



OPO Update:

In August, the HHS initiated the decertification of Network for Hope (formerly Kentucky Organ Donor Affiliates), the Organ Procurement Organization serving Kentucky and portions of Ohio, West Virginia, and Indiana. House Energy & Commerce Committee Chairman Brett Guthrie and Oversight & Investigations Subcommittee Chairman John Joyce described the action as the culmination of more than two years of congressional oversight focused on patient safety, accountability, and public trust within the nation's organ procurement and transplantation system.

A March 2025 investigation by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) reviewed 351 donation cases and found that nearly 30 percent contained concerning features, including deficiencies in patient and family interactions, medical assessments, recognition of neurological function, team communications, and medical documentation. Concerns initially raised during a September 2024 congressional hearing were later substantiated through HRSA's review.

The decertification of Network for Hope signals continued congressional and federal scrutiny of donation-related systems



and reflects a broader policy trend toward strengthening oversight, transparency, and patient protections. The action reinforces many of the same concerns that have led NFDA to support federal reforms such as the Consensual Donation and Research Integrity Act, which seeks to establish clear standards and accountability measures for the body donation community.

You can read the full article here: [HHS Decertifies KY Organ Procurement Organization to Protect Patients, Restore Trust](#)

STAY DILIGENT! Watch out for Scams! WVFDCA does not send eVites at this time.

SCAM – Fake eVites

A highly active phishing scam targeting users of digital invitation platforms like Paperless Post, Evite, and Punchbowl is currently sweeping across the country. Scammers hijack real email accounts to send deceptive, official-looking "You're Invited" messages to the victim's contacts.

These fraudulent messages are highly convincing because they appear to come from friends, family, or colleagues you already know and trust.

NFDA Leadership – Louisville, KY

During the first week of August, your Executive Director attended the NFDA Leadership Conference in Louisville, Kentucky and ran into member Jon Wright, Wright Funeral Home, Philippi, WV. The event brought together funeral service professionals from across the country to share leadership strategies, industry insights, and best practices. Through educational sessions and networking opportunities, attendees gained valuable perspectives on

strengthening leadership skills and helping shape the future of funeral service.



Thank you to the ad hoc Insurance Information Committee for all your work! Jared Jenkins delivered the final report at the September Board Meeting citing that census information had been recorded and movement forward will require ERISA documentation from the government. Time frame is unknown (as government has cited 12-18 months for completion). In the meantime, the Thompson Group is still available to all members seeking Health Insurance (medical, dental, and vision). We will continue seeking cost effective measures for insurance needs.

Members Only Section on website

Beginning in January, we are excited to bring the Members Only section on the website. A few items you will be able to access is a discount portal for deep discounts on everyday name brand items (Nike shoes, groceries, restaurants, gas, pet expenses, etc.) and on items like cell phone plans, vacations, and more. This will be available in January!

NFDA Arrangement Skills Masterclass

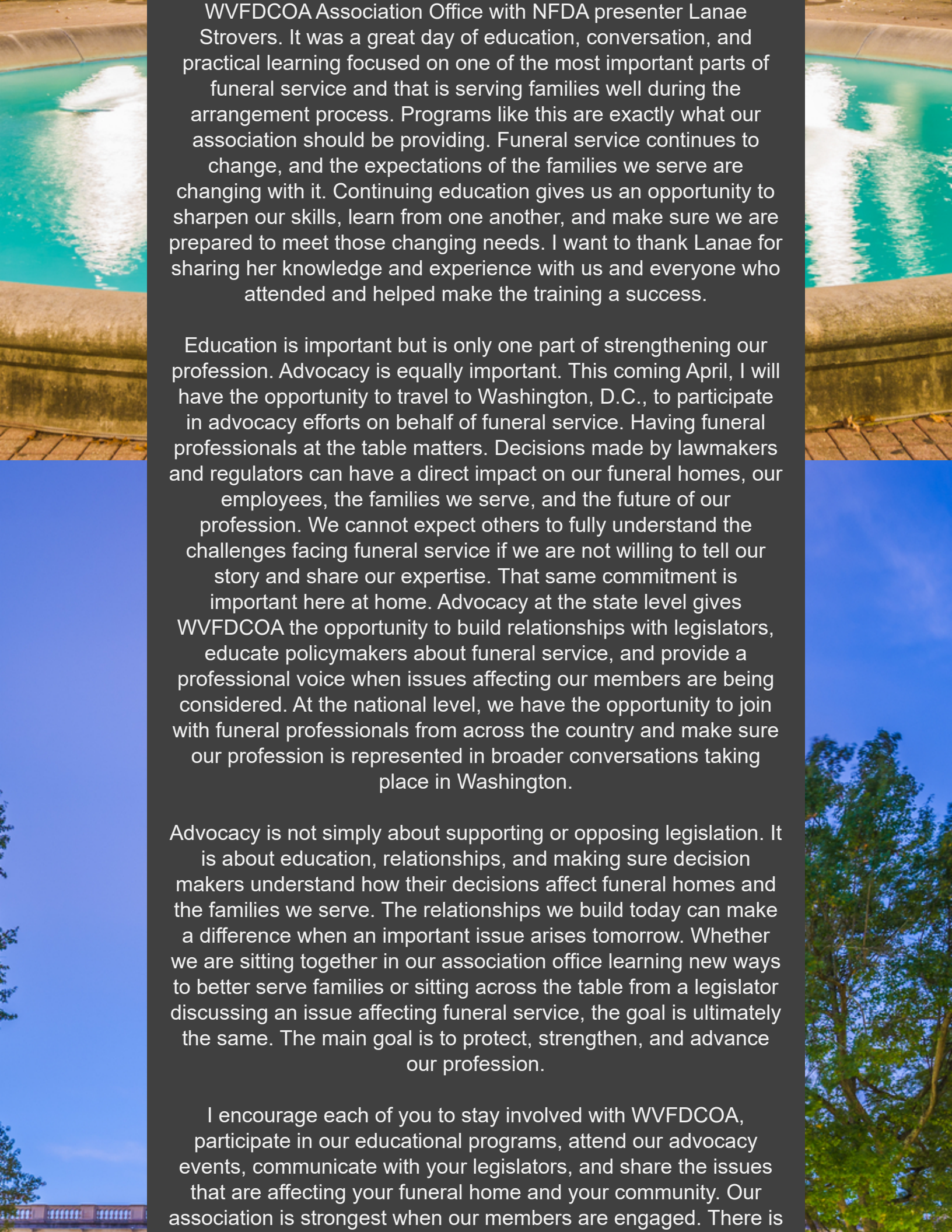
The WVFDCOA hosted the NFDA Arrangement Skills Masterclass at our office in September! The participants spent a full day interacting with fellow funeral professionals discussing current trends, challenges, and solutions. They engaged in facilitated education and problem solving that will allow them to better connect with families they serve, help them discover their needs and values, and gained tools to lead and support them through memorialization planning. Lanae Strovers, NFDA Trainer, provided the training on site.





Message from the President

It is easy for all of us to get busy, especially this time of year, but one of the greatest strengths of our association is the opportunity to come together. We come together not only to learn, but to strengthen the profession we all care so deeply about. Recently, we had the pleasure of hosting an Arranger Training at the



WVFDCOA Association Office with NFDA presenter Lanae Strovers. It was a great day of education, conversation, and practical learning focused on one of the most important parts of funeral service and that is serving families well during the arrangement process. Programs like this are exactly what our association should be providing. Funeral service continues to change, and the expectations of the families we serve are changing with it. Continuing education gives us an opportunity to sharpen our skills, learn from one another, and make sure we are prepared to meet those changing needs. I want to thank Lanae for sharing her knowledge and experience with us and everyone who attended and helped make the training a success.

Education is important but is only one part of strengthening our profession. Advocacy is equally important. This coming April, I will have the opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C., to participate in advocacy efforts on behalf of funeral service. Having funeral professionals at the table matters. Decisions made by lawmakers and regulators can have a direct impact on our funeral homes, our employees, the families we serve, and the future of our profession. We cannot expect others to fully understand the challenges facing funeral service if we are not willing to tell our story and share our expertise. That same commitment is important here at home. Advocacy at the state level gives WVFDCOA the opportunity to build relationships with legislators, educate policymakers about funeral service, and provide a professional voice when issues affecting our members are being considered. At the national level, we have the opportunity to join with funeral professionals from across the country and make sure our profession is represented in broader conversations taking place in Washington.

Advocacy is not simply about supporting or opposing legislation. It is about education, relationships, and making sure decision makers understand how their decisions affect funeral homes and the families we serve. The relationships we build today can make a difference when an important issue arises tomorrow. Whether we are sitting together in our association office learning new ways to better serve families or sitting across the table from a legislator discussing an issue affecting funeral service, the goal is ultimately the same. The main goal is to protect, strengthen, and advance our profession.

I encourage each of you to stay involved with WVFDCOA, participate in our educational programs, attend our advocacy events, communicate with your legislators, and share the issues that are affecting your funeral home and your community. Our association is strongest when our members are engaged. There is

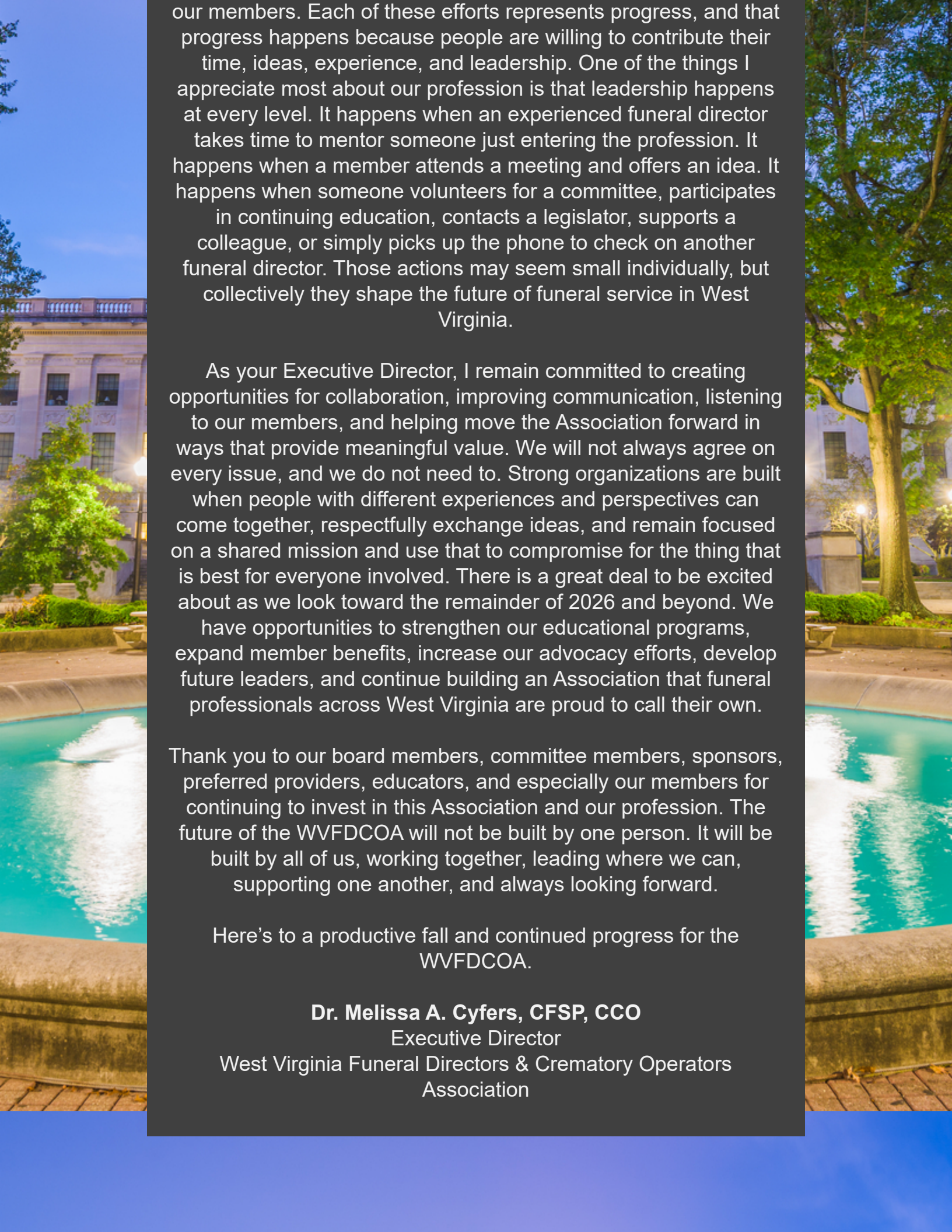
tremendous value in what we do every day for West Virginia families. By continuing to learn, advocate, and work together, we can make sure funeral service has a strong voice and an even stronger future.



Message from the Executive Director

As we move into the fall season, I have been reflecting on what makes an association strong. Oh, and stopping for my morning Pumpkin Spice anything! Yes, I am that person. But, while drinking my pumpkin spice and reflecting, programs, events, education, and advocacy are certainly important, but at the heart of a successful association are its people. The willingness of those people to work together toward a common purpose is really what makes an association what it is. Leadership is not simply about holding a title or having a seat at the table. It is about being willing to listen, contribute, communicate, and sometimes have difficult conversations while never losing sight of why we are here. For the WVFDCOA, that purpose is clear, and that is to support and strengthen funeral service professionals throughout West Virginia and to help protect the future of our profession.

There are many positive things happening within our Association. We continue to expand educational opportunities, strengthen member benefits, explore new partnerships, advocate for issues that affect funeral service, and look for new ways to bring value to



our members. Each of these efforts represents progress, and that progress happens because people are willing to contribute their time, ideas, experience, and leadership. One of the things I appreciate most about our profession is that leadership happens at every level. It happens when an experienced funeral director takes time to mentor someone just entering the profession. It happens when a member attends a meeting and offers an idea. It happens when someone volunteers for a committee, participates in continuing education, contacts a legislator, supports a colleague, or simply picks up the phone to check on another funeral director. Those actions may seem small individually, but collectively they shape the future of funeral service in West Virginia.

As your Executive Director, I remain committed to creating opportunities for collaboration, improving communication, listening to our members, and helping move the Association forward in ways that provide meaningful value. We will not always agree on every issue, and we do not need to. Strong organizations are built when people with different experiences and perspectives can come together, respectfully exchange ideas, and remain focused on a shared mission and use that to compromise for the thing that is best for everyone involved. There is a great deal to be excited about as we look toward the remainder of 2026 and beyond. We have opportunities to strengthen our educational programs, expand member benefits, increase our advocacy efforts, develop future leaders, and continue building an Association that funeral professionals across West Virginia are proud to call their own.

Thank you to our board members, committee members, sponsors, preferred providers, educators, and especially our members for continuing to invest in this Association and our profession. The future of the WVFDCOA will not be built by one person. It will be built by all of us, working together, leading where we can, supporting one another, and always looking forward.

Here's to a productive fall and continued progress for the WVFDCOA.

Dr. Melissa A. Cyfers, CFSP, CCO

Executive Director

West Virginia Funeral Directors & Crematory Operators
Association



UPCOMING MEETINGS & IMPORTANT DATES

2026

December 2nd, NOON, Association Office

2027

Feb 8th – NOON, Four Points Sheraton

Feb 8th – 5 pm – Legislative Reception, Four Points Sheraton, Charleston, WV

Feb 9th – All day, Mid Winter Legislative Summit, Four Points Sheraton, Charleston, WV

June 2-4, Annual Convention, Stonewall Resort

Melissa's Monthly Blog is Now Active!

View it [HERE](#) on the Website!



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Our mailing address is:

400 Allen Drive, Suite 20 Charleston, WV 25302

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West Virginia Funeral Directors Association · 400 Allen Drive, Suite 20 · Charleston, WV 25302 · USA

