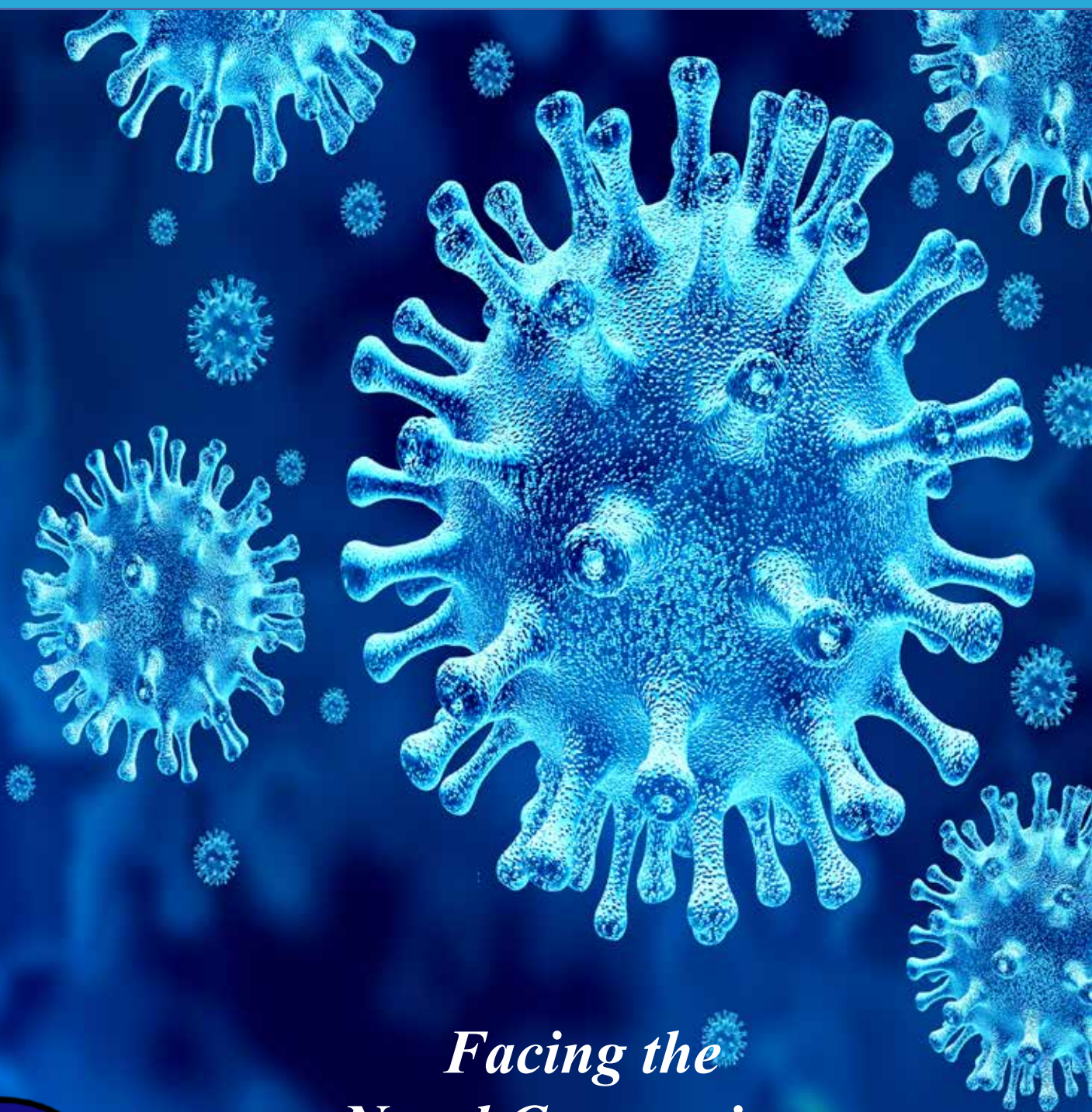


# THE BULLETIN

APR | MAY | JUNE | 2020



*Facing the  
Novel Coronavirus  
(COVID-19) Pandemic*



# Bill Black

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*Join the VFDA at the 132nd Annual VFDA Convention  
in Virginia Beach, September 8-11, 2020.*

## Thinking outside the box during the Coronavirus Pandemic



Greetings from Gloucester County!

I hope that everyone is safe and healthy. With the breakout of the Coronavirus 19, we as professionals have had to learn to adapt and change the way that we help the families who call on us to assist them. This ranges from immediate burials with Celebration of Life services at a later date, webcast funeral services, and even drive through visitations. It is great that we have been able to think outside the box.

I want to thank Lacy Whittaker, Executive Director; Angie Bezik, VFDA Lobbyist and her staff, for keeping our membership informed on what is going on the Commonwealth and the country. Also, I want to thank YOU, the VFDA members that have taken part in different meetings in their district pertaining to COVID-19.



As you know, we have had to push back the date and change the location of the 132nd VFDA Annual Convention in Virginia Beach. The new dates are September 8-11 at the Marriott Virginia Beach Oceanfront, formally the Cavalier. We will still offer our usual excellent education program and even have live entertainment on Wednesday, September 9. I hope that everyone will be able to attend so we can relax and reconnect with friends.

Everyone, stay safe and healthy. If anyone has any questions, please call me or Lacy.

Take care,

Gerald "Jerry" Andrews



## Just Around the Corner: Our New and Improved Convention

This year took a bit of a turn, didn't it? What a whirlwind couple of months this have been, right? As funeral professionals, we are always prepared to serve our communities in times of loss and suffering, but a pandemic brings its own unique challenges. We're inspired by our members sharing what they are doing to combat statewide gatherings bans and how they are supporting their communities and each other during this challenging time. Each and every one of you is incredible and should be applauded for your service!

Speaking of support, we want to know that you are the heart of everything we do here at the VFDA. We are dedicated to helping you keep your staff safe and healthy and your doors open for business. That's why we're keeping you updated with the most relevant and accurate information on the Coronavirus pandemic through our website and social media channels. If you aren't receiving our email updates and would like to, please give us a call at 804-264-0505 or send an email to [info@vfda.net](mailto:info@vfda.net).

As we hopefully, move back to our "normal" day-to-day lives, the association would like to hear from you on your experiences in the association, likes/dislikes and what we can continue to add to your membership to make it beneficial for you and your staff. You should have received an e-mail with a link to complete the survey (information is also available on page 17). We appreciate all who have taken the time to complete the survey so far and hope that if you have not completed the survey that you will soon.

Additionally, you should have received our latest membership brochure in the mail that spotlights some of our member benefits and features our legislative work over the past year. If you know someone who is not yet a member or is new to the profession, please feel free to pass the brochure along and invite them to join us.

Lastly, the 132nd Annual VFDA Convention location and dates have been moved! This year's convention will be held on September 8-11, 2020 at the beautiful and luxurious Marriott Virginia Beach Oceanfront Hotel across from the Cavalier Hotel. Mark Your Calendars! We are in the process of rescheduling and confirming speakers and registration information will be available soon.

We look forward to healthier times ahead when we can connect as an association, but until then, remember we are in your corner, advocating for your industry and championing your success.

Take care of yourself and each other.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lacy Whittaker". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lacy Whittaker

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## Share Your News With the VFDA

Do you have any professional or personal news that you would like to share with your fellow members in the "Member Moments" section of our newsletter? If so, please send it to the association office for publication in the next issue of THE BULLETIN. To be published in the next issue, please send to the VFDA office by July 17, 2020.

We welcome:

- Wedding and birth announcements (of VFDA members only).

- Updates on member's certifications, honors, promotions, or retirements.
- News about significantly completed renovations to a member's business property.
- Address changes, moving updates, etc.

Please note that news should be about members only.

Space is limited. All submissions are restricted to two to three sentences. VFDA reserves the right to edit or publish items based on content and available space.

### Thacker Caskets Awarded #1 in Service

Thacker Caskets is honored to be selected number one in service for 2019. In a nationwide survey conducted by Funeral Service Insider, Thacker was voted best in service. To be recognized for the service Thacker provides is a great privilege, as outstanding customer service has been the cornerstone of the business since the company was founded in 1939.



Danielle Thacker, vice president of sales, said, "We are absolutely thrilled with our No. 1 ranking in service. Since we started being included in the FSI casket survey about eight years ago, we have steadily rose in the service rankings and being the top dog for 2019 is certainly something we are extremely excited about."

As a family-owned and operated business that employs 250 individuals, Thacker credits the entire Thacker team for the honor, "To be No. 1 in service is a great honor as this ranking truly shows the spirit of all our employees from drivers to customer service to salespeople and more."

In addition to number 1 in service, Thacker Caskets was ranked among the top 3 in quality. Thacker takes pride in providing quality caskets that are manufactured domestically, including many of the component parts. Thacker is excited to continue to provide the best customer service and rise to the top for quality as well.

Thacker Caskets is incredibly thankful to their customer base for trusting them with their business needs. The industry ranking only adds to Thacker's continued effort to pursue its vision to "be the most trusted supplier to more families by providing an honest product at an honest price, with honest service."

Thacker Caskets is the funeral industry's leading family-owned funeral supply company. To learn more about Thacker and its commitment to outstanding customer service please call 800.637.8891 or visit [www.thackercaskets.com](http://www.thackercaskets.com).

## Reimagined Visitation Offers Connection for Grieving Families in Lynchburg

The impact of coronavirus reaches far and wide and almost every part of our daily lives has been affected by it. We have changed the way we shop for groceries, collaborate with our colleagues, and spend time with our communities. But under the portico at Heritage Funeral Home in Lynchburg, Virginia, grieving families are getting a chance to honor the memory of their loved one thanks to Heritage's "Drive-Thru Only" visitations.

Owner and funeral director John Saville says the recent bans on gatherings of more than 10 people have put funeral homes in a unique position. His team needed to think outside the box — or outside the building in this case — to continue to meet the needs of their community while also honoring long-held traditions.

During a drive-thru visitation, Saville and his team position the members of their client family six feet apart under the portico. Each person is also presented with a protective face mask to wear. While this is happening, other members of the team are setting up a guest book area just outside the portico where mourners can leave their names and addresses using social distancing practices.



Once they have signed the guest book, those paying their respects may drive under the portico and visit with the family while remaining in their car at a safe distance.

To date, Saville says two families have chosen to receive friends this way and the turnout has been encouraging. In a time when so many things are uncertain, a little innovative thinking can both reassure families and honor tradition all without getting out of the car.

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## 132<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL VFDA CONVENTION | SEPTEMBER 8-11, 2020



### 132nd Annual VFDA Convention NEW DATE and LOCATION!

Due to the COVID-19, we have changed the date and location of the 132nd Annual VFDA Convention. An updated Convention Brochure and Registration was emailed to all members on May 19, 2020. You can view the [Convention Brochure](#) and you can register for the Convention [online](#). We look forward to seeing you at the beach in September!

### National Funeral Directors Association Cremation Certification Program

Join the National Funeral Directors Association as they bring their Cremation Certification Program to Virginia Beach during the 132nd Annual VFDA Convention at the Marriott Virginia Beach Oceanfront on September 8th.

Mike Nicodemus, Vice President, Cremation Services, NFDA, will present information on:

- The 4 Ps To Avoid Cremation Litigation: Polices, Procedures, Performance, Prevention
- Evaluating Your 3rd Party Cremation Provider
- Communication Skills for Connecting with Cremation Families
- Marketing Cremation for Profitability
- Something Went Wrong...You've Been Sued...Now What
- Cremation Liability Issues for Crematories and Funeral Homes Using 3rd Party Crematories and Knowing Whether Your Insurer Stands Behind You.
- Separating Yourself from Rest...How to be The Best Crematory, Operator, and Owner in Your Area.
- Cremation Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow: Change= Opportunity
- 5 Keys to Cremation Success
- Bringing Ritual to Cremation Arranging
- If it Isn't in Writing, It Didn't Happen. The Importance of Having Proper Paperwork
- The 3 E's for Cremation Success: Employees, Expectations, Engagement
- Your Funeral Home has a Website...Is It Any Good What Does it Tell Your Customers About Cremation?

Registration information will be sent out soon!

## **WHAT OUR MEMBERS SAY**

“The biggest advantages [of being a member of the VFDA] are networking opportunities at both the winter and the summer conventions. I participate in our Central Virginia Funeral Directors Association, but it is always nice to meet other directors and vendors from around the state. The CEU credits have also been a big help to me as I pursue my CFSP designation.”

— *Kaylinn Bezenar, CPC, CCSP*  
*Morrisett Funeral and Cremation Service*

”

“Being a member of the VFDA not only keeps me up to date on my training as a funeral professional, but it gives me a network of reliable and experienced colleagues across the state who I can learn from and lead. I consider this association one of the most valuable resources available to our profession.”

— *Daniel Chapman,*  
*Licensed Funeral Director*  
*Johnson Funeral Services, Inc.*

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LAST ONES  
TO LET YOU  
DOWN**

VIRGINIA FUNERAL  
DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION

(804) 264-0505 | [info@vfda.net](mailto:info@vfda.net)  
P.O. Box 395  
Hanover, VA 23069

You've heard that joke before, but finding a trusted network of like-minded funeral professionals you can learn from is no laughing matter.

The Virginia Funeral Directors Association helps you:

- stay updated on best practices and trends to provide excellent customer service;
- engage in meaningful service to your community and the families you assist;
- manage your funeral home's day-to-day operations more efficiently; advocate for your profession in impactful ways at local and state levels.

Plus, our 200 member firms know how to have a good time.

**Are you ready to join us?**

## BUILD YOUR NETWORK

As a member of the VFDA, you have access to continuing education courses, professional development activities and networking opportunities within the profession across the commonwealth.

## MEMBER PERKS

We strive to partner with companies that serve the funeral profession well.

Enjoy benefits from exclusive VFDA member-only discounts and perks, like Brooks Brothers, AmVantage, Federated Insurance and Answering Service for Directors to name a few.

We're well-connected, so you can focus on what matters.

## STAY CONNECTED

**f** [virginiafuneraldirectorsassociation](#)  
**@** [virginiafuneraldirectors](#)

## INFLUENCE POLICY

Our commitment to represent the funeral profession at all levels of government includes regularly participating in public policy processes. We aim to keep our members informed in proceedings that impact our profession from a niche level to things that every business owner in Virginia should know. Our members share their opinions and experiences with us to advocate for the profession and protect the communities we serve.

Our recent legislative work includes:

- Clarifying the process for veteran families to receive a free copy of a death certificate, which now allows funeral directors to obtain the copy on behalf of the family.
- Adding necessary language to a new bill that protects the sale of caskets preneed.
- Assisting with the implementation of the Electronic Death Registration Service (EDRS) and encouraging doctors in our state to sign up without penalty.







**P.O. Box 395 • Hanover, Virginia 23069 •  
Phone: (804) 264-0505 Fax: (804) 264-3260**

March 3, 2020

Dear VFDA Members/District Officers:

The Virginia Funeral Directors Association is calling for nominations for the following Board of Directors positions. To serve as a board member, your funeral home must be a member in good standing with the Virginia Funeral Directors Association. We ask that your district begin discussing this with your members at your next district meeting. All nominations are due to the VFDA office by **May 29, 2020**.

**Available Position by District:**

**Secretary/Treasurer (2-year term)**

**At-Large Directors (2-year term, 2 vacancies available)**

**Central Virginia Funeral Directors Association (3-year term – Board Representative)**

**Northern Virginia Funeral Directors Association (3-year term-Board Representative)**

**Tidewater Funeral Directors Association (3-year term-Board Representative)**

Please submit your name, funeral home, phone number, e-mail address and position you wish to fill to the VFDA office at [info@vfda.net](mailto:info@vfda.net) or fax to (804) 264-3260.

If you have any questions regarding any of the VFDA Board of Directors vacancies, please feel free to contact the VFDA office (804) 264-0505.

Marty White, Nominations Committee Chair

Lacy Whittaker, VFDA Executive Director

# VFDA Responds to Coronavirus Pandemic

When news broke of a possible pandemic in the United States in February, the elected officials of the Virginia Funeral Directors Association (VFDA) knew they needed to act quickly to ensure their member firms were well supported, well informed, and knew where to turn when faced with tough decisions in the weeks and months to come.

“Since the outset of this pandemic, we have worked hard to keep our member firms aware of the latest coronavirus information affecting the funeral service profession, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the communities our members live in and serve every day,” said Lacy Whittaker, executive director of the VFDA.

“Our members are on the frontlines of this devastating pandemic, and it is our responsibility as an association to provide reliable, accurate information so they can continue to do their jobs as safely and effectively as possible.”

Currently, member firms receive daily emails with relevant news updates from Whittaker and her team. Members of the general public may stay up to date on funeral-specific coronavirus news on the VFDA’s website and social media pages.

One of the reasons that information is so important during this time is due to social distancing. With a statewide stay-at-home order and a limit on gatherings of more than 10 people nationally, the funeral industry is having to rethink crucial aspects of its business model, including funeral services, visitations and wakes to name a few.

Funeral service providers are also having to take extra precautions during removals and embalming procedures to ensure their protection from the virus and mitigate community spread. Because of this, the VFDA joined forces with the National Funeral Directors Association, 31 state funeral service associations, and 20 funeral service corporations and suppliers to petition the President of the United States to identify funeral professionals as essential critical infrastructure workers.

This designation ensures workers in this field would have priority access to personal protective equipment (PPE), exemption from quarantine orders, and priority for testing and vaccines when made available.

Additionally, requests were sent to congressional leaders and the United States Department of Health and Human Services. Back here in Virginia, the VFDA is also readying its Disaster Response Team. This team has worked closely with the Medical Reserve Corps to secure necessary credentials giving them the ability to provide deathcare support in times of crisis. The team, which was created in 2007, is prepared to serve fellow funeral professionals at all times.

One way they provide support is through offering administrative relief for funeral homes in natural disaster areas. When affected communities are unable to fully staff their businesses, the

Disaster Relief Team may come in to meet with families or perform removals while the business gets back on its feet. Another way the team supports the industry is to work in mass fatality crisis centers as intermediaries between officials at the scene and families of the deceased. The coronavirus pandemic has created a blend of those two situations.

All over the country, virus hot spots are experiencing mass fatalities with an overworked infrastructure in place to process the deceased and communicate with families. And the funeral industry is experiencing an “all hands on deck” level demand to serve families and create meaningful ways to honor loved ones while the aforementioned gathering bans are in place.

“We’re experiencing an unprecedented time in the funeral industry right now with managing a growing death toll while trying to protect our own businesses and communities from the spread of the disease,” said Duffy Ferguson, chair of the VFDA Disaster Response Team. “We want our colleagues to know the VFDA Disaster Response Team is ready and willing to meet the needs of both the community of Virginia and the funeral professionals who serve them.”

If a funeral home in Virginia is experiencing a staff shortage due to sick employees or if a hot spot pops up locally, the Disaster Response Team will be activated and aid will be provided.

“This is a crucial time for our country and our profession,” said Gerald L. Andrews, president of the VFDA. “At the VFDA, we believe it is our responsibility to care for our communities, protect those we work beside, and demonstrate effective leadership during times of crisis. Together, we can set the standard for how to honor those who perish from this terrible disease and how to support our most critical workers who are fighting on the frontlines.”

For more information and the latest updates on how the coronavirus is impacting Virginia’s funeral industry, visit [www.vfda.net](http://www.vfda.net) or follow the [VFDA Facebook](#). Member firms will also receive email updates as needed.



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 17, 2020

Media Contact: Kelly Manion

Phone: 262-814-1574

Email: [kmanion@funeralservicefoundation.org](mailto:kmanion@funeralservicefoundation.org)

## Funeral Service Foundation Issues Call for COVID-19 Crisis Relief Grant Proposals

**Brookfield, Wis.** - The Funeral Service Foundation has issued a call for grant proposals from funeral service-related businesses and charitable institutions throughout the United States and Canada who are providing elevated/emergency assistance or grief support to communities impacted by COVID-19. Grants will be awarded through the Foundation's COVID-19 Crisis Response Fund.

### Funding Priorities

Designed to be flexible, the fund provides grants for immediate needs within funeral service including emergency response to significant loss of life; grants to organizations providing services and resources to families with unresolved and complicated grief due to loss during this crisis; and grants for other important needs as funeral service continues to serve families during this rapidly evolving crisis. The costs associated with burials, memorialization, cremations, etc. are not eligible for funding.

"The grants are intended to ensure funeral service professionals have access to the supplies, equipment, personnel and resources necessary to safely and compassionately care for the deceased and their grieving families," says Foundation Chair Anthony Guerra. "We've cast a wide net, understanding that the urgent needs will vary from community to community."

### How to Apply

Funeral service-related businesses and charitable organizations may apply [online](https://www.funeralservicefoundation.org/covid19fund/) at <https://www.funeralservicefoundation.org/covid19fund/>. Applicants are required to provide a brief project narrative, a detailed budget, and will be asked to discuss the capacity to deliver on the request and define its success.

The Foundation's Fund Advisory Committee Grant reviews the grant proposals weekly allowing for swift deployment of urgently needed funding and resources.



## Support the COVID-19 Crisis Response Fund

Gifts to the Funeral Service Foundation COVID-19 Crisis Response Fund directly support funeral service and grieving families in this time of loss and uncertainty. Since its launch last month, which began with a \$200,000 allocation from the Funeral Service Foundation, individuals, funeral homes, organizations and businesses across the US and Canada have already answered the call to give. Notable contributions include a \$50,000 lead gift from the National Funeral Directors Association, and a \$100,000 matching gift from Homesteaders Life Company, which allows donors to double their impact.

One-time or monthly gifts at every level can be made [online](#) at <https://www.funeralservicefoundation.org/covid19fund/>. Those interested in supporting may also send checks, made payable to the Funeral Service Foundation to the FSF COVID-19 Crisis Response Fund, 13625 Bishop's Drive, Brookfield, WI 53005, or call 262-814-1549 to make a gift by phone.

## About the Funeral Service Foundation – [FuneralServiceFoundation.org](https://www.funeralservicefoundation.org)



Since 1945, the Funeral Service Foundation has served as the profession's philanthropic voice. As the charitable arm of the National Funeral Directors Association since 1997, the Foundation receives operational support from NFDA and donors across the profession to help advance its mission to support funeral service in building meaningful relationships with the families and the communities it serves.

###

**Header Link:** <https://www.funeralservicefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/News-Release-Header.png>

**Application Link:** <https://www.funeralservicefoundation.org/covid19fund/>

## IN REMEMBRANCE

### BLUE RIDGE FUNERAL DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION

Mark Eric Haupt - January 31, 2020

### CENTRAL FUNERAL DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION

Letitia Nanette Graves - March 3, 2020

### SHENANDOAH VALLEY FUNERAL

#### DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION

Jeb Tanner Rippey Bartenslager - April 11, 2020

### SOUTHSIDE FUNERAL DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION

Betty Gatewood Bryant - November 11, 2019

Fran Mattox Moran - January 10, 2020

Robert Lee Finch - April 9, 2020

### SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA FUNERAL DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION

Bob Addington - April 11, 2020

### TIDEWATER FUNERAL DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION

Virginia "Ginny" Smith Young - November 14, 2019

Dorothy "Sue" Elizabeth Kelly Parr - December 17, 2019

Jake "Forrest" Alan Ulrich - February 23, 2020

Gale Poole Moore - April 7, 2020

Linda DeCantis Graham - April 13, 2020

### VIRGINIA FUNERAL SALES ASSOCIATION

Marie Elizabeth Cancemi - November 29, 2019

John Ryland Garrett - December 8, 2019

Harold Wayne Stutzman - March 30, 2020

### FRIENDS OF VFDA

Manuel Lawrence "Manny" Sklaroff - October 9, 2019

Polly Ann Hayden - November 2, 2019

John David Reed, Sr. - February 20, 2020



### **VFDA and VFSA Membership Dues Reminder!**

Membership fees are due by May 30, 2020. After May 30th, non-renewing members will be removed from the membership roster and email distribution lists.

Don't miss out on the important information and legislative updates we distribute weekly!

# Blue Ridge Funeral Directors Association

#### **President:**

**Mike Rorrer**

McCoy Funeral Home

mccoymfuneralhome@verizon.net

#### **Vice President:**

**Jonathan Stilwell**

John M. Oakey & Son, Inc.

jonathan@johnmoakey.com

#### **Secretary/Treasurer:**

**Jeff Wolfe**

John M. Oakey & Son, Inc.

jeff@johnmoakey.com



Beautiful Buchanan, Va in the Spring. Photo credit <http://www.visitbotetourt.com>.

*Meetings are held on the third Tuesday in January, March, May, July, and September. Installations in July.*

**Virginia Funeral Directors Association  
Member Satisfaction Survey**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Firm/Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How long have you been a member of our organization?
2. Are you involved in any committees/sub-committees/task forces?
  - a. If so, which one(s)?
3. Have you ever volunteered with our organization?
  - a. If not, what might encourage you to volunteer?
4. Do you read our [weekly/monthly] newsletter/E-mails?
5. What type of content would you like to see in our [weekly/monthly] newsletter?
6. Have you attended any of our events (either in person or online) in the past year?
  - a. If so, which ones?
  - b. If no, why do you not attend?
7. Of our current events, which ones are your favorite?
8. What types of events would you like to see us host in the future?
9. What industry-related topics are of most interest to you right now?
10. Do you currently follow our organization on social media?  
If yes, please specify the platform(s):
  - a. Facebook
  - b. Instagram
11. What would you like to see us post about on social media? (Events, volunteer opportunities, member spotlights, industry-related news, etc.)
12. How do you prefer to receive news/announcements from our organization? (Via email, social media, newsletters, etc.)?
13. What do you currently like most about our organization?
14. What do you currently like least about our organization?
15. How likely are you to renew your membership in the upcoming year?





Delegate Terry Kilgore  
[HB479](#)  
**2020 LEGISLATOR  
 OF THE YEAR**



Senator John Edwards  
[SB1300](#)  
**PAST LEGISLATOR OF THE  
 YEAR**



Senator Jeremy McPike  
[SB1044](#)  
 Promulgate regulations  
 for Funeral Director &  
 Embalmers



Delegate Chris Hurst  
[HB641](#)  
 Preneed sale of caskets

The 2020 General Assembly session adjourned Sine Die on March 12, 2020 – a little later than the estimated March 7 date. Reconvened, or Veto Session, will happen on April 22, 2020.

During the 2019 General Assembly, the VFDA proposed next-of-kin legislation, and Delegate Mark Sickles and Senator Creigh Deeds agreed to patron. After discovering there was still work to be done on this issue, we asked our patrons to strike their bills. VFDA Legislative Committee members and our legislative advocates worked during the interim with the Virginia Bar Association to develop better language. The VFDA considered the many variables at play for the 2020 legislative session and decided to see how the shift in majority and influx of so many new people worked out before moving to bring controversial legislation forward. The decision was a good one in light of how the session progressed. Both bodies grappled to become organized and adopt their rules; many major initiatives were brought forth, including on the labor, gun and health fronts; all members were feeling their way in a new majority; newer members serving in new positions within committee structures; and freshmen members learning process and procedure. Additionally, there have been many staff changes and shortages of personnel, most impactful in the Division of Legislative Services. There will still be a lot of work to do on the issue, and members across the state will be needed to assist throughout the off session to prepare for 2021.

[Delegate Terry Kilgore](#) (R) – Scott County patroned a bill for the VFDA, [HB479](#), which would allow, “*Upon request of the surviving spouse of a veteran, the funeral director or funeral service licensee providing funeral services for the veteran may obtain one certified copy of the death certificate for service-connected benefits.*” The bill passed each subcommittee, committee and floor unanimously. Delegate Kilgore championed our request beautifully and HB479 was signed by the President of the Senate and the Speaker on February 27, 2020 and was enrolled and communicated to the Governor. The Governor must act on the legislation by April 6, 2020.

Governor Northam signed [HB641](#) patroned by [Delegate Chris Hurst](#) (D) – Giles County, on March 3, 2020 and will become effective on July 1, 2020. Delegate Hurst’s bill allows for preneed sale of caskets by third parties in Virginia, one of the last states in the country to address the issue. As Introduced, HB641 would have allowed any third-party to sell preneed caskets. Third-party casket sales were addressed last year, and legislation Introduced by Senator Bryce Reeves and Delegate Bobby Orrock ultimately clarified and reconfirmed that *at need* sale of caskets by third-party providers was legal. Delegate Hurst had a constituent who wanted to allow *preneed* third-party sale of caskets. After conversation with our legislative advocate, Delegate Hurst allowed his bill to be amended to require that any third-party casket sales/sellers must meet the same requirements a preneed funeral contract per the FTC guidelines **and** the Code of VA [§54.1-2820](#).

[Senator Jeremy McPike](#) (D) - Manassas filed [SB1044](#), which required promulgation of regulations for the old funeral directors license and embalmers license, which were replaced, yet not repealed, in the 1970’s.

*Legislative Update continued on page 19.*

He did not prefile the legislation but Introduced it on January 17, 2020 along with 154 bills Introduced by other legislators.

After weighing several factors, the VFDA took a neutral position on the legislation. One of the many considerations was the growing divide in membership between those who support a multi-license system and those who support a Funeral Service Licensee license only system. Also, Senator McPike told our legislative advocate that he patroned this for a constituent, who is an Imam. He further explained that his district has a growing Muslim community, and their religious customs do not include embalming and burial must be within 24 hours. Members received a full explanation from leadership via email. The bill passed the Senate unanimously and made it to the Floor of the House unanimously, where it met some opposition. It ultimately passed the Floor of the House 76 – 18, with six Members not voting. The regulatory process of 280 days will begin when the Governor signs the bill. The Governor has until April 11, 2020 to act on the bill.

Your VFDA will work closely with the Board of Funeral Directors and Embalmers during the regulatory process to address the concerns and present the recommendations of its members as the Board works to develop the rules and regulations for the Funeral Director license and Embalmer license. Your concerns and recommendations should be shared with Lacy Whittaker so that we may present them in an appropriate and concise way. We will keep you posted on the progress as the Board works its way through the process. Of course, you are also welcomed to participate in the process in person, via email or via letter.

During the Winter Conference Business Meeting, Duffy Ferguson reported that he attended a conference on infectious disease and there seemed to be a lack of understanding of what funeral directors do and how they do it when there is a pandemic situation of infectious disease. He wants to engage more closely with entities such as Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association (VHHA) and other entities to educate them on how funeral directors may be strong participants in the planning and execution of activities associated with protection from and prevention of the spread of infectious disease. Related to Mr. Ferguson's statements is [HB661](#) patroned by [Delegate Rob Bell](#) (R) – Albemarle. The bill directs the Secretaries of Health and Human Resources and Public Safety to establish a work group to develop a plan to improve the Commonwealth's response to exposure-prone incidents involving law-enforcement officers, firefighters, and emergency medical services providers. The law defines entities to be appointed to the work group, and while funeral directors are not expressly included, language contained in the bill could allow a funeral director for inclusion: "...*(iv) such other stakeholders as the Secretaries shall deem appropriate.*" With interest by a VFDA member, and commitment to participate fully, we can ask to have a funeral director included in the work group.

There are also many meetings that will be held throughout the year that VFDA will not only need to participate in but will need to stand out as a leader. This will require VFDA membership participation as well. While Executive Director, Lacy Whittaker and our advocates at Principle Advantage work hard for VFDA, our members are also important to the process of advocating for our needs. Involvement in VFDA meetings, legislative meetings, regulatory process meetings, sharing of information as requested and promotion of VFDA generally is incumbent upon all members when they can support the organization and mission. 2020 will be a big year for VFDA!

- **Board of Funeral Directors and Embalmers** – Regularly scheduled meetings and regulatory process as prescribed by SB1044
- **Office of Vital Records** – will begin EDRS Workgroup meetings again beginning in April 2020

- **Secretaries of Health and Human Resources & Public Safety** - Workgroup to develop a plan to improve the Commonwealth's response to exposure-prone incidents – we will work to include VFDA in the Workgroup
- **VFDA** – Legislative and other committees; conferences

## LEGISLATIVE CHAIR MESSAGE

Good Afternoon Members. As I promised this is my next installment of several letters to membership regarding the 2020 legislative session. This one focuses on Senate Bill 1044; Funeral Directors and embalmers; Board to promulgate regulations for licensure, which was introduced by Senator Jeremy McPike.

I recognize that this single issue polarized our association over the last 90 days. I stand by the original decision based on the circumstances at that time and as explained to membership in a letter. Despite the differences internally, I was very proud that members acted on their positions with the Members of the General Assembly. Because we took a neutral position as an association, I encouraged our members to reach out to their legislators and many of you did. Guess what? It was working. The bill began to lose traction in the waning days before the final vote. A bill that made it unanimously from the Senate to the floor of the House of Delegates ended up with a final vote of 76-18.

There are two points to make here. First is that the VFDA as an organization is a recognized entity in Richmond. The work we do, the relationships we build all bring dividends to our membership. We officially took a neutral position, the VMA opposed, and the IFHV supported with caveats (as you saw in the clip from the Senate committee hearing).

Second, each year our leadership and lobbying team stresses to our members that although we are the constant and the “boots on the ground” for the VFDA, it is our members who help drive our position. In a few short days of calls to legislators from our members the tide began to turn on this bill. This is one of the “Three C’s.” **Constituents!**

Sadly, we now are in a vastly different situation globally, which has highlighted many of the arguments members on the side of “no change to licensure” have. Because of this current situation, VFDA has changed its position to opposed. In our efforts, Angie and our lobbying team have reached out to the Governor and his Administration, and we have sent a letter stating our new position and succinctly articulated why we have changed our position. In that letter we asked, in order of preference, for the Governor to veto the legislation or at least delay implementation.

Some of you may already be aware that on April 9, 2020, Governor Ralph Northam signed the bill into law with no amendments. This means that the process of the Board of Funeral Directors and Embalmers to promulgate regulations to allow the format for licensure to include separate licenses for Funeral Director and Embalmer is underway.

So, in the wake of this change, what are our next steps? Immediately Angie began working with Corie Tillman Wolf, Executive Director of the State Board of Funeral Directors and Embalmers, to help ensure our seat at the table. In her outreach to Ms. Wolf, Angie confirmed that as signed, SB1044 requires regulations to be in effect 280 days from enactment, (which is the day the Governor signed the bill), or by Jan 14, 2021. Ms. Wolf indicated that they have not determined the process to be followed

but will welcome input from the VFDA. Ms. Wolf also stated that it is likely the Board will need to adopt the emergency regulations at its meeting scheduled for October.

A major challenge right now is the inability of the Board to conduct a meeting. The meeting scheduled for April has been postponed, (as was January meeting). We will serve as the voice of the VFDA membership before the Board, of course. What we will need most from VFDA members in the coming weeks is your quick response for input on what you want to see adopted as the regulations for these reconstituted licenses are developed. We will be reaching out to you soon with a request for your feedback, but please submit ideas to VFDA at any time.

As an example, one suggestion mentioned at a meeting in March is that anyone who is a Funeral Director only must work under the direct supervision of a Funeral Service Licensee. Not with the reporting or documentation required for an intern, but still working under supervision. This is not a new concept to the state and there are many cases of this structure within the medical field.

I also recommend that in order to simplify the transition, the educational requirements not change. There is no reason to change the education requirements in Virginia. Students who choose to attend schools outside of Virginia will still be required to perform the requirements of instruction for each out-of-state funeral school to graduate. The change must be in the intern program, not the educational components of the profession. The State Board has the authority to adjust the parameters of the internship program, and this would not require a systemic overhaul of the curriculum. Again, we ask for ideas to be submitted to the VFDA. We will catalogue your suggestions for your review.

The VFDA has weathered many storms in 132 years. There have been internal struggles and external pressures. Still we stand strong. We must continue to support our mission and our profession. We are colleagues. We are friends. We are professionals. It is time for us to come together to find the best path forward in this process and make it as beneficial to VFDA members as possible.

I look forward to working with you all and hope you will participate with the VFDA in development of the guidelines we hope will be implemented to protect the public and our profession.

Sincerely,

Jay McIntyre



# VFDA Holds Last Traveling Caravans for the Season Virtually

Due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic, the VFDA held its last two traveling continuing education caravans virtually. This allowed us to meet the needs of our members and ensured that they have their required continuing education credits on time.

A huge thank you to our presenters who took the time to be with us on all the traveling caravans this year! Thank you!

James Ruggerio, Lakeland Preneed Planning, LLC

Angie Bezik, VFDA Lobbyist

Theodore A. Hoch, Ed. D., B.C.B.A.-D., L.B.A., Northern Virginia Applied Behavior Analysis, LLC, Virginia Autism Project

Rebecca S. Moore, PhD, Associate Professor, Director of Research Training, Institute for the Psychological Sciences

Mary Andres Russell, Professional Development Director - East, Matthews Aurora Funeral Solutions



## Virtual Continuing Education Series

The Virginia Funeral Directors Association (VFDA) offered its members FREE virtual continuing education programs as a thank you for their commitment to the VFDA and the funeral service profession. We understand that in these trying times, it is difficult to stay on top of continuing education requirements and we hope this series helped our members and staff receive the required courses they need.

On Tuesday, April 28th, Anne Moss Rogers presented on “Speaking of Suicide: How to Talk to Families Who’ve Suffered a Loss by Suicide.” The workshop offered guidance on supporting families who have suffered a loss by suicide and included downloads and handouts for staff and families. Attendees learned, what to say or not say, how to support families who’ve suffered loss by suicide, how to spot the bereaved who are at risk of suicide and how to make sure staff gets support.

Anne Moss Rogers is a TEDx speaker, emotionally naked storyteller, author of the book, *Diary of a Broken Mind*, a registered suicide prevention trainer, and grief support group facilitator. Despite her family’s best efforts, Anne Moss’s 20-year-old son Charles died by suicide on June 5, 2015 after many years of struggle with anxiety, depression and ultimately addiction. She chronicled her family’s tragedy in a newspaper article that went viral and started a blog called *EmotionallyNaked.com* that has been read over a million times. Anne Moss Rogers sold her digital marketing company in 2017 to become a national public speaker on suicide and grief. Her story has been featured in the *New York Times* and she was the first suicide loss survivor ever invited to speak at the National Institute of Mental Health. She was recently interviewed on *Undertaking: The Podcast* with Ryan Ballard and Brian Waters.

Visit Anne Moss Rogers at: [Professional Speaking Site](#); [Blog](#); [Free eBook Download](#)

On Wednesday, May 6th, the VFDA along with James Ruggerio with Lakeland Preneed Planning, LLC presented “Preneed and the Global Pandemic 2020.” James gave an overview of what we learned, tools available and best practices using them to provide advance planning services to families in our service area during and after the stay at home order was declared.

James earned his degree in Funeral Service from John Tyler Community College and joined an independent funeral home in Virginia as a Licensed Funeral Director in 1998. His motivation to serve families honestly and ethically, while keeping their financial well-being in mind led him to pursue a specialization in advance planning in 2002 when the funeral home joined the Keystone Group. Following several years as a counselor, James was promoted to Area Sales Manager and then Regional Sales Director. When the Keystone Group joined Service Corporation International, James spent 18 months as a Sales Manager in the Virginia and Pennsylvania Main Street Market, then in 2012 joined Forethought Life Insurance Co. as Director of Business Development focusing on VA, NC, SC, TN, FL, GA & AL. In August of 2016 and following 4 years with Forethought (GAFG), James launched Lakeland Preneed Planning LLC, an Independent Marketing Organization and marketing partner with Homesteaders Life Co. offering preneed services designed to support the funeral homes preneed programs.

James Ruggerio  
Lakeland Preneed Planning LLC  
540-470-0611, [jruggiero@lakelandpreneedplanning.com](mailto:jruggiero@lakelandpreneedplanning.com)



# Central Virginia Funeral Directors Association

**President:**

**Stephanie Bell**

Woody Funeral Home  
stephanie.bell@dignitymemorial.com

**Vice President:**

**Kaylinn Bezenar**

Morrissett Funeral & Cremation Service  
kaylinn@morrissett.com

**Secretary/Treasurer:**

**Margaret Edie**

Morrissett Funeral & Cremation Service  
margaret@morrissett.com



Main Street in Richmond, Va in the spring.

Meetings are held on the second Tuesday in January, March, May, July, September, and November. Installations in November.

# Northern Virginia Funeral Directors Association



**President:**

**Jae Turner**

Cunningham-Turch  
jeromialmorgan@gmail.com



**Vice President:**

**Benjamin Hinkle**

National Funeral Home  
benjamin.hinkle@dignitymemorial.com

**Photo  
Coming  
Soon!**

**Secretary-Treasurer:**

**Tyra Baker Thompson**

Chinn and Baker Funeral Home  
tyrabt@yahoo.com

Meetings are held on the first Wednesday in March, June, September, and December. Installations in June.

2019 Funeral Director of the Year Application continued on page 19.

# Shenandoah Valley Funeral Directors Association

**President:**

**S. Jonathan Hines**

Coffman Funeral Home and Crematory  
sjhines.coffmanfuneralhome@gmail.com

**Vice President:**

**Neal Wong**

Johnson Funeral Service  
Nwong@johnsonfs.com

**Secretary:**

**Jay McIntyre**

McMullen Funeral Home  
mcmullenfh@comcast.net

**Treasurer:**

**Daniel Chapman**

Johnson Funeral Service  
dchapmanp@gmail.com



*Main Street in Appomattox, Va at dusk. Photo credit Mike Doss.*

*Meetings are held on the third Thursday in January, March, May, September, and November. Installations in May.*

# Southside Funeral Directors Association

**President:**

**Paul Spiggle**

Robinson Funeral Home, Appomattox  
spigglefam@aol.com

**Vice President:**

**Butch Gatewood**

Norris Funeral Services  
butch.1947@hotmail.com

**Secretary/Treasurer:**

**Les Powell, III**

Powell Funeral Home, South Boston  
lespowell111@gmail.com



*War Memorial in Halifax, VA. Photo credit Steve Rust.*

*Meetings are quarterly and determined by district. Installations in May.*

# Southwest Funeral Directors Association

**President:**

**Tyler Bailey**

Frost Funeral Home

tylersbaileyfh@gmail.com

**Vice President:**

**John Britton**

Mullins-Sturgill Funeral Home

monumentsservices@yahoo.com

**Secretary/Treasurer:**

**P. Martin Hagy**

Hagy & Fawbush Funeral Home Inc.

info@hagyfawbush.com



*Powell Valley as viewed from Benge's Gap in Norton, Va. Photo credit J654567.*

*Meetings are held on the third Thursday in March, June, September, and December. Installations in June.*

# Tidewater Funeral Directors Association

**President: Ron Vance**

Holloman-Brown

ron.vance.fsl@gmail.com

**1st Vice President: Lynda Harris**

Kellum/Smith & Williams Funeral Homes

lynda.harris@dignitymemorial.com

**2nd Vice President: Eric Wray**

E Vaughn Wray

evaughnwray@gmail.com

**Secretary: Jamie Karpa**

R. Hayden Smith Funeral Home

jamiekarpa@gmail.com

**Treasurer: Bryan Graves**

H.D. Oliver

hdofh@aol.com



*Freemason Abbey in Norfolk, Va. Photo credit www.norfolk.gov.*

**1st Year Director: Stephanie Smith**

sgs.rhsfh@gmail.com

**2nd Year Director: Reneé Battle**

TE Cooke Overton

tecofh@gmail.com

*Meetings are held on the third Monday of the month except in June, July, August, and November. Installations in April.*

## Join Us at the 132nd Annual Virginia Funeral Directors Association in Virginia Beach

Dear Virginia Funeral Sales Association Members:

The Virginia Funeral Sales Association (VFSA) is invited to this year's 132nd Annual VFDA Convention, being held at the new luxurious Marriott Virginia Beach Oceanfront Hotel on September 8-11, 2020. Although we will not have an exhibits hall, this year's convention will be tailored to the suppliers and attendees with numerous face-to-face networking opportunities. I encourage you to take advantage of all the events the VFDA has to offer at this year's convention, starting with the VFSA golf outing or Oysters Wine and Brew Tour. This is a great opportunity for you to have 30 hours of face time with current and potential customers at this convention. Join the VFSA in this year's hospitality suite! Lacy Whittaker with the VFDA office, will be happy to help set-up "pop-up" shops in your suites, make reservations at local restaurants and create dynamic experiences for you and your clients.

Jerry Andrews is working hard to put on a memorable convention, with numerous networking opportunities, dynamic continuing education and great door prizes. Make sure you support the VFDA convention through sponsorship opportunities being offered and get your name in front of this year's attendees.

Join us at the beach and support the VFDA/VFSA and enjoy time with friends. I invite you to join the VFSA before the 132nd Annual Convention, so you can take advantage of this discount registration fees and sponsorship opportunities. I look forward to seeing each of you at this year's 132nd Annual Convention in Virginia Beach and thank you for supporting this event!

Sincerely,

Todd Dean  
VFSA President

## Virginia Funeral Supply Association

**President:**

**Todd Dean**

Richards-Wilbert, Inc.

todd@richardswilbert.com

**1st Vice President:**

**RD Monson**

Homesteaders Life Company

rmonson@tmfh.com

**Secretary/Treasurer:**

**Sherry Noble**

Messenger

sherrynoble@me.com



*Meetings and installations held in June during VFDA Annual Convention.*





**VIRGINIA  
FUNERAL DIRECTORS  
ASSOCIATION**

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### **VFDA Calendar of Events\***

*\*subject to change*

June 18, 2020	VFDA Board of Directors Meeting	4:00 pm - Zoom Conference Meeting
July 1, 2020	Virginia Funeral Sales Association Scholarship Application Deadline	
July 27, 2020	Virginia Funeral Sales Association Membership Meeting	4:00 pm - Zoom Conference Meeting
August 2-5, 2020	NFDA Leadership Conference	Charleston, SC
August 14, 2020	132nd VFDA Annual Convention Registration Deadline	
August 14, 2020	132nd VFDA Annual Convention Awards Deadline	
September 8, 2020	NFDA Cremation Certification Program	Marriott Virginia Beach Oceanfront - Virginia Beach, VA
September 8-11, 2020	132nd Annual VFDA Convention	Marriott Virginia Beach Oceanfront - Virginia Beach, VA
September 24, 2020	District Officers Meeting	4:00 pm - Zoom Conference Meeting
October 18-21, 2020	NFDA International Convention & Expo	New Orleans, LA
January 21, 2021	District Officers Meeting	4:00 pm - Zoom Conference Meeting
May 13, 2021	District Officers Meeting	4:00 pm - Zoom Conference Meeting
June 13-16, 2021	133rd Annual VFDA Convention	Marriott Virginia Beach Oceanfront - Virginia Beach, VA
June 12-15, 2022	134th Annual VFDA Convention	Marriott Virginia Beach Oceanfront - Virginia Beach, VA
June 11-14, 2023	135th Annual VFDA Convention	Marriott Virginia Beach Oceanfront - Virginia Beach, VA