

Nassuff Newsletter

Spring/Summer | 2023



Congratulations Jo Pettit!



L to R: Andy Powell, Bill Butler, Holly O'Brien, Jo Pettit, Doug Brueggemann, Wesley Powell, Michael Grant

Congratulations to Jo Pettit, former Executive Director of the NSFDA for over 30 years, who was honored by the Amityville Rotary Club at their 2023 Gift of Life Gala held on June 1, 2023, at The Piermont in Babylon.

Jo is the recipient of the Frank B. Powell Rotarian of the Year award. She was surrounded by her family and friends as she was presented with a plaque and proclamations. Jo is well deserving of this award for all she does for the rotary and her community.



**Important
Information**

SAVE THE DATE!
2023 Annual Convention

NYSFDA- 2023 Annual Convention
August 20-23, 2023
Saratoga Hilton & City Center, Saratoga NY

SAVE THE DATE

Toni & Vincent Romeo Memorial Golf Outing

Monday, October 2, 2023

Stonebridge Golf Links & Country Club
2000 Raynors Way, Smithtown, NY



Suffolk County Department of Social Services Burial Assistance Benefit Increase effective May 1, 2023

Please see the attached document regarding an increase to the maximum
SCDSS burial assistance benefit

[Click for Document](#)



**The NSFDA would like to extend a special
Thank You to the**



WHITMORE GROUP

**for sponsoring the 4th Annual
Symposium and Networking Event**



A Message from the NSFDA Board President: Michael J. Gorton

Dear Members,

Every new beginning comes from some other beginning's end."

— Closing Time, Semisonic

As I sit here writing my last piece for our newsletter as your president, I can't help but get emotional. For the last three years I have been your president, I have worked hard for the best interest of the Nassau Suffolk Funeral Directors Association, for the board of directors, and for the betterment of funeral service on Long Island.


I took over as president after the height of the Covid pandemic of 2020. It was tough and challenging coming out of COVID, to get things back to normal, and what we were used to. The board worked very hard to bring nothing but the best for our members and to come up with new ideas and benefits of being a member of this association.

One of the things that I have always heard is, *"What does the association do for me?"*

I have also heard in conversations, *"What do I get out of it for the money I put into it?"*

It's not always evident, I get it. It's usually something that you don't notice or might take a little while for you to see. I will say this: being president of this association and working on this board for a number of years, even before I was president, we work hard and try to bring the best opportunities for continuing education at the lowest possible cost for our members. We bring our members timely news items that impact or affect our backyard. We help solve problems locally and on a state level.

What you don't see is how well the board members work together to lift each other up, to talk about ideas, to put things on the table and to bring them to play. We address all concerns or issues brought to us. Here are some examples: the symposium was an idea that was born from a few members and has now grown to one of the best programs that we hold. We bring in knowledgeable speakers from across the country. We bring in our vendors so that we can network, mix and mingle with them outside of the funeral home and we learn a little bit about each other. We also brought our members a holiday party, the first in many years.

A vertical border of yellow daffodils runs along the left and right sides of the page. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, with some showing their characteristic six petals and central stamens. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting foliage.

Before Covid we kept talking about doing it, every year we said we should do it and this year we finally did. The feedback was that everybody who was there was smiling and celebrating the holiday season with great cheer and friendship. There wasn't a CEU tied to it and we were able to bring members, their staff and their companions together.

As I leave, the board is in great capable hands. We have four new officers but a wealth of experience at all positions. It's been years since there was a change at treasurer. Ken Lysak has been chosen to lead the association as your president and has the full confidence of the board and of course its members. We have a new secretary, Mike Hoddinott, who was a key factor in our new and exciting webpage. Rich D'Andrea, who has a long history on our board and other boards in his community will now be the new "CFO" for NSFDA. Our funds and how they are managed is in good hands with Rich as our Treasurer. Last but not least, our vice president, Melissa Schmidt, who is fully capable and prepared to help Ken lead the association when needed. Her voice and ideas will help shape the association as the board moves on. As I now fill the role held by Rich O'Shea while I was president, I will move to adviser, confidant and immediate past president.

"How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard." -

A.A. Milne (Winnie-the-Pooh)

I'm most excited for the chance to be a past president. We have had many great past presidents and, to now join their club, it truly is an honor. I may not lead the board and the association anymore, but I won't be far and I now have bigger steps to climb on the ladder of NYSFDA. I knew I would one day climb that ladder, I just did not expect it this soon. I am about to serve our state association as treasurer. A huge task and one I am looking forward to. I am excited and nervous, but I know that I can continue to lean on my colleagues and friends when I need to.

I am so grateful for the officers and board members who I have worked so hard with over the last 3 years. You have all made me a better person and president. I thank Holly for directing the board and assisting at all of our events and meetings to make them run so smoothly and efficiently. I thank the members who have supported NSFDA and been at our meetings, our events and giving feedback when asked or not. Thank you to the past presidents who have gone out of their way to offer advice, bend my ear and lend support. Without you, I don't know if I would have been so successful. I want to thank my wife, Melissa and my son Gabe. I missed a few family functions and had to cut a vacation short a few times for NSFDA, but because of your support, I was able to give my all to my colleagues. Lastly, I need to thank my Aunt Dorothy and Uncle Charles. They are the reason I became a funeral director, they encouraged and welcomed me into the family business and because of them I have grown and I owe them my success. They allowed me to explore my passion for my profession, the joy to work with my colleagues and lead this association.

I have found great joy in ending my messages with a quote from some of my favorite eras of rock music. This time, as it's my last, I wanted to start and end with a quote. The first one is a timeless hit by Semisonic. I threw a line from Winnie the Pooh in the middle and I will end with my favorite artist, from my favorite song. One line, but it means everything to me. Whenever I start something new, or something I never thought I would do, I think of this line.

"I will go in this way and find my own way out" - #41 - Dave Matthews Band

Yours truly,

Michael J. Gorton, Jr, CFSP
President, NSFDA

Success at the Annual Symposium!

Members of the NSFDA Board gathered along with 80 funeral directors, 19 vendors and 6 mortuary science students for the *4th Annual Symposium and Networking Event* on May 9th at The Larkfield. The day consisted of a two-credit law class entitled: *"Legal rights and responsibilities of parties involved in a funeral"* and *"Social media at work, best practices to make the tools work for you"* presented by Nancy Schick, Esq. Other seminars included, *"Tackling the Dreaded "C" word in Deathcare"* presented by Poul LeMasters and *"Pressure's On, Let's take some pressure off in the prep room presented"* by Joseph Bernaudo. Many thanks and appreciation to The Whitmore Group for being the Event Sponsor and to Mark Mannix from Cooperative Funeral Fund who is the donor of the NSFDA John M. Lieblang Annual Scholarship Award as well as the donor of the practice tests for the mortuary science students who attend Nassau Community College Mortuary Science Program.



President Plaque Presentation: Michael J. Gorton, Jr., President and Richard J. O'Shea, Region 9



Poul LeMasters—presented: “Tackling the Dreaded “C” Word in Deathcare”



Symposium Attendees



Nancy Schick, Esq.-presented: "Legal Rights and Responsibilities of Parties involved in a Funeral" and "Social Media at Work, Best Practices to make the Tools work for you".



Scholarship Presentation:

Michael J. Gorton Jr. President, Catie Canetti-Cooperative Funeral Fund, Ann Marie St. George-Cooperative Funeral Fund, Susan E. Bua Scholarship Recipient. Prof. Michael Mastellone, Chair of the Mortuary Science Dept. Nassau Community College. Joseph Bernaudo-Scholarship Chairperson

Joseph Bernaudo-presented: *“Pressure’s on. Let’s take some pressure off in the prep room.”*



Dorothy Comodore and Charles Bunton.



Charles Lorey, Michael J. Gorton Jr.,
Dorothy Comodore.



Dinner Guests



Dinner Guests



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A Message from the Executive Director



I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who attended the *NSFDA 4th Annual Symposium and Networking Event*, which was held on May 9, 2023 at The Larkfield in East Northport. It was a great event and very well attended by funeral directors, vendors and students. A special thank you to our Event Sponsor, The Whitmore Group and the Gold Sponsors, Abigal Press Inc., After Goodbye, Batesville Casket Co., Cooperative Funeral Fund Inc., The Dodge Company, Janice Redmond & Associates CPA, J&R Victoriaville & Co., Long Island Cremation Company, Matthews Aurora Funeral Solutions, Muri Sustainability (Small Solutions

LLC), Pinelawn Memorial Park, Pre Plan Funeral Trust, Specialty Vehicles, Taglia, Lysak & Co. Student Sponsor, Jeff Burnett/Messenger & H.S. Eckels, Kevin Shannon and Tukios. Everyone enjoyed the presentations, food and networking with the vendors and the mortuary science students from Nassau Community College.

Congratulations to Susan E. Bua who was the recipient of the NSFDA John M. Lieblang Scholarship Award. This award is presented annually to a mortuary science student and funded by Mark Mannix from Cooperative Funeral Fund. Mark also funds the practice tests to Nassau Community College for the students. Thank you Mark for all your support and generosity to the NSFDA.

Congratulations to Tom Fusco, Funeral Director and Sales Rep. for The Dodge Co. who retired after 39 years of funeral service. The NSFDA presented Tom with a plaque thanking him for his service and support. We wish Tom the best of luck in his retirement and in his new home in Tennessee.

The Toni and Vincent Romeo Memorial Golf Outing is being held on Monday, October 2, 2023, at the Stonebridge Country Club and Golf Links in Smithtown. Registration information will be emailed next month.

The Board of Directors are working on the upcoming in-person continuing education programs as well as webinars. All information on these programs will be listed on the NSFDA website.

Thank you and wishing you all a great summer.

Holly

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It is with deep sadness that the NSFDA announces the passing of:

Eileen C. McBride, Co-owner of the New Hyde Park Funeral Home, Mother of Michael McBride, owner of the New Hyde Park Funeral Home and member of the NSFDA.

James F. Gavigan, long-time member of the NSFDA and retired manager of 53 years from N. F. Walker Inc. Funeral Home.

Leslie Francisco, Licensed Funeral Director of the former Francisco Funeral Home in Ozone Park.

Lois Overton, Licensed Funeral Director at Overton Funeral Home and wife of Wayne Overton.

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