



Informs ■ Educates ■ Advocates

**For Immediate Release:** June 2, 2025

**Contact:** Jessica Koth, 262-814-1536, JKoth@NFDA.org

## **Four Days. One Unforgettable Experience: The 2025 NFDA Convention & Expo**

*Discover fresh ideas, innovative solutions and the inspiration to shape the future of funeral service in the heart of Chicago.*

Brookfield, Wis. – Registration is open for the most anticipated event in funeral service: the National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA) [2025 International Convention & Expo](#), taking place October 26–29 in the vibrant city of Chicago, Illinois. This can't-miss global gathering brings together thousands of funeral service professionals, suppliers and thought leaders for four powerful days of learning, innovation and connection. With unmatched education, the largest funeral service expo in the world and unforgettable experiences in a world-class city, this year's Convention promises to be NFDA's most exciting yet.

### **Big Ideas. Bold Inspiration.**

The NFDA's [keynote speakers](#) will illuminate critical issues and ignite convention participants' professional and personal journeys.

#### **Opening General Session – Monday, October 27: *Virtuoso: Living the Virtuoso Life* presented by Felipe Gómez**

Felipe Gómez, a global speaker and bestselling author of *Attitude-E: The Method for Being Entrepreneurial and Fulfilling Your Dreams*, will deliver an inspiring keynote that blends business insight with live music. With more than 25 years of leadership experience, Gómez uses the power of the piano to share how leaders and teams can pursue excellence, foster innovation and build meaningful connections through conscious listening. His message centers on “virtuosity” – doing everything with mastery, intention and heart. Gómez is sponsored by National Guardian Life.

#### **Closing General Session – Wednesday, October 29: *Futureproof Yourself: Innovate and Thrive in Times of Uncertainty* by Crystal Washington**

Technology futurist Crystal Washington, one of *Forbes'* 50 Leading Female Futurists, will show convention participants how to thrive in a world of constant change by uncovering the “Easter eggs” of innovation already at their fingertips. Blending humor with practical insight, she'll offer strategies to future-proof your career and organization, all while embracing change with confidence and creativity. Her keynote address, sponsored by Carriage, draws on her experience working with Fortune 500 companies and as the author of *One Tech Action* and *The Social Media Why*.

### **Education That Moves You Forward**

Whether they're new to the field or seasoned professional, 2025 convention participants can choose from a [robust lineup of workshops](#) designed to help them stay ahead of evolving consumer expectations, economic pressures and workforce challenges. With sessions spanning topics such as embalming and restorative art, compliance and legal issues, consumer care, grief support, business

operations, marketing, innovation, and emerging forms of disposition, there's something for everyone looking to sharpen their skills and strengthen their business.

Participants can expect exceptional technical skills training from some of the profession's leading practitioners, including Dr. Damon de la Cruz, who will help apprentices prepare for their first solo embalming, Alain Koninckx who will explore uncommon injection points, and Michelle Johnston, who will offer advanced instruction in airbrush cosmetics and color theory. Business-focused sessions will equip owners and managers with practical tools for boosting profits, empowering teams and delivering exceptional customer experiences, with insights from experts like Jeff Smith, Doug Gober and Damon Wenig.

To help participants adapt to shifting consumer behaviors, sessions like "Stop Selling Sadness" with Angela Human and Autumn Rothermel will challenge funeral homes to rethink their digital marketing approach, while Georganne Bender will take a deep dive into the mindset of today's funeral consumers. For those interested in new and sustainable practices, workshops on natural organic reduction and cremated remains alternatives will offer innovative, future-forward solutions.

Additional sessions will address important professional and cultural issues, including workforce development and retention, psychological wellness in funeral service, crisis communication, and the evolving role of advocacy in Washington, D.C.

With more than 30 sessions to choose from – more than half of which will be presented by experts who are new to the NFDA stage – the education at the convention will offer practical takeaways, new perspectives and forward-thinking strategies for every member of a funeral home team. NFDA Convention education sessions are sponsored by TruStage.

To ensure an inclusive and accessible learning experience, NFDA is offering real-time translation and captioning through Wordly, a web-based tool that requires no app or special equipment. By scanning a QR code in any keynote or education session room, participants can view live captions or translations into more than 60 languages, including English, on their mobile devices. Wordly isn't just for those who prefer a different language; it's also a helpful resource for individuals who are hard of hearing, seated at the back of the room or distracted by ambient noise. While headphones are not required, NFDA recommends using them for the best experience for audio translation and to minimize disruptions to others.

In addition to education sessions, NFDA will offer [five pre-convention seminars](#). These intensive workshops, designed to provide deep dives into specialized topics, will give participants actionable knowledge and skills (preconvention seminars require additional registration):

- Friday, October 24-Sunday, October 26 – *Certified Celebrant Training*, presented by Glenda Stansbury and Matt Bailey, brought to you by InSight Institute and hosted by NFDA
- Saturday, October 25– *NFDA Arranger Training*, presented by Lanae Strovers, NFDA Trainer
- Saturday, October 25 – *NFDA Cremation Certification Program*, presented by Michael Nicodemus, NFDA Vice President, Cremation Services, with support from Tim Copeland, NFDA Presenter; sponsored by Implant Recycling
- Sunday, October 26 – *Enhancing Open Casket Viewings: Techniques for Severe Trauma Cases*, presented by Glyn Tallon, founder, Tallon Mortuary Specialists
- Sunday, October 26 – *Caring for Ourselves*, presented by Sara Murphy, Ph.D., death educator, Fellow in Thanatology and Suicidologist

## Experience the Expo

[The NFDA Expo Hall](#) is more than a trade show, it's an experience. NFDA hosts the world's largest funeral service exposition, bringing together leading suppliers showcasing the latest products, services and innovations shaping the future of the profession. From cutting-edge technology to personalized memorial merchandise, participants can discover what's new, compare solutions and

take advantage of exclusive show-only offers. The Expo Hall will be open Monday and Tuesday, October 27 and 28, from 12-5 p.m. and Wednesday, October 29 from 9 a.m.-12 p.m.

While participants are in the Expo Hall, they should be sure to check out:

- **NFDA-Endorsed Providers:** Save time and gain peace of mind by connecting with [companies that have been carefully vetted by NFDA](#). These trusted partners offer reliable products and services with exclusive pricing and perks just for NFDA members.
- **NFDA Funeral Career Center:** Whether a funeral professional is hiring or job hunting, the NFDA Funeral Career Center is their [hub for career resources](#). Students and seasoned professionals alike will find tools to connect job seekers with funeral homes looking for their next great employee.
- **A Brush With Death:** Catch live recordings of [NFDA's award-winning podcast](#) as host Gabe Schauf interviews industry leaders about what's next in funeral service. Participants might even get a chance to join the conversation.
- **Remembering A Life Booth:** Explore free consumer education resources to share with the families you serve. Pick up the [newest idea guide](#) and discover tools that support community outreach and communication efforts.
- **NFDA Pursuit of Excellence Showcase:** Celebrate the 2025 honorees and discover how firms across the country are [raising the bar in funeral service](#). Get inspired and register onsite for the 2026 program with an exclusive attendee-only discount.
- **NFDA Publications:** Meet the editorial team behind [The Director, Memorial Business Journal and The Director.edu](#). Share your story ideas, pick up complimentary issues and learn more about the member-exclusive *Director* app.
- **2025 Innovation Award Finalists:** See what's next in funeral service! The finalists – and the winner – of this year's [NFDA Innovation Award](#), sponsored by ASD, will be on display in the Expo Hall. Don't miss the official announcement of the winner during Monday's Opening General Session.

With new discoveries around every corner, the NFDA Expo Hall is the place to connect, learn shop and be inspired.

## Celebrate and Connect

The NFDA International Convention & Expo isn't just about education – it's also about connection, celebration and inspiration. From high-energy gatherings to heartfelt tributes, participants will enjoy a full lineup of [can't-miss experiences](#).

### 25th Annual Funeral Service Foundation Golf Classic, Sunday, October 26, Topgolf, Schaumburg

Celebrate 25 years of giving back at this milestone event in support of the Funeral Service Foundation. Enjoy tournament-style play, great food and drinks and laid-back networking in a climate-controlled bay. [Registration](#) includes transportation and all amenities. Not a golfer? Spectator [registration](#) options are available.

### Welcome Party at the House of Blues, Sunday, October 26

Kick off Convention in style at Chicago's iconic House of Blues. Enjoy complimentary bites, lively music and unforgettable energy as you connect with colleagues from around the world in a venue known for soul, style and celebration. The Welcome Party is sponsored by Batesville and Legacy.com and is included with registration.

### All-Star Recognition Ceremony, Monday, October 27

Join the NFDA Board of Directors in honoring funeral professionals who exemplify leadership, innovation and excellence. From the 2025 Pursuit of Excellence Award recipients to scholarship winners and professionals who have earned certifications, this inspiring event celebrates those shaping the future of funeral service. This event is included with registration.

## **Young and New Funeral Professionals Networking Event, Tuesday, October 28, Lucky Strike Chicago**

New to the profession? Make lasting connections at this exclusive evening of fun and networking. Enjoy private bowling lanes, arcade games, billiards, appetizers, cocktails and more, all in a vibrant, energetic setting. Separate registration required; must be 21+.

## **Service of Remembrance, Tuesday, October 28**

Experience the power of gospel music in the city where it was born. Join the historic Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Choir in honoring the lives and legacies of funeral professionals and loved ones who have died during the past year in this moving and meaningful tribute. This event is included with registration and is sponsored by Messenger and Tukios.

## **Friendly Competition, Funeral Service Style**

This year's Convention will feature two exciting competitions that bring skill, knowledge and friendly rivalry to the forefront. Whether you're participating or cheering from the sidelines, don't miss these dynamic events.

**Funeral Face-off:** Participants can put their funeral service knowledge to the test in this fast-paced trivia showdown. Three-person teams will compete in preliminary rounds this summer, with the Wild Card and Championship rounds taking place live on the Expo Hall floor. Hosted by mortuary science educators Gabe Schauf and Ben Schmidt, this fan-favorite event is back and better than ever. Bragging rights and fabulous prizes are on the line. Funeral Face-off is sponsored by Precoa.

[Registration](#) for Funeral Face-off is open through August 24.

**Restorative Art Technical Showcase:** Witness artistry in action during NFDA's first-ever restorative art competition. Up to eight contestants will perform reconstructive techniques on a "practice head" with simulated facial trauma in the Expo Hall before a live audience and a panel of expert judges: Glyn Tallon, Vernie Fountain and Karl Wenzel. Convention participants will gain insight as judges explain methods, offer critiques and celebrate outstanding craftsmanship. The winner will receive bragging rights and a valuable prize package. The application to participate in the showcase will open soon and will require funeral professionals to answer essay questions and submit a short video.

## **Chicago Awaits**

With its world-class architecture, vibrant neighborhoods and iconic lakefront, Chicago offers something for everyone. Explore renowned museums like the Art Institute of Chicago and the Field Museum, stroll along the Magnificent Mile for unbeatable shopping or take in panoramic views from the Skydeck at Willis Tower. Food lovers will delight in everything from deep-dish pizza and Michelin-starred restaurants to global cuisine representing the city's rich cultural diversity. Music, theater, public art and a dynamic dining scene make Chicago a destination where big-city energy meets Midwest charm.

To help participants understand why Chicago has been voted the "Best Big City in the United States" for eight years running by the readers of Condé Nast Traveler, NFDA has coordinated five city tours, each offering a distinct perspective on the city's history and culture. [These tours require separate registration.](#)

- Sunday, October 26, City Sightseeing Tour
- Sunday, October 26, Secret Food Tour
- Monday, October 27, Chicago TV & Movie Tour
- Monday, October 27, Architectural River Cruise
- Tuesday, October 28, Graceland Cemetery Walking Tour
- Tuesday, October 28, Wrigley Field Tour (contingent on the Chicago Cubs' play-off schedule)

## Make Convention Possible: Apply for a Scholarship

All funeral directors, interns and apprentices licensed or working in the U.S. or Canada are invited to apply for a scholarship to attend the NFDA Convention. The Funeral Service Foundation will award up to 20 scholarships, each valued at up to \$2,200, that cover registration fees, three nights' lodging and up to \$500 in travel reimbursement. Funeral professionals must apply online at [FuneralServiceFoundation.org](https://FuneralServiceFoundation.org) by 11:59 p.m. CT on Thursday, July 24.

## Secure Your Spot in Chicago

The latest information, including information on how to register and make hotel reservations, is available at [NFDA.org/Convention](https://NFDA.org/Convention) or by calling 800-228-6332 (+1-262-789-1880).

NFDA International Convention & Expo participants should [register on or before Thursday, August 14 to take advantage of early-bird pricing](#). After August 14, registration fees will increase by \$100.

Maritz Global Events is the official hotel bureau for the 2025 NFDA International Convention & Expo. Maritz enables participants to easily compare hotel prices and locations to find the accommodation that best meets their needs. Maritz's simple booking process – and friendly, helpful staff – will make booking a hotel room and managing reservations a breeze. Reservations must be made [online](#) by Friday, October 3.

Funeral service professionals may receive calls or emails from scammers offering hotels for the NFDA Convention. While these offers may seem like a good option, they may not be legitimate, come with unreasonable cancellation or change penalties, have exorbitant fees, or be completely non-refundable. When convention participants book with Maritz Global Events, they will be treated honestly and fairly.

## With Gratitude

NFDA thanks the [generous sponsors](#) who made the 2024 convention possible and helped elevate the funeral service profession. Their support ensured that the convention was an unforgettable experience for all who attended.

- **Medallion:** NGL – National Guardian Life
- **Platinum:** Carriage Services, Federated Insurance
- **Titanium:** Tribute Technology
- **Gold:** Batesville, Elevia, Global Atlantic, Homesteaders, Legacy.com, Love Urns, Physicians Mutual, Security National Life Insurance Company, TruStage
- **Silver:** @Need Marketing, ASD – Answering Service for Directors, C & J Financial, Foundation Partners, Implant Recycling, Inman Shipping/Travel Plan by Inman, Johnson Consulting, Live Oak Bank, The Messenger Company, Passare, Precoa, Ring Ring Marketing, Tukios, Ultimate Canine
- **Bronze:** Argent Trust, Aurora Payments, Clear Point, Cesar Ornelas International Injury Lawyers, Doric, funeral365, Funeral Service Credit Union, Heartland, Madelyn Co., Matthews Environmental Solutions, NOMIS Publications Inc., Revere, Trigard, USA Today Network Obituaries

## About NFDA

NFDA is the world's leading and largest funeral service association, with 20,000 individual members who represent more than 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).

# # #