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IN THIS ISSUE

- PAGE 1** You Can “Get Grace”
Nationwide Beginning March 23
- PAGE 4** NFDA Announces 2018
Meet the Mentors Attendees
- PAGE 5** 27 CCMS Students Earn
Celebrant Certification
- PAGE 6** The Notebook
- PAGE 7** From the Editor’s Desk:
“Real Life”

You Can “Get Grace” Nationwide Beginning March 23

BETHLEHEM, PENNSYLVANIA – The much anticipated feature film *Getting Grace* will have three one-day premieres in theaters in the Lehigh Valley March 3 before the movie lands in select theaters nationwide March 23.

The movie has created some positive buzz among funeral directors, who are not always portrayed in film in the most positive light. Veteran character actor Daniel Roebuck portrays a funeral director who meets a terminally ill teenage girl who wants to know what will happen to her after she dies. In the end, she also teaches him how to celebrate life.

Roebuck, along with Paula and Demetri Herron, participated in a panel discussion at the 2017 NFDA International Convention & Expo in Boston, where they talked about the making of the movie, the portrayal of funeral directors in pop culture and what it entailed to film a movie inside an actual funeral home.



In addition to starring in the film, Roebuck is co-writer and director. He filmed *Getting Grace* in and around his hometown of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, with the main setting at John F. Herron Funeral Home, owned by funeral director Demetri Herron. His sister, Paula Herron, is supervising funeral director. About a third of the shoot took place in one or both funeral homes. Herron Funeral Homes has two locations, one in Bethlehem, which served as the main location, including all of the exterior shots, and Sell-Herron Funeral Home in Allentown.

Getting Grace scored extremely well in film festivals last year. At the Northeast Film Festival in Teaneck, New Jersey, it won four awards: Best Feature Film, Best Director (Daniel Roebuck), Best Actress in a Feature Film (Madelyn Dundon) and the Audience Choice Award.

During the film’s run at its second festival, the

Adirondack Film Festival, it won the top prize – Best of the Best.

“During this time, when it’s the tent-pole movies like *Star Wars* or the Marvel films dominating the box office, getting our small labor of love into theaters across the country is nothing short of a miracle,” said Samantha Edwards, one of the film’s producers and Roebuck’s partner.

Hannover House and Medallion Releasing will launch the film in theaters March 23 in top markets across the country, with a campaign that will include nontraditional promotional events and cross-promotions designed to build audience interest. All of the top 20 largest markets are targeted, along with 20 additional key markets that collectively represent theatrical markets with about 80% of the total U.S. population.

One promotional event, beginning March 4, is a barnstorming bus tour along the East Coast where *Getting Grace* will be previewed in major cities until its March 23 release.

“As a filmmaker who has spent the last nine years bringing our *Grace* to an audience, I am thrilled to be teaming with Hannover House and longtime friend Eric Parkinson,” Roebuck said recently. “Together, we’re hoping to make history with our extraordinary and unique approach to building audience interest for this film that has, so far, touched people of all ages and faiths. We can’t wait to share *Grace* with the rest of world!”

LEHIGH VALLEY PREMIERE MARCH 3

For people in the Lehigh Valley, Roebuck is planning something special on March 3 as a way to say thank-you for the support he received in making the movie, which he called “a love letter to the Lehigh Valley.”



Daniel Roebuck and Diane Wagner portray brother and sister funeral directors in the forthcoming feature film Getting Grace. About one-third of the movie was filmed inside John F. Herron Funeral Home in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

“We couldn’t have done it without the support of the people and businesses of the Lehigh Valley!” Roebuck said. “From the very beginning, we have talked about how to say thank-you for that unwavering local belief in our movie and its message.”

Toward that end, a steering committee was formed. It was headed by Lynn Collins Cunningham, the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber senior vice president for Bethlehem, and seated with members of the charity organizations whose specific input and support of *Getting Grace* helped make the film a success. Those organizations are the Pediatric Cancer Foundation of the Lehigh Valley, PBS, Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts and three local, community-based theaters: Pennsylvania Playhouse, Civic Theater and MUNOPCO.

“Danny really wanted to do something unique for the area and do it in a way that’s never been done before,” said Tammy Roebuck, one of the film’s producers and Daniel’s wife. “It will be a one-day, multi-venue premiere across the valley during which everyone who supports the event – and these charities – can walk the red carpet and meet the cast. Essentially, we are bringing the Hollywood experience to Danny’s hometown.”



Daniel Roebuck (left) participates in a panel discussion about the movie *Getting Grace* with funeral directors Demetri and Paula Herron at the 2017 NFDA International Convention & Expo in Boston.



Alexa Mcfillin and Daniel Roebuck in a scene from *Getting Grace*.



The cast of *Getting Grace*.

The day-long celebration will offer *Getting Grace*'s Lehigh Valley premiere, a chance to mingle with its stars and an opportunity to hear the original music featured in the film's soundtrack performed by the local musicians who created it.

The movie will be shown at Frank Banko Alehouse Cinemas and Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts in Bethlehem, and at The Roxy Theatre in Northampton.

The cost for the charity screening is \$22 per person

for general admission; all money raised will go directly to the charities.

"It's the best \$22 they'll ever spend," Roebuck said. "Not only will they be the first to see [the film] in the Lehigh Valley, they will have the opportunity to meet and take photos with cast members and receive limited-edition perks available only to ticket holders."

After the movie has its run in theaters, Sony Pictures Home Entertainment will distribute the film through video on demand, Amazon and Netflix.

Tickets for the Lehigh Valley screenings are selling fast. At press time, one of the screenings was already sold out. A link for tickets to the Lehigh Valley premiere is available on the *Getting Grace* Facebook page, as well as at gettinggracethemovie.com.

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An interview with Daniel Roebuck and Demetri and Paula Herron appeared in the June 2017 edition of The Director magazine.

NFDA Announces 2018 Meet the Mentors Attendees

BROOKFIELD, WISCONSIN – NFDA has announced the names of the 50 funeral professionals who will attend the association's 2018 Meet the Mentors program March 11-13 at Emory Conference Center Hotel in Atlanta. Meet the Mentors has been wholly funded by the Funeral Service Foundation since the program's inception in 2011.

During the program, these 50 professionals who are either age 40 or under or new to the profession (first licensed within the last five years) will have an opportunity to meet, learn from and talk with innovative and successful funeral professionals. It's also an opportunity to network and form relationships with other new professionals. The names of the 50 participants were announced last week through a series of video drawings, which were shared on the NFDA website and social media sites.

ABOUT MEET THE MENTORS

The three mentors this year are Matthew Baskerville, owner of Reeves & Baskerville Funeral Homes, with locations in Coal City, Gardner, Morris and Wilmington, Illinois; Erlinda Valdez, general manager of Wallin Funeral Homes, with locations in Sanger, Fowler, Riverdale and Parlier, California; and Victor C. March Sr., president and CEO of March Funeral Homes in Baltimore, Maryland. March also serves on the Funeral Service Foundation Board of Trustees, and Baskerville is a 2013 Meet the Mentors alum.

There is no cost to participate in the Meet the Mentors program itself. The Funeral Service Foundation's grant provides exclusive, career-transforming access to three mentors and covers attendees' registration fees, two nights' lodging and select meals. The 50 individuals selected to attend pay only for their transportation to and from the program.

More than 600 young professionals and emerging leaders have benefited from Meet the Mentors, which underscores the Foundation's mission to support all of funeral service in building meaning-

ful relationships with the families and communities it serves. The program is part of the Foundation '45 Awards, which are designed to transform the careers of funeral service professionals through scholarships, awards, resources and mission-focused outreach.

Complete details about the Meet the Mentors program, including the videos announcing the 2018 participants, can be found at nfda.org/mentors.

2018 NFDA Meet the Mentors attendees are Tiffany Aguilar, Legacy Funeral Group, Seguin, Texas; Lorna Agosto, Granby's Funeral Service, Bronx, New York; Emily Ahern, Vincent Funeral Home, Simsbury, Connecticut; Patrick Anderson, Anderson Funeral and Cremation Services, Belvidere, Illinois; John Appel, Garden of Memories Funeral Home & Cemetery, Metairie, Louisiana; Blake Ashley, Martin Funeral Home, Mt. Morris, Michigan; Eileen Baldeshwiler, Sunset Funeral Home & Memorial Park, Evansville, Indiana; Jack Clock, Wm. Sullivan and Son Funeral Directors, Utica, Michigan; Devin Cole, Roller-Chenal Funeral Home, Little Rock, Arkansas; Erika Collaros, Schoedinger Funeral and Cremation Service, Columbus, Ohio; Bryan Conyers, Blyth Funeral Home, Greenwood, South Carolina; Paige Gaikowski, Scott Funeral Home, Jeffersonville, Indiana; and Jay Garrett, Cotton Funeral Service, Newark, New Jersey.

Also, Hanna Goffinet, Scott Funeral Home, Jeffersonville, Indiana; Jessica Goglin, Kuhler Funeral Home, Huron, South Dakota; William (Cody) Gore, Scottsboro Funeral Home, Scottsboro, Alabama; Winston Grannis, Boone-Nickell Funeral Home, Flemingsburg, Kentucky; Amanda Hall, Funeral Alternatives of Washington, Tumwater, Washington; Courtney Heck, Brainard Funeral Home, Wausau, Wisconsin; Ben Hengesteg, Iles Funeral Homes-Dunn's Chapel, Des Moines, Iowa; Dana Ivins, Wappner Funeral Directors, Mansfield, Ohio; Robert Justen, Justen Funeral Home, McHenry, Illinois; Mykal Jensen, Gunderson Funeral Home, Madison, Wisconsin; Kaitlynn Lenoir, Gunderson

Funeral Home, Madison, Wisconsin; Rhonda McCann, McNabb Funeral Home, Pocahontas, Arkansas; Brett McReavy, Washburn-McReavy Funeral Chapels, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Nathan Minnich, Hoover-Boyer Funeral Home, Elizabethville, Pennsylvania; Amanda Moss, Harris Funeral Home & Cremation Services, Abbeville, South Carolina; Austin O'Neal, Cochran Funeral Home, Blairsville, Georgia; and Justin Panske, Malcore Funeral Home, Green Bay, Wisconsin.

Also, Angela Plummer, Anderson & Sons Mortuary, American Fork, Utah; Jonathan Poling, Schoedinger Funeral Service, Grove City, Ohio; Shannon Powell, Barnes Friederich Funeral Home, Midwest City, Oklahoma; Brandi Reed, Lakeside Memorial Funeral Home, Hamburg, New York; Matthew Richmond, Williams-Gores Funeral Home, Delton, Michigan; Nicholas Ricci, Patrick T. Lanigan Funeral Home & Crematory, East Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Dexter Ritter, D.L. Ritter & Co., Canton,

Mississippi; Parris Robles, Roller-Christeson Funeral Home, Harrison, Arkansas; Arianna Rule, Mt. Sinai Memorial Chapels, Manalapan, New Jersey; Constance Scheanon, Ducro Funeral Home, Ashtabula, Ohio; and Ren Scherling, Darrell Howe Mortuary, Lafayette, Colorado

Also, Jerelyn Serra, Blake Chelmsford Funeral Home, Chelmsford, Massachusetts; Amanda Stafford, Mueller Memorial, St. Paul, Minnesota; Melody Stuart, McClure Funeral Home, Taylorville, Illinois; Kelly VanderLaan, VanderLaan Funeral Home, Hudsonville, Michigan; Sarah Whetstine, Barnes Friederich Funeral Home, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Jennifer Harvey, Ogeechee Technical College, Statesboro, Georgia; LaTorria Williams, Davenport & Harris Funeral Home, Birmingham, Alabama; Andrew Wint, Wint Funeral Home, Clarkston, Michigan; and Damon Wenig, Wenig Funeral Homes, Sheboygan Falls, Wisconsin.

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27 CCMS Students Earn Celebrant Certification

CINCINNATI – Students at Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science recently completed a three-day intense training from InSight Certified Celebrant trainers. CCMS faculty Teresa Dutko and Wanda Lee, funeral celebrant trainers, certified 27 bachelor's program students as InSight Funeral Celebrants.

"Celebrant training is so important that it is part of our degree program," said Jack E. Lechner Jr., president and CEO of the college. "Deathcare professionals need foundational training to ensure that they can meet the specific needs of the families they will serve; this training is critical to that end."

Lee and Dutko trained as celebrants in 2005 and 2006 respectively. Newly certified funeral celebrants are Melanie Anderson, Leigh Badyna, Catherine Collins, Emily Doan, Jessica Eckstein, Anastasia Elencovf, Mason Elrod, Aaron Engle, Courtney Evans, Michael Faraco, Sydney

Heinle, Alecia Hellkamp, Samuel Henson, Lynne Hoffman, Brandon Jackson, Jordan Kill, Vanessa Leon-Verde, Brandon Miller, Emma Miner, Nikita Ogard, Delzie Osborne, Layne Perone, Sandra Sanders, Sarah Stansbery, Tyra Turk, Jessica Wavra and Katia White.

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The Notebook

PITTSBURGH INSTITUTE OF MORTUARY SCIENCE will offer a six-hour, day-long spring continuing education event, 2018-PIMS Best Practices 101, on Friday, March 16. Topics for this multidimensional program include:

- “Embalming Fluid 101” presented by Paul Bauman of the Champion Company: general chemical principles, toxic exposure, tenets of embalming, natural green movement
- “Laws Concerning End-of-Life Decisions” presented by attorney George Entenmann: right of disposition, disinterment, cremation, anatomical gifts.

The program will not disappoint embalmers and funeral directors, with discussions on both clinical and business issues. Application for approval for six continuing education units has been made to Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio, Maryland, New York and the Academy of Professional Funeral Service Practice. Breakfast, lunch, and all course materials are included. For more information or to register, visit pims.edu/continuing-education.

TERRYBEAR URNS & MEMORIALS has introduced the Infinity Cross pendant. The necklace features an infinity design that represents the endless love shared between two people. The cross is completed with a single cubic zirconia on the front. The collection is made with 316 stainless steel and is available in 14k gold-plated (bronze) or stainless finish (pewter). The pendant can hold a nominal amount of cremated remains and includes a threaded compartment for secure closure. Each piece comes with a matching 19-inch chain and fill kit.

SICH CASKET has announced the winner of its “Year of the Funeral Director” casket giveaway for December. Paul Thomas Ayers Hawkins is co-owner of Hope Valley Hawkins Funeral Service & Cremation in Clinton, North Carolina. He will receive the Sich Monarch Blue casket (oversize) featuring 18-gauge steel/gasket with Monarch Blue finish and Sky Blue crepe interior and will take delivery from Vickie Zimmerman of ADDvantage Casket Company, the Sich Casket distributor in Raleigh. Hawkins began in funeral service at age 15 by helping out at a local funeral home. His passion for caring for others led him to work with the Clinton Rescue and Fire Department for more than 20 years before returning to funeral service. He opened Hope Valley Hawkins Funeral Service & Cremation in 2009.

“We received receipt of the casket, and none too soon,” Hawkins shared. “We had a family come in that was struggling financially and was thinking about cremation. We were able to provide a blessing to them by making this casket available for their loved one.”

Hawkins is the ninth person to win a Sich casket as part of the company’s monthly giveaway. Other winners include Jack (Bill) White Jr. of Brooks & White Funeral Home in Roxboro, North Carolina; Daryl R. Berry of Lyon-DeWitt-Berry Funeral Home in Campbellsville, Kentucky; Todd Schrag of Roper and Sons Funeral Home in Lincoln, Nebraska; Todd Howell of Woodfin Funeral Chapels in Murfreesboro and Smyrna, Tennessee; Howie VanRensselaer of VanRensselaer & Son Funeral Home in Randolph, New York; Brent Shehorn of Lake Shore Funeral Home in Waco, Texas; Frank Nosek of Kuratko-Nosek Funeral Home in North Riverside, Illinois; and Larry Gould of Whitaker Funeral Home in Metter, California.

The next Sich casket giveaway drawing will be held at the end of January. To learn more about the monthly drawing and to enter, visit sich.com or rethinkyourcaskets.com/YearFD. Participants need only enter once to be registered for all drawings throughout the balance of the year.

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From the Editor's Desk...

Real Life

After more than eight years in development, more than a year in production and after premiering in film festivals and garnering enthusiastic response from audiences, Daniel Roebuck's feature film, *Getting Grace*, will be released March 23. The release comes nearly three weeks after an exclusive premiere in Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley where the movie was filmed. Roebuck, who also co-wrote and directed the film, portrays Bill Jankowski, a funeral director who has seemingly withdrawn from life and whose life is turned upside down by a 16-year-old girl dying of cancer.

Ever since I learned that this movie was being produced, I've thought about the funeral director's role in pop culture. Can you imagine if Superman's earthly identity, Clark Kent, had been cast as a funeral director instead of a mild-mannered reporter? What if the Green Hornet, Britt Reid, owned a funeral home instead of the *Daily Sentinel*? Or if Peter Parker (Spider-Man) was an intern at a funeral home rather than at the *Daily Bugle*? (It does seem like a lot of superheroes are journalists; personally, I am fine with that.)

The portrayal of funeral directors in popular culture has not diverted much from the clichés of yesteryear. Law, the one profession that might be the brunt of the most jokes in history, has its clichés as well, but hundreds of shows and movies about lawyers give the profession many opportunities to show the public a different side.

Funeral service was fortunate enough to be the focus of the award-winning PBS FRONTLINE program *The Undertaking*, which showed real-life events at an actual funeral home. But today, real life must compete with reality TV, and there have been a flurry of so-called reality shows spotlighting funeral service, including *Best Funeral Ever*, featuring the staff of Golden Gate Funeral Home in Dallas, and *Family Plots*, which ran four seasons on A&E and featured Poway-Bernardo Mortuary in Poway, California.

The HBO original series *Six Feet Under* ran from 2001-05 and featured a dysfunctional family that happened to own a funeral home. Granted, the show was noted for its realistic portrayal of "the business," but the characters quickly devolved into cartoons.

It's odd that there have not been more films or shows set in funeral homes, considering the general public's fascination with death and dying, especially of celebrities. So when a project like *Getting Grace* comes along, consider the positive effects it could have on reshaping public perception of funeral directors and funeral service. Yes, it's a movie, but very seldom are funeral directors fully developed characters.

Said Demetri Herron, whose funeral homes were used as the setting for much of the film: "I'm sure you're going to have some funeral directors nitpick some of the quirky parts of the movie, but to be honest, the storyline shows the human side of the funeral director. You sweep the pavement, you go to dinner, you're a normal person."

Getting Grace will let the viewing public get to know a funeral director, something real-life funeral directors must do more of every day.



EDWARD J. DEFORT
EDITOR

Memorial Business Journal

13625 Bishop's Dr.
Brookfield, WI 53005-6607
800-228-6332 or 609-815-8145
www.nfda.org

EDITOR

Edward J. Defort
(edefort@nfda.org)

MANAGING EDITOR

Dawn M. Behr
(dbehr@nfda.org)

GRAPHICS

Brooke Krishok
(bkrishok@nfda.org)

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