**Arlington Memorial Chapels, Inc., Quezon City, Metro Manila, Philippines**

**HEARTS THAT HOLD:**

**A Campaign to Advocate for a National End-of-Life Carers Day**

In the funeral profession, we often talk about the importance of being present for grieving families. But rarely do we pause to ask: who is present for the caregivers? The ones who quietly carry the weight of loss every single day?

At Arlington Memorial Chapels, we believe that end-of-life professionals—whether funeral staff, caregivers, or hospital personnel—deserve to be seen, supported, and celebrated. This belief gave rise to a deeply personal and pioneering initiative we called Hearts That Hold.

Held in June 2025, Hearts That Hold was a week-long series of events dedicated to honoring those who hold space for others in their most painful moments. It culminated on June 21—the summer solstice, the longest day of the year—which we now propose to mark annually as National End-of-Life Care Professionals Day.

There’s a national day for almost everything—donuts, pets, sisters, even stationery—but none yet to recognize the people who spend their days standing at the threshold of life and death. This is a day we propose to be dedicated to those most exposed to grief and mortality: the nurse who has to pull the plug, the embalmer who tends to the body with quiet reverence, the funeral director who holds space for shattered families, the hospice worker who keeps vigil until the last breath. These are the ones who carry the weight of death—not occasionally, but daily—and who deserve, at least once a year, to be seen, honored, and held.

The symbolism of June 21 was intentional. It is the longest day of the year—and for those in this field, almost every day feels like the longest. The weight of another person’s grief, the emotional labor, the stillness after loss—it stretches the hours. And yet we continue to show up. Not just as witnesses to sorrow, but as quiet lights in the dark. In the invisible, often overlooked work of end-of-life care, we are the ones who carry the flame of compassion through the longest days.

The week began with the unveiling of our Appreciation Wall—a mural and mosaic composed of real messages of gratitude from families we’ve served over the years. Handwritten notes like “eternal gratitude” and “you brought us peace” were mounted in a permanent installation that now lives in our main building. It was our way of saying: you are remembered, too.

Each day that followed was dedicated to a simple but meaningful act of care. On June 17, we launched Care for the Carer, providing transportation and errand assistance to selected caregivers. The next day, we visited six partner hospitals—UERM, St. Luke’s, Cardinal Santos, National Children’s, and more—bringing tokens of gratitude to ER, ICU, and morgue staff. These are people who encounter death daily, often with no time to grieve. Our visit was a reminder: you are not invisible.

On June 19, we hosted a movie night at our very own crematory chapel and invited funeral directors and practitioners from neighboring funeral homes—a pause in the week to laugh, rest, and share a moment together outside our roles. This was followed by Wellness Day on June 20, where staff received free haircuts, manicures, pedicures, and massages. These small indulgences brought joy, but more than that, they restored something internal: dignity, peace, and permission to care for oneself.

The culmination on June 21 was a full-day gathering that brought together both reflection and renewal. We began with powerful talks by Dr. Elizabeth Rondain and Dr. Pia Babao Guballa, experts on grief and compassion fatigue. Their words gave voice to the silent burden many of us carry and offered tools to navigate emotional exhaustion. After the talks, participants chose among three breakout wellness workshops: yoga for beginners, creative expression to process grief, and meal prepping made simple, which included nutrition consultations and live demos. The goal was simple: to offer holistic care for the mind, body, and heart.

What made this project transformative was not just the programming, but the people. Our team found themselves reconnected to the deeper meaning of our work. They didn’t just plan events—they showed up for one another. Funeral professionals who are used to remaining in the background finally had a space created just for them.

Our client families noticed, too. Many reached out with appreciation, moved that we would honor the very people who once served them.

To help others bring this vision to life, we created a comprehensive playbook—submitted alongside this essay. It includes a breakdown of each event, sample timelines, proposed budgets, communication templates, and creative assets. It is our sincere hope that this toolkit inspires other funeral homes—not just in the Philippines, but around the world—to replicate or adapt Hearts That Hold in their own communities.

Because while grief may be universal, so is compassion. And just as we honor the dead, we must care for the living who walk with them to the end.

This is more than a project—it is a movement.

And today, we invite the National Funeral Directors Association—and the global funeral community—to join us in this call. To help turn June 21 into an internationally recognized day for end-of-life care professionals. One ripple at a time, we can create a wave of recognition, care, and dignity that travels across borders.

A day to remind the world: behind every goodbye is a hand that held someone through it.

And those hands—tired, gentle, steady—are not just witnesses to loss.

They are the light in the longest days.

They are the hearts that hold.