility, but has taught us the values and strengths needed to properly build relationships with the families and community we serve.

As every family is unique and their circumstances regarding the loss of a loved one may be different, we have come to recognize a common factor among everyone we serve. This common factor is the needed ability each family must have in transitioning through the loss of a loved one.

It has become our goal as funeral professionals to serve our community above and beyond the level our competition can. We are able to accomplish this goal through directly assisting our families and the community by providing a comfortable atmosphere that encourages room for love, guidance, direction and additional support mechanisms to help individuals make the transition that comes after losing a loved one.

Rosalind Fretz is a Chaplain and a Grief Certified Counselor who works directly with our firm. Under her direction, Memorial Mortuary has been able to successfully establish community bereavement support services for the people in our community. We invite and encourage each family we serve to participate in these support groups both as a family, community and as individuals in one-on-one forums.

Every third Wednesday of the month our grief support groups are held at our facility. The group sessions are conducted by Ms. Fretz. If Ms. Fretz determines that a family may need extra attention and support she is able to arrange private counseling sessions. If families feel they need extra help they are welcome to inform us and we will gladly take heed in supporting their needs.

As part of our staff, Ms. Fretz is always available in times of immediate assistance. She is able to work directly with the funeral director and can counsel families facing a tragic unexpected death by providing additional grief support services during the time funeral arrangements are discussed as well as being called directly to the scene of an accident or place of death.

In addition to the grief support our firm offers to the families and community we serve, we have come to realize a greater need for supporting our community as a whole. This means we not only



reach out to those we serve, in addition we reach out to special groups within the community. Such as religious, civic, and social groups, as well as advocating services for law enforcement and firefighters serving so diligently in our community.

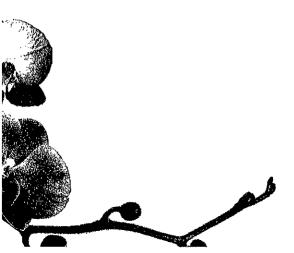
Ms. Fretz has certifications as a Grief Counselor and Victim Advocate in addition to extensive Crisis Intervention Counseling learned while attending the International Fire and Police Chaplains Academy in Michigan. Ms. Fretz specializes in spiritual support for those experiencing traumatic or emergency situations including domestic violence, homicide, death of a child, suicide, and trauma resulting from violent crimes.

In conjunction with our grief support services and the additional training Ms. Fretz has received along with outstanding academic certifications we can provide services above and beyond the expectations of our families. We can support our local law enforcement agencies and firefighters by offering counseling services to their staff in times of severe stress and mental challenges as they serve our community.

The wonderful part of the services we provide is that there is never any cost to families and the community. Everyone is welcome to attend our support groups for as long as they may need. We believe strongly in giving back to our community and this program has touched people in ways that simply can't be described.

This program has allowed us to be considered experts within our field and a trusted resource in times of need. We feel it a privilege to reach out to people and help them deal with one of the most difficult situations they may ever face in their lives. We also take pride in knowing that our services do not end at the conclusion of a funeral service. We consistently support and encourage our families for years to come. The bonds and connections made will last a lifetime.

Ultimately it is exciting to see our families grow from the experiences they have had and in turn see them reach out to others in the community. Their willingness to share their ideas and experiences with others who are facing similar challenges creates an everlasting bond based upon relationships of trust and love.



# The Patrick T. Lanigan Funeral Home Grief Support Group: 20 Years and Going Strong.

In a recent professional publication, an article appeared regarding a 2011 book that criticized the Grief Counseling profession as a creation of a cottage industry that is not necessary for recovering from grief. I disagree with the premise of the author and her book.

For over 20 years, our firm has sponsored a grief support group. The group is facilitated by Dr. Barbara Coyne, a bereavement counselor. She has helped hundreds of people as they experience the very real pain of grief. These folks are living in a new world without someone who has been very important and dear too them. Now, that person is no longer with them in their earthly existence. Their lives are irreversibly changed.

We are very pleased to be able to help folks experiencing the emptiness of grief.

We began our affiliation with Dr. Coyne in 1984. My Aunt Dolores had suddenly died at her home that year, and my Uncle Marty was having a terrible time coping. His family told him that he needs to be strong, know she won't return, quit talking about it, get over it, etc. I noticed a grief seminar being held at our local hospital with Dr. Coyne as the presenter. I took Marty and his daughters. Dr. Coyne spoke about grief and its effects and ways to cope and I found Marty nodding his head in agreement. After the seminar, Dr. Coyne met briefly with Uncle Marty and his daughters and asked about my Aunt's death and his relationship. She told Marty, "That after 40 years of marriage and her sudden death, she deserves to be grieved for by you. You are quite normal in your feelings and keep expressing yourself". We were all educated by her response. In 1985, we hosted our first Grief Seminar in town with over 200 people in attendance. We hosted 2 seminars the next year and soon decided to have monthly meetings for anyone suffering from the death of a loved person.

The group meets in the St. Maurice Parish Center which has been converted from a convent to an office/meeting center. We have been given use of a large, comfortable lounge that can accommodate a small group of 5 or 6 or a larger group of 15-25. I purposely accepted this space as opposed to other offers from Churches to use their church basements or undercrofts. I think the more unreligious the setting, the better, so as not deter those who are not very faith-based.

The group meets every first Wednesday of the month from 7-9pm, January through November. Our Holiday Service is held on the first Wednesday of December and all of the folks from the group are invited to attend that evening, also.

The group is open to anyone, whether we served their family or not.

One of our staff of co-workers opens the doors at 6:40. We provide coffee, soft drinks, cookies and pastries. We do not attend the meeting, for fear of inhibiting open discussion. Dr.Coyne leads the group with her knowledge and insight and, at the end of the evening, she consults, one-on-one, with whomever needs some extra help.

As I reflect back in my earliest of days in mortuary school, I remember most of the class relating that they chose funeral service in order to help people at one of the most tragic times of their lives. Every first Wednesday of the month I know that we are fulfilling that mission to help folks, by sponsoring our Grief Support Group.

And I also know that the positive comments from the folks who attend our group debunk the book of that writer who was critical of bereavement support.

# Living with Loss

Once a year around the holiday season we are privileged enough to be able to put on a program, "Living with Loss", presented by Dr. Dudley Riggle. He is a Professor Emeritus at Carthage College, where he developed and taught the class "Issues in Living and Dying." He is nationally recognized for his helpful presentations on loss and grief and for his Hospice work with the dying and grieving.

We host the event at the Kenosha Public Museum and invite not only the families that we have served over the past year, but the general public as well. We mail postcards to all of the families we have served in the previous year, hang up flyers around nursing homes, libraries, and other public places, as well as, advertise the program in our local newspaper and a local radio station.

Although the majority of residents in Kenosha are Christian, the "Living with Loss", program is not directed at any specific religion, it's non-denominational. The program is based on the fact that no matter how small of a loss, that all of us suffer from some sort of loss; it may be a job, a pet, a grandparent, or maybe even a child. He also explained we have learned to deal with loss from the day our mother's first dropped us off at kindergarten. From this, everyone in the room had something in common, something that tied all of us together.

Realizing this, Dr. Riggle proceeds to address the different stages of grieving. He explained how people experience so many different emotions associated with loss, that there is no "typical" reaction. He then discussed the average time that one grieves for, and the different circumstances that affect this. Such as if it were a sudden death, an expected death, a death of a child, a death where there is unresolved problems, there were numerous factors that contribute to the length of time, for which an individual grieves.

An interesting point that Dr. Riggle shared was that crying because you're grieving actually helps you feel better. Psychic tears, those related to emotion have a different chemical make-up than basal and reflex tears. Psychic tears release hormones that will bring your body back to equilibrium.

Following Dr. Riggle's presentation, we had a 30 minute session for questions and answers. No one was forced to participate. It was strictly voluntary, but most of the audience contributed in one way or another. I feel that this section of the presentation is very beneficial, because it allows all of the families to share with one another what has helped them and what they are finding difficult. By sharing with one another and talking about their loss, I believe it helped ease their pain.

We have been presenting this program for nearly 20 years. It not only benefits the families we serve and our community by allowing them an occasion to remember their loved one and to understand the grieving process better, but it benefits us as a funeral home as well. We not only get to see these people that we have served again, but also gain a better understanding of how they are feeling following the death of a loved one.

### Wappner Funeral Directors

### **Continuing Care Specialist**

The path of healing for families that choose Wappner Funeral Directors as their funeral provider begins with the "first call," at the funeral home and beyond the services, and continues with care from our specialized staff every step of the way. One specific service we provide to our families that continues care to the family following the funeral services is our Continuing Care Specialist. The benefits to a family and the community at-large are numerous when a little extra care is provided, even after a little time has passed from the services of a loved one who has died.

Wappner Funeral Directors began the Continuing Care Specialist position at the funeral home in February of 2011. Our representative, Beverly Bernotas was the specialist chosen, to see to the families needs following every service that occurs from our funeral homes. Her position as the Continuing Care Specialist does not eliminate the follow-up calls and rapport of the funeral director that served the family, but her position rather enhances the follow-up from the funeral directors, with additional, pertinent information that is helpful in going on with life after a death has occurred. Mrs. Bernotas attended a specialized program through The Outlook Group Inc. in the Fall of 2010 to obtain the tools necessary for success in her new job at the funeral home. Bev also serves as the funeral home receptionist, so she naturally fit the criteria for the position, with her kind demeanor, and good heart.

The benefits of the Continuing Care Specialist in a funeral home setting are numerous for both the family and the funeral home, mutually. A week following a funeral, memorial, or simple service, Mrs. Bernotas makes a call to a family to meet for a follow-up visit. She will meet families at the funeral home, or any location of their own choosing. When the time is set, Mrs. Bernotas meets the family, and begins some additional rapport building in an effort to establish their well-being following the death. She provides a special gift basket to each family with specialty comfort foods from local retailers. It is Wappner Funeral Directors first goal for the specialist to make sure the family is doing as well as can be expected, and if not, make recommendations for the individual care they may need. Mrs. Bernotas presents a packet of beneficial information to the family, outlining details such as Social Security Benefits, life insurance and finances, cancellation of drivers license, identity theft, Veterans Benefits, etiquette for acknowledgement cards, and information regarding advance funeral planning. A special gift of Shasta Daisy Seeds, and special thank you are given to each family as well. Mrs. Bernotas also takes time to explain and provide information regarding our funeral service survey. Since a survey is sent to each family served, it is helpful information for how our staff did, during the family's time of need. Essentially, our Continuing Care Specialist is the liaison between the funeral home staff and the family following services, so no family is left behind in their grief.

Local business plays a role in the Continuing Care Specialist's presentation as well. Mrs. Bernotas purchases local baked goods, candies and popcorns, and other comfort foods from local small business. By keeping the local economy involved, our funeral home helps to foster the hometown spirit of buying locally. Our families appreciate the hospitality, and in turn, are more likely to use the products given at a later time.

Wonderly Horvath Hanes

#### COMMUNITY REMEMBRANCE SERVICE

In 2011, we organized and sponsored our fifteenth annual Community Remembrance Service. We have improved our service every year. The service is held in the spring because spring reminds us all of endings and new beginnings. The remnants of winter are ending and spring brings forth new growth for trees and flowers, new buds sprouting through the old, blossoming with vivid colors. It reminds us of the life cycle of all things.

Therefore, we set aside one day a year in our busy lives, a day for reflection and remembrance of the loved ones who have died.

We send out formal invitations to our families that we have served in the last two years with an rsvp four weeks prior to the service. We placed an ad in our newspaper for three days and prepared a press release to the radio. We also supplied flyers for many of the churches in our area. It was also advertised on our website.

We design and hand out programs. The names of those who have died are printed on the left of the program and the order of the service is on the right side of the program. We inserted the words to "We Remember Them" which allows everyone to participate.

It was an ecumenical nondenominational service with a Christian backround. We try and rotate at churches for the service. We ask a different pastor or priest to give the invocation. We ask different speakers on grief each year, some who are local and others who are out of state. We pay an honorarium or fee to the speaker. They normally speak for thirty minutes or less. We hire a harpist to play before, during and following the service. We then have someone who reads the names of the deceased and as the name is announced, a friend or family representative comes forward to light a candle and place in a sand container and then receives a carnation in memory of their loved one. One of the funeral home staff reads the insert "We Remember Them" and the audience participates. Then, we have closing remarks with an invitation to the reception hall for heavy hors d'oeuvres, dessert and beverages.

The funeral home sets up a table with free grief brochures, books for circulation, free rosemary packets, free angel pins, etc. The service is well attended with at least 70 people.