



# funeral service **insider**

independent news & guidance for funeral home owners and operators

## As Fears of a Worldwide Pandemic Rise, Experts Urge Focusing on Best Practices

With coronavirus cases spreading throughout Korea, Italy, South Korea, Iran and elsewhere, funeral and health professionals in the United States are emphasizing the need to refocus on best practices.

Monica Torres, a licensed funeral director and embalmer and owner of NXT Generation Mortuary Support, says death-care professionals are increasingly worried about the virus that was first detected in China late last year.

Having sought counsel from other embalmers as well as pathologists, she recommends anyone picking up bodies or working in a prep room use professional-grade wipes and make it a habit to “wipe everything down.”

Vernie Fountain, owner of Fountain Embalming Services, Fountain National Academy of Professional Embalming Skills and Forensic Investigative Resources of the Midwest, has been actively involved in disaster planning his entire career – and *now* is the time for funeral service to prepare for the spread of the virus, he says.

“What I would encourage every funeral home to do is to look at this as a potentially serious situation and not panic but evaluate plans that they might have in their own funeral home – the ‘what ifs,’” he says.

For instance, if things get bad here, a funeral home with five employees could find itself with only one healthy person on staff. “Who is going to pick up the bodies?” he asks.

Nationwide, there could be a shortage of not just funeral professionals, but those in other critical fields such as health care and utility workers, Fountain says.

As to killing the virus, one concern Fountain has is that right now, it’s not clear how that is done. “Most of the chemicals we have in the mortuary, we do not know if they have the ability to kill this particular virus,” he says.

But funeral homes do have chemicals that kill viruses in the same class as coronavirus. “For now, it sounds like these chemicals are the best we can use until we know more about

## TANEXPO Cancels Event Amid Coronavirus Fears

In an unprecedented move, the managers of Tanexpo have canceled its convention that draws death-care professionals from throughout the world due to the spread of the coronavirus that has killed thousands of people worldwide.

In a news release, the managers of the convention said that the decision came after meeting with regional authorities.

The convention, which had been scheduled to take place next month in Bologna, Italy, has been delayed an entire year. It has been rescheduled for February 2021.

“The decision to postpone the event to the next year has been taken paying the utmost attention to the protection of the industry,” organizers said in their news release. “In this way, we hope to guarantee the maximum health and safety conditions for the professionals participating in the event and, at the same time, ensure a new successful edition, as we have been doing since 30 years.”

The organizers of the event noted that they know the decision will cause a hardship for many. They thanked exhibitors, partners and visitors for understanding and pledged to plan a great event for 2021.

Tanexpo typically attracts vendors and visitors from dozens of countries worldwide.



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the virus,” he says.

Fountain has been fielding inquiries from death-care professionals asking what they should do as fears of the virus’s spread escalate. One person asked him about hand sanitizer. “I don’t know if that will kill this bug or not,” he says, adding that he would love to know how they are disinfecting cruise ships that have had passengers with the virus on board.

One upside to concerns about the virus, however, is that it could serve as an opportunity for funeral homes to refocus on best practices to ensure they are abiding by proper procedures, Torres says.

For instance, when Torres visits funeral homes, she often notices that firms are using permeable gloves in their embalming rooms.

It seems that some firms try to save money by buying gloves at their local CVS or Walmart instead of investing in the medical-grade gloves they should be supplying staff, she says.

“There are a ton of mortuary-specific companies that sell medical-grade products,” she says. “Any one of our major chemical companies typically sell those gloves on their website or in their booklet.”

Torres also said that embalmers

should wear a respirator – and she is not a fan of the half respirator that many embalmers use.

“I am one of the few embalmers who wear a full-face respirator,” Torres says.

Fountain, who prefers using a face mask in the prep room, says the coronavirus warrants “being very careful.” He adds, “Whether you need a respirator, I am not sure. But gloves and protective gear – yes. If you are handling sheets that came from the bed of a person who died of that virus, there could be airborne bacteria you could breathe in, so a mask or respirator could provide additional protection.”

It’s also imperative that funeral homes make sure they have proper ventilation in their prep rooms – especially given that many embalmers fail to wear a respirator, Torres says.

Asked why a respirator and sometimes even a mask is unpopular, Torres says it can be a matter of younger embalmers mirroring what they see from veteran funeral directors. Some established funeral directors do not wear their equipment, “so those novice embalmers are coming into an environment where they are seeing that ... it is learned behavior.”

While not related to the spread of germs or a virus, Torres also says firms should make sure they

have proper lifts in their prep room as so many recent mortuary college graduates are women. “That is not to say that there aren’t women that aren’t super buff, but traditionally men can handle more weight than women,” she says.

### Guidance from the CDC

Just as this newsletter was about to be sent out to subscribers, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued [interim guidance](#) for the collection and submission of postmortem specimens from deceased persons under investigation for coronavirus.

The CDC notes in [that memo](#), “Most often, spread from a living person happens with close contact (i.e. within about 6 feet) via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes, similar to how influenza and other respiratory pathogens spread. This route of transmission is not a concern when handling human remains or performing postmortem procedures. Postmortem activities should be conducted with a focus on avoiding aerosol generation procedures, and ensuring that if aerosol generation is likely (e.g., when using an oscillating saw) that appropriate engineering controls and personal protective equipment (PPE) are used. These precautions and the use of Standard Precautions should ensure that appropriate work practices are used to prevent direct contact with infectious material, percutaneous

### The Spread of the Coronavirus Causes Worldwide Alarm

Coronavirus first appeared late last year in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China, and has been detected in dozens of countries throughout the world, including the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The virus has been named “SARS-CoV-2” and the disease it causes has been named “coronavirus disease 2019” (abbreviated “COVID-19”).

On Jan. 30, 2020, the International Health Regulations Emergency Committee of the World Health Organization declared the outbreak a “public health emergency of international concern.” On Jan. 31, Health and Human Services Secretary Alex M. Azar II declared a public health emergency for the United States to aid the nation’s health care community in responding to COVID-19.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website, “Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in many different species of animals, including camels, cattle, cats, and bats. Rarely, animal coronaviruses can infect people and then spread between people such as with MERS-CoV, SARS-CoV, and now with this new virus.”

The CDC goes to note, “current global circumstances suggest it is likely that this virus will cause a pandemic.” The CDC adds, “Widespread transmission of COVID-19 in the United States would translate into large numbers of people needing medical care at the same time. Schools, childcare centers, workplaces, and other places for mass gatherings may experience more absenteeism. Public health and health care systems may become overloaded, with elevated rates of hospitalizations and deaths. Other critical infrastructure, such as law enforcement, emergency medical services, and transportation industry may also be affected. Health care providers and hospitals may be overwhelmed.”

At press time, there had been 15 confirmed cases of coronavirus in the United States, according to the CDC, including the infection of someone in California who did not have relevant travel history or exposure to another known patient with the virus.

“It’s possible this could be an instance of community spread of COVID-19, which would be the first time this has happened in the United States. Community spread means spread of an illness for which the source of infection is unknown,” according to the CDC.

injury, and hazards related to moving heavy remains and handling embalming chemicals.”

In addition to providing guidance for the collection of postmortem specimens, the CDC document provides recommendations for biosafety and infection control practices during specimen collection and handling, including during autopsy procedures. “The guidance can be utilized by medical examiners, coroners, pathologists, other workers involved in the postmortem care of deceased PUI (persons under investigation for COVID-19), and local and state health departments,” according to the guidance.

The editors of this newsletter highly recommend you familiarize yourself with [the entire memo](#), which includes the following PPE recommendations to be worn *at a minimum* when dealing with these cases:

- Wear nonsterile, nitrile gloves when handling potentially infectious materials.
- If there is a risk of cuts, puncture wounds, or other injuries that break the skin, wear heavy-duty gloves over the nitrile gloves.
- Wear a clean, long sleeved fluid-resistant or impermeable gown to protect skin and clothing.
- Use a plastic face shield or a face mask and goggles to protect the face, eyes, nose, and mouth from splashes of potentially infectious bodily fluids.

The ripple effect from the spread of the virus could be “monumental,” Fountain warns. “We hope and pray it is this simple little thing with not too many affected in the United States,” he says. “We hope it is not going to be serious, but it could be *extremely* serious.”

“Just sit down with your staff and think about the worst-case scenario,” Fountain advises. “Think about the ‘what ifs’ and try to solve the ‘what ifs.’”

Visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-postmortem-specimens.html> or click on the links embedded in this story to read the entire text of the interim guidance from the CDC.

### **Funeral Director Sentenced to Four to Eight Years in Prison**

Stephen Kezmarksy, who owned and operated Kezmarksy Funeral Home in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, has been sentenced to four to eight years in prison for stealing more than a half-million dollars from about 80 families who had prearranged their funeral, WPXI News 11 reported.

He pleaded guilty to the charge in October 2019. As part of his sentencing, he must also pay \$555,000 in restitution and serve 20 years of probation. While he accepted payments for prearranged funerals, he never submitted the policies to an insurance company, according to the state attorney general’s office.



## SCI Ends the Year with Strong Operating Performance and Growth

Service Corporation International reported adjusted fourth-quarter earnings per share of 60 cents – an 11% increase compared with the year ago-period. That result matched the average estimate of Wall Street securities analysts.

In a news release issued Feb. 17, the company also reported comparable funeral gross profit grew 10% on a 5% increase in revenue. Comparable funeral and cemetery preneed sales production increased by 12.1% and 5.2%, respectively, compared to the prior-year quarter.

Other quarterly highlights included:

- Net cash provided by operating activities declined to \$156.6 million in the fourth quarter of 2019 compared to \$163.5 million in the fourth quarter of 2018 as increases in operating results were offset by expected higher cash taxes and the timing of cash interest payments.
- During the fourth quarter, SCI returned \$110.2 million to shareholders through share repurchases and dividends and deployed \$48.2 million of capital to accretive acquisitions and the construction of new funeral service locations.

Commenting on the results, Tom Ryan, president and CEO, said, “We ended the year with a strong operating performance from our funeral businesses for the fourth quarter, which contributed to an impressive 11% growth in adjusted earnings per share. Revenue and profit growth in our funeral segment was somewhat offset by the timing of revenue recognition from cemetery sales production for the fourth quarter. Comparable funeral and cemetery preneed sales production increased by over 8% on a combined basis compared to the prior-year quarter. These results are all made possible by our greatest asset, our 25,000 associates. Their hard work, dedication, and focus on our client families are what makes this company so strong.”

Ryan continued, “Looking ahead to 2020, we believe we are well positioned to deliver solid results, with expected adjusted earnings per share growth in our long-term targeted growth range of 8% to 12%, despite pressure from a higher effective tax rate in 2020. Looking forward, we believe that our operating platform and healthy financial condition will allow us to continue to grow revenue, leverage our scale, and deploy capital wisely to enhance shareholder value.”

Commenting on the results during an earnings conference call, Ryan highlighted the company’s “healthy increases in both services performed and average revenue per service.” He added that preneed funeral sales were “a true highlight of the quarter.” For the full year, preneed funeral sales production grew just under 5% – at the top end of its guidance range of 3% to 5%, he said.

For 2020, SCI expects adjusted earnings per share of \$1.96 to \$2.16 per share, with the midpoint of that range – \$2.06 – representing an 8.4% increase over 2019 earnings per share, Ryan said.

Speaking of acquisitions, Eric Tanzberger, senior vice president and chief financial officer, said he

remains optimistic about the pipeline.

Ryan noted, “We continue to see people willing and wanting to sell. I will tell you, I think it’s gotten a little more competitive in the last year or so, and we are starting to see a little price creep as it relates to certain opportunities that are out there, and again, we’ve seen some competitors face some pretty significant premiums.”

But when SCI wants a business, it gets “very competitive,” Ryan said. In some cases, it is limited by what it can buy as a result of Federal Trade Commission restrictions, which is one reason it is beginning to build more locations, he said.

“We’re going to spend \$50 million on locations this year, and that’s one of the reasons – because it allows us to compete in markets,” Ryan said. Building and/or updating locations also allows SCI to offer families a flexible facility that caters to those interested in life celebrations, he said.

Answering a question on the effect of the flu on the company’s results, Ryan said that the impact began a little earlier than usual, but the surge was around the influenza B strain, which usually tends to be hardest on children and people under 25.

“So, what you saw, while there is a higher incidence of the flu, the hospitalization rates and mortality rates are actually pretty low even as the incident rate climbs,” he said. “What’s really unusual about this is the last time this happened was in 1993. So, it’s been almost 27 years since we had this kind of influenza B strain come first, and so it’s really, really unusual. So, the flu is prevalent. We’re not necessarily seeing it in the death rate.”

Flu season is not over, and if the influenza A strain becomes more prevalent, it can have a larger effect on the elderly, which could result in more deaths, Ryan said.

### Watch KB Webinars on Demand

Whether you missed Hayden Burrus’ webinar on perpetual care funds, Courtney Gould Miller’s talk on social media or Tyler Fraser’s insights on cremation urns and e-commerce, you can still hear all their guidance by visiting our on-demand webinar channel.

Just visit [www.katesboylston.com/ondemand](http://www.katesboylston.com/ondemand).



## Carriage Services Touts Recent Acquisitions after a Tough Quarter

Carriage Services reported fourth-quarter diluted earnings per share of 29 cents per share compared with 23 cents in the year-ago period, according to a news release. That result widely missed the average estimate of Wall Street securities analysts.

While the quarterly performance caused its stock price to fall, CEO Mel Payne sounded an upbeat tone, stating, “Our performance in the fourth quarter and full year of 2019 was dramatically better than 2018, as we reversed the broadly declining performance trends in our funeral and cemetery portfolios. While we still have much work to do to achieve the optimum performance potential in our existing portfolio, we made two bold and strategic moves in the last quarter of 2019 by recruiting Bill Goetz as president and chief operating officer and acquiring four large high-quality businesses in great strategic markets with about \$50 million in new high margin revenue once fully integrated into Carriage’s operating model framework.”

Moving forward, Payne says the company will seek to integrate its recent acquisitions, divest low-performing firms, reduce debt, improve its credit profile and optimize its performance potential.

Carriage Services also reported fourth-quarter revenue increased \$4.8 million, or 7.3% to \$71.1 million compared with the year-ago period.

On an earnings call with Wall Street analysts and investors, Goetz, who was previously the vice president of sales and marketing at Sysco (the food and beverage company), said he was excited about being at Carriage after 75 days on the job. “I think there is a huge opportunity to grow our business, grow it in existing markets where we operate today through our decentralized model,” he said. He added the company is forming “transformative teams” to define service and the guest experience, improve technology innovation, encourage more cremation families to have a service and boost cemetery sales.

Dan Isard, managing partner of The Foresight Companies, says Goetz has an impressive pedigree. “Mr. Goetz has an A+ resume,” he says. “He is a rare individual that has moved up the ladder at Sysco and Cintas as well as others. He has a strong background in marketing and sales. I am sure he will learn how to apply these strengths to the funeral and cemetery worlds. It is critical that the shareholders have comfort knowing Carriage is preparing for its continuity by attracting a guy of this level to their future.”

Ben Brink, chief financial officer of Carriage, admitted that the fourth-quarter performance “was short of our expectations.” But he added that the strategic moves the company made – including four recent acquisitions and the hiring of Goetz – position the company for success for years to come.

Speaking of those acquisitions, Brink said, “During the fourth quarter, we completed three acquisitions: Lombardo Funeral Homes in Buffalo, New York, Rest Haven Funeral Home and Memorial Park in Rockwall, Texas, and Fairfax Memorial Park and Funeral Home in Fairfax, Virginia, which represents the single largest acquisition in the 28-year history of Carriage. Shortly after the first of the year, we also closed on the acquisition of Oakmont Memorial Park and Mortuary in Lafayette, California.”

The recent acquisitions “are indicative of Carriage’s long-term opportunity to partner with the best remaining independent businesses in what remains a highly fragmented funeral and cemetery industry,” Brink says.

Speaking of the company's plans to divest low-performing businesses, Brink said the strategic decision had been made to "divest or merge 12 to 15 funeral home businesses throughout 2020."

Commenting on the Fairfax acquisition, Payne said, "We bought a great franchise at a high price – and the great franchise has been undermanaged massively ... and now it's going to be in a company that knows how to turn on the high performance buttons through leadership and systems, and it will be one of these that we'll look back in 10 years and say, 'Wow, we got a good deal there' – but it's going to take us a while to get this one home, and it's a big, big business – and it's going to be a big growth in earnings and a free cash flow driver for Carriage for years and years to come. Once we get it going, it'll grow market share in the funeral niches in and around Fairfax."

Payne added that he knows Wall Street is not so patient when you pay a dear price for something, but he knows it was the right thing to do. "It's the critical mass that we've been looking for," he said.

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## Bogati Urns Introduces Package Offer Featuring Birthstone Collection

After an explosion of interest in a line of birthstone cremation pendants, Bogati Urns has announced the addition of a new package offer featuring these traditional pieces, according to a new release.

The new Bogati birthstone jewelry package includes 12 stainless steel pendants with a simulated birthstone for each month, a chain and microfiber jewelry pouch for each pendant, and a white linen, glass-front presentation case.

"These birthstone pendants offer a traditional yet highly personalized way to remember someone. So they were very popular when we released them last year," says Bogati Urns owner, Andrea Bogard LeBlanc. "Given their popularity, I thought creating a bundle would be helpful for our customers from both a pricing and display perspective."

Customers can save by purchasing the items bundled together in the package. Plus, Bogard LeBlanc always advises customers to purchase at least two of an item – one to show and one to go. Once the extra of any design has been purchased, the display can then be used to generate an order. With Bogati's quick turnaround times, customers can receive new pendant orders within just a few days.

The display case was specifically designed to both highlight and secure the pendants. The glass top allows families to browse the collection with the lid clasped closed, and at 9.5 inches x 6.75 inches x 2 inches in size, it easily fits in a desk drawer for safe storage when not on display.

Visit: <https://bogatiurns.com/product-category/memorial-jewelry-packages> to view the jewelry packages.



Bogati Urns' Birthstone Cremation Pendant Collection.



## If You Didn't Know Already, Now You Do: Coleen Ellis Really Rocks!

As the woman who opened the nation's first standalone pet funeral home, an author, co-chairperson of the Pet Loss Professionals Alliance and member of the board of trustees at Fort Hays University in Fort Hays, Kansas, no one would argue that Coleen Ellis long ago achieved rock star status.

Now, she is making it official with the launch of Coleen.Rocks – a website where she highlights her mentoring, speaking and consulting services to a wider audience – not necessarily those connected to death care.

We recently caught up with Ellis to learn about her new venture and what she's been up to inside and outside of funeral service.

### What was the impetus behind forming Coleen.Rocks?

I have had so much fun over the past years in sharing my story with many different audiences. For the past few years, it's been humbling to have a variety of attendees tell me that I needed to branch out, and take my message to other groups, from women's associations and groups to entrepreneurs to those looking to gender-base their speaker base. The tipping point was last May when I had the pleasure of chatting with Erik Qualman, named by Forbes as one of the top 50 digital influencers, at a conference he was speaking at directed more toward insurance professionals. I was visiting with Erik, who by the way was a dynamic and fabulous keynote speaker for the ICCFA a few years ago, and just spit-balling my idea of branching out and spreading my wings.

He was so encouraging and gave me just the guidance I needed to finally take the leap. As for the name of my new business, it's simple. My website is Coleen.Rocks, so taking that really cool URL as the name just seemed to make sense: Coleen.Rocks! At the heart of my mission with this new venture of mine, it's what I want to happen when people hear my talks. It truly is a summary of what I hear from people after they have attended one of my talks: "She's energetic, inspirational, moving, and you really just want to do better and be better after you get a dose of her energy!" Those are humbling words for me!

### Does this mean you will be paying less attention to death care?

Not in the near term as I have so many commitments already on my speaking calendar for 2020, as well as discussions already in place for 2021, in the death-care space. I love sharing in this space, and sharing my experiences, so I still want to give back to this part of my heart. After all, it's such a driver for my mission, passion and my "why," and I want to continue to fill my bucket up with sharing that knowledge and those stories in this area.



Coleen Ellis with Beulah, enjoying an ice cold beer.

### Why did you decide to share your story with a broader audience?

What touches my heart is animals. Much like I share in the video on my website, as I really reflect on my love for them, I found myself standing even taller and asking myself, “How else do animals affect my world?” They are such amazing teachers! In fact, I’m working on my next book with which will be all about that! I’m summing up this fun and organic learning in this way ... we all know what IQ and EQ is. Let’s talk about AQ: animal quotient. The organic lessons we learn from animals. And, these organic lessons are amazing! For instance, for entrepreneurs and business owners, I like to share the story of the chihuahua with the title of this particular section: Chihuahuas Don’t Hunt.



Coleen Ellis loves to spend time and cuddle with her flat-coated retriever, Albert.

That statement is funny, at first. But here’s the question: Are you indeed a chihuahua trying to hunt? Are you a person who is trying to do something, within your business or life, that is not in your wheelhouse? At the heart of this self-reflection is the life and business lesson that says “Do what you’re good at. If hunting is not your strong suit, what are your talents?” Another example: Think of a border collie, and how they have a goal in what they do naturally: it’s herding. Do you have a goal, or are you taking yourself, your team, and your business all over the place, and not working toward the desired or focused end goal?

Think about the lessons of just being and living in the moment, of unconditional love that we can all do better with as a person, and as a leader. And, there’s so much more that falls into these beautiful lessons! I can’t wait to share them in more detail with larger audiences.

### What has the response been thus far?

I’m so honored to get this journey started. My schedule is booked with organizations such as the Veterinary Hospital Managers Association, the Association of Pet Dog Trainers, the International Association for Animal Hospice and Palliative Care, and so many more. While I’m still incorporating a lot of my pet loss training with these groups, the concept of AQ is being sprinkled in.

### Can you share one or two of your favorite experiences as a public speaker?

I think for any speaker, it’s having someone come up to you after a talk to share how your words just changed their world or the way they think about something. I am so honored and humbled to have had that happen countless times! It literally makes me tear up even after hearing it numerous times. It’s truly moving.

Another experience that rocks my world when I’m on stage is when someone just bursts out, “Can you come home with me and give me energy, inspiration, and positive thoughts every day?” While I laugh with them and

the rest of the audience, inside I just swell with pride. Knowing that I might have done something to rock someone else's world and have them think different and behave different is really moving!

### **So ... do your furry love bundles travel with you?**

I would love nothing more than to have these loves with me on every trip! The new little fluff-ball, Beulah, is my arm candy! (Yes, her name is Beulah! I name my pets after my grandparents who have passed.) She is so stinking cute, and I am having fun in dressing her up in little tutus, bows and fun outfits. She will certainly turn heads with her cuteness! She's only been with us for a few months and is already a pro in maneuvering airports and the Transportation Security Administration. She's my fun traveler! Roberta Knauf is helping me in training with my flat-coated retriever, Albert, in getting him "stage ready!" I figure if I'm talking about the power of animals and what they can do just with their presence, then he needs to be present. He's doing good with his training, and I can just tell in his demeanor that the stage and him will be incredible friends. I can't wait!

### **I assume you will be playing a role at the ICCFA convention ... can you share what you'll be doing?**

This year, I'm going to be speaking on pets and preneed. I'm excited to share my thoughts and experiences with the conference on ideas in this area, especially given that I spent so many years of my career with Forethought and in preneed. To bring those two subjects together is the absolute perfect combination of my passions.

Of course, we have various Pet Loss Professionals Alliance events, receptions and meetings, and I will attend all of them. The PLPA is my heart, and I will always support that movement in making sure we are doing what we can do for respectful and dignified services for our precious pets in death.

### **Get Strategic Guidance from Coleen Ellis**



Coleen Ellis will be one of the keynote speakers at the Cremation Innovators Summit, Sept. 18, in Charleston, South Carolina.

She will be joined by Courtney Gould Miller, chief strategy officer and head of digital at MKJ Marketing; Rolf Gutknecht, vice president and an agent of change at LA ads, a marketing agency; Mark Smith, president and CEO of McAlister-Smith Funeral Homes; and Erin Whitaker, senior vice president of business development at Foundation Partners Group.

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### What are you most looking forward to at the convention?

As always, seeing everyone! That just fills me up, and I look forward to these few days for months prior to the conference. I also like to see all the new booths and creative ideas in what people are doing in our industry.

### What else are you working on at the moment?

I've still got my hands full with Two Hearts. My Pet Loss & Grief Companionship Certification classes are still incredibly popular, so much so that I have also moved these to an online learning platform to cast a broader net for those wanting this learning. I continue to get asked to blog for other organizations, so writing is keeping me busy, which I just love.

I've broadened my base of consulting clients and am helping with some veterinary end-of-life services as well as some manufacturers on new memorialization ideas. I am also exploring a larger role within the Entrepreneurial Studies School at my alma mater, Fort Hays State University, to do some teaching, coaching and mentoring with students. Lastly, I was asked at the end of 2019 to step back in to the International Association for Animal Hospice and Palliative Care to take on a temporary leadership role as executive director to help the association get future ready, and properly poised to take on the next decade. My plate is full, and every day I'm blessed to be doing what I love!

Visit <https://coleen.rocks> to learn more about Coleen Ellis' new initiative.

### Take Funeral Service Insider's Annual Compensation Survey

Funeral Service Insider's annual compensation survey is now open. Every year, funeral service professionals eagerly look forward to the results of the survey. The confidential survey serves as a resource to determine how funeral homes are paying their staff, whether salaries are going up or down, how funeral homes are compensating employees beyond salary and much more. Take the survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/JDCK2GG>.

Sincerely,



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