

**An Innovative Program Essay:
BAILEY FUNERAL HOME HOSTS *REFLECTIONS* TO CELEBRATE 125 YEARS OF SERVICE**

To commemorate the 125th anniversary celebration of Bailey Funeral Home, the oldest continuous business in Plainville, Connecticut, families, friends and the local community were invited to freely tour *Reflections: The American Funeral* mobile museum exhibit and our funeral home on Saturday, September 12, 2009. Fresh long stem red roses were given out to all ladies, as guests were first greeted out-of-doors in our parking area which staged the mobile museum, a champagne bar and a tasteful array of hors d'oeuvres of fresh fruit, assorted cheeses, crackers and vegetable crudités.

The entire staff of Bailey Funeral Home had been dispersed in and out-of-doors throughout the funeral home which proudly displayed our NFDA Pursuit of Excellence awards, Eagle statues and entry scrapbooks in our main chapel area along with a continuously played slide show DVD of photographs related to the funeral home and staff. Five framed poster-sized history boards were strategically placed in different rooms for guests to view at their leisure. These boards featured the chronological history of the Bailey Funeral Home beginning in 1884 and continuing by quarter-century increments right up to 2009. The many who attended the open house took great delight in seeing these custom-made boards that included photographs, historical accounts, facts of the funeral home and the Bailey family and staff through the years. We were excited to have James Bailey and Jessica Bailey (fifth and sixth generation) celebrating with us! Also participating in the celebration was author, Lynda Russell, who was present to sign copies of her book, *Plainville*, which traces the history of the city. Furthering the educational aspect of the open house, representatives from Batesville Casket Company and Wilbert Vault were on hand in our casket, outer burial container and urn selection room to field questions and provide information regarding their quality products.

The highlight of the Open House was certainly *Reflections: The American Funeral*, a 53' mobile museum which was spread out across 1,000 sq. ft. of thoughtful display areas that included "Arlington National Cemetery" which honors our country's veterans and the more than three million Americans buried in our national cemeteries; "Glory, Glory Hallelujah" showcased President John F. Kennedy's rider-less horse – empty boots reversed in the saddle – trotting briskly in his funeral procession and civil rights pioneer Rosa Parks, who was the first woman to lie in state at the Capitol Rotunda; a display on Abraham Lincoln featuring a reproduction of his casket and tracing the near 3-week funeral procession and "The Final Curtain," which pays homage to celebrities, including Marilyn Monroe, Dale Earnhardt, Elvis and Michael Jackson, who had passed away only a few months prior.

Part of being a successful business for many years is a direct result of community support. After 125 years in the same location and becoming a pillar within Plainville, we genuinely wanted to express our thanks to the community and the families that we have been honored to serve by hosting *Reflections* and opening our doors to all. The benefits to the families and all that attended this special event included not only the educational aspects, but also an insightful appreciation for funeral service through the years and our appreciation to the community for allowing us to serve them. What better time to "give back" to our community in this unique and special way. Our Open House also served as a welcoming platform for people to comfortably meet our staff and tour our home of their own free will, rather than to attend services out of a sense of duty or respect for a loved one. We continue to strive in making ourselves resourceful to the community in creative ways, not only when there is an urgent or at-need purpose to do so.

Our staff benefited from hosting *Reflections* and the Open House by genuinely enjoying in the celebration of who we are, where we came from and how funeral service and we, as funeral service professionals, have changed through the years. This was certainly evident to all who attended, including Rep. Betty Boukus, who spoke and presented Bailey Funeral Home with an official citation from the State of CT General Assembly. We felt truly proud of what we do, how we do it and the fact that we will continue to provide and care for our Plainville families and those in the surrounding towns for many more years to come.