

PCCFA

KEYNEWS

Current News and Comments from the Pennsylvania Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association / February 2023

President's Message

Time marches on. It is hard to believe that this is my next to last President's Message as we approach the end of my term at the annual meeting and spring conference. The next newsletter will give me an opportunity to reflect on my presidency, but this issue gets us looking towards our future. First, we are happy that the state legislature is getting on with their new legislative session, and we see the cremation temperature bill being reintroduced in both the House (by a D) and the Senate (by an R). Thank your representative and senator in advance for their support. Encourage them to co-sign the bill!

The PCCFA Spring Conference is coming to the Best Western Premier in the Harrisburg area on June 7th through the 9th. Jude Abraham and Ernie Petersen are sharing the conference chairmanship and already, I am hearing good things about the line-up. Be sure to stay tuned for important conference information coming to your inbox shortly. The PCCFA Spring Conference is not the only one on the horizon. We have the Mid-Atlantic States Cemetery and Funeral Conference in Atlantic City, November 8th through the 10th. This combination of five state associations attracts forty-five outstanding suppliers, engaging and informative speakers; and a fun wine-tasting event that people are already asking how to get signed up.



As a precursor to these conferences, we start a series of articles, Don't Miss the 97%, written by Jason Cavett of webCemeteries concerning the use of technology at your cemetery or funeral home. Mr. Cavett will be presenting on these subjects and more at the conferences. If there is something you don't quite understand or want to go deeper into the subject, you will be able to ask the author himself!

I would be remiss if I didn't thank you all again for your professionalism and compassion in servicing the needs of the families that come to you. Everyone wants to talk about changes in consumer tastes from cremation to "mushroom suits." Yes, that means we have to adapt. However, the two things that should never change are our compassion and professionalism.

All the best,
Dagny Neel Fitzpatrick
President

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Committees, Assignments

Conferences & Conventions

Spring 2023: Jude Abraham & Ernie Petersen
Mid Atlantic 2023 Dagny Neel Fitzpatrick and Ernie Petersen

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Ethics & Inquiry Committee Harry Neel

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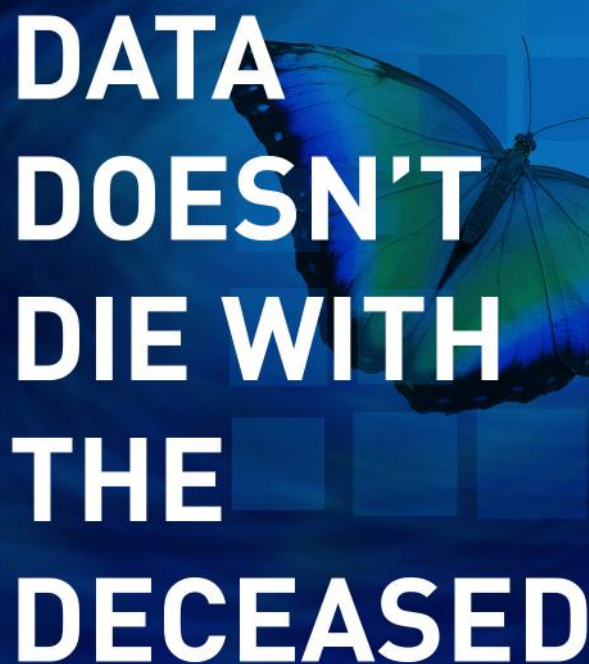
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Nominating/Polling Committee David Michener with all Past Presidents

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Benefits of Membership

By Craig Schwalm

- The eKeynews, a four times a year publication, delivered by e-mail.
- Two conferences a year with continuing education credits for funeral directors at PA locations. (Every other year, our fall conference is held in Atlantic City with four other states and there the education program provides credits and certifications.
- A discount on the MemorialPro insurance product from the Regan Agency, Inc.
- Constant Contact available for for rapid communications. Suppliers take note!
- Access to our supplier members network
- The PCCFA complaint hotline helping us help cemeteries with consumer issues.
- An annual legislative reception, to make sure your representatives know they can come to us for assistance with pending legislation and constituent issues.
- A lobbyist looking out for our best interests in Harrisburg.
- Access to other cemeterians to network and brainstorm amid the changing and evolving death care industry. Green burials, spotted lantern fly, etc.

Don't Miss the 97%

Technology That Enables Service Series

By Jason Cavett, CTFO | webCemeteries



As someone who came into the death care industry from technology-heavy industries (medical, defense, and research), I was impressed and proud to be a part of an industry that took great pride in caring deeply for their customers. Families, who are dealing with the death of a loved one, have the opportunity to interact with so many wonderful people who work diligently to provide the highest level of service and care.

As a technologist and someone who has developed software for his entire career, I believe technology should exist to serve - it should never exist just to have it. It should not exist to check a box. But technology, when implemented well and with consideration of who it is serving, dramatically increases the ability for an organization - a cemetery or a funeral home - to serve its families.

This following series of articles will dive into the particulars of various technologies. I will look at what is available to our industry and why technology should not be something to be feared but, if implemented thoughtfully, can dramatically improve and extend the wonderful care that the death care industry prides itself on.

Who Are the 97%

Imagine for a second that you discover a pipe has burst behind the walls of your house due to a shoddy installation job and this winter's temperatures reached -50 degrees. After the initial panic has worn off, how do you find a plumber in your area? If you're like most people, you head online to search.

According to SEO (Search Engine Optimization) Tribunal, 97% of people learn about a local company online more than anywhere else. If that doesn't perk your ears up, the follow-on stat is even more important: 88% of searches for local businesses result in a follow-up call or visit within 24 hours. As a true local business - one that is truly locked to the land in the case of cemeteries - discoverability is king. The online world offers

numerous ways to be discoverable. As we look through this list, reflect on how discoverable you are?



Your Website

Your primary home online should be your website. But it's not straightforward enough to have just a website. Just like you take care of your grounds, and keep things looking fresh, and add water features and other improvements - a website needs to be treated with similar care.

Always keep in mind that a website has three main pillars that need to be properly constructed to work well. The first is the site's design. This is the look and feel, the usability, and what drives users to the appropriate calls to action on your site. The second leg of a well-constructed website is content and discoverability. This is what results in the site being found by search engines so that your users can find you. This is the content that makes up your website so you have the information that local families are looking for. The third component is technical. Your site has to run well, it has to be secure (particularly if you have eCommerce!), and it needs to be easy to manage. Going for the cheapest hosting platform is rarely going to earn you points when your page takes twenty seconds to load (yes, I have fixed websites that have this problem!). Remember that a site needs to be loaded in less than two seconds to keep your visitors happy!

Google Business Profile (and Others)

When I was young, my family would receive - typically once a year - a big yellow book with everyone's phone numbers in it. While the Yellow Pages is (almost) completely gone, the concept still exists in the form of Google Business Profile. If you are not familiar, you have almost definitely seen these locally-focused listings down the right

Don't Miss the 97%

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hand side of your screen when you search for a specific business.

Google Business Profile (and other such services) bring together your entire local brand into one place. You can link together your websites, social media accounts, basic operating information (hours, phone number, etc.), and, most importantly to someone researching your cemetery or funeral home, your ratings and reviews. What you may not know is that someone may have created a profile for you and it exists out there without any management or oversight. Google works hard to make sure that local search results (e.g. "cemeteries near me") show

Google Business Profile information first because it is likely to be most applicable for the search results. Go and create or claim your Google Business Profile and make sure it says what you want it to say.

Social Media

The last major part of being discoverable online is to manage your social image. For better or worse (and many times, it's worse unfortunately), social media is how people will interact with you. A key thing to remember about social media is that it needs to be regularly managed to not give the appearance of getting no attention.

Something that should be recognized, however, is that unless you are a major brand or a famous/notable cemetery, you likely will get little to no interaction on social media. That is okay! Just put little posts here and there. Keep it looking alive and fresh. And, most importantly, be ready to engage with those individuals who reach out to you.

Discoverability is a Service

When I taught at ICCFA University last year, a concern that came up around technology is that it gets in the way of good, personal service to customers. I strongly disagree. Poorly implemented technology can for sure (and one reason I recommend hiring a professional designer for your website). But well-implemented

technology enhances good service and enables you to focus on the important things at your organization. In the case of discoverability, well-implemented technology will bring people through your front door or get them to call you where you can then show off the phenomenal care that is the hallmark of thousands of people in this industry.

In future articles, I will dive into the introduction of other technologies and how they can add to your ability to serve.

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PCCFA Member Wins ICCFA KIP Award!

At the ICCFA Annual Conference and Exposition, an Honorary Mention KIP will be award to one of our member cemeteries! The Keeping It Personal (KIP) Awards exist to encourage the sharing of ideas for personalizing services and products to better serve families. As the ICCFA has not published their list of awardees, we are not permitted to public name the member, but we can heartily cheer this accomplishment!

The NLRB Decision Requires Employers to Review Their Severance Agreements

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Must O'Keefe

Last week, the National Labor Relations Board (“NLRB”) ruled that severance agreements that include confidentiality or non-disparagement provisions that “have a reasonable tendency to interfere with, restrain, or coerce employees in the exercise of their Section 7 rights” under the National Labor Relations Act (“NLRA”) are unlawful.

In McLaren Macomb, 372 NLRB No. 58 (2023), a hospital offered employees a severance agreement and general release that contained confidentiality and non-disparagement provisions. Specifically, the confidentiality clause stated the employee

agreed not to disclose the terms of the agreement “to any third person, other than spouse, or as necessary to professional advisors for the purposes of obtaining legal counsel or tax advice, or unless legally compelled to do so by a court or administrative agency of competent jurisdiction.” The non-disparagement clause stated the employee agreed “not to make statements to Employer’s employees or to the general public which could disparage or harm the image of Employer, its parent and affiliated entities and their officers, directors, employees, agents and representatives.”

The NLRB ruled that the provisions were unlawful because, among other things, the provisions restrained employees from discussing the agreements and workplace matters with others, making public statements about the workplace, and filing unfair labor practice charges or participating in a NLRB investigation. Per the NLRB, these provisions violated

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The NLRB Decision

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Section 7, which provides employees with the right to act together to improve their working conditions. The NLRB's decision applies to severance agreements offered to both union and non-union employees, but the decision does not apply to severance agreements offered to executives, managers, and most supervisors. Based on this decision, employers should consult with legal counsel to review whether their severance agreements comply with the NLRB decision and discuss whether revisions to their severance agreements are necessary. Potential courses of action include adding a NLRA disclaimer to the severance agreements or removing the provisions from the severance agreements. Please contact a member of the Metz Lewis employment law group or your Metz Lewis contact to discuss the best course of action for your company.

Tentative Agenda for Spring Conference

Wednesday June 7th, 2023

12:00 pm	Past Presidents' Meeting
12:30 pm– 3:30 pm	PCCFA Board of Directors' Meeting
6:00 pm	Welcome Reception
7:00 pm	Banquet

Thursday June 8th, 2023

8:45 am – 9:00 am	Welcome and Introductions
9 am-10:00 am	The Hallowed Grounds Project Barbara Barksdale, Chair
10:00 am-10:15 am	Stretch or Coffee Break
10:15 am-11:45 am	A new and novel medical benefit plan Stephen Horvat, VP Corporate Synergies
11:45 am-12:30 pm	Family Benefits of Preplanning Jonathan Ger, Independent Preneed Consultant
12:30 pm	Lunch Sponsored by Corporate Synergies
	Afternoon and evening activities on your own

Friday, June 9th, 2023

8:45 – 9:00 am	Welcome and Introductions
9:00 am – 9:40 am	Sales Management and Sales Training Sean Coyle, CEO of Sandler Sales Training
9:40 am – 9:55am	Stretch or Coffee Break
9:55 am-11:20 am	Are You Missing the 97% Jason Cavett, Chief Technology Officer
11:25 am -12:10 pm	Livestream Funeral and Graveside Services Kyle Fogarty

This agenda may be subject to revision and change!

Spring Conference 2023

June 7-9, 2023

Harrisburg- the heart of Pennsylvania



You don't want to miss this one!

Assistance in Applying for Solar Grants in Rural Areas

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of Rural Development administers a grant and loan program, Rural Energy for America Program (REAP). REAP started in 2002 as part of the federal Farm Bill. The purpose of REAP is to help rural small businesses access renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies.

The REAP program has been so popular that the funding budget for the grants has not been able to meet the demand. But, the good news is that the Inflation Reduction Act solved this problem.

The Inflation Reduction Act lifts the maximum grant size from 25% to 40% of a project's costs for the Oct. 31, 2023 and March 31, 2024 deadlines, and ultimately up to 50% of a project's cost once the USDA publishes new guidance.

Many Pennsylvania cemeteries fit the eligibility requirements of a private for-profit entity and rural small business. Rural small business is a small business that is not in a town with a population of more than 50,000 people and is not in an urbanized contiguous area of a town with a population of greater than 50,000 inhabitants. Total net worth cannot exceed \$15 million and annual income for a two year period must be below \$5 million.

Solar United Neighbors has a program to help. Request their guide at <https://www.solarunitedneighbors.org/ready-set-solar-rural-businesses>

PAC and Legal Defense Funds

Who works with our state representatives to protect your business, consumer grievances and protects us from overly burdensome laws? **PCCFA does!** Support our efforts with your personal donation to the PCCFA PAC Fund.

For more information: Ernie Petersen at (814) 243-3837 or e-mail southsidestr@mac.com

If you want to support PCCFA, with a business contribution, consider donating to the Legal Defense Fund.

For more information: Ernie Petersen at (184) 243-3837 or e-mail pccfa.exec.team@gmail.com

Cremation Bill Low on Sponsors

In the new session of the PA Legislature we have a disappointing number of co-sponsors for the House cremation temperature bill. The House Committee is eager to move this. Our lobbyist, Morgan Plant, has e-mailed previous sponsors and spoken to a number of other members. Given that the House just finally adopted Rules last week they can be excused for not paying attention to co-sponsorships, but **we need to increase our level of engagement.** Both Chambers are out of session until April 24 while they conduct Budget hearings.

As of March 3 this is who we have: Sanchez, Pickett, Madden, Ciresi, Hill-Evans, ozwiak, Dellosa, Fleming, Leadbeter, Mullins, Rigby, and Tomlinson

Please call, write, visit your House members and ask them to sign on!

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