

Cemetery Directors Conference Wrap-up

The Cemetery Directors Conference, held by Kates-Boylston Publications, gave cemetery professionals a well-thought-out day filled with expert speakers, master planners and marketing gurus.

The Cemetery Directors Conference was presented before the Funeral Service Business Forum and the Crematory Operators Certification Conference, which was held in conjunction with the Cremation Association of North America and Matthews Cremation Division.

The Cemetery Directors Conference was held at Caesars Palace on the Las Vegas Strip on Nov. 16, 2010. The sponsors of the event were Kelco

Supply Co., Kryprotek and webCemeteries.com.

Key Tips In Tough Economy

As the death-care industry continues to be affected by the economic slump, speakers at the Cemetery Directors Conference brought new and interesting ideas to attendees that might not have been apparent.

“(The best part about the conference was) meeting others in the industry, comparing their problems, solutions,

new thoughts and tips on improving my programs,” said attendee Bonnie J. Ripplinger, superintendent of Rosehill Memorial Park in Minot, N.D.

Ripplinger, as well as many other attendees, enjoyed speaker Mark Smith, co-owner of McAllister-Smith Funeral Homes and Palmetto Cremation Society. Smith discussed the best ways to market cremation (which can be a tricky and sensitive subject to many families). Smith also discussed how to determine if owning your own crematory makes sense for your business and what products and services that families who choose cremation want the most.

Another speaker who shined some light on some still-confusing parts of the death-care industry was Barb Milton, vice president of community relations for the Buchanan Group in Indianapolis. The Buchanan Group includes Flanner and Buchanan Funeral Centers, Cremation Center of Indiana, Pet Legacy Memorial Services, Washington Park Cemetery Association and Washington Park Services.

Milton discussed the niche markets of both pet and green funeral service, which was especially interesting to attendees. She focused on the topics of understanding the pet and green funeral industries better and how they can benefit your business.

Attendee Jay Towne, sales manager for Memory Lane Memorial Park in



(From left to right) Speakers Lawrence Anspach, owner of American Cemetery & Mortuary Consultants, Barb Milton, vice president of community relations at the Buchanan Group and Ed Horn, director of community relations for St. Michael's Cemetery, enjoy networking during a break.



Mark Smith, co-owner of McAllister-Smith Funeral Homes and Palmetto Cremation Society



Doug Flin, principal of the Cemetery Planning Resource Alliance



Eric Robuck, president of webCemeteries.com

Crown Point, Ind., enjoyed the discussions by Doug Flin on master planning and Ed Horn on community outreach. Flin, principal of the Cemetery Planning Resource Alliance, discussed the wants and needs of the ever-growing baby boomer market and the master planning techniques that will not only gain their attention but help you expand your land efficiently. Flin also discussed the value of cemetery space and how you can find space that you never knew could be used for interment purposes.

Horn, director of community relations for St. Michael's Cemetery in Queens, N.Y., gave a presentation on the importance of community outreach and involvement. Horn explained how St. Michael's has thanked and remembered those who have served our country and how these community events and campaigns can promote the involvement of your cemetery to families.

Another topic for cemeticians that can get difficult is how to properly appraise and maximize the value of your cemetery. Lawrence Anspach, owner of American Cemetery & Mortuary Consultants, discussed how to stay in touch with changes in cemetery value, how to harness trends and patterns to your financial advantage and what improvements will boost the value of your cemetery.

As times and trends continue to change for death care, Eric Robuck, president of webCemeteries.com and Nick Timpe, the company's director of sales and marketing, discussed the importance of an online presence for cemeteries. Robuck and Timpe showed how the Internet can be used to help grow your business, how to provide information like burial

records and cemetery maps online, improving security on your cemetery's website, how to generate more preneed leads for your cemetery through the Internet and more.

"There aren't many conferences that can boast the top experts on finance, green burial, pet sections and technology, but this one delivered all that and more for our attendees," said Thomas A. Parmalee, editorial director of Kates-Boylston Publications and conference moderator. "I've already heard back from several attendees who plan on coming to a future Cemetery Directors Conference so they can continue working on a strategic plan that will boost profits. We won't let them down." ❖