

ICCFAYOU

A newsletter by, for and about ICCFAU students, faculty and alumni

CLASS OF 2008 Record Freshman, Graduating Classes



The 2008 session of ICCFA University broke several records, with all-time high attendance, the largest freshman class in its history and a record-breaking number of graduates. Pictured here is the 2008 graduating class: Patrick J. Posey Sr., Diocese of Memphis, Memphis, Tennessee; Todd Petry, Woodside Cemetery & Arboretum, Middletown, Ohio; Stephen L. Penny, City of Jonesboro Parks & Recreation, Arkansas; Robert A. Gordon, CCFE, Eternal Hills, Klamath Falls, Oregon; Ronald J. Nestor, Knollwood Cemetery Corp., Sharon, Massachusetts; Patrick Hollick, Sunset Memorial Gardens, Richland, Washington; Charles Myers, Highland Mortuary & Cemetery, Thornton, Colorado; Denise G. Bullocks, Oakridge Glen Oak Cemetery, Hillside, Illinois; Jennifer Frew, Green Hills Memorial Park, Rancho Palos Verdes, California; Jeremy G. Weber, Einan's Funeral Home, Richland, Washington; Kevin Gaffney, Funeral Directors Life Insurance Co., Abilene, Texas; Donald F. Price, Greenwood Cemetery, Orlando, Florida; Joseph J. Verzi, Catholic Cemeteries—Archdiocese of Newark, New Jersey; Paul R. Vogel II, Calumet Park Cemetery & Funeral Chapel, Merrillville, Indiana; Steven N. Shenefield, Toledo Memorial Park, Sylvania, Ohio; James A. DeCastro, Diocese of Tucson Catholic Cemeteries, Arizona; Christopher J. Tuohy, Catholic Cemeteries, Middle Village, New York; and Samuel I. Douglas, Harvey-Douglas Funeral Home, Ardmore, Oklahoma. In the back row are (from left) Dean Jeff Kidwiler, CCE; Dean Jim Starks, CFuE, CCRÉ; Dean Gary O'Sullivan, CCE; Dean Katherine Scimmi; Dean Todd Van Beck; Chancellor Michael Burke; ICCFA President Mark Krause, CFuE; and Dean Ernie Heffner, CFuE.

CHANCELLOR'S MESSAGE

Dear ICCFAU Alumni, Students & Faculty:

Welcome to the inaugural issue of ICCFAYOU, which focuses on you, the students, faculty and alumni of ICCFA University!

This quarterly newsletter has been born out of our huge success with the University over the past five years. I am a little partial, but let me entertain all of you for a few minutes with just a few of our accomplishments.

Seeing this program over the past 20 years develop into a full-fledged learning center has exceeded all of my expectations. And it is thanks to all of you. We tackle every issue, every subject, with the best minds and proven performers out there... just as a fully accredited university would. Egos

are left at home in our world!

We reached record attendance in 2008. That included a record freshman class and a record graduate class. We simply designed what you and many others have needed for many years. We then delivered the information from the best professors out there. Results: Our attendance and unmatched spirit was evident, especially this year!

With the addition of our College of 21st Century Services (which was a huge success), we now run six state-of-the-art collegiate programs. Wow! We have



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VALEDICTORIAN'S MESSAGE

Ron Nestor

Foreman

Knollwood Memorial Park

Canton, Massachusetts

2008 ICCFAU Graduate



It is an honor to be in the presence of such an illustrious group, including President Krause, Chancellor Burke, respective deans and faculty, students and guests, and my fellow graduates. The dais is filled with such a wealth of knowledge. Seated behind me is well over 100 years of service and experience, as well as some of the most dedicated, passionate, amazing people you or I will ever have the pleasure of knowing and learning from.

As I am sure you heard many times at ICCFAU, it doesn't matter specifically what you do, where you do it, how long you have been doing it for, or the volume you process, you will always learn and grow from the experience, and that is what I want to stress. The classes, the networking, the friendships, the University – it all amounts to one unparalleled experience.

For me, this experience has meant quite a few things, but I will summarize. It means the best education and reference material anywhere pertaining to our work. It means professional relationships with proven, incredible people who will answer any question or help you in any way possible, at any time, even if it is from 2,000 miles away. It means life-long friendships. I have made some of my best friends at University. Through this experience, I have learned relatively quickly that professional development translates into personal growth. The University and all its ingredients have made me a better cemeterian, a better mentor to some of our own staff and a better person.

So if you believe as I do that this is not just a job, but a career, come back. If possible, bring someone with you.

Whether you are educating your staff on changes you will implement when you get home, working with a family, or maintaining your cemetery grounds, the more educated your company is the easier it will be to meet your responsibilities. This is where you get that knowledge.

Four years ago, I went home after completing the College of Land Management & Grounds Operations and had a meeting with our CEO, and I remember saying to him that I *had* to attend University again. I had set a short-term goal for myself of graduating from this experience. There are a few people who already know this because I bothered them so much to get them to contact my boss and convince him that I needed to get back here. And they did. And he agreed.

Now, four years later, I am so proud to have been at ICCFAU with some of my best friends as part of the ICCFA University's largest-ever graduating class.

Graduating is often referred to as a rite of passage. Because this association is so proactive and always moving forward, the University is experiencing its own rite of passage in that it has outgrown the first-class facility at the University of Memphis. It will move on to another facility next year that will surely provide an even greater experience.

You may or may not have heard me say this before, but it's something my mentor said to me a long time ago that has always stayed with me. He said, "In life, and in work, you will rise or fall to the level of your environment."

The University, and the overall experience, is where you learn how to create that environment for all involved to rise in order to give our families and our community the level of service they deserve and that we are all so privileged to provide.

ICCFAYOU

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ICCFA UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP

Michael Burke
Chancellor

Ernie Heffner, CFuE
Dean, College of 21st Century Services

Gary O'Sullivan, CCE, CCFE
Dean, J. Asher Neel College of Sales & Marketing

Jim Starks, CFuE, CCrE
Dean, College of Cremation Services

Jeff Kidwiler, CCE, CSE
Dean, College of Land Management & Grounds Operations

Katherine Scimmi
Dean, College of Administration & Management

Todd Van Beck
Dean, College of Funeral Home Management

SCHOLARSHIPS: A GATEWAY TO OPPORTUNITY

Ron Nestor, foreman at Knollwood Memorial Park in Canton, Massachusetts, graduated from ICCFA University this year as class valedictorian, an achievement made possible in part by scholarship programs run by the ICCFA Educational Foundation and the New England Cemetery Association.

What have those scholarships meant to this new grad, who began his four-year journey as a cemetery maintenance employee?

"It has done so much for me," Nestor said. "I was promoted this past June to a management position, and that is something that never, ever would have happened if it weren't for that."

How can you and your organization support scholarship programs like those that helped Nestor?

Work with Your State Association to Establish a Program

Associations are intended to advance the industry, and what better way to do this than by promoting education through a scholarship program? Work with your state or regional association to find a way to support a scholarship program among its members. You'll find that there are many resources available to you.

For example, the ICCFA currently runs two scholarship programs. The Educational Foundation scholarships are funded through tax-deductible contributions made by individuals and companies that wish to support education within the industry. This recently established foundation awarded its first ICCFA University scholarships this year, including one \$1,500 scholarship and one \$500 scholarship.

The ICCFA Women's Forum offers scholarships that are funded through sponsorship by generous industry suppliers. In 2008, Women's Forum Co-Chairs Christine Toson Hentges and Nicole Wiedeman solicited enough sponsorship monies to award two full scholarships to ICCFAU.

The Southern Cemetery, Cremation & Funeral Association also runs a scholarship program and has begun awarding scholarships to ICCFAU. According to SCCFA Executive Director Mary Perl, the program is funded in two ways: through money raised during a 50/50 raffle held at the association's annual convention and through a line on the association's dues application that asks for voluntary contributions to the fund.

Contribute to an Existing Program

There are numerous scholarship programs in the industry for many worthy educational programs. Contact your state or regional association or your local mortuary school to see if they run such a program.

If you want to specifically support a scholarship that sends students to ICCFA University, consider contributing to the ICCFA Educational Foundation. Your donation is tax-deductible, and you can specify on your check that you wish to have the money designated toward an ICCFAU scholarship. Send checks payable to: ICCFA Educational Foundation, 107 Carpenter Drive, Suite 100, Sterling, VA 20164. For details, contact Foundation Executive Director Bob Fells at rfells@icffa.com or 1.800.645.7700.

Supplier companies can contact the ICCFA regarding sponsorship for the Women's Forum scholarship. Sponsors receive recognition on the scholarship application, in the ICCFA University program, in the *ICCFA Magazine* and at the University. For more information, contact Rob Treadway at 1.800.645.7700 or robt@icffa.com.

Applying for an ICCFAU Scholarship

The ICCFA Educational Foundation and Women's Forum will be accepting applications for scholarships for the 2009 session of ICCFA University soon. Details on how to apply will appear in the winter edition of ICCFAYOU, to be published in January 2009.

University Expands to New Location For 2009

Due to its continuing success, the ICCFA University has outgrown its home at the University of Memphis. In 2009, ICCFAU will move to the Mid-South Convention Center in Tunica, Mississippi. This new venue is just 20 minutes south of Memphis, Tennessee.

The Mid-South Convention Center features versatile state-of-the-art facilities, full-service catering, a professional full service audio-visual department, high-speed Internet access, a business center powered by IKON and offers more than 45,000 square feet of meeting space.

The host hotel will be The Veranda Hotel (seen below). The hotel overlooks The Links at Cottonwoods Golf Course and Harrah's Lake. It is adjacent to the Mid-South Convention Center, has 568 rooms and suites, an outdoor swimming pool, a jacuzzi and a fitness center. Additional information on ICCFAU's new home will be available in the next edition of ICCFAYOU.

In 2009, the ICCFAU will be held at its new home at the Mid-South Convention Center in Tunica, MS, from July 17-22. Want to learn much more? See you at "The U" in 2009!"

Right: The view of The Veranda Hotel at night.

Below: The main entrance of the host hotel.



INSTRUCTOR EXTRAS

Ask the Right Questions

*Professor Tim Lancaster, CCFE
Eternal Hills Memorial Gardens and
Funeral Home
Klamath Falls, Oregon*

We often say families come to us on the most difficult day of their life, and most often that is true. They are coming to us under great duress.



At times we forget this simple fact, and so we allow getting the details such as vital statistics to take precedence over the family's feelings at the initial stage of the arrangement. However, if we are to help the family create the best possible tribute to their loved one, we must move them from this point to a time of sharing about their loved one's life. This is difficult, but it can be achieved by a few important steps.

1. Warm up. Don't just go in and start asking questions. Begin by telling the family who your company is, what makes you different, what you are going to do and how long it will take. Be sure to have this information scripted for your company. Winging it doesn't work. Practice, practice, practice. Videotape your arrangers so they can see for themselves where they need to improve.

2. Use open-ended questions. We always start with "Can you tell me about what happened?" This gives us familiarity with what this family has been going through and allows them to tell their story – a story that needs to be repeated time and time again to help them get through the process.

3. Continue with open-ended questions all through the arrangements. Don't give up at the first negative response. Remember where they are coming from – just a few hours ago they were holding their loved one's hand and watching them die. When it's time to move into questions about their preferences for the service, an easy transition is, "What was the last service you attended and what did you find valuable in it?"

Developing a company presentation is the key to success for cemetery, cremation or funeral arrangements. For more information or for a list of the open-ended questions we use at Eternal Hills, please contact me at director@eternalhills.com.

Check It Off

*Professor John Bolton, CCE
Matthews International Corporation
Johnson City, Tennessee*

In today's fast-paced environment, where customer satisfaction is paramount to success, why not make sure that your cemetery maintenance staff does everything they can to eliminate mistakes and potentially costly errors? Fall is a great time to gather your staff together and create some Maintenance Accountability Checklists.



Checklists can help ensure that things are being done correctly and safely, the first time. They eliminate the often-heard ambiguous statement, "I didn't know I needed to do that."

I suggest making cemetery checklists for activities such as opening and closing graves, funeral set ups, lowering-device and lift safety, and routine equipment maintenance.

Each list should cover all of the steps involved in that activity. For example, the funeral set-up checklist could include:

- greens are clean
- chairs are stable
- tent is staked properly
- trash and debris are removed from area
- procession path is clear of debris, holes and ruts
- lowering device is level
- ...et cetera

Creating checklists for maintenance activities will help make your staff more efficient and assist you with creating a high level of customer service and satisfaction.

"Instructor Extras" is a column offering helpful advice from ICCFA University professors – tips & tools to add to what you learn in class.

Professors: If you would like to contribute to "Instructor Extras," please contact Rob Treadway at robt@iccfa.com.

CHANCELLOR'S MESSAGE *Continued from page 1*

grown. And we have grown through participation from industry greats. Some have passed and some still vigorously support the University. Many thanks to all who have shaped our University!

Our industry's best collegiate program deans: Todd Van Beck, Jim Starks, Gary O'Sullivan, Katherine Scimmi, Jeff Kidwiler and Ernie Heffner are second to none, with thought-provoking, straightforward and brilliantly designed educational programs. We address **now**, and the **future**.

Our valedictorian selection process, our student testimonials and our entire graduation process is now a huge honor. It must be experienced to truly be appreciated. Our students simply ROCK! By week's end, we are a very formidable and highly energized group. And each year many come back. Our students have even scheduled their vacations so as to attend our University. It does not get any better than that!

Our responsiveness is unmatched. We are constantly evaluating class sizes, professor talent and all subject matter. Your questions and needs are handled "real time." If we cannot get the info to you immediately, we will before you leave. We are working as our students are learning.

Experts from within our industry... and now even from outside of our industry ... are lining up to be professors at our University. No kidding! We are attracting the very best in not only cemetery, cremation and funeral service, but also in accounting, administration and others.

And we do this with no solicitation. Just good old-fashioned word of mouth.

New in 2009, our growth has enabled us to look for and secure new, upgraded facilities and rooms for our students. It is vital that we maintain this program process in comfortable, friendly environments with great food and great networking. I promise all of that.

Our student networking is second to none. Read our testimonials and I think you will agree that it is time to get yourself, and or your staff, back to the ICCFA University.

This newsletter is **yours** and we are looking for your input and contributions. Please see the box on page 8 with information on how to submit your news and views.

I am proud of our heritage and I can promise that the ICCFA University will continue to grow and be the source for your training and your continual employee development. That is my promise to you and a promise from my deans as well.

The ICCFA University in 2009 will move to our new facilities, with even better food and accommodations, and carry the "spirit" and pride of the ICCFA. Come carry the ICCFA University flag with me!

All my best,



Michael H. Burke
ICCFA University Chancellor

IN YOUR OWN WORDS...

I have been a funeral director/embalmer for 13 years and attended numerous continuing education classes and seminars, and not one has been as exciting, informative and productive as this one. I am so excited about everything I learned.

— Amey Stuart-Garza
Laurel Oaks Memorial Park &
Funeral Home
Mesquite, Texas

The best networking, educational opportunity in the funeral industry.

— Mark Pennington
Halo International Group
Twinsburg, Ohio

What a unique opportunity to be surrounded by a wealth of knowledge in all aspects of our profession.

— Kim Kojan
Miller-Jones Mortuary &
Crematory
Sun City, California

It far exceeded my expectations. Every presentation was worthwhile. I have a renewed enthusiasm and optimism for our industry.

— Linda Cotten
Greenleaf Memorial Park
New Bern, North Carolina

Excellent! Great people, great content, and overall a great university.

— Andrew Clark
Hiers-Baxley Funeral Services
Chiefland, Florida

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

July 17-22, 2009 • Mid-South Convention Center
20 miles south of Memphis, TN, in Tunica, MS

CAUGHT ON CAMERA! CAPTION CONTEST

Come up with your own captions for the pictures below from ICCFAU 2008 and submit them to robt@icfa.com. The best submissions will be published in the next issue of ICCFAYOU. Be sure to include the photo number when submitting your caption. Deadline: October 31, 2008.



Thanks to official ICCFAU photographer Scott Saltsgaver for these gems!



INTERNATIONAL CEMETERY, CREMATION
AND FUNERAL ASSOCIATION

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Sterling, VA 20164

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

JULY 17-22, 2009

Mid-South Convention Center
Tunica, MS

WE WANT YOUR NEWS!

STUDENTS & ALUMNI: We want to hear from you! If you have news about personal and professional milestones such as promotions, new jobs, new designations/certifications, retirements, marriages, births, etc., please contact us at robtf@icfca.com. You could see your announcement in the next newsletter.