

125th Annual Convention Speakers

Keynote Speaker Highlight:



Ryan Thogmartin, is founder and CEO of two innovative companies. DISRUPT Media, LLC and Connecting Directors, LLC. DISRUPT Media specializes in helping global organizations, small businesses, and Celebrity create strategic approaches to social media and social networking.

ConnectingDirectors.com is the premier progressive online publication for funeral professionals with a reader base of over 15,000 of the most elite and forward-thinking professionals in the profession. With Connect Directors LLC Ryan has created a global community through an online platform allowing funeral professionals to Stay Current. Stay Informed. Stay Elite.

Ryan has been practicing online marketing and digital media for over a decade. He has traveled the US and abroad as a featured social media presenter. Ryan has given keynote presentations in the states of: North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Pennsylvania, Arkansas, Ohio, Illinois, Montana and the Island of Bermuda.

Cutting Through the Hype: Social Media is Worthless...

You're constantly hearing the hype about social media and who is using it. Let's cut through the hype and look at the social media landscape in the funeral profession. Are your customers' really using social media and do they want to talk about death? We will answer these questions as well as explain why social media is completely worthless without the right foundation and strategy. Attendees will get access to the presentation slide deck, intro into getting started with social media and our Goals worksheet that will walk you through the process of setting social media goals, which is essential to having success with social media.

- Website – many families in need of funeral service will conduct a Google search in order to find a funeral provider. Having a website makes it easier for families to connect with funeral homes and understand the services and quality that the funeral providers offer.
- Social Media – to create new relationships and maintain past relationships, funeral providers may consider utilizing social media. In this discussion we will debunk the myth that consumers are not talking about death. Will provide eye opening information that solidifies the baby boomer generation as one of the largest social media user groups.



Patrick E. Lynch, is a past president of the National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA). Lynch is owner and operator of Lynch & Sons Funeral Directors of Clawson, Mich., one of seven Lynch family-owned firms in the suburban Detroit area.

An active member of his state and national associations, his presidency of the Michigan Funeral Directors Association (MFDA) was marked by the passage of landmark consumer protection legislation and a series of regional interdisciplinary conferences called “The Good Death, Good Grief and Good Funerals.” These day-long symposia brought more than 1,600 clergy, hospice workers and funeral directors together in meetings around the state to discuss the continuum of care to the dying, the dead and the bereaved. Media interest in both the legislative and educational initiatives of MFDA cast a positive light on funerals and funeral directors in media markets around the state.

On a national level, Lynch has served as an at-large representative, secretary, treasurer, president-elect and president on NFDA’s Executive Board. For more than 35 years, Lynch has taken on many roles within his national association, including serving on many NFDA committees and work groups: Advocacy, Budget, Professional Development, Preneed, Public Relations, Consumer Campaign, Spokesperson, Exhibit Advisory, Pursuit of Excellence, Audit and Operations; he is a member of NFDA’s Heritage Club. Lynch also participated in NFDA’s For a Life Worth Celebrating program, the Political Action Committee Phone-a-Thon and the World War II Memorial fundraising campaign.

Lynch enjoys speaking to high school groups, universities and medical and mortuary groups; he is a regular contributor to trade publications, such as The Director magazine. He is also a member of the Funeral Ethics Association, Michigan Embalmers Society, Cremation Association of North America and Embalmers Association of Ireland.

In October 2007, Lynch & Sons Funeral Directors was profiled in the FRONTLINE documentary, “The Undertaking,” that aired on PBS. Portraying a moving, insightful view of funeral service, “The Undertaking” emphasized the important work funeral service professionals perform every day. On September 22, 2008, “The Undertaking” won an Emmy in the “Outstanding Arts & Culture Programming” category. More information about “The Undertaking” can be found at www.pbs.org/frontline/undertaking.



Mike Nicodemus, Vice President of Cremation Services, National Funeral Directors Association, Vice President of Cremation Operations, Hollomon-Brown Funeral Homes, and Nicodemus & Associates, funeral and cremation consulting firm is a licensed funeral director and vice president of the cremation operations at Hollomon-Brown Funeral Homes, with nine locations in the

Tidewater VA, area, averaging a 55 percent cremation rate. It's a position he has held since 1979. He is Past President of the Cremation Association of North America (CANA) and serves as Chairman of their Crematory Operators' Certification Program (COCP).

He serves as a board member of the Pittsburgh Institute of Mortuary Science. He has been a featured speaker at state and national conventions and is the author of the *Cremation Operators' Manual* published by Kates-Boylston. Mike has been featured or quoted in various articles on cremation from *USA Today*, *ABC News*, *CNNMoney.com*, *NY Times*, and *Newsweek* to name a few, and has been retained as an expert witness in numerous funeral home and crematory litigation issues.



Richard W. Brockwell, Jr., Richard started his funeral service career in 1984 after growing up in family trucking and auto businesses in Emporia Va. In college he rented a room from Bob Gordon, undertaker extraordinaire, at Gould Funeral Home in Hopewell, and soon found that the part time work he reluctantly agreed to felt like what he was destined to do. Helping families work through terribly sad events by doing for them what they were emotionally ill-equipped to do fit his personality and attention to detail. Once enrolled in the Funeral Service Program at John Tyler he started his apprenticeship at Nelsens Funeral Home in Richmond and finished at the Joseph W. Bliley Funeral Home where he spent the next 20 years. During his tenure he became known as an out of the box thinker and progressive funeral director specializing in children, young adults and complex funeral arrangements. While at Blileys, Richard became active in many professional associations. Ultimately he served as president of the Woodlake Lions Club, Central District Funeral Directors Association and the Virginia Funeral Directors Association.

In 2006 Richard began a second career in Preneed Insurance, first with Southland National Insurance and now with Capstone PreNeed Funding Solutions, as a Regional Manager for Virginia traveling the state supporting funeral homes' pre need programs and offering agent support. The same out of the box thinking and attention to detail that served him well in the funeral home is now being utilized in creative marketing programs, agent training and public speaking for his colleagues. Since 2007 he has presented continuing education classes on preneed insurance rules and regulations to funeral directors for the VFDA and numerous public lectures on funeral service, funeral arrangements, preneed options, and end of life issues across the state for funeral homes, senior groups, seminaries, and varied civic groups. Richard remains active in the VFDA and is member of the Southside, Central District, Blue Ridge, Southwest, Shenandoah Valley and Tidewater Funeral Director Associations, is a past president of the Virginia Funeral Sales and Supply Association

Richard lives in Midlothian with his wife of 25 years, the lovely and talented Gin Brockwell and their super smart and uber tall son, Tripp.

If ever you need to contact him feel free to call his cell (804) 690-4418 or email him at Richard@CapstonePreNeed.com; much to his family's chagrin his iPhone never leaves his side.



Lynne Helmick, works for the Department of Health Professions. She was appointed as the Deputy Executive Director for three health professional boards, including the Board of Funeral Directors and Embalmers, on October 4, 2010. As Deputy Executive Director, she has responsibility for the licensure, disciplinary, and inspection processes of the boards. Prior to that, she was a Senior Inspector for the Department of Health Professions for eleven years. The duties of the job included conducting investigations for all the health professional boards under DHP and conducting inspections for the boards of Veterinary Medicine, Funeral Directors and Embalmers, and Pharmacy.

Previously she worked for the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services for six years; first as a Licensure Specialist and then as a Regional Manager in the Licensure Office. Before she moved to Virginia in 1992, she worked in the state and local mental health systems in Ohio for twenty years.

Lynne has a Bachelor of Science in Social Work from West Virginia University and a Master of Public Administration from Kent State University.



Paul Harris is President and Compliance Director of Regulatory Support Services, Inc., a company founded in 1994 and specializing in regulatory compliance consultation to the death care profession. He holds a North Carolina Funeral Service license and prior to joining the company, was the Executive Director of the North Carolina Board of Funeral Service from 2004 until early 2012. He was also active with the International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards and the Association of Executives of Funeral Service Boards. From 1998 until 2003 Paul was a member of the North Carolina Board of Funeral Service. Additionally, he served as the OSHA compliance coordinator for a North Carolina funeral home and has first-hand experience with OSHA inspections. Paul and his family make their home in Durham, NC.



Richard R. Sikon, Operational Director of Virginia State Anatomical Program. Former Associate Professor and Department Chair of the Funeral Service Department and Allied Health Programs at John Tyler Community College. Rick is Per-diem Tissue Recovery Team Leader and technician for LifeNet Health. He also serves as donor reconstruction and embalming advisor. Rick is a

presenter for various State and National Funeral Service organizations. He is a graduate of John Tyler Community College with an associates degree in Funeral Services. He is a graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University with a Bachelor of Science Degree and a graduate of the University of Richmond with a Master of Liberal Arts degree. Has over 30 years of experience in the Funeral Service Profession.



Patty S. Hutcheson, CFSP, has taught Grief Psychology and Restorative Art for more than 20 years at Gupton-Jones College of Funeral Service in Decatur, Georgia, where she graduated with Michael Smith, VFDA President. She was named President of the College in 2000. She holds an Associates of Arts Degree from Truett-McConnell College, an Associate of Science Degree from Gupton-Jones College of Funeral Service and a bachelor and masters degree in English from the University of West Georgia. Patty is a Georgia Licensed Funeral Director and Embalmer since 1987, a Certified Funeral Service Practitioner and is Past- President of the American Board of Funeral Service Education. She and her husband, Danny, own Hutcheson's Memorial Chapel and Crematory in Buchanan, Georgia.