

**A.J. Desmond & Sons
Funeral Directors**

Albert J. Desmond (1913-1994)
August J. McInnes (1875-1941)
A.J. McInnes, Jr. (1905-1967)
William V. Vasu (1915-1962)

A.J. DESMOND SONS

FUNERAL DIRECTORS

A Family Tradition Since 1917

The Best of the Best
A.J. Desmond & Sons Funeral Directors
Terence B. Desmond
Phone: 248-362-2500
Veterans Day Memorial Tribute

Following in the Desmond tradition of service to our families and the community, the year of 2006 proved to be especially eventful. Saluting our veterans has always been a part of our philosophy, however this year we took it to a new level.

In order to honor the veterans and their families, the entire staff of the funeral home formed committees, working together to cover all aspects of this tremendous tribute. The tribute consisted of an elaborate ceremony to celebrate the unique contributions and accomplishments of our veterans.

All the families that we have served were invited to participate by sharing personal photos, letters, and memorabilia of their loved ones and other veterans. These personal artifacts were then incorporated into a DVD to be shown during the celebration. Invitations were sent out to families to invite them to share this event with us. In addition there was also a posting on the Desmond Funeral Home website. extensive media coverage. Local dignitaries were invited to partake in the special event. The response was incredible; local politicians, mayors, judges, and city council members all attended the event.

The ceremony was held at our Royal Oak facility and drew guests from five different surrounding cities. As people entered they were greeted by staff. On display were the photos, photo albums, medals, campaign ribbons and commendations families had brought in. Several veterans as well as some military family members also attended. Some families honored multiple generations of veterans and servicemen and women. Local politicians, including mayors, judges and city council members from the area also attended.

2006-2007 Pursuit of Excellence – Emeritus

A.J. Desmond (1913-1994)
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The event started with the Posting of the Colors by a military honor guard. The National Anthem was sung by the Troy Community Chorus and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by a local Boy Scout Troop. The President's Veterans Day Proclamation was read and our local dignitaries were introduced. We then asked that present veterans stand as their military branch anthem was played. Our special invited speakers, U.S. Congressman Knollenberg and State Senator Pappageorge, both of whom are veterans, offered gratitude and encouragement to the veterans and veteran families present. We then played the video tribute. Prayers were offered by a local pastor, also a veteran. The tribute closed with the playing of the Taps and then "God Bless America" by the Troy Community Chorus. Finally, a reception was held for the guests with light refreshments provided.

While this event was initially conceived as a public event, it had additional benefits. It held special significance to the veterans and military parents on our staff. It was the first opportunity many of the staff shared their military experiences with colleagues. Staff with active military family members found it comforting to have the support and recognition of their colleagues and the wider community. Non-veteran staff further appreciated the profound commitment and contributions colleagues, and all veterans, have made.

It remains a privilege to honor those who have done so much for us through the services we offer to their families. The Veterans Day Memorial Tribute will continue to be an important aspect of A.J. Desmond & Sons service to families and the community.

2006-2007 Pursuit of Excellence – Emeritus

Caldwell & Cowan Funeral Home, Inc.
3134 Floyd Street
Covington, Georgia 30014
(770) 786-7062
Judson and Ginger Caldwell, Owners

Pursuit of Excellence Criteria – Subsection I.E.
Essay for Best of the Best
by Ginger Caldwell

When Judson and I returned from the NFDA Annual Convention in Philadelphia last year, we were “fired up” about Pursuit of Excellence and Best of the Best. In order to instill the same excitement into our staff that we were feeling, we decided to hold a contest. We gave the staff members one month in which to come up with a project both beneficial to the community and to our funeral home which they thought might qualify for Best of the Best. The reward would be an all expense paid trip to the 2007 NFDA Annual Convention in Las Vegas.

The front-runners emerged immediately. Don Campbell, a full-time firefighter and part-time funeral director and embalmer with Caldwell & Cowan (C&C), and his wife, Susan, our Accounts Manager, are two caring people who are interested in the well-being of the citizens of our community, especially the children. Several years ago, Don had been involved with the Covington Kiwanis Club in trying to establish a program of presenting to babies born at Newton Medical Center, our county hospital, a smoke detector to be placed in their nurseries. The program never really got off the ground, and was short lived. Don’s idea for Best of the Best was to resurrect this program and really make it work. We loved the idea of helping with the safety of families and their newborn babies, and he and Susan were declared the winners of our contest.

Being a firefighter, Don wanted to involve the Covington Fire Department (CFD) to help with educating the recipients on how to use the smoke detectors, so he approached Chief Don Floyd with the idea of partnering with Caldwell & Cowan. The idea was well received, and the CFD came on board. The next step was to arrange for smooth distribution of the smoke detectors and educational material to the families. In talking with the appropriate people at Newton Medical, Don found that there was a program called First Steps, which helps parents and their infants get to know each other by making available staff to give support, parenting education, and referral services to help families in the early months of parenting. A package of informational materials is provided through First Steps to each family with newborns. The hospital agreed to partner with CFD and C&C to include the smoke detector and information in their package. C&C agreed to purchase the smoke detectors and provide the plastic bags for the packages, CFD arranged to provide the educational materials, and Newton Medical agreed to distribute the entire package through their First Steps Program. Thus the partnership was cemented, and christened “From One Generation To The Next – Passing On The Tradition Of Caring,” with the objective of the program being to provide each newborn in the First Steps Program at Newton Medical Center a smoke detector to be placed inside their room at home. The

official start-up of the program was in the month of February, 2007. Since then, we have averaged giving away approximately 20 to 25 smoke detectors per month.

Being active in both his professions, when Don attended a State firefighters meeting, he talked about this new program, and interest was expressed by other fire departments. It was suggested to Don that John Oxendine, Georgia State Insurance and Fire Safety Commissioner, might be interested in hearing about this program, and a call to his office brought a positive response. Upon hearing of the program, Commissioner Oxendine was very impressed, and expressed an interest taking part in publicizing the program. He has agreed to help us take the program to a state-wide level, and also gave us the opportunity to purchase the smoke detectors through his office at a considerable savings to us.

Due to the Commissioner's schedule, it took several months to coordinate his being able to be present at our press conference, and to reach and arrange for local and hospital officials and press to be in attendance. The Atlanta newspaper had told us and the Commissioner's office that they would cover the press conference, but did not show up. However, both the Covington News and Newton Citizen had representatives there. Also in attendance were Covington Mayor Sam Ramsey, Covington Fire Chief Don Floyd, Martha Taylor, Director of Volunteer Services at Newton Medical Center, along with other hospital representatives, firefighters and local citizens.

After the conclusion of the press conference, a reporter from the Covington News went to Newton General to interview a family who had just had a baby, and who were receiving their First Steps Program packet that afternoon. The couple were pleased to speak with the news reporter, and that news article is included herein.

We are very proud of Don and Susan Campbell for the program idea, and of Don for his tireless and time-consuming work in putting this program together for us and partners Covington Fire Department and Newton Medical Center. Most of all, we appreciate having caring, thoughtful people like Don and Susan on our staff.

With Don's professions of both firefighter and funeral director, he states his view as, "We are helping people in some of the worse times of their lives. It could be a death in the family, a house fire, or an emergency medical situation. I wanted to set up a program that also helped people at happy times in their lives. What better time than the birth of a child? What better way than to protect these children with the gift of a smoke detector."

We respectfully submit the program *From One Generation To The Next – Passing On The Tradition Of Caring – Fire Detectors for Newborns* for consideration for Best of the Best.



Infant Memorial Garden

Several years ago, a dear friend of the Davis Funeral Home suffered a miscarriage in early pregnancy. It was through her that we discovered that fetal death records in the State of New Hampshire were only kept for one year. After that time, the records were destroyed and the family was left with nothing that even marked the passing of this young life.

Through the help of the two local hospitals, a new service was offered to those families whose pregnancies tragically ended with miscarriage. In the case of fetal deaths under the age of 20 weeks gestation, the family now has the option to have the baby cremated at no charge through the funeral home. This was previously treated as "medical waste" and was devastating to many mothers, who had begun to plan for and expect a baby.

The cremated remains are kept at the funeral home until the service is scheduled in mid-May. At that time, invitations are sent out to those families that have desired the final disposition at the Infant Memorial Garden in a local cemetery.

During the service there is a wreath with ribbons attached to it with the baby's names on them. Prayers and poems are read and the families are given the opportunity to speak if they so desire. Several families over the years have also brought flowers, teddy bears and balloons to the service.

The cremated remains are then placed in the earth, a song is played and the names are read. At the conclusion of the service, the ribbons are removed from the wreath and attached to a card for the family to bring home as a keepsake that a life, albeit tiny and known to few, was lived.

A granite marker, donated by a local monument company and a small evergreen bush designate the area in the cemetery at the Infant Memorial Garden. This gives the families a place to come to visit their babies if they find comfort in doing so.

This service has become quite important to these families whose baby's death is often overlooked and misunderstood by other friends and family members.



Best of the Best

*Ippolito - Stellato Funeral Home
Lyndhurst NJ*

As Director of Student Services for the Lyndhurst School District and School Crisis Management, Tracey Stellato sees first hand the many different stresses, hardships and tragedies teenagers of today are facing. Unfortunately, at the forefront of this list has been the loss of a parent or sibling followed by grief and post traumatic stress. In speaking with her father, Louis J. Stellato Jr., they collaborated to develop the first ever "Grief Club" at Lyndhurst High School. Tracey, along with the School Psychologist, contacted the students they know suffered intimate losses and used those students to target others that may have suffered as well. After presenting the idea, a number of students were excited to form a group with others like themselves.

At the first meeting, ground rules and goals were set up and immediately we helped the students understand that no one grieves the same way. Next, the students requested that the club meet once every other week. The meeting took place at lunch, where food was provided by the club advisors or Ippolito-Stellato Funeral Home. An agenda was set up for each meeting, which included distribution and explanation of literature, discussions about feelings, and art therapy projects including scrap booking.



Best of the Best

*Ippolito - Stellato Funeral Home
Lyndhurst NJ*

Computerized journals, purchased through I-Memory books, were donated by the Ippolito-Stellato Funeral Home and were kept by each student throughout the year, serving as a wonderful healing aid.

As the year went on, the club grew, and it was truly amazing to see 10 students from all different backgrounds and circumstances come together and begin to heal. Johnny's father was killed at a construction site, Rebecca and Jimmy's mom in a car crash, Gina and Alyson lost their mother to cancer, Peter's father overdosed, Melissa and Mark both lost their fathers to AIDS. Throughout the year, the students would ask for different opportunities to come together. Aside from the regularly scheduled meetings, there were trips to the movies, parties, and we also sponsored a poetry hour.

Tracey has already gotten inquiries from two elementary school students who will be entering the high school in September and have lost siblings – one to cancer and the other to a tragic car accident.



Best of the Best

*Ippolito - Stellato Funeral Home
Lyndhurst NJ*

The feeling that comes over you when a grieving teenager is sharing his/her scrapbook and/or journal with random members of the student body is truly indescribable. At any given point of any day, students are stopping in Tracey's office and picking up their books to share.

This has been a challenging, yet truly positive experience for Tracey as the funeral home's "aftercare" coordinator, Lyndhurst High School, and the funeral home as a whole. To become so closely involved in the healing process of teenagers in grief has been one of the most rewarding program in which Ippolito - Stellato Funeral Home has been involved.



I. Basic Requirements E. Concert

UNITED

During the 2005-2006 school year, our General Manager, Glenn Gilmore, volunteered at the Villa Rica High School. During his time there, he developed a strong rapport with the Music Department, which resulted in him being asked to chaperone a Villa Rica High School Chorus Trip. (As a side note, Glenn does not have children in the Villa Rica School System. He simply has a strong commitment to the young people of our area.) During his involvement with the chorus, he realized that the Fine Arts Department in our local school was suffering from a lack of funds, unlike some of the more popular programs. With this in mind, he began a crusade to raise much needed funds for the Villa Rica High School Chorus.

Being located in the Bible Belt of the South, Glenn, a lover of good music, especially Southern Gospel Music, proposed to the Jones Wynn Family, Martie Abney, Chorus Director at Villa Rica High School, along with the administration at Villa Rica High School that we UNITE our forces and host a Southern Gospel Outdoor Concert to benefit the Villa Rica High School Chorus. Thus the concert concept emerged:

UNITED

With much planning, desire and determination, the wheels began to turn and the makings of a wonderful community event were underway. The concert was slated for Saturday, August 19, 2006, beginning at 4:00 PM on the front lawn of Jones-Wynn Funeral Home. The chorus sold tickets for the dinner, recorded radio spots to play on the local stations, promoting the event, and the Jones-Wynn Family printed flyers to distribute in local businesses and area churches. We also published ads in the local newspapers.

We contacted local talents to feature such as Enlisted, Reign, Wendy Cole, Cross Reference and, last but not least, the Villa Rica High School Chorus. Large white tents were placed on the front lawn, which provided a canopy for the groups. A larger white tent provided comfort for the audience to enjoy music, food and fellowship. The Jones-Wynn Family manned the food and prepared dinner, as this was the main source of revenue for the Chorus.

After an afternoon enjoyed by hundreds that attended, the Jones-Wynn Family was able to present a large donation to the Villa Rica High School Chorus.

Due to the huge success of this community event, the Jones-Wynn Family voted to assume all expenses for the event and forward all monies received to the Villa Rica High School Chorus. This project was such a success that the Jones-Wynn Family decided to declare it an annual event and allow organizations that have a financial need to apply to be the beneficiary of UNITED.

Kilpatrick Funeral Homes hosted a three-day event in May of 2007. Our purpose was to honor our United States Veterans and educate the community of the sacrifice made by these men and women who protect our freedoms. We began by inviting the nationally acclaimed documentary filmmaker Larry Cappetto, working with him to accomplish our objective. Larry graciously heeded the rigorous schedule Kathy Reeg, Director of Family Support, had set up. He brought WWII veteran Lewis Johnson as an added bonus to participate and share his story.

We began Wednesday when Larry and Lewis arrived ready for an 8:00am History class on the campus of Louisiana Tech University. Before several hundred students, Larry and Lewis shared their stories, showed a portion of the film, and fielded questions. There was a great deal of tears, with the shedding of a few tears by the Tech students. It was then on to a 10:00am History class on the private school campus of Cedar Creek. The high school seniors assembled in the Library for the film. It was evident that the film interested the students, with Lewis especially capturing their attention. The letters they wrote following the assembly showed just how much the program spoke to their hearts.

At 2:00pm we were due at the War Veterans Home where over 100 veterans had gathered for refreshments Kilpatrick's provided, a word from Mr. Cappetto and the full viewing of the film "Iwo Jima". Larry was able to hold interviews with several veterans during the film, one of which was a D-Day Vet. Shortly after Larry as well was interviewed by (did we mention?) Washington News Correspondent, Wyatt Andrews of NBC, who was accompanying us. Yes, we found out that Mr. Andrews had chosen Kilpatrick's and Louisiana two days before to shadow Larry Cappetto for a news story. You can imagine the excitement and the stir of being trailed by a camera crew and an acclaimed correspondent!!!...

Next we were off to the West Monroe Convention Center where Kilpatrick Funeral Homes had invited several Veterans and individuals, as well as Miss Louisiana, Jamie Wilson, for a sit down dinner to meet Mr. Cappetto and Mr. Andrews. We adjourned to the auditorium where the entire community had been invited to come for Mr. Cappetto's film "Return to Iwo Jima". It was meaningful to participate in the prayer and Louisiana Tech's ROTC presentation of the colors. Many individuals serving in various branches of the military were in attendance and were honored when Kilpatrick's Funeral Directors gave attendees American Flag pins. Moved by the message of the film, the audience waited patiently to shake Mr. Cappetto's hand and thank him for his work.

The next two full days were spent at Kilpatrick Funeral Homes where we hosted a number of veterans coming to be interviewed by Larry Cappetto for his upcoming films. Thursday was for WWII veterans and Friday was for Korea, Viet Nam and the Iraq war. When the interviews concluded we bid our farewells, knowing Larry Cappetto would soon return at our invitation and grateful for the opportunity to meet Wyatt Andrews.

There were television cameras, front page coverage in the newspapers and most incredibly we made Headline News on Memorial Day as the lead story for Katie Couric. Larry Cappetto received thousands of emails in two days...and Kilpatrick Funeral Homes? We were just the vessel. God had a much bigger work in mind when we asked Mr. Cappetto to come to Louisiana...minus the fanfare, minus the publicity, the bottom line is... after three days, not only did our community experience a deeper understanding of the sacrifices made by our Veterans, most importantly they honored these men and women. And for that, the staff of Kilpatrick's is humbled to have been a part.

I. Basic Requirements (E)

- E. On June 12, 2007 the city lost five beautiful children (ages 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7) in a deadly fire in the Lincoln/Larimer neighborhood of Pittsburgh, PA. The Samuel E. Coston Funeral Home (also in the Lincoln/Larimer area) was given the honor of burying three of the five children. Within less than 3 days, the staff created a "*Child's Play*" viewing to help ease the pain for the youngsters playmates and families.

Every detail was mapped out in order to create the "kid-friendly" atmosphere. Three delicate caskets, blanketed in pink and blue were mounted on colorful building blocks. In addition, the staff added each of the children's favorite items including "Dora The Explorer" dolls, a WWF Wrestling Belt, and "Dress-Up" clothes to each of their individual caskets. The stage was also decorated with oversized *Crayola Crayons*, a Gingerbread man, and a Lollipop. Placed in front of the display were two park benches for the immediate family to sit while overlooking the play area designed for three of God's angels.

In the second chapel, the staff set up three ft. easels accompanied with *crayola* markers for the children's playmates and friends to sign the non-traditional guest book. Coloring books, crayons along with small tables and chairs were also added for children to draw pictures in memory of their loved ones.

There was an outpouring of support generated by the community. Local biker clubs sponsored a ride and collected money for the families. Nearly 100 bikers rode to the visitation, lining their bikes outside the front of the funeral home to show their support. Several city officials, clergy, firefighters, policemen and dignitaries came out in support of the children along with many community organizations.

The viewing attracted a frenzy of media attention including three local television stations, radio stations and all the local news publications. (*see attachment I - E*)

Innovative Program Veteran Oral History Project

On November 2, 2006, West Funeral Home, along with Minnesota State University Moorhead and three area businesses, unveiled a new program for veterans and their families. Both Senators from North Dakota attended and the local military band played. The program was a collaboration of the local college and our funeral home to work together with veteran groups in order to record veteran's war stories. Stories are recorded and video taped, then archived at the college and military museum. Many veterans who have told their stories find it to be quite healing. Those who have been in combat carry grief and sorrow with them everyday. Telling their stories has given many a sense of relief and some veterans have stated things such as "a heavy load has been lifted from my shoulders." Students, families and the public have access to the stories for educational purposes and also to hold on to a piece of history. From the gathered stories, individuals are highlighted on a local radio show every Monday, encouraging people to record their own stories.

The veteran's oral history project was developed after we realized that many of the veterans we met with were ready to share their stories. While talking with them many seemed eager to share the details of their military past and often times family members with them had never heard the stories before.

From this, the idea of having veteran's tell their stories evolved into videotaping and recording their stories for family and future generations. Naomi Bradbury-Marchand, Family Service Coordinator, contacted the local college's veteran department in addition to the local Patriotic Bodies organization to work out a partnership to begin recording stories and archiving them both at the college and online. After promoting the program, the local military air museum asked to be a part of this project. The three entities now work together to record, preserve and promote this program. West Funeral Home handles public relations and organizes events to encourage veterans to tell their stories. The Fargo Air Museum videotapes the interviews, scans photo's of the individuals and pieces them together to create stories similar to what is seen on the History Channel. Minnesota State University Moorhead's history department archives the unedited stories and the IT Director maintains a website, listing the veteran's who have shared their stories. This enables family to have easy access to their

loved ones story and also allows students access to the interviews for educational purposes.

Veterans who have told their story have expressed a sense of relief and a time of healing. As one veteran named Harold said, "When I left the war I came back to the community to work, marry and raise a family. Now I am retired, I have a lot of time to think and the memories haunt me. Telling my story has lifted a weight off my shoulders." Families have expressed their appreciation because some were given the opportunity to hear the stories for the first time. They felt as though a piece of their family's history was preserved and their veteran received the recognition they deserve.

In the past one year, fifty seven veterans have recorded their stories, and we look forward to the many more stories that will follow in the years to come.