

A publication of the Academy of Professional Funeral Service Practice



The Compass

Spring 2020

What is Your Vision for 2020?

On all Academy stationery are the words Learn, Grow, Achieve. That first word, Learn, is so important to the mission of the Academy. In fact, the Academy was founded to recognize those who wanted to learn more and become lifelong learners. The difference between ordinary and extraordinary is that little extra. What extra will you do, learn or achieve in 2020 to be extraordinary?

Dr. Seuss said, "Oh the things you can find, if you don't stay behind." And behind we get if we are not learning every day. Remember to log in or send that activity you have completed to be entered on your Academy transcript. You will be amazed at the end of the year what extraordinary things you have accomplished. Thank you for your support of lifelong learning and for your support of the Academy and its mission to encourage all funeral professionals to pursue lifelong learning.

Confused About Your Login Credentials to the Academy site? It's Easy, Really!

We automatically default your Login ID to the email address we have on file unless you have not provided it to us in the past. Your password is your Academy ID number (with dashes). If you have trouble at first, please try any previous emails you may have shared with us in case our records reflect your home or business email address only.

The fastest way to request a password reset or credentials request is to use the link on our web site called "Academy members, need help logging in?" right under the log in box.

Once you log in, you have complete control and can change your login information to an email address you prefer by Updating your Contact Information. You can then enter your activities and print out current or past years' transcripts. If you still need help, just call the office.

Lifelong Learning

Henry Ford, the inventor made famous by revolutionizing mass production, said, "Anyone who stops learning is old whether at 28 or 80. Anyone who keeps learning stays young." There has been so much research dedicated to the brain and how it functions. But one thing we do know, we must use it or we will lose some of its functionality. Learning is a conscious decision to use our brain and understand something, something new. Now, some would argue that in funeral service no two days are alike, so you are always using your brain to learn something new. However, sometimes after many years of helping grieving families we get in a rut and lose our creativity. Where can we recharge and see outside our small world to new options and opportunities that exist? Continuing education offers some of these opportunities.

Continuing education, or life-long learning, has been offered in funeral service for decades. Professional associations and conventions have been around since the 1800's, but of course, attendance at these meetings and continuing education credits were not a requirement for licensure. Funeral professionals came together to enjoy one another's company and to learn from each other – what we call today "networking." In the midst of that networking, classes were held on various subjects. Those funeral directors attending seminars and workshops in those days desired to learn all they could about funeral service and the opportunities to serve their families in better, possibly more creative, ways, not because it was required, but because they wanted to be progressive.

Today, life-long learning is offered in various forms of delivery. Seminars and workshops are still very popular, and many funeral practitioners enjoy the camaraderie at conventions and meetings as well as the information that is delivered. Relationships are formed and we learn from one another. But some practitioners find the constraints of the profession lending less time for leaving their businesses and acquiring this type of education. So there are those who prefer online continuing education or home study courses. These courses can be instructor-led videos, real time webinars, or printed materials.

As well as various forms of delivery, there are a great number of topics offered. Practitioners can learn about new business practices, legal matters, professional and ethical conduct,

technology, psychology of grief, and embalming challenges. Is there a topic you would like to learn more about? Have you contacted your local, state or national education committee to request that topic be presented? Or better yet, do you have the expertise in an area that might be beneficial to share with your colleagues? Would you like to share something with your Academy colleagues here in the Newsletter?

The old adage that "you get out of something what you put into it" holds true for continuing education. If the practitioner attends a seminar with the belief that there will be at least one new idea or helpful hint derived from the process, then learning has occurred and something was gained. But if that practitioner does not expect to learn anything, guess what, nothing will probably be learned. So the proper attitude is also important when researching continuing education opportunities available. Look for that topic that stimulates your mind and maybe answers a question you have. Look for those courses that can make your business better and make you a more effective funeral practitioner. If we want the most memorable funeral experience for our families, then we must be the best. And being the best means continuing to learn and grow and achieve. Check our Academy approved continuing education offerings under the drop-down box Continuing Education on our website. What new and exciting things will you learn in 2020?

Check in with other members on our Facebook page

CFSP Designation from the Academy (APFSP) • [facebook.com/APFSP](https://www.facebook.com/APFSP)

Every Life is Worthy of Note

The first note following a death is the obituary. As funeral directors, our composition has three purposes: notify the community of the death; offer a brief factual description of the life; and invite the community to participate in public events to honor that life.

This might be accomplished in just over 100 words, or using more than 1,000 words. And those words might have a variety of intentions such as a grand celebration of an amazing father, polishing the memory of an amazingly bad father, promoting a religious belief, or promoting a funeral business. Please consider focusing on notify, describe, invite.

The opening paragraph will typically be the classic reporting "4 Ws and an H": who, what, when, where, and how. Who is obvious, and might include both common, legal, and nick names. "Died" is a cold, hard fact, and always appropriate. Each community and its newspaper will have accepted standards for which details to include in the when, where, and how.

Describing of the life of the deceased helps the community identify their relationship. This could be remembering that they were in high school during a shared era, or that they were co-workers in the factory, or were a member of the same organization. That chronological life story is followed by a list of survivors to help the reader to identify a neighbor's father, or a daughter-in-law's sister. The "preceded in death" list accomplishes the same understanding of the reader's relationship.

Having learned of the death, and figured-out how they are known, the reader might wish to find the appropriate time and place to extend condolences to the family, and to personally spend a few moments honoring that life. This is an excellent opportunity to invite the community to such events.

Some of the most meaningful obituaries require the greatest effort to learn about relatively unknown lives, including members of the homeless community, and miscarried or stillborn infants known only to their mothers.

Many of us compose obituaries every day, whether for newspaper publication, website posting, or printing in a service folder. What we do is significantly different from full-time obituary writers, employed by major newspapers to write feature-length obituaries about newsworthy deaths. Regularly reading those obituaries can help us improve our humble efforts. One way to do so is to become an Associate Member of the Society of Professional Obituary Writers. SPOW members share notable obituaries on the group's Facebook page. They also gather every two years at an "ObitCon" for educational seminars, informal round table discussions, and to recognize the best obituaries with the "Grimmy" awards.

They, like us, are dedicated to giving respect and humanity to every life by composing just the right note.

Jim Meyer, CFSP • MBIE • Halbritter-Wickens Funeral Home, Niles, MI.

Renew Quickly Online

For your convenience in paying your renewal, we accept Mastercard, VISA, Discover and American Express or transfers directly from your bank account using PayPal.

Call us at (866) 431-CFSP or visit [apfsp.org](https://www.apfsp.org) and log in to your member page to pay online.





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Call for Candidates for the Board of Trustees

It is election year for the Academy Board! Elections are held every two years to fill the seat of the Board members whose six year board terms have expired. Your Board of Trustees has 9 members who are elected by you, the membership. As a member of the Academy, you will be electing two (2) new Trustees to the Academy Board in 2020 for a term of six (6) years. All Certified Funeral Service Practitioners (CFSP) who have been certified a minimum of 5 years (since 2015) are eligible for this position and will join the other seven current trustees. Any Academy CFSP interested in serving on the Board of Trustees of the Academy of Professional Funeral Service Practice should submit a letter of intention in one of the following ways:

- By US Mail (APFSP, PO Box 1160, Buchanan, GA 30113) - or -
- By Fax (770-646-9490) - or -
- By E-mail to webmaster@apfsp.com

Deadline for submission of the letter of intention is March 31, 2020.

The Board of Trustees is responsible for conducting, managing and controlling the business affairs and activities of the Academy. Board members are expected to attend designated meetings which usually occur twice a year, or more frequently using electronic means. The Academy office will send you a form to complete and return along with your photograph. This information will be used in the preparation of the election brochure and ballots. If you do not receive this candidate form by May 1, please call the Academy office to be sure we have received your letter of intent to seek election to the Board of Trustees. Election ballots will be mailed in July and tallied by August 15th.

Are you up for the opportunity and challenge to see your Academy grow and flourish in the years to come? Are you wanting to learn all you can about the workings of the Academy? If you have questions, call the Academy office or speak with one of our current Board Members listed on the website. Declare your candidacy, campaign for one of the two seats, and work to see your Academy flourish in the upcoming years!