

Reeves & Baskerville Funeral Homes and Crematory, Coal City, IL

Reeves & Baskerville Funeral Homes and Crematory, Gardner, IL; Reeves & Baskerville Funeral Homes and Crematory, Morris, IL; Reeves & Baskerville Funeral Homes and Crematory, Wilmington, IL

ESSAY #1

Reeves and Baskerville Funeral Homes are four brick and mortar stand alone funeral homes serving the rural communities of Coal City, Gardner, Morris and Wilmington, Illinois. Each funeral home is within a 20 mile radius and we are approximately 60 miles southwest of urban Chicago, Illinois. Our communities range in populations from 1300 to 15000 people and our owner Matt Baskerville and then entire staff comprise of local residents whom have called these communities their home for a lifetime.

Many years ago, Matt took away an idea from attending a NFDA Convention, (one in which he was initially hesitant to utilize because he thought it could be misconstrued as too melodramatic) - however has proven to be a wonderful sentiment. The practice of leaving a rose on the bed following a transfer, truly has demonstrated to be meaningful for so many families.

Over the years, (particularly since we acquired and began operating our retail florist) we have elevated the practice with "real feel" roses and have even on multiple occasions been told by families that they didn't even realize the flower we left was artificial until they noticed it wasn't drinking any water from the bud vase they placed it in!

In an effort to take this to another lever - last year we had a family that posted on social media a photo of our rose that we left after the transfer of their mother. In the photo was the family cat sitting by the rose... In addition to the heartfelt sentiment of how meaningful it was, the social media post went on to say that pets grieve too...

This photo (which is attached) was so impactful - we started thinking of how can we address this as a funeral service provider? Our entire staff is pet friendly. In addition to our grief therapy dog, Katie, all of team members have fur babies of their own at home!

We took this opportunity to begin to remember pet family members at the time of transfers... And, here is what we have come up with!

When we now do a transfer from a residence where there are pets (dogs or cats) - in addition to the rose, we now leave a little tin of locally made and sourced treats. We acquire these handmade treats from our local Trinity Barkery. This nonprofit organization is dedicated to helping people with developmental disabilities and mental illnesses. Each treat handmade and all natural.

Along with the tin of treats we also include a little card expressing that "All beings grieve..." and it is from Katie (our Grief Therapy Dog) - a fellow four-legged companion.

It further states that most dogs and cats are exquisitely sensitive to the emotions of their social companions. As household people grieve and adjust to their own loss, dogs and cats can sense their sadness and display signs of their own grief!

This has had such an amazing impact... Families in today's society seem so much more involved with their pets and literally include them as a part of the family. It is such a nominal gesture that makes a significant statement. In addition to showing that we care for the entire family - even the four legged members, we are also supporting a great organization in our community through Trinity Barkery.

The cost of this program is nominal:

- We purchase the metal rectangular tins in bulk for less than 50 cents each.
- The 'Fritters for Critters" treats are purchased in bulk and a \$6.49 package can be made into 20 individually sealed and wrapped treats for each small tin.

- We have the attached sentiment cards printed as our memorial/prayer cards which average 67 cents each.
- Finally we sticker the tins with a custom logo “Forever In Our Heart” that we created in house and cost 34 cents each.

As you can see for less than \$1.85 each, the impact and sentiment is priceless!

We have also had to start keeping these on hand at each location too as the word is getting out - pet families are inquiring about them and we give them out at arrangements - particularly if transfer was from a location other than home or skilled care where family would be returning to the place of death. Attached are photos of the card and presentation that is left.

This is a tremendously meaningful practice that any funeral home could replicate for little cost with a big return.

ESSAY #2

In 2024, Reeves and Baskerville Funeral Homes is celebrating our 100th anniversary. It was in 1924 that Wilfred and Anna Reeves dream of relocating their family from Massachusetts to Coal City Illinois and opening Reeves Funeral Home came to fruition. This was truly a business venture that Mr. Reeves embarked on, having come from a career working as an executive with the railroad – and Coal City being a stop that was in need of a funeral service provider.

Initially the funeral home began as a storefront operation and Mrs. Reeves also sis seamstress work out of the business. Wakes were held in the homes and it wasn't until 1938 that the Reeves family opened the first stand alone funeral home of it's kind to the area. Today we continue to operate out of the 1938 building and as the 3rd generation aged – the Reeves family sold the business to Matt Baskerville in 2003.

Matt is proud to be carrying on the 4th generation of funeral service and operating the oldest business in the community. In addition the funeral homes over the past 6 decades expanded to include locations in Wilmington, Illinois, Morris, Illinois and most recently under Matt's direction – Gardner, Illinois.

Our 100th Anniversary has been on the topic for many years now and we wanted to commemorate this milestone in a manner that was meaningful outside of showboating our long standing continuation of the business...

After much consideration, it was decided upon by our whole team that there was no better way to showcase our century of service than to honor others who are also celebrating this 100 year milestone... So here's what we have done!

Our first honoree is Mrs. Lucille DeGulie. A beloved member raised in our Wilmington community and later completed a truly successful career in teaching in our Coal City community. Matt Baskerville and the curator of our local Carbon Hill Museum set an appointment with Lucille where she was interviewed and had the opportunity to share all about her life and love of community.

Matt then took that information and researched community and genealogical photographs and completed a Life Story on her. Our funeral homes are already known for the Life Stories that we create for the families that we serve, and it wasn't a surprise that we could honor a member of the community with the same literary format.

Once the life story was created, we then put it together in a publication form and presented it to Lucille honoring her and her birthday milestone. With her permission we have also presented the Life Story to the local libraries for their archives and the local historical museums for their keeping.

The library was so impressed with the publication that they have invited Mrs. DeGulie to a summer event to honor her and allow the community to celebrate her.

In addition our life story is also being published in the local paper commemorating her in honor of our century of service.

I am attaching the life story publication for review, and we are also in the process of soliciting for additional member in the communities that we serve to honor in the same fashion throughout the year. It has been such a wonderful way to commemorate our anniversary by celebrating and honors others in the community! It cost only time, some creativity and good will and is so easily duplicated for a host of reasons. This I believe in addition to being an exceptional public relations program, has been informative to the community, created substantial content for historical purposes and was simply a feel good program.