



# Eagle's Eye

A Newsletter for Pursuit of Excellence Participants



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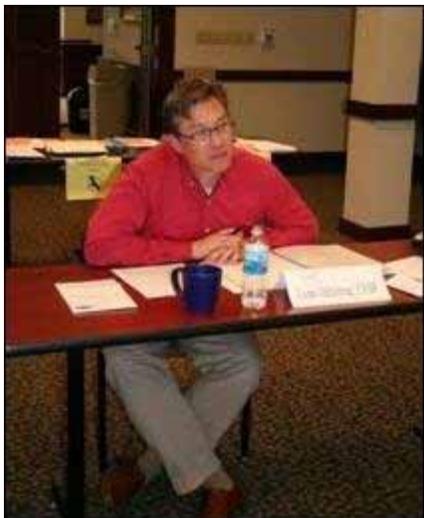
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## From the Chair: Maintaining Momentum, Endless Potential



Even though we have not yet reached the July 15 deadline for 2008-2009 *Pursuit of Excellence*<sup>®</sup> entry submission, planning for the 2009-2010 program is already well underway. The *Pursuit of Excellence* program's mission is to encourage participants to be *proactive* and *innovative* when it comes to the development and execution of their funeral home's programs and services. Keeping this fundamental message in mind, the *Pursuit of Excellence* Committee and NFDA staff have been diligently working together to ensure the program continues to inspire participants to exceed the expectations of the families and communities they serve, year after year.

In order for the program to maintain its momentum and offer the *most* benefit to participants, it is essential we routinely assess all components of the program, including criteria, promotional materials given to award recipients and even merchandise offerings.

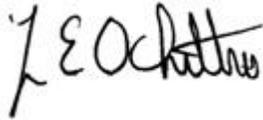
As the needs of families continue to grow and evolve, so does the potential for the program and those who participate. From green services to online memorialization, the 2009-2010 *Pursuit of Excellence* criteria will reflect the new reality of our profession, and encourage funeral homes to explore and expand their services to meet the ever-changing needs of families.

This issue of the *Eagle's Eye* will highlight some of these upcoming program changes and the *Pursuit of Excellence* events you won't want to miss at [NFDA's International Convention & Expo](#) in Boston.

In the meantime, I'm looking forward to joining my committee colleagues at NFDA headquarters in August to review [2008-2009 entries](#). As with every review period, *Pursuit of Excellence* participants continue to amaze the review team with their entry content, which demonstrates a clear commitment to providing outstanding

programs, services, and activities for families and the greater community. I am privileged to be part of such a dedicated group of funeral service professionals.

Sincerely,



Lynn E. Ochiltree, CFSP  
Pursuit of Excellence Committee Chair

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### **Out with the Old, In with the New**

Even though the *Pursuit of Excellence* Committee and NFDA staff already have their sights set on the 2009-2010 program, current participants will notice a few changes after they submit their 2008-2009 entry.

The eagle has long been a symbolic figure of the *Pursuit of Excellence* program, representing strength and prestige. The eagle is incorporated in the program logo and is available as a statue, commemorating *Pursuit of Excellence* achievement. Recently NFDA has been exploring new options when it comes to merchandise offerings for award recipients.



Instead of the alabaster eagle available for purchase in the past, NFDA is offering a new statue (*left*). This antique bronze eagle statue is mounted on a rosewood piano-finish base. Standing approximately 12 inches tall, this statue will be personalized with funeral home name and year of achievement. Its lightweight build allows for easy transport, making it ideal for participants who wish to display the statue at events outside the funeral home.

In addition to receiving a complimentary framed certificate, funeral homes recognized with the [Best of the Best](#) award now have the option of purchasing key chains (*right*) for members of their staff. Perfect for engraving, these Best of the Best key chains make a great personalized gift and show appreciation to the hard-working individuals who participated in the Best-recognized program/activity.



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## Publicizing Your Prestigious Award Just Got a Whole Lot Easier!

One of the main objectives of the *Pursuit of Excellence* program is to help funeral homes stand out in their communities and raise awareness about the important services they provide. NFDA provides all award recipients with a comprehensive set of promotional materials to help spread the great news about their achievement.

Previously, award recipients received paper copies of their promotional materials. Because many media outlets prefer documents and images to be submitted electronically, NFDA will now give award recipients a CD containing a:



- **Press release template:** Announce your firm's *Pursuit of Excellence* achievement in your community by submitting this release to your local media; customize this release with information about your firm.
- **Logo image:** Place the *Pursuit of Excellence* logo on any of your informational/promotional pieces. The possibilities are endless when it comes to how the *Pursuit of Excellence* logo can be utilized.
- **Ad slick:** A preformatted advertisement that announces your *Pursuit of Excellence* achievement can be personalized with your funeral home logo and other related information.
- **Radio ad script:** A 60-second radio ad script announcing your *Pursuit of Excellence* achievement can be customized with information about your firm.
- **Consumer information handout:** This preformatted document can be included in any of your funeral home's informational packets. Let the families you serve read about your firm's dedication and commitment to funeral service excellence. Customize this handout with information about your firm.

**A list of your local print and broadcast media contacts** will accompany the CD. Utilize the local contacts to help spread the word in your community (via newspaper, radio, etc.) about your *Pursuit of Excellence* achievement.

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## At-a-Glance: See What's Ahead for *Pursuit of Excellence* in □09

While participants breathe a sigh of relief after they submit their *Pursuit of Excellence* entry by the July 15 deadline, there's still plenty of action behind the scenes at NFDA. Take a look at what's coming up for *Pursuit of Excellence*.



### August

- *Pursuit of Excellence* Committee members gather at NFDA headquarters to review 2008-2009 entries. Incomplete or unsatisfactory criteria descriptions in program entries will be brought to the attention of the firm for an opportunity to resubmit these items for further review.
- Award recipients will be notified in late-August via fax after all entries have been reviewed.
- Best of the Best award recipients will be contacted for additional materials that may be showcased in the *Pursuit of Excellence* area at [NFDA's International Convention & Expo](#) in Boston.

## August-October

- NFDA prepares for *Pursuit of Excellence* events featured at the 2009 International Convention & Expo in Boston (e.g., *Pursuit of Excellence* booth in ☐NFDA Central;☐ All-star Recognition Ceremony & Reception; innovative ideas workshop hosted by Lynn Ochiltree, *Pursuit of Excellence* Committee chair).

## October

- Visit the *Pursuit of Excellence* area in ☐NFDA Central☐ at NFDA's International Convention & Expo in Boston, October 25-28.
  - Pick up your *Pursuit of Excellence* badge ribbon(s).
  - See which ideas made this year's Best of the Best and ☐Committee Picks.☐
  - Be inspired ☐ take home a copy of the 2008-2009 innovative ideas essays submitted by award recipients.
  - Get your copy of the 2009-2010 program guidelines.
  - Receive a \$35 ☐early bird☐ discount on the 2009-2010 *Pursuit of Excellence* participation fee by registering your firm at convention.
- Don't miss the All-star Recognition Ceremony & Reception, Monday, October 26, 4:30-6 p.m., featuring Jack Lengyel (*right*), the inspiration behind the movie *We Are Marshall*. Pick up your award packet with promotional materials, meet other award-winners, and have your picture taken with NFDA President John D. Reed Sr., CFSP, CPC.



## November

- Entries (and promotional materials of those who did not attend the All-star Recognition Ceremony & Reception at NFDA's International Convention & Expo in Boston) will be mailed back to participants.

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## Get Your Sneak Peek of New 2009-2010 Criteria!

As mentioned earlier in this issue, enhancements to the 2009-2010 *Pursuit of Excellence* criteria are already in place. How do your funeral home's programs and services measure up to these new additions? Here's a sneak peek of what you'll find behind the cover of the 2009-2010 *Pursuit of Excellence* Guidelines!

### Family Outreach, Support and Services

- **Online Memorialization**  
*Provide families with online memorialization options (e.g., funeral Webcasting, online video tributes, photo galleries, assistance with memorial Websites).*
- **Green Funeral/Natural Burial**  
*Offer green funeral/natural burial options to families.*
- **Environmentally-friendly Business Practices**  
*Implement environmentally-friendly business practices within your funeral home (e.g., alternative energy sources for energy efficiency and conservation; green construction and remodeling; energy-*



saving transportation/fleet practices; waste prevention, reduction and recycling).

## Professional Service and Participation

- **Government Relations**

Attend the [NFDA Advocacy Summit](#), a provincial or state government regulatory meeting, or send letters to your elected officials to ensure that funeral service or small-business issues are heard by members of Congress.

- **Funeral Service Foundation**

Make a monetary contribution to the [Funeral Service Foundation](#) or participate in the annual **Funeral Service Foundation Golf Classic** (see page 20 of the [Convention Brochure](#) to register).

- **Mortuary Science Programs**

Become actively involved with a local mortuary science education program (e.g., serve on a board, present a workshop to students, host a tour of your funeral home for students, serve as a faculty member).

- **The Heritage Club**

Make a monetary contribution to or become a member of [The Heritage Club](#).

Firms interested in participating in the 2009-2010 program can get a copy of the guidelines after July 1 by calling 800-228-6332 or by visiting [Pursuit of Excellence](#).

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## Instant Ideas: Oh the Possibilities!

Not only does the *Eagle's Eye* provide the latest information on *Pursuit of Excellence* happenings, but it is also an outlet for idea-sharing. In this and future editions of the *Eagle's Eye*, we hope to inspire readers by sharing how other funeral homes are pursuing service excellence in their communities. Here are some brief descriptions of programs, services and activities that had a powerful impact on families and communities throughout the country.



- One funeral director from a firm in Maryland created a scholarship fund in memory of his sister, which has awarded more than \$500,000 to more than 50 graduates from local high schools. He has also provided educational opportunities for those seeking careers in mortuary science, making it possible for more than 40 individuals to achieve their dream of becoming licensed funeral directors by assisting them with tuition.
- A funeral home in Nevada held its 23<sup>rd</sup> annual, inter-denominational ☐Easter Sunrise Service,☐ featuring performances from several musicians.
- A funeral home in California co-hosted a free community financial planning workshop. A representative from a local bank led a one-hour discussion on getting finances in order and how to develop a financial plan, along with such topics as knowing what documents the bank will need and understanding the roles of trustees and beneficiaries. This workshop was part of the funeral home's monthly program that addresses finances, banking, insurance, estate administration and grief counseling.
- A Jewish cemetery and mortuary in southern California hosted a ☐Mother's Day Remembrance Service☐ performed by a rabbi from a local temple. The unique celebration included a prayer and candle-lighting ceremony and live music. Notes and prayers, written in honor of remembered

mothers, were taken by the funeral home and placed in the sacred Western Wall of Jerusalem. In the spirit of *tzedakah* (charitable giving), the funeral home also accepted contributions of canned and packaged dry foods, eyeglasses, hearing aids and cell phones for the *Chesed* (act of kindness) Project.

- A North Carolina funeral home sponsored [LIVESTRONG Day](#), the [Lance Armstrong Foundation's](#) one-day initiative to raise awareness and funds for the fight against cancer. The event featured speakers, an oncologist, a silent auction, live music and a candlelight vigil for survivors, current patients and those who lost the battle against cancer. A 10- or 50-mile bike ride was also held. Both events were free to the public.
- Owners of a funeral home in Texas commissioned the largest painting to ever hang in a veterans' cemetery in a ceremony at their local civic center. The painting honors the U.S. military; 14 active members of various branches posed for the painting. The funeral home owners have been longtime supporters of the military.
- A funeral home in New Jersey was recognized by the state's Board of Public Utilities for its leadership in creating clean energy solutions that save energy and reduce greenhouse gases. The funeral home created an educational display of its solar technology for the public, as well as a tour in renewable energy for local school and community groups.

Looking for more great ideas? Call 800-288-6332 for a free CD of innovative ideas submitted by *Pursuit of Excellence* Award-winning funeral homes.

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National Funeral Directors Association : 13625 Bishop's Drive : Brookfield, WI 53005 : 800-228-6332