

G. Provide a mission statement that clearly states the purpose of your funeral business for both your organization and the families and community you serve.

The mission of Arnett & Steele Funeral Home, Inc. is to provide comfort, care, guidance and quality funeral service to all the families that we serve, their relatives, neighbors and our community.

H. Submit an essay (250 work minimum) describing an innovative program, service or activity conducted by the funeral home in the time period previously stated on page 5.

Special Education Children are probably the most forgotten group of School Children in education. This year we were contacted by Mrs. Karen Saylor, the Bell County High School Special Education Instructor, and asked if we could assist with providing her classroom with I-Pads. After speaking with Mrs. Saylor we learned that the I-Pads give the students the ability to learn in a totally different way and allows them to use "computers" just like all other students. She also explained that there are special programs available free of cost to educational institutions to assist children in learning. Each I-Pad costs \$500.00 and the class is looking for a total of ten I-Pads. Jay and I decided to help purchase all of the I-Pad's for the class. Jay and Mary went into the community and talked with all the civic clubs and local businesses and asked for donations and through their generosity all the I-Pads were obtained. Jay and Mary Steele along with the funeral home donated an I-Pad in honor of our children and granddaughter. We were blessed to be ale to be at school when the I-Pads were







being given to the students and they were so excited to finally have one each to use. (They had been using 3 between all the students.) While some of the children were very shy, others were very excited to show us the money games they use to learn about money and some of the math problems they solve. They also play lots of games to help them develop skills they may use in a job. We are not sure we could do all they can with the I-Pads. Although we did get a picture in the newspaper with the children and their I-Pads, we didn't do this for the publicity, we did it because these children deserve the best education possible. This was a very humbling experience and we were honored to be able to assist them.

F. If "a picture is worth a thousand word, "what do you want your Pursuit of Excellence "snapshot" to say about your funeral home? Along with your entry, send in a photo that captures a program or service from 2010-2011 criteria fulfillment.





Dobratz-Hantge



### "Keep It Local" Hutchinson Event, Mystery Tour

Hutchinson is the largest city in McLeod County, and the largest city in all of the communities that are served by Hantge Funeral Chapels, however we are surrounded by smaller cities and many farms, so we are still considered a rural community. There are a variety of religious denominations in Hutchinson.

TAP or Transition Assistance Program is a School District #423 educational program for young adults ages 18-21 with special needs. It is a community-based special education program emphasizing work experience and independent living skills. TAP assists in providing special education programming to increase a student's ability to live and work as independently as possible.

### Their mission

To educate students to reach their full potential in a respectful and dignified manner and provide individualized services that enable them to lead productive and independent lives as adults to the extent of their ability.

In the fail of 2010, Sharon Kuester, one of the staff members for TAP wanted to do something different for the students in the program for their end of year outing. She came up with an idea of a limo ride. Sharon brought the idea to the other staff of TAP at a staff meeting. The staff which included, Lois Ehnert, Corrine McCloud, Kari Nikolaisen, Lynn Lauer and Scott Daak approved the idea. Sharon called around to the limo companies in the area and found out the prices which were too high for them. She then remembered that the Dobratz-Hantge Funeral Chapel in Hutchinson had a limo. Sharon made a phone call to Robert Hantge, one of the owner's and a funeral director at the Chapel asking him if they could use the limo for their end of year outing for the students. Robert was excited to help her.

Now that they had arranged for the limo the staff needed to come up with what they were going to do on their outing for the 17 students in the class, (7 young men and 10 young women.) They wanted to do something to involve local businesses. The staff came up with "Keep It Local" Hutchinson event and included a mystery tour for the students. The staff created an invitation for the students which read: "Dear Special Student: You are invited to a Mystery Tour on Wednesday, April 30, 2011." Sharon then made a couple of calls to Venus Salon and Spa and Crow River Floral and Gifts, these two businesses are work sites for the students during the school year, to see if they had any ideas for the day. Then she made a call to Hutch Bowl and the Crow River Golf Club. The date was set, Sharon made her reminder call in the spring of 2011, to Robert to inform him of the date. The businesses were all on board with the outing for the students.

The invitation continued with, "We ask that you wear the following: Males, dress/casual pants, and nice shirt; Females, can wear a dress, Capris or skirts, nice top. NO JEANS! Rest up the night before, so you will enjoy the Day!" The week of the outing Corrine wrote clues on the board each day to see if the students could figure out what the big day would include. One of the clues was a video of food. That day the students learn food etiquette; folding a napkin properly on your nap, which fork to eat with, how to eat when you are out in a restaurant and remembering your please and thank you's. Another clue was about



transportation; what were they going to travel in for their outing? School van, school bus or the Trailblazer Transit was some of the answers Corrine got from the students. That day the students learned how to call, ride and have the correct amount of money for the Trailblazer Transit.

While the students were trying to figure out what was planned for their outing, Robert, made arrangements for Rick Reiner, a visitation staff employee at the funeral chapel, to be the limo driver for the outing. Rick had no problem saying yes.

The big day started at 8:00 A.M. Mystery #1 with a TAP for the morning meeting. Then the students were informed to wait outside in front of the school. The students couldn't believe their eyes when they saw the limo had pulled up in front of the school at 9:00 A.M. Sharon said, "The looks on their faces were worth a million". Photos were taken in front of the limo which included students, teachers and Rick, their limo driver for the day. Crow River Floral and Gifts gave each young lady a single rose and all the students received a corsage; each one was made per the student's personality. Example, one student had a green ribbon because that was his school colors, one student's favorite color was pink and another had paws on the ribbon because she loved animals and volunteered at the Heart of Minnesota Animal Shelter. The floral shop also made the centerpieces for the tables for lunch.

It was time for Mystery #2 for men only; Rick took the 7 young men to the bowling alley arcade for the day till 10:30. After dropping the men off, Rick was back at school for Mystery #2 for women only, he made two trips to Venus Hair Salon where the 10 young women received manicures and pedicures. The salon gave each young woman a personal pamper bag with nail polish, lotion and body spray in it and each young man received a roll of quarters.

Then it was time for lunch, Mystery #3 is for everyone, Rick picked up the young men and drove them to the Crow River Country Club and then made two trips for the young ladies to the country club. More group photos were taken and a catered meal was served. The tables were placed in a large square so the students would carry on a conversation with everyone. Table tents with the menus were placed next to each place setting so the student knew what they were going to be served. The menus included; Harvest Salad, Almond Crusted Chicken Breast, Garlic Mash Potatoes with skin, Peasant Bread, Chocolate Truffle Mousse Cake and water with lemon. Sharon told us, because of the food etiquette lesson that the students learned; one of the young men was so worried that he was going to use the wrong fork. The country club was closed to the public for two hours to accommodate the students. Once lunch was done it was time for Rick to make three trips back to school with the students.

The day was filmed and each student received a CD of the day and TAP photo with limo.

A week later the funeral chapel had three visitors, Sharon and two students, They wanted to say thank you to Robert for letting them use the limo for the day and to say thank you to Rick for the limo ride and to give Rick thank you cards that each one of them made. One said "Thanks so much for giving us a fun and exciting ride in the limo. I am so happy you came to TAP. Please come again, that was fun." Sharon informed us that the students were talking about the outing and the limo ride until school got out in June.

Because last year was our firm's first full year of operations in our new Brighton location, the outreach to that community became the focus of much of our combined energies. Our professional and support staff members form a broad range of experience and training, interests and skill sets – from students in mortuary and undergraduate programs to a ninety year old funeral director emeritus who has been licensed for nearly 65 years. Because we employ the "best of the old and best of the new," the freshest of technologies are brought to bear on longstanding and well tested forms of community outreach and this approach has paid real measurable dividends. Our two most recent licensees are examples of this: Dana Nowak is active in the Optimists Club and Eric Marker is active with our local Masons. Both in their twenties, they are tech savvy and well connected to all the new century's social media. So when our firm in Brighton was asked to participate in the "Mock Crash" at the local highschool, not only did Eric and Dana take the hearse and the stretcher and act our their parts in the cautionary theater where they met the local police and fire chiefs and school leadership, they later connected with them all on Facebook where photos of the day's event, taken by their IPhones, were posted to the various community pages. This was followed by a press release that generated the interest of the local paper which did an article on our firm's generous participation and included commentary from Dana and Eric and eventually became part of a program at the local Optimists Club which was, understandably very proud of their youngest and newest member. In this way, the connectedness afforded by the new technology widened the outreach of their participation in a single community event.

Our constantly updated interactive website, the gifting of thumb-drive archives of family documents and photos and useful forms to every family, not to mention the ease of professional communication and scheduling are all benefits of the new technology which, when combined with good old fashioned funeral service and community outreach pays many more dividends than costly display ads, give-away sponsorships, or other expensive forms of business promotion.

The year before we took over the funeral home in Brighton and brought our pursuit of excellence to that community, the funeral home served fewer than sixty families. In 2010 we served more than ninety. Real service, team work, community outreach, earned media, new technology and old school hard work are elements of the pursuit of excellence and a formula for growth.

# NEWINGTON HIGH SCHOOL CAR WASHES

Our Newington Memorial Funeral Home is located in Newington, Connecticut, a town just south of Hartford, with a population of approximately 35,000. Throughout the years, a variety of Newington High School organizations have had car washes on the high school property in order to raise money. Recent changes have resulted in the Town of Newington's decision to not allow car washes on the school property.

For the past five or six years, we have supported the Girls Tennis Team by offering our parking lot to have an annual car wash. Now that the Town of Newington has taken a new position, other high school organizations have contacted us to have their car washes here as well.

We provide the hose, water and cones to direct the "car washing traffic pattern". The rest is up to the students. They make signs and jump around on the corner of Main Street to attract drivers to turn in to the funeral home parking lot. They wash, rinse and dry the cars. They pre-sell tickets to the car wash, and there is always a long line of dirty cars waiting for their beauty treatments, even if the weather is overcast and gloomy. We limit the day and time options, so that they will not interfere with funeral services, and so far, everything has worked out beautifully.

Recently, through the spring and summer months, the following NHS organizations have held car washes in our funeral home parking lot: Student Council, Varsity Football, Boys Tennis Team, Girls Tennis Team, Math Honor Society and Cheerleaders.

Like most funeral homes, we have supported our community and our schools in a variety of ways, but offering our parking lot for these car washes is something unique and memorable to the students, parents and teachers of Newington High School. Many members of the community have commented on how nice it is that we are offering our space to support the children and their efforts. It is indeed our pleasure.

### Scholarship Program

This past May, Memorial Funeral Home presented a \$500 scholarship to a graduating senior from each of the three high schools in our local community, Pharr-San Juan-Alamo Independent School District. The scholarship program is one of the ways that Memorial Funeral Home has decided to give back to the community which we serve.

During the months of March and April a counselor from each high school, P.-SJ-A High, P.-SJ-A North and P.-SJ-A Memorial, delivers applications for the Memorial Funeral Home Scholarship. The applications are reviewed by the funeral home owners, Velma Sue and Leon De Leon, and together they decide on a recipient for the scholarship. The selection criteria that must be met by the scholarship recipient are community service, involvement in extracurricular activities and academic achievement. Furthermore, the student is usually in the top 10% of their graduating class.

In late April or early May each high school has an awards assembly in their auditorium in which they introduce the top graduates and present the various scholarships. The counselors mail a formal invitation inviting the scholarship presenters to the event. Some schools call the names of the graduates, while others allow the students to come forward, state their name, parents' names, class rank and the name of the college or university which they plan to attend.

After the introductions the scholarship presentation begins. One of the funeral directors of Memorial Funeral Home attends the awards assembly to make the presentation. We are called to the stage and give a brief explanation of our scholarship and then announce the name of the recipient. When the graduate comes forward we present them with a letter in which we congratulate them for their achievement and ask them to come to our funeral home to receive their scholarship check for \$500 and take a picture for the local newspaper.

We realize that the cost to further one's education can be quite expensive. Many of the students in our community are not able to afford a college education for reasons beyond their control. They rely on assistance from organizations and individuals to help offset their expenses which is why Memorial Funexal Home has implemented the scholarship program. It is a way for us to give back to the families in our community, many of them families who we have served. At times, when the students come in to take a photograph, they are accompanied by their parents who are, along with their children, grateful for the scholarship as well as for us taking the time to make such a generous presentation.

# Family Makes The Difference Freston-Hanley FUNERAL HOMES, LL.C. Family Owned and Operated

### I. Basic Requirements - H

### Our Innovative Program:

As a family owned and operated funeral home, we take great pride in serving in our hometown and giving back through various community endeavors. Pekin is located in Central Illinois with a population of 33,000. One of our funeral directors, Charlie Hanley, has given back in a big way for several years, by single handedly producing a unique event held for graduating 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in our community.

Charlie is a longtime member of the Rotary Club of Pekin and serves as their scholarship chairman. For many years, Rotary has sponsored a Scholastic Awards Dinner. This program involves inviting the top 10 percent of incoming freshman at Pekin Community High School (from the 7 area public/private feeder schools) to a special dinner held in their honor. The students' families are invited as well with more than 300 attending. This was Charlie's fourth year producing this event. It was held on Wednesday, May 11, 2011 in the cafeteria of Pekin Community High School.

To select the students to be honored, Charlie makes contact with the principals from each school with graduating 8<sup>th</sup> graders. He then arranges all of the logistics for the event including: booking the facility to hold the event, the caterer, wait staff, dinner entertainment and the program speaker. Charlie even serves as the master of ceremonies for the event, which provides excellent visibility and good will for our family's firm.

This year our funeral home sponsored the program speaker in addition to lending Charlie's leadership. Carl Cannon is a motivational speaker that truly inspires and totally captivates the audience. Carl has spoken to well over 250,000 youth throughout the country and is the Supervisor for Youth Outreach Programming with the Peoria Park District at the Riverplex Recreation and Wellness Center. Carl's passion and commitment is for today's youth and their welfare. His talk centered on challenging the students to continue to excel while at the same time encouraging, mentoring and lifting up a fellow student.

Our office staff prepared the certificates that Charlie personally presented to each student along with a keepsake medallion. Charlie invites each school's principal to come to the podium to introduce each graduating eighth grader. Our secretary also prepares and prints the program for the event.

In summary, this is a positive and encouraging event for our youth that certainly creates goodwill for everyone involved.

## Innovative Program Essay

Anatomy, Physiology and Art students from all over Faulkner County, Arkansas, are welcomed and are encouraged to tour and learn about Roller-McNutt Funeral Home's processes. We have offered this innovative program to our local private and public schools as well as colleges for many years and will continue to do so in years to come. We feel that it is imperative to capture the interest of our younger generations seeking the science field or those who have that compassionate desire to work with families during a time of grief.

Roller-McNutt Funeral Home has an open invitation to all of our local schools here in Faulkner County. The population of our county in the 2010 Census was approximately 109,386, with as many rural area square miles as it has urban area square miles. Roller-McNutt Funeral Home services the highest quantity of funeral services throughout Arkansas.

Chris Presser, Embalmer and Funeral Director for Roller-McNutt Funeral Home, directs and oversees this program. Mr. Pressler will set a scheduled date and time for a Science, Anatomy, Physiology, Art, etc...class to arrive at our facility for their tour. During this tour, Mr. Pressler will describe the embalming process and the various interactions with the fluids, which normally will generate a question and answer period. This discussion generally takes the "mystery" out of the embalming process. He also discusses the embalming usefulness as a tool in the grief process. Then he highlights the processes of burial and cremation, as well as describes the differences between the two. Cosmetics and cosmetic lighting are a topic normally discussed, in detail, with the art classes. From the time the class arrives to the time the class boards their bus, the duration of the tour is approximately 4 hours.

Roller-McNutt Funeral Home's goal for this innovative program is to open the door and allow our younger generations to ask questions and learn about the science of embalming before bypassing this field as a career. We want to allow the younger generations the opportunity to explore the processes the funeral homes initiate behind the scenes in order to create a beautiful funeral service.

Our goal is to grasp the interest of the students who may be seeking a career in mortuary science, by helping with informative information regarding this field. We believe that the future families we serve, our community and funeral homes throughout the state will benefit from this informative innovative program which will ultimately generate future embalmers and/or funeral directors.

This innovative program has been beneficial to several local schools here in Faulkner County. Following this essay you will find pictures and appreciative letters from the Science Instructor and students from Greenbrier High School who attended a tour on February 24, 2011.

In early February, 2011, Rick Johnson, CEO, Tom M. Wages Funeral Service, LLC, was contacted by Brooke Como a student at Mountain View High School, one of the newest high

schools that serves students in Gwinnett County, Georgia. Ms. Como asked about the possibility of our funeral home assisting with a "Mock Funeral" at the high school. Rick turned this community service project over to Valerie J. Wages, CFSP, his sister-in-law, and President of Tom M. Wages. Valerie contacted Brooke and setup a meeting at Mountain View for Wednesday, March 2, 2011 for 2:30 P.M. in the afternoon. At this meeting, Valerie Meet Brooke Como and her mother, Marilyn Como, President of the Mountain View High School PTA. Valerie found out at this meeting that Brooke had applied for a grant (Operation Drive Smart) that funds high schools across the country to coordinate and execute a simulated DUI crash involving students, and also a follow-up "Mock Funeral" being held on the high school grounds. These two activities were executed the week before their High School Prom which was held on March 26, 2011. The simulated DUI crash involved a student, who had been driving while drinking, and three other students that happened to be from the same high school (Mountain View) as the student who was driving while drinking. The DUI crash was staged at the football stadium with the entire high school population (teachers and students) in attendance on Monday morning, March 21, 2011. After the simulated crash, the Assistant District Attorney for Gwinnett County spoke to the students about how many years a young teenager could spent in jail for an accident with someone killed and another person injured. The Mock Funeral by Tom M. Wages was held on Thursday afternoon, March 24, 2011 at the end of the school day. The entire event was done in conjunction with the Duluth Police Department, Gwinnett County Fire & Rescue, and Tom M. Wages Funeral Service. From these two events held at the high school, the students were given a realistic look at the effects of driving under the influence and bad decision making. The Mock Funeral was held for the student who was killed so tragically in the car crash. Kevin Schatell, a member of the Student Council, who was out of school for the week and was not present for "his" service, had his life commemorated at a service attended by over 1,500 people in the high school gymnasium.

Attendee's at the service to celebrate Kevin's life were his parents, family members, close friends, and the driver at fault (wearing a bright orange jumpsuit, handcuffed, and supervisor by a police officer.) The accuracy of the service caused many students to take program seriously and consider the ramifications for such actions. Valerie J. Wages, CFSP, Funeral Director for Kevin' service, spoke to the student body after the service about the heartbreak and uncontrollable grief she has witnessed over the years in serving families that have had a loved one killed by a drunk driver. All of us at Tom M. Wages, were honored to participate in "Operation Drive

Smart" with Mountain View High School and the other service support groups, to help the students make the right choice during their own "split second" about making the right decision for their future...and the future of others.