



December 2009

**From the Chair: Soaring to New Heights**

**Meet Your 2009-10 *Pursuit of Excellence*® Committee**

**NFDA Convention Rewind: Your #1 Destination for Inspiration!**

**Don't Miss a Beat: What's Coming Up for *Pursuit* in 2010**

**Bring the CPC Program to Your Doorstep!**

NFDA  
Home Page

Pursuit of  
Excellence

Eagle's Eye  
Archive



### **From the Chair: Soaring to New Heights**

In a 1981 *Director* article, before the unveiling of the [Pursuit of Excellence](#)® program at NFDA's 1981 centennial convention in Boston, Mass., then NFDA President Richard Myers wrote to readers: "The purpose of [NFDA's] *Pursuit of Excellence* program is to encourage expanding our frontiers of accomplishment in funeral service. It is hoped that it will stretch our imaginations, challenge our ingenuity, and cause us to seek new and innovative programs of achievement and excellence. Above all, it asks for a renewed commitment on the part of our members to extend themselves into new avenues of caring and service." Myers' message is still relevant nearly three decades later.

In recent editions of the [Eagle's Eye](#), I've addressed the various ways the program has evolved over the years, including new recognitions and criteria. More importantly, I've stressed the importance of not losing focus on the program's original intent, and continuing your firm's quest for service excellence, even after you've reached a milestone, such as being inducted into the NFDA [Hall of Excellence](#). The meaning behind being a *Pursuit of Excellence* participant is not defined by which award your firm receives; it's about going beyond expectations and taking that extra step to demonstrate your commitment to your staff, the families you serve and your community. It's about taking the extra time and effort to be part of a voluntary program that celebrates extraordinary service and inspires innovation.

That being said, I would like to acknowledge those funeral homes that have truly embraced the meaning behind *Pursuit of Excellence* and have renewed their commitment to the profession time after time. The following ten Hall of Excellence inductees have been honored with *Pursuit of Excellence* recognition 20 or more times, a commendable achievement we can all admire.



*Evergreen Mortuary, Cemetery & Crematory  
Tucson, Ariz.  
Recognized 29 times*



*Myers Mortuary  
Ogden, Utah  
Recognized 29 times*



*Myers Mortuary  
Roy, Utah  
Recognized 29 times*



*A.J. Desmond & Sons Funeral Directors  
Troy, Mich.  
Recognized 27 times*



*Myers Mortuary  
Layton, Utah  
Recognized 25 times*

(Funeral home image unavailable.)

*Fogarty Funeral Home  
Flushing, N.Y.  
Recognized 24 times*



*Myers Mortuary  
Brigham City, Utah  
Recognized 24 times*



*Twiford Funeral Homes, LLC  
Elizabeth City, N.C.  
Recognized 22 times*



*Drum Funeral Home & Cremation Services  
Conover, N.C.  
Recognized 21 times*



*Miles T. Martin Funeral Home  
Mount Morris, Mich.  
Recognized 21 times*

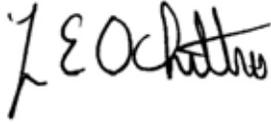


*Pray Funeral Home  
Charlotte, Mich.  
Recognized 20 times*

On behalf of the *Pursuit of Excellence* Committee, I would like to congratulate these firms for their outstanding accomplishments and dedication to maintaining superior programs and services. As *Pursuit of Excellence* continues to offer funeral homes a unique opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to providing innovative, meaningful programs and services, I can only hope more funeral homes aspire to this level of distinction.

I look forward to serving another term as chair of the *Pursuit of Excellence* Committee and have great expectations for what the 2009-10 program will bring.

Sincerely,



Lynn E. Ochiltree, CFSP  
2009-10 *Pursuit of Excellence* Committee Chair

**Meet Your 2009-10 *Pursuit of Excellence*® Committee**

The success of *Pursuit of Excellence* is largely based upon its participants, and the value and benefit they find from program involvement. As funeral service professionals and program participants, *Pursuit of Excellence* Committee members play a significant role in upholding the integrity of the program, and ensuring all components of the program meet the needs of participants and challenge them to explore programs and services in all areas of funeral service.

Every year, new and returning committee members bring their unique perspectives to the table – adding to the dialogue of how *Pursuit* can continue to grow and how its message can be shared with [NFDA's](#) membership. NFDA welcomes these committee members as they take on their important leadership roles within the association.



**Lynn E. Ochiltree, CFSP**  
**Committee Chair**  
Ochiltree Funeral Service &  
Aftercare  
Winterset, Iowa

Seven-time *Pursuit of Excellence* Award Recipient



**Robert T. Rosson Jr.,**  
**CFSP, CPC**  
**Executive Board Liaison**  
Waller Funeral Home  
Oxford, Miss.

Eight-time *Pursuit of Excellence* Award Recipient



**Richard E. Myers, CFSP**  
**Program Founder and Emeritus**  
**Committee Member**  
Myers Mortuary  
Ogden, Utah

Hall of Excellence Inductee and  
Twenty-nine-time *Pursuit of Excellence* Award Recipient



**Rosemarie Forsberg**  
**Committee Member**  
Heritage Funeral  
Home  
Nipawin, SK, Canada

Three-time *Pursuit of  
Excellence* Award Recipient



**Randy L. Grimes, CFSP,**  
**CPC**  
**Committee Member**  
DeMoney-Grimes  
Countryside Park Funeral  
Home  
Columbia City, Ind.

Nine-time *Pursuit of  
Excellence* Award Recipient



**Dana C. Jones Wynn, CFSP,**  
**CPC**  
**Committee Member**  
Jones-Wynn Funeral Home,  
Douglas Chapel  
Douglasville, Ga.

Seven-time *Pursuit of Excellence*  
Award Recipient



**Michael A. Klett, CFSP**  
**Committee Member**  
D'Esopo Funeral Chapel  
Wethersfield, Conn.

Nine-time *Pursuit of  
Excellence* Award Recipient



**Raymond C. Lope**  
**Committee Member**  
Wm. Sullivan & Son  
Funeral Home  
Utica, Mich.

Six-time *Pursuit of  
Excellence* Award Recipient



**James A. Morman, CPC**  
**Committee Member**  
Morman Funeral Home  
Wakeman, Ohio

Five-time *Pursuit of Excellence*  
Award Recipient



**Julius M. Steele Jr., CFSP**  
**Committee Member**  
 Arnett & Steele Funeral  
 Home, Inc.  
 Pineville, Ky.

Hall of Excellence Inductee  
 and Fourteen-time *Pursuit of  
 Excellence* Award Recipient



**Louis J. Stellato Jr.,  
 CFSP, CPC**  
**Committee Member**  
 Ippolito-Stellato Funeral  
 Home  
 Lyndhurst, N.J.

Hall of Excellence Inductee  
 and Ten-time *Pursuit of  
 Excellence* Award Recipient



**J. Peter Ducro, CFSP**  
**Committee Member**  
 Ducro Funeral Services &  
 Crematory  
 Ashtabula, Ohio

Hall of Excellence Inductee and  
 Eleven-time *Pursuit of Excellence*  
 Award Recipient

**NFDA Convention Rewind: Your #1 Destination for Inspiration!**

[NFDA's 2009 International Convention & Expo](#) in Boston, Mass., was a huge success and *Pursuit of Excellence*-related events were no exception! Convention attendees were able to check out which ideas were deemed [Best of the Best](#), take home a copy of this year's "Committee Picks," pick up the [2009-10 guidelines](#), receive a special convention discount on the 2009-10 entry fee and take part in the All-Star Recognition Ceremony & Reception, featuring special guest speaker Jack Lengyel, the inspiration behind the movie *We Are Marshall*.

Because the *Pursuit of Excellence* program has always fostered idea-sharing – and not everyone was able to attend NFDA's Convention – below is a recap of the ready-to-implement program and service ideas selected as the 2009 "Committee Picks" and Best of the Best.

2009 Committee Picks

Created in 2009 and determined by members of the *Pursuit of Excellence* Committee, "Committee Picks" highlight unique programs and services (excluding those described in the essay) described by participants in their entries that had a positive impact on families and communities.

- **BINGO!**  
 Pray Funeral Home of Charlotte, Mich., conducted a funeral service for a bingo enthusiast. Funeral home staff set up a table next to the casket that displayed the deceased's personal bingo kit and borrowed a local church's bingo board to display in the chapel. As guests arrived, they were handed bingo cards, along with markers. At the end

of the service, the funeral director pulled numbers out of the bingo machine and handed them to the minister, who read the numbers. After several numbers were read, the entire crowd simultaneously shouted “Bingo!” Everyone had the same card. The funeral home continues to receive positive feedback from their community on this highly-personalized service.

- *“Look Twice” Challenge*

Jones-Wynn Funeral Home of Villa Rica, Ga., wanted to strengthen its rapport with members of their community. The funeral home developed a series of ads that prompted readers to identify the differences between two images. The first few people that submitted the correct answers received a Bible and a funeral planning guide. Since implementing this new approach to advertising, the funeral home received an outpouring of appreciation from the community.



- *Clergy Appreciation*

As part of its appreciation efforts for local clergy, Gamble Funeral Service of Savannah, Ga., sends a personal thank you letter to every clergy member who has participated in a funeral or memorial service. This small, but meaningful gesture of gratitude has had a significant impact on both funeral home staff and clergy members. The funeral home also schedules regular lunch meetings with members of the local clergy to discuss special requests or needs they may have concerning the services the funeral home and other local firms provide.

- *E-AfterCare*



To meet the varying needs of grieving families, Robertaccio Funeral Home, Inc. of Patchogue, N.Y., is committed to providing contemporary and private bereavement support choices. The funeral home is proud to be one of the only funeral homes in the area that offers “E-AfterCare,” an innovative approach to bereavement care.

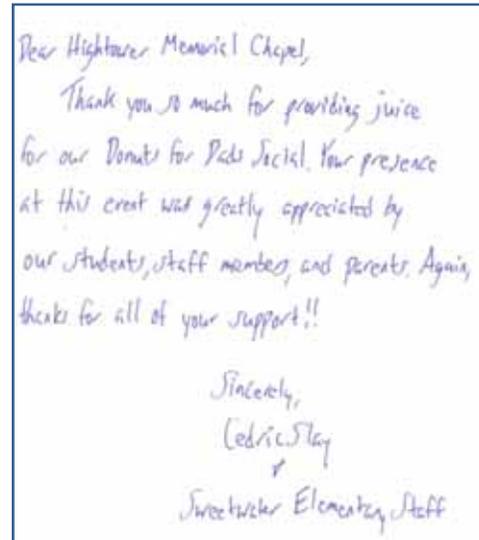
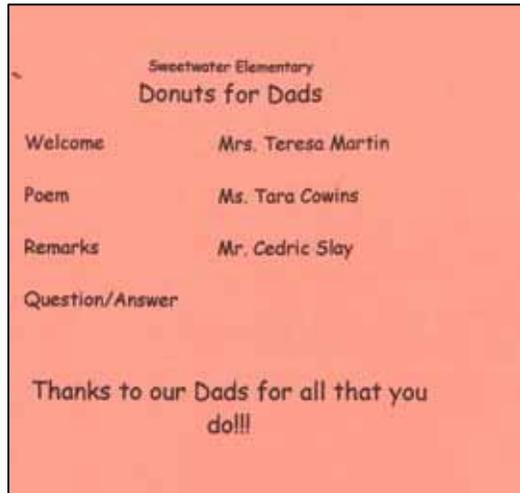
Easily accessible from the funeral home’s Website, E-AfterCare is an online source of information, support and encouragement, available to grieving individuals at any time of day, in the privacy of their own home. Features of the online bereavement care site include: Virtual presentations by Executive Counseling Director Dr. Virginia Simpson; daily affirmation and support emails by request; and a grief forum that provides an opportunity to share experiences and questions and answers with other grieving individuals.

- *The Power of Pink*  
As part of their ongoing commitment to supporting programming on specific health issues, staff of Heartland Memorial Center, of Tinley Park, Ill., collect pink ribbons from funeral floral arrangements to donate to a local breast cancer fundraising organization. Over the past three years, the funeral home has saved enough pink ribbons to fill five 55-gallon bags.
- *Presidential Memorial Certificates*  
Honoring veterans is an important initiative of staff at Deseret Memorial Mortuary in Salt Lake City, Utah. The mortuary requests a Presidential Memorial Certificate for all families of deceased, honorably-discharged veterans. Initiated in March 1962 by President John F. Kennedy, this certificate is a gold-embossed paper certificate inscribed with the veteran's name that bears the current president's signature.

All funeral homes can request a certificate for veterans' families through the [National Cemetery Administration Website](#).

- *Trick or Treat*  
As part of their unique marketing and public relations activities, Weeks' Enumclaw Funeral Home of Enumclaw, Wash., opened up the funeral home to the community for a Halloween-themed event. Greeted by funeral home staff dressed in costumes, children were encouraged to "trick or treat" for large candy bars and were given the opportunity to view the funeral home's antique hearse. Adults who accompanied the children enjoyed refreshments and a tour of the funeral home. Leftover treats were donated to the local Kiwanis Club to be included in Thanksgiving baskets.
- *Taking to the Airwaves*  
From September 2007, through March 2009, Martin Funeral Homes of Fairgrove, Vassar and Mount Morris, Mich., took to the airwaves with a live, call-in radio show every Sunday afternoon. Featured on AM 1570, "The Martin Funeral Home Hour" was hosted by funeral home staff. The hour-long show addressed a variety of funeral service topics and featured guest speakers from Batesville Casket Company; Superior Vault Company; Superior Cremation Services; hospice organizations; Gift of Life, an associate member of the National Marrow Donor Program; and various grief support groups. If a caller was unable to dial-in, they could email their question directly to the funeral home and have it answered on the following week's show.

- *Donuts for Dads*  
Hightower's Memorial Chapel of Douglasville, Ga., supports a social at their local elementary school. The "Donuts for Dads" program allows parents to visit the school, meet with teachers and administrators, and enjoy refreshments. Funeral home staff hosted the event.



### 2009 Best of the Best

- *Coston Funeral Homes, Inc., Pittsburgh, Penn.*  
*A Tribute Fit for a King: Michael Jackson Memorial Tribute*



Taking into account the profound impact the "King of Pop" had on millions of people and the importance of celebrating and remembering this pop icon, the entire staff of Coston Funeral Homes came together the evening of Michael Jackson's death to begin planning a memorial service. Knowing the significance of this event to members of their community, the funeral home promptly began promoting the Michael Jackson memorial service through newspaper

advertisements, online announcements, emails and press releases to local media outlets.

The tribute highlighted the many accomplishments of Michael Jackson throughout his career. His music and videos were played throughout the memorial; a local dance troupe performed a special routine; and guests were encouraged to share their favorite memories of the pop star during a guided discussion. Pictures of Michael Jackson's album covers and candid moments throughout his life were displayed throughout the funeral home. Attendees were able to sign two guest books (one for the Jackson family and one for the

funeral home's archives) and were given a program that featured song lyrics and an obituary.

Coston Funeral Homes was the only funeral home in the Pittsburgh region to organize a memorial tribute for Michael Jackson; the media was instrumental in promoting this event to the community. Several news broadcasts featured stories on this event, along with coverage in all major newspapers.

Due to an overwhelming response to the initial Michael Jackson memorial tribute, the funeral home organized a second service at another location. Guests who were unable to attend the event were able to watch it live via the funeral home's Website.

Funeral home staff were pleased with the success of the Michael Jackson memorial tributes, which provided an outlet for community members to grieve and celebrate the life of one of the world's greatest entertainers.

- *DeMoney-Grimes Countryside Park Funeral Home, Columbia City, Ind.  
Senior Expo*

Staff of DeMoney-Grimes Funeral Home felt there was a lack of information about resources for senior citizens in their community. After meeting with the executive director of the local senior center, the funeral home decided a "Senior Expo" would be the best way to make seniors aware of services that are available to them.

Funeral home staff collaborated with local providers of senior services and invited them to exhibit, at no charge, at the funeral home. They placed advertisements in local newspapers and on Internet news sites to invite seniors and/or their caregivers to the expo; partnered with a local restaurant to distribute advertisements to their senior patrons; and hung a banner over a busy street to help spread the word about the "Senior Expo."



Thirty local businesses took part in the "Senior Expo" at the funeral home. All the furniture in the funeral home was moved to accommodate the booths and create a trade show-like environment. In addition to the many booths that showcased senior services and resources, educational seminars on significant senior issues took place. Local practitioners were on hand to discuss topics such as eye health and drug interactions. Guests also enjoyed food and refreshments, and musical entertainment provided by the Chain-O-Lakes Barbershop Chorus and the Red Hat Strutters.

The funeral home continues to organize and host this educational event on an annual basis.

- *Ippolito-Stellato Funeral Home, Lyndhurst, N.J.  
Crisis Management Plan*



When staff at Ippolito-Stellato Funeral Home heard their local school district was preparing a “Crisis Management Plan” for submission to the State Department of Education, they immediately wanted to get involved.

Staff began working with the school’s Crisis Management Committee and local police representatives to create

“emergency go-kits,” items that teachers, students and administrators could utilize during urgent situations that would require evacuation of the premises, such as a fire, gas leak, hazardous material accident, aircraft disaster or terrorist attack.

After several meetings with the Crisis Management Committee and local officials, the funeral home purchased the appropriate items for the “emergency go-kits”: blankets, writing pads, pens, Band-Aids, bandages, antibacterial hand sanitizer, flashlights, batteries, rubber gloves and alcohol wipes and more. Staff assembled the items and placed them into canvas bags, featuring the funeral home logo.

Funeral home staff hope the “emergency go-kits” are never needed, but if they are, they are comforted knowing they have helped keep students, teachers and administrators safe with these essential items.

- *Lippert-Olson Funeral Home, Sheboygan, Wis.  
Mystery Dinner Party*

For 117 years, Lippert-Olson Funeral Home has served grieving families during their time of need. However, the staff wanted to show a different side of the funeral home by opening its doors to the public for a lighthearted evening of fine dining and entertainment. In 2008, Lippert-Olson Funeral Home hosted its first annual “Mystery Dinner Party.”

Not only did funeral home staff want to provide an unforgettable evening to guests who attended the “Mystery Dinner Party,” but they also wanted to give back to the community. Instead of sending out an open invitation to the public to attend this event, the funeral home auctioned off a chance to attend the



party to guests during a local charity dinner. All proceeds went to local charities benefitting children.

The funeral home sent out personalized invitations to the winning bidders. Each person was given a character description, costume suggestions and background information on the “murder mystery.”

Once guests arrived at the funeral home on the evening of the “Mystery Dinner Party,” each person was given clues which they were to reveal throughout the night. Everything was planned around four courses of dinner. The funeral home staff had spent months preparing the script and décor, helping to transform the funeral home into a 1940s-style supper club.

Hosting the “Mystery Dinner Party” gave staff an opportunity to give back to the community in a special way. Most importantly, it showed the community a different side of the funeral home – a side that is not scary or morbid. Because the event received so much positive feedback, and had a significant impact on the community in a variety of ways, the funeral home has decided to host another event next year.

- *Mattson Funeral Home & Cremation Service, Forest Lake, Minn.  
The Heartley Bear Project*



Following the death of his beloved grandfather, and struggling with what to do with his personal belongings, funeral director Paul Hutchison of Mattson Funeral Home came up with an idea that would allow him and his family to cherish his grandfather’s memory for years to come. His grandfather’s favorite articles of clothing were used to make a bear that became a special

family keepsake.

Realizing the impact this idea would have on other families, Mattson Funeral Home & Cremation Service implemented the “Heartley Bear Project,” named after Paul’s grandfather. Funeral home staff wanted to designate one day per month as “Heartley Bear Day,” when families could come to the funeral home with an item of clothing from their loved one. The families would then create the bear with help from staff and volunteers.

To spread the word about this new program, the funeral home enlisted the help of their local newspaper that ran a feature story about the “Heartley Bear Project,” and asked for community volunteers who would be willing to help families create the bears. Because the program was offered to the entire community, regardless of whether the funeral home had served the family, the “Heartley Bear Project” garnered a large response from the public.

The funeral home created a Heartley Bear packet for each family wishing to create a bear. The packet includes: a wooden heart which families can use to write a message to their loved one or put their loved one's name on it; a heart patch which can be sewn onto the bear's paw; and heart confetti to put inside the bear and fill it with love. In order to offer this program at no cost to families and the greater community, the funeral home asked local businesses for financial support to offset the cost of supplies.

In addition to scheduled "Heartley Bear Days," the funeral home has volunteers available to make bears for families on an at-need basis. To see the joy on peoples' faces as they complete a bear has been a true gift to the staff of Mattson Funeral Home & Cremation Service.

### **Don't Miss a Beat: What's Coming Up for *Pursuit* in 2010**

The role of a funeral professional extends far beyond the typical nine-to-five responsibilities. The same can be said for pursuing excellence. The 2008-09 *Pursuit of Excellence* program may have just ended, but the 2009-10 program is already in full-swing. Have you begun your commitment to another year of service excellence?

Make the most of your 2009-10 *Pursuit of Excellence* experience! Mark your calendar with these important dates:

- **January 15, 2010: Early Bird Deadline Nearing!**  
Saving money is, as Martha Stewart would say, "a good thing." Register your firm for the 2009-10 program by January 15, 2010, and receive nearly 10% off the participation fee. (Program entries, and any corresponding documentation, are not due until July 15, 2010.) To take advantage of this special offer:
  - Call your personal NFDA member services representative at 800-228-6332.
  - Visit [Pursuit of Excellence](#) on NFDA's Website to download a copy of the registration form and mail or fax back to NFDA or register online through the NFDA Resource Store.
  
- **[NFDA Web Seminar, "Recession-friendly Ideas to Accelerate Innovation at Your Firm"](#)**  
*February 11, 2010, 1-2 p.m. CT, 1 CE hour*  
*Presenter: Pursuit of Excellence Committee Chair Lynn E. Ochiltree, CFSP*  
The state of the economy may be requiring you to cut corners in your business. You can still be cognizant of your budget and reach out to your community without compromising the quality of service you provide to families. Now is the time to seek out unique but cost-effective ways to stand out. This interactive Web seminar will provide participants with "tried and true," ready-to-implement innovative ideas that will not break the bank. Participants will be encouraged to share their own cost-saving ideas that have had a powerful impact on the families and communities they serve.

- Fulfill *Pursuit of Excellence* criteria with these upcoming NFDA events!

<b>Category I: Basic Requirements</b>	
<i>Criterion B: FTC Funeral Rule Training</i>	<p><b>The FTC Funeral Rule Coordinator Speaks Out on How to Avoid Findings and Fines</b>  <i>Presenters: Craig Tregillus and Scott Gilligan</i>            NFDA Teleconference            May 6, 2010, 1-3 p.m. CT            2 CE hours</p>
<b>Category II: Continuing Education and Staff Development</b>	
<i>Criterion B: Training on Communication Skill</i>	<p><b>Facebook Best Practices for Funeral Directors</b>  <i>Presenter: Robin Heppell</i>            NFDA Web Seminar            May 20, 2010, 1-3 p.m. CT            2 CE hours</p>
<i>Criterion C: Training on Funeral Home Operations</i>	<p><a href="#"><u>Simple and Practical Best-practice Ideas of Leading Funeral Homes</u></a>  <i>Presenter: Alan Creedy</i>            NFDA Web Seminar            January 21, 2010, 1-2 p.m. CT            1 CE hour</p>
	<p><b>Developing a Payment-in-full Policy</b>  <i>Presenter: Curtis Rostad</i>            NFDA Teleconference            March 25, 2010, 1-2 p.m. CT            1 CE hour</p>
	<p><b>Advanced Cremation Arranging</b>  <i>Presenter: Bill McQueen</i>            NFDA Web Seminar            April 27, 2010, 1-3 p.m. CT            2 CE hours</p>
	<p><b>Ten Succession Secrets of Lasting Family Businesses</b>  <i>Presenter: Ernesto Poza</i>            NFDA Web Seminar            May 13, 2010, 1-2 p.m. CT            1 CE hour</p>
	<p><b>Eliminating Potential Wage and Hour Violations at Your Firm</b>  <i>Presenter: Stephanie Peters</i>            NFDA Teleconference            June 10, 2010, 1-3 p.m. CT            2 CE hours</p>
<i>Criterion F: Certified Preplanning Consultant (CPC)</i>	<p><a href="#"><u>NFDA Certified Preplanning Consultant Seminar</u></a>            NFDA Training Center            Brookfield, Wis.            April 21-23, 2010            16 CE hours</p>

<b>Category V: Professional Service and Participation</b>	
<i>Criterion B: Attend NFDA Events</i>	<a href="#"><u>CANA/NFDA Spring Symposium</u></a> Harrah's Hotel & Casino Las Vegas, Nev. February 17-19, 2010
	<a href="#"><u>NFDA Professional Women's Conference</u></a> The Mulberry Inn Savannah, Ga. April 8-10, 2010
	<a href="#"><u>NFDA Family Business Conference</u></a> Thunderbird School of Global Management Phoenix, Ariz. April 12-13, 2010
	<a href="#"><u>NFDA Asia Funeral Expo</u></a> Hong Kong May 13-15, 2010
<i>Criterion D: Attend NFDA Advocacy Summit</i>	<a href="#"><u>NFDA Advocacy Summit</u></a> Renaissance Mayflower Hotel Washington, D.C. March 8-10, 2010

**Bring the CPC Program to Your Doorstep!**

NFDA is inviting *Pursuit of Excellence* participants to host a Certified Preplanning Consultant (CPC) seminar. As a host, your funeral home is entitled to a *substantial discount* on seminar registrations for your entire qualified staff. An added benefit: the CPC seminar is approved for up to 16 CE hours by most state licensing boards and will help you fulfill *Pursuit of Excellence* criteria.

The [NFDA CPC designation](#) is the only national certification for preplanning professionals. If you have at least seven staff members who qualify, NFDA can make the seminar exclusive to your firm. Alternatively, NFDA can open up the seminar to a larger audience. All that is required is a training room for three days during which candidates will prepare for the certification exam, which is given on the final morning of the seminar.

In today's uncertain economic times, the CPC designation is more valued than ever as a way to set your funeral home staff apart from the competition. Here is an opportunity, at great savings, to certify your entire preneed team!

Call Colleen Murphy Klein or Faye Bonini at 800-228-6332 for more information about hosting a CPC seminar at your funeral home.