

Seaver-Brown Funeral Service & Crematory, Marion, VA

“Don’t look for big things, just do small things with great love.” – Mother Teresa

Toward the end of the third week of January 2016, weather forecasters identified the potential for a major winter storm in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States, including our small town of Marion, Virginia. On Friday, January 22, 2016, as the forecast became more foreboding, we sent non-essential staff home and began adjusting our funeral home staff schedule in preparation for a severe winter storm. As we made choices to protect those we cared about from threatening weather conditions, our thoughts turned to those members of our community who would be out braving the storm to keep us safe and comfortable. Was there anything we could do to ease their burden? We certainly couldn’t repair power lines or plow the streets, but we realized we could provide those that were performing those tasks with a warm place to rest and “recharge their batteries”. So, we started spreading the word around town and placed a post on our Facebook page, letting everyone know that our doors would be open from 11pm-7am January 22-23, 2016 for the “men and women plowing, patrolling, working to keep utilities on, and working with our fire and life saving crews...” Our staff members were joined by members of the Cedar Bluff Baptist Church in Atkins, Virginia and together we took shifts throughout the night to provide hot coffee, home-made cookies, clean restrooms, appreciative smiles and “thank-yous” for those keeping us safe during the storm. This simple act of kindness garnered more attention than we ever could have imagined. Our Facebook post reached over 30,000 people with nearly 500 shares, over 500 likes, and more than 60 encouraging comments. On January 23, 2016, we received the ultimate compliment when Farris Funeral Service in Abingdon, VA borrowed our idea and opened their doors to first responders for the evening. To this day, we still have people thanking us for this simple gesture of appreciation.

Every year, we sponsor large events, like our benefit concert for St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital and our Celebration of Life Service, that require months of planning and preparation and cost thousands of dollars. We often think we need these big events to show how much we care about our community, but in truth, sometimes it is the simplest acts of kindness that provide the most significant rewards. In an afternoon, we were able to coordinate volunteers and bake cookies with minimal financial input. As demonstrated by Farris Funeral Home, this is an idea that is very easy to replicate. And, while we only directly served about a dozen first responders that night, the ripple effect throughout our community positively impacted thousands.