

**Cosmopolitan Funeral Homes Inc., Cebu City, Philippines**

*Cosmopolitan Funeral Homes Inc., Davao City, Philippines; Cosmopolitan Memorial Chapels and Crematory, Quezon City, Philippines*

**Soulful Expressions: A Tribute Through Art & Music  
Cosmopolitan Memorial Chapels All Souls Day Event**

On October 30, 2024, Cosmopolitan Memorial Chapels & Crematory hosted Soulful Expressions: A Tribute Through Art & Music at its G. Araneta Branch—an All Souls Day event that offered a poignant tribute to life, love, and remembrance through the beauty of artistic expression. Designed as a reflective and soulful gathering, the event brought comfort to the bereaved and inspiration to the living, all within a serene and dignified space.

Distinguished guests included representatives from the Australian and American Consulates, the Philippine National Police, General Sinas, and the many families served by Cosmopolitan throughout the year. Their presence honored the significance of the evening and underscored the event's inclusive and heartfelt mission.

A highlight of the program was the live performance by the acclaimed Santo Domingo Male Chorale. Known for their deeply moving and harmonious renditions, the chorale provided a soundtrack of reverence and hope, guiding attendees through a profound emotional journey as they remembered loved ones.

In addition to the musical tribute, the venue was transformed into a gallery of remembrance through a curated art exhibit featuring some of the Philippines' most compelling visual artists. Works by Yeo Kaa, Carla Gamalinda, Hannah Nantes, Fritzie Amar, and debut artist Kim Noel Cadena offered diverse perspectives on themes of grief, healing, and the lasting imprint of memory. Each piece was a visual expression of what it means to lose, to love, and to carry forward the essence of those we hold dear.

Adding a meaningful layer to the event was its philanthropic component. A portion of the proceeds from the art sales was pledged to the Philippine-Chinese Charitable Association Inc., extending the impact of the evening beyond the walls of the chapel and into communities in need.

To add to the evening's celebration, a delicious spread of Filipino cuisine was served to the guests. Families, friends, and the Cosmopolitan team were formally dressed to celebrate life in this artistic program that served as the first big activity for Cosmopolitan Memorial Chapels.

Soulful Expressions was more than an event—it was a shared space for healing, celebration, and human connection. It reminded all who attended that even in mourning, there is beauty, creativity, and a powerful sense of unity. Through music and art, Cosmopolitan Memorial Chapels offered a moving tribute that resonated with the soul and celebrated lives that continue to inspire.

## **Gamble Funeral Service, Savannah, Georgia**

The staff of Gamble Funeral Service held its Annual Candle Lighting Service on December 10, 2024 in the Chapel of the funeral home. Families that have been assisted this past year by the staff at Gamble Funeral Service were invited.

The rationale behind the service is to provide comfort and community to family members who have lost a loved one during the past year. We, as a funeral home, provide light snacks, drinks and dessert to all families that attend. This year each family was presented with a candle in their loved one's memory as a keepsake. We have a local Hospice Minister, Reverend Dr. Drew Corbett, officiate and give an uplifting message of encouragement and remembrance to all in attendance. A local organist, Suzanne Woodrum performed joyous Christmas Carols and also played several religious songs during the service.

We changed to a candle lighting service from our previous Memorial and Tree Lighting service with the intent of comforting a family with the flame of a candle expressing the love for their loved one that still burns brightly within their hearts.

A remembrance service of any sort has become a tradition in the community and at Gamble Funeral Service. This service also allows us, as a funeral provider, to give back to the community and families that we have had the honor to serve in a positive way during a sometimes difficult time for them and the loved ones of a deceased member of their family. This service also serves as a way of showing support for the community and being available to any surviving family members as to answering questions, assisting in any uncompleted tasks with the estate. Gamble Funeral Service has asked professionals in other fields to be available to assist these surviving family members with any questions or guidance.

Gamble Funeral Service had a prearrangement counselor available at the candle light service to assist families with any questions they may have on prearranging their own funeral service.

The prearrangement team also had a lunch and learn program in a neighboring town to expand our service to the community at large. It was a well attended event and also introduced our company to many new community members. The counselors answered questions and provided information to those in attendance. Our goal was to educate and inform a new area of the services that we offer as well as to introduce ourselves and showcase our staff in the community.

**H.E. Turner & Co. Inc., Batavia, New York**

*Bohm-Calarco-Smith Funeral Home, Batavia, New York; Burdett & Sanford Funeral Home, Oakfield, New York; Gilmartin Funeral Home, Batavia, New York; Marley Funeral Home, Attica, New York; Robinson & Hackemer, Warsaw, New York; Eaton-Watson Funeral Homes, Perry, New York*

We believe that our responsibility to the families we serve extends beyond the funeral or memorial service itself. We understand that the holiday season can be an incredibly challenging time for those who have lost a loved one. The feelings of grief can feel particularly overwhelming when the world is celebrating, and families may feel more isolated in their sorrow. In response to this need, we created an innovative program—a simple but meaningful gesture—that brings comfort and hope during the holiday season: the handmade snowflake program.

**Rationale Behind the Idea**

The idea for this program arose from the understanding that grief does not follow a calendar, and holidays can be especially painful for those who are grieving. Research consistently shows that the holiday season can exacerbate feelings of loss. According to a study by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), the holiday season often increases stress and sadness for those dealing with grief, as family traditions and rituals become reminders of the empty spaces left by their loved ones. This is a reality we witness at our funeral home every year.

We wanted to create a gesture that could offer families something personal, a symbol of remembrance and connection during the holidays. With this in mind, we decided to partner with a local artisan to provide handmade snowflakes—symbols of hope and remembrance that are uniquely personal to each family we serve. These snowflakes are not mass-produced and cannot be purchased from a store or industry supplier. Instead, they are handcrafted by a local individual, ensuring that each snowflake is unique and made with care.

Each year, as Christmas approaches, we purchase handmade snowflakes from a local artisan, and we send one to every family we have served in the previous year. These snowflakes, meticulously crafted by hand, are as unique as the individuals we honor. We take great care in selecting a local artisan who creates each snowflake with love and attention to detail. Because the snowflakes cannot be found in stores or online, they provide families with a truly one-of-a-kind memento—something that cannot be replicated, just like their loved one.

Each snowflake is accompanied by a note expressing our gratitude for allowing us to serve their family, as well as offering words of comfort and continued support during the holiday season. We encourage families to hang the snowflake on their Christmas tree or display it in their home as a symbol of remembrance and love. By providing this special keepsake, we hope to give families a tangible connection to their loved one, and a reminder that they are not alone during what can be an especially difficult time.

**Benefits to Funeral Home and Staff**

The snowflake program has had several positive effects on our funeral home and staff. First and foremost, it has fostered a sense of camaraderie and community among our team. Every staff member, from funeral directors to administrative personnel, is involved in the distribution of the snowflakes. This hands-on project allows us to bond over a shared purpose and brings our team closer together. It is also a reminder to our staff that the work we do extends far beyond logistics—it's about providing ongoing support and care.

Furthermore, the program has given our staff a deeper sense of fulfillment in their work. Knowing that this small act of kindness has such a meaningful impact on grieving families helps to reinforce our commitment to compassionate service.

**Benefits to Families and the Community**

The snowflake program provides numerous benefits to the families we serve and to the larger community. For families, it serves as a gesture of comfort and remembrance during the holiday season. The snowflakes act as lasting mementos that families can keep and display year after year. They offer an opportunity to honor their loved one in a personal and meaningful way, reminding them that their loved one's memory lives on.

Beyond individual families, the snowflake program also helps to foster a sense of community within the grieving process. It shows that our funeral home is not simply a service provider, but an active participant in the emotional healing journey of each family. The act of sending a handmade snowflake tells families that they are cared for long after the funeral, and that we are walking with them through their grief.

In addition, the program has fostered stronger ties within our local community. By supporting a local artisan and including personal notes of support, we've cultivated a culture of care and compassion that extends beyond our funeral home's walls. This collaboration strengthens our relationship with the community and reflects our commitment to supporting local businesses.

In conclusion, the handmade snowflake program is more than just a holiday gesture. It is an innovative way to offer ongoing support to grieving families, providing them with a symbol of remembrance and love during the challenging holiday season. By partnering with a local artisan to provide one-of-a-kind, handmade snowflakes, we ensure that each family receives something personal and unique—something that cannot be bought from a store or mass-produced supplier. This simple yet impactful program has strengthened our relationships with families, brought our staff closer together, and enhanced our funeral home's role in the community. We are proud to continue this tradition, knowing that it brings comfort, connection, and healing to those who need it most.

## **Memorial Funeral Home, San Juan, Texas**

At Memorial Funeral Home, one of the most meaningful traditions we uphold is our Annual Holiday memorial Service, it's held every December for the families we've served throughout the year. The purpose of this event is to provide a space for remembrance, healing, and togetherness, especially during a season that is often centered on family, joy, and celebration.

The holidays can be an incredibly difficult time for those who have lost a loved one. While the world is celebrating, many are grieving. That's why we created this memorial service, to remind families that they are not alone, and that their loved ones are not forgotten. It is our way of walking beside them during what may be the hardest season of the year.

The service is held in one of our chapels, which accommodates up to 500 guests. Families gather in a peaceful, candle lit, atmosphere where we read aloud the names of those who have passed. As each name is announced, their family members are invited to walk to the front, receive a small memento in honor of their loved one, and return to their seats. It's a simple gesture, but one that often brings deep emotion and comfort.

We also take a moment to honor all veterans who passed that year, incorporating respectful tributes into the service. Music, prayer, and moments of silence help create a heartfelt and reflective environment. After the ceremony, we offer refreshments, warm food and drinks. Families can take these items home or stay and spend time with one another. Our staff helps with every detail, from setting up the space to serving food and offering emotional support throughout the evening.

This tradition has been part of Memorial Funeral Home since our earliest days. It reflects our core belief that funeral service is about more than what happens on the day of the funeral it's about continued care. We do everything we can to make each year's memorial service meaningful, adjusting and improving based on feedback and suggestions from the families who attend.

Over the years, many families have shared how much this event has helped them begin to heal. Some attend year after year, even if their loss wasn't recent, simply because the service gives them a sense of peace and connection. It becomes a place where grief is honored openly and gently, without pressure; just support and remembrance.

It is a privilege to hold this event every year. Through it, we are reminded of the power of remembrance, the importance of community, and the heart of what we do; serving with compassion, especially when it's needed the most.

**Myers Mortuary, Ogden, Utah**

*Myers Mortuary, Roy, Utah; Myers Mortuary, Brigham City, Utah; Myers Mortuary, Layton, Utah*

We at Myers Mortuary love our involvement in the community. It helps the community to feel we truly care about the members and that we are committed to excellence. Two years ago at our Myers Mortuary of Ogden location, we started a Memorial Butterfly release program. It's an opportunity for those who have lost a loved one over the past year to come and listen to a short program with music, speaking and refreshments to help those attending to remember their loved ones that have passed away; to be edified and uplifted. Our Ogden Annual Memorial Gathering and Butterfly Release program was held on Wednesday, June 18, 2025 at the Golden Hours Senior Center. We chose this location because of it is on the grounds of one of Ogden City's largest parks. It was attended by over one hundred fifty people. Our staff was extremely helpful from advertising on social media to setting up and cleaning up. After the program then, everyone was invited outside in the park to receive a butterfly to release. Releasing the butterfly, symbolizes the releasing of their loved ones spirit as well as their own emotions up to heaven.

In May of 2025, we chose to continue this event we do for our Ogden community but also establish this event thirty minuets north of Ogden in the City of Brigham City, Utah. Myers Mortuary has a funeral home location there. We felt the urge to share this wonderful experience with the community of Brigham City on Saturday, May 31, 2025 located at our Brigham City Funeral Home. This event began months in advance with advertising within the community as well as online thru our social media postings. Our staff members also shared the social media posting about the event to further spread the word. When the day came for our event, it was a hustle of excitement around the building. We set up flowers, balloons, refreshments and put butterfly stickers on the windows and doors and around the building. We handed out butterfly rings and plastic butterflies on sticks as memorabilia for those in attendance to take with them to remember this day. Our Brigham City Memorial Butterfly release had close to 200 in attendance filling our chapel. The compliments from those attending was wonderful. One woman thanked us for putting on the event. She said, "It was wonderful to be able to come and celebrate her daughter, who passed away a few years ago, but more importantly was to be with others who were grieving. Grieving alone amplifies the pain I feel, because I'm all alone. I know people die everyday, but to see all of these people grieving come together was wonderful." It was a fun time had by all and something we will continue to expand upon in the future.

## **Reeves, Fruland & Baskerville Funeral Homes and Crematory, Coal City, Illinois**

*Reeves, Fruland & Baskerville Funeral Homes and Crematory, Morris, Illinois; Reeves, Fruland & Baskerville Funeral Homes and Crematory, Gardner, Illinois; Reeves, Fruland & Baskerville Funeral Homes and Crematory, Morris, Illinois; Reeves, Fruland & Baskerville Funeral Homes and Crematory, Wilmington, Illinois*

### **Honoring Families on Mother's and Father's Day: A Thoughtful Outreach Initiative**

Reeves, Fruland, and Baskerville Funeral Homes and Crematory are located approximately 65 miles southwest of Chicago. We operate five funeral homes across two counties, serving communities with populations ranging from 1,200 to 20,000. As dedicated rural funeral service providers, we take pride in building deep, lasting relationships with the families in our care. Our clientele is close-knit, and our staff is composed entirely of local residents—many of whom have generational ties to the very communities we serve. These connections shape how we approach funeral service: with compassion, authenticity, and a strong sense of community responsibility.

Over the years, we've remained committed to exceeding expectations in every facet of our work. The Pursuit of Excellence program has consistently inspired us to innovate and reflect on how we can provide more meaningful service. We've been honored to receive numerous honorable mentions, as Matt served on the Pursuit of Excellence Task Force, and last year, we were humbled to be recognized as a "Best of the Best." recipient. P.O.E. truly brings insight and motivation to our team each year as we brainstorm new ways to better serve the bereaved.

The idea for one of our most impactful programs came from a simple but powerful conversation. While attending a study group in 2024, Matt spoke with a fellow funeral service professional who had recently lost his father. As Father's Day approached, the colleague expressed a quiet dread—not of anything related to funeral service, but of facing the holiday without his dad. He described how difficult it was to be on the "other side of the fence" and how even months after the loss, the approach of Father's Day stirred intense emotions. That conversation resonated deeply and prompted us to re-examine how we support families after the service concludes.

We realized that although we already offer a variety of follow-up touches—monthly Care Letters, personalized texts, holiday memorial services, Christmas memorial ornaments, and anniversary or birthday cards—we had not yet addressed the emotional challenges families face on Mother's Day and Father's Day. We saw an opportunity to extend kindness and support at a moment when it could mean the most.

Starting in 2024, we implemented a new outreach initiative. We reviewed all client families served after Mother's Day and Father's Day of the previous year, identifying those whose next of kin was a child. We then created custom-designed cards for each occasion. Every card was hand-signed by our staff and mailed during the week leading up to the holiday.

The impact was immediate and profound. Our phones began to ring with emotional expressions of gratitude, and we received numerous thank-you notes in return. Families were deeply touched—not only by the remembrance but by the personal effort behind it. Each card was handwritten, ensuring it felt sincere and not mass-produced.

Moving forward, we now prepare these cards at the close of each funeral file, verifying recipient details annually. The cost is minimal—a printed card and a stamp—but the emotional return is immeasurable. This simple gesture has become a powerful way to affirm that our families are not forgotten.

This program exemplifies the kind of thoughtful, authentic outreach that any funeral firm can replicate. It requires little more than time, care, and a willingness to connect—and it reminds us all that true service often continues long after the service ends.

**Wasatch Lawn Memorial Park and Mortuary, Salt Lake City, Utah**

*Valley View Memorial Park and Funeral Home, West Valley City, Utah; Wasatch Lawn Memorial Park  
South Valley, Riverton, Utah*

Our non-denominational Annual Luminary Event is held on the Saturday before Christmas. We honor and celebrate the lives of those lost throughout the years and gain a sense of peace from the healing power of the community.

Preparing for the Luminary starts early each Fall. Local high school groups that are required to have community service hours gather together to prepare over 26,000 luminary bags in the garage of our South Valley location. We start early in the day, having fun talking and laughing in the warm weather, working together to put sand in each luminary bag. We count and sort each bag to ensure the required number of luminaries will be ready for each location. The completed luminary bags are stored safely in the garage until the morning of the luminary.

On the morning of the Luminary Event, each luminary bag is quickly placed with purpose throughout the gardens in our memorial parks. As you can imagine, assembling and putting thousands of luminary bags takes many hands and several hours. To effectively accomplish this task, we invite volunteers from local high school groups, different church organizations, local businesses, and the neighbors of our Memorial Park to join us. The volunteers and families look forward to this event each year and arrive early, no matter the weather, dressed warmly and ready to serve. When all of the luminary bags are placed, everyone is treated to doughnuts and hot cocoa. All of the time spent preparing for this one evening is worth it when the sun finally goes down and the cemetery gardens are lit up with the flickering candlelight. It is a sight that is truly inspiring, some say even spiritual.

On the evening of the luminary, guests drive through our memorial parks and marvel at the sight of the lighted luminaries blanketing the lawns. They are directed through the park and finally to the funeral home, where a cozy fire is burning, and the cocoa and freshly baked cookies are warm and ready to enjoy. During the open house, we invite those who have suffered losses to decorate and hang ornaments on our Tree of Remembrance. All through the evening, families delight in listening to performances from local school musical groups, enhancing the Christmas experience.

This annual event is one of a kind in our area. We are grateful for the opportunity to give back to our community, knowing that the families we serve look forward to this holiday tradition each year.