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NFDA Announces Transition in Cremation Certification Program Leadership

Brookfield, Wis. – After more than a decade of building the profession’s most respected cremation education program, the National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA) is implementing a thoughtful leadership transition to ensure its Cremation Certification Program remains the gold standard for funeral professionals worldwide.

For the past 12 years, Mike Nicodemus has served as NFDA’s vice president of cremation services and the driving force behind what has become the profession’s most respected cremation education and certification program. Since joining NFDA in 2013, he created and continuously elevated the NFDA Cremation Certification Program, staffed the association’s Cremation Hotline, authored numerous cremation-focused resources and traveled nationally and internationally to promote due diligence and best practices.

A licensed funeral director with more than 50 years in funeral service, Nicodemus previously served 35 years with Hollomon-Brown Funeral Home in Virginia Beach, Virginia, and was president of the Cremation Association of North America (CANA). Known to many as “Mr. Cremation,” he has been called upon repeatedly as an expert witness in cremation litigation cases and has been a leading advocate for stronger due-diligence practices in the wake of high-profile industry scandals.

“Mike’s impact on cremation education and professional standards cannot be overstated,” said Christine Pepper, CAE, NFDA CEO. “He transformed how funeral directors think about cremation operations, risk management and accountability. The program he and NFDA built has educated thousands of professionals and strengthened trust in our profession throughout the United States and around the world.”

Under Nicodemus’ leadership, NFDA launched the Certified Crematory Operator Program in 2013, later evolving it into the NFDA Cremation Certification Program to better reflect the diverse roles funeral professionals play in the cremation process. The program has since reached record attendance levels and expanded internationally.

As part of a forward-looking transition plan, Timothy Copeland has been hired as an NFDA Trainer and is now serving as the primary instructor and coordinator for the Cremation Certification Program. Copeland brings more than 35 years of experience as a licensed funeral director, cremation educator and end-of-life care consultant.

He previously owned and operated Copeland Funeral Home and has held leadership roles including trustee of the New York State Funeral Directors Association PrePlan Trust and board member of the New York State Funeral Directors Association. A former educator at Hudson Valley Community College, Copeland has mentored future funeral professionals with a focus on communication, ethics and grief support. He is a certified practitioner of Dignity Therapy, co-author of a chapter in the Handbook of Thanatology and holds a Master of Science in Thanatology from Marian University.

“This transition reflects NFDA’s commitment to preserving the strong foundation Mike built while ensuring the program remains sustainable and responsive to the profession’s evolving needs,”

Pepper said. “Tim’s experience in cremation education, ethics and end-of-life care will help us continue delivering the highest standard of training for funeral professionals.”

Nicodemus will continue to serve NFDA through October 2026 in a contracted training and advisory capacity. During this period, he will provide subject-matter expertise, support curriculum consistency and contribute to select educational programs, ensuring continuity in both content and standards as he prepares to retire from his work with NFDA.

The experience, rigor and outcomes of the Cremation Certification Program remain unchanged. NFDA remains fully committed to delivering high-quality, practical and respected cremation education for funeral professionals and students alike.

For more information about the NFDA Cremation Certification Program or hosting opportunities, visit [NFDA.org/CremationCertification](https://www.nfda.org/CremationCertification) or contact the NFDA Education Team at Education@NFDA.org.

About the National Funeral Directors Association

NFDA is the world’s leading and largest funeral service association, serving 20,000 individual members who represent nearly 11,000 funeral homes in the United States and 49 countries around the world. NFDA is the trusted leader, beacon for ethics and the strongest advocate for the profession. NFDA is the association of choice because it offers funeral professionals comprehensive educational resources, tools to manage successful businesses, guidance to become pillars in their communities and the expertise to foster future generations of funeral professionals. NFDA is headquartered in Brookfield, Wis., and has an office in Washington, D.C. For more information, visit [NFDA.org](https://www.nfda.org).

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