

From hips to helping: Kerrville Funeral Home's recycling supports children's grief program

A knee replacement, a pin in one's hip or a totally new joint: these items, plus more, along with the assistance of Kerrville Funeral Home, are able to help grieving children cope with their losses.

Kerrville, in the heart of the Texas Hill Country, has become a home for many people to relax and retire. These retirees have increased the number of the city's mature population which has increased the number of deaths, many of which desire cremation. And, along with these cremations, comes an increasing number of metal parts added to those frail or injured bodies at some point during their lives.

Through the maladies that seem to come with accidents and old age, medical science has armed many people with enough metal in their bodies to set off every airport security system around. Kerrville is no exception to the percentage of Americans with metal joint replacements, rods in backs or pins holding their limbs together. However, with cremation, "ashes to ashes, dust to dust" did not include Aunt Myrtle's hip replacement.

At 1650 degrees, the retort at Kerrville Funeral Home is very efficient in doing its job. When the ashes and bone fragments are removed from the retort, the metal that did not melt is also integrated with these cremains. This metal is filtered out before processing and placed in a container with various other joints and parts.

After connecting with Implant Recycling, LLC, at the 2009 NFDA Conference in Boston, Massachusetts, Gene Allen, CFSP, CPC,

Owner/Manager of Kerrville Funeral Home found a way that, in death, a person could help others.

Kerrville Funeral Home began shipping all their metal prosthetic parts to Detroit, Michigan. Implant Recycling then melts these items down to rebuild new prostheses. The proceeds gained from this project began a regular schedule of donations to Peterson Hospice's "Bridging the Gap" program.

"Bridging the Gap" is a children's grief program in which children 4 through 18 attend sessions for six weeks that focus on the loss of their loved one and ways to cope with the feelings associated with it. As the children are in their age appropriate groups, parents are also attending sessions to assist them in understanding what their children are going through and how to deal with children's grief.

"Bridging the Gap" facilitators are comprised of people who volunteer their time and energy to grieving kids. Weekly, these volunteers find themselves doing anything from gluing sequins on a mask that represents inner feelings to recreating a funeral scene with felt figures.

There is no charge to children or parents attending "Bridging the Gap" and group facilitators receive no pay. This program is sustained solely through donations. Every quarter, Kerrville Funeral Home helps to fund this program through the monies gained from their commitment to recycling.

Through the generosity of a funeral home and their recycling efforts, a person who suffered from the replacement of a knee or hip is, now, able to posthumously help a child through a loss of his or her own.