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2021 NFDA International Convention & Expo: Reunited and It Felt So Good

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NFDA

November 3, 2021



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Brookfield, Wis. – After a hiatus in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Funeral Directors Association International Convention & Expo was back. The convention, which took place, October 17-20 in Nashville, Tennessee, gave funeral service professionals a chance to reunite with colleagues, reexplore what it means to serve families, and renew their professional passion through unrivalled opportunities for learning, networking, and discovering new products and services.

The 2022 NFDA Convention drew 5,052 total attendees (3,316 attendees and 2,021 exhibitor representatives). A total of 76 international attendees, representing 13 countries and territories, participated in the 2021 NFDA Convention. The Expo Hall featured 323 exhibiting companies.

The NFDA convention proved to be an impactful experience for all who were able to attend. To help attendees build upon their foundation of skills, NFDA offered more than 30 engaging education sessions that addressed technical skills; business management; the value of ceremony; marketing and community outreach; grief and bereavement; and more. The sessions offered tangible takeaways to help funeral professionals better understand the evolving needs of families and build thriving businesses.

The Expo Hall was a highlight for many attendees because, in addition to connecting with their valued supplier partners, they also discovered new products and services they can offer to families in their communities.

Attendees also explored a variety of other special areas in the Expo Hall. In the Salute to Service Pavilion, attendees learned about benefits available to veterans. They also learned more about the Journey to Serve initiative, which is designed to connect military veterans with careers throughout the funeral service profession. The Funeral Service Foundation offers this profession-wide initiative in partnership with the ICCFA Educational Foundation.

Funeral professionals discovered the benefits a therapy dog can bring to their firm – and met puppies-in-training – in the Pause for Paws booth, sponsored by Thumbies and Ultimate Canine. Attendees took a step into the future in the Virtual Reality Technology Lounge, sponsored by Physicians Mutual.

Whether attendees donned a cowboy hat and did a two-step to up-and-coming country band Runaway June during the 11th Annual Welcome Party on the streets of Nashville (sponsored by P&P), or enjoyed an exciting Broadway musical performance on Broadway Street at the Funeral Service Museum, or learned how to perform a square dance during the 11th Annual Square Dance Saloon, attendees had a great time. The convention was a great opportunity for colleagues and friends.

Giving Hea



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Seventeen volunteers shared their time and talents with Habitat for Humanity – Williamson-Maury Counties. This year’s volunteers worked on a home that was being built for Searria Peoples, a single mother of four, in Columbia, Tennessee, about 50 miles south of Nashville. NFDA volunteers got to meet Peoples and work side-by-side with her on her five-bedroom, two-bath home. Thanks, in part, to the generosity of NFDA volunteers, Peoples will soon realize her American dream of home ownership.

NFDA thanks donors to and sponsors of its Habitat for Humanity volunteer effort in Nashville: Keeney & Basford Funeral Home, NOMIS Publications Inc., Patrick T. Lanigan Funeral Home, Nicodemus & Associates, Cooperative Funeral Fund and Matthews Aurora Funeral Solutions.

Honoring the Care and Compassion of Funeral Directors

A highlight of the 2021 NFDA Convention was the Service of Remembrance. Every day, funeral directors answer the call to be caring, compassionate guides to families that are beginning their grief journeys. During this year’s service, NFDA was honored to be joined by singer-songwriter Brad Warren, who experienced the sudden death of his son, Sage Warren, to an overdose last year.

Warren spoke of the caring funeral service professionals who served his family and helped them honor the life of his son in a beautiful and meaningful way. Brad Warren was later joined on stage by his brother Brett Warren and, together, they performed the song, “If You’re Reading This,” which has been played at many military funerals. Brad and Brett Warren co-wrote the song with the legendary Tim McGraw.

Attendees were also treated to a special video message from Vince Gill, who performed “Go Rest High on that Mountain” during the Service of Remembrance at the 2014 NFDA Convention. Gill was joined in the video by his wife, Amy Grant, and, together, they thanked funeral professionals for they extraordinary care and kindness they have shown, not just during the pandemic, but always.

As NFDA paid tribute to the essential role of funeral directors in grief and healing it also honored members of the NFDA family who died this past year.

During the Service of Remembrance, a collection was taken up for Alive Hospice in Nashville. Through the generosity of convention attendees, \$1,882 was donated to the organization.

NFDA Honors Funeral Service All Stars

During the All-Star Recognition Ceremony, NFDA recognized funeral professionals who, in 2020 or 2021, earned their NFDA Cremation Certification; NFDA Certified Preplanning Specialist; NFDA Certified Funeral Director; NFDA Service Practitioner designation; or NFDA Certified Funeral Service Practice.

NFDA also honored the 2021 National Funeral Directors Association Award from the National Funeral Directors Association for the outstanding funeral home or funeral home emerging Leaders Program.

Additional honorees included the 2021 National Funeral Directors Association Practice Center Award for the outstanding funeral home or funeral home emerging the Best of the Best of the National Funeral Directors Association.



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Award and Hall of Excellence inductees – during the All-Star Recognition Ceremony.

During the All-Star Recognition Ceremony, NFDA offered a special tribute to Dr. Carol T. Williams, the executive director of the National Funeral Directors & Morticians Association (NFD&MA). Williams will soon step away from her role with NFD&MA, a role she has held for 11 incredible years.

In presenting Williams with a plaque recognizing her accomplishments, NFDA CEO Christine Pepper, CAE, said, “Dr. Williams has been a passionate and loyal leader of NFD&MA, particularly during this past year as she guided her members through the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. Beyond the difficulties of the past year, however, she leaves behind an impressive legacy and I want to thank you for all you have done for funeral directors and our profession.”

Big Winners

During the Opening General Session, NFDA presented Passare with the 2021 NFDA Innovation Award. Coming in second place was Parting Stone; Frigid Fluid took third place. Established in 2009, the NFDA Innovation Award recognizes and promotes creativity, innovation and excellence among funeral service suppliers and vendors.

During the Closing General Session on Wednesday, NFDA also gave out fabulous prizes to attendees in the Great Big Giveaway. During Expo Hall hours on Wednesday morning, convention attendees could visit the booths of NFDA’s valued sponsors for a chance to win fabulous prizes. The winners were:

- **Grand Prize – 2022 NFDA International Convention & Expo Experience** (convention registration, travel reimbursement up to \$1,000 and a special gift from the city of Baltimore): Addison Roth, Bellbrook, Ohio
- **Ring Security System and Amazon Echo Show:** Adam Stocker, Minneapolis, Minnesota
- **Apple Watch:** Vanessa Granby, Bronx, New York
- **Amazon Echo Show:** Jeri Lynn Davenport, Benton, Arkansas; Franklin H. Raineer, Ewing, New Jersey
- **\$100 Gift Card:** Casey Holsted, Berryville, Arkansas; Valentina Wright, Tecumseh, Nebraska
- **\$50 Gift Card:** Taylor Dannenfels, Berryville, Arkansas; Jeri Lynn Davenport, Benton, Arkansas; Katey Houston, Auburn, Washington; Addison Roth, Bellbrook, Ohio; Adam Stocker, Minneapolis, Minnesota
- **\$25 Gift Card:** Monica Burchi, Appleton, Michigan; Kathie Friederich, Midwest City, Oklahoma; JaLayne Hawkins, Milton, Wisconsin; Anna Koch, Bellbrook, Ohio; Jason Meyer, Newton, Illinois; Valentina Wright, Tecumseh, Nebraska

Music City



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The NFDA Live! stage in the Expo Hall broadcast live interviews via Facebook with NFDA staff, special guests, workshop speakers and more. Recordings of these interviews can be found on NFDA’s Facebook page, www.facebook.com/NationalFuneralDirectorsAssociation – click on the “2021 NFDA International Convention & Expo” playlist in the “Videos” section). Also in this playlist is a recording of a portion of the Opening General Session, the Installation of the 2021-2022 NFDA Board of Directors and the Closing General Session.

Professional photographers captured all of the excitement of the 2021 NFDA Convention. All of the photos can be viewed at www.nfda.org/nashvillepics. Attendees may download as many photos as they like at no charge; hardcopy prints and other keepsake items are also available for purchase.

Be Charmed by “Charm City”

The 2022 NFDA International Convention & Expo will take place October 9-12, 2022, in Baltimore, Maryland.

Baltimore is writing a new chapter in its history, fueled by cultural tastemakers and creative entrepreneurs. Today’s Baltimore is a vibrant community that honors the past while keeping a keen eye on the future. In Charm City, you can see the largest public collection of Matisse in the world (for free!), sip a craft beer in the sanctuary of a converted church and stay in a four-star hotel poised atop an historic recreation pier.

The Baltimore Convention Center is located in the heart of the bustling Inner Harbor district. After a busy day at the convention center, attendees will love clearing their minds with a stroll along the waterfront promenade and networking over cocktails and bites at one of many restaurants and bars overlooking the water. The hotels along the Inner Harbor are also just steps from performances at Royal Farms Arena and cultural attractions like the Chesapeake Shakespeare Company, National Aquarium and the Reginald F. Lewis Museum.

Within walking distance of Baltimore’s Inner Harbor attendees will find lively walkable neighborhoods, each with a distinct personality. Head to Fell’s Point for a pint at the pub Edgar Allan Poe liked to visit, sip a cocktail at a swanky speakeasy bar in upscale Harbor East, or check out the renovated public market in historic Federal Hill.

Learn more about Baltimore at www.baltimore.org. Registration and housing for the 2022 NFDA Convention will open in Spring 2022 at www.nfda.org/convention.

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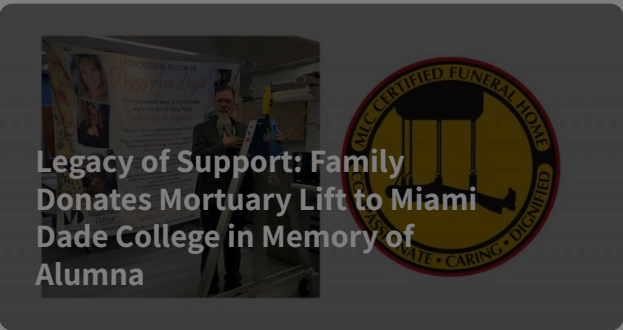
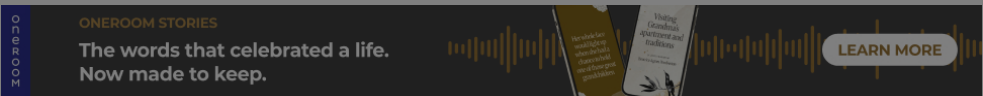
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About NFDA

NFDA is the world’s leading and largest funeral service association, serving more than 20,000 individual members who represent nearly 11,000 funeral homes in the United States and 49 countries around the world. NFDA is the trusted leader, beacon for ethics and the strongest advocate for the profession. NFDA is the association of choice because it offers funeral professionals comprehensive educational resources, tools to manage successful businesses, guidance to become pillars in their communities and the expertise to foster future generations of funeral professionals. NFDA is headquartered in Brookfield, Wis., and has an office in Washington, D.C. For more information, visit www.nfda.org.



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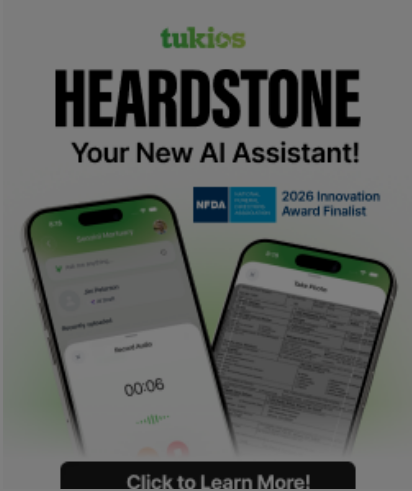
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