



## NEJC CHAMBER SPOTLIGHT: Funeral Advocates

**H**AVE YOU EVER had to plan a funeral for a loved one? Planning a funeral under duress, while sitting at a funeral home, is stressful and can be expensive.

To protect your interests, you need a wingman, a friend who's less invested and can help you make decisions with a clearer head. Funeral Advocates, LLC, can be your wingman. Founded in September 2006 by Prairie Village resident Brian O'Laughlin, Funeral Advocates helps people preplan for the inevitable.

"We function like a wedding planner, but for funerals, and we help save you lots of money," said O'Laughlin. "We understand the Kansas City market and the costs associated with the 94 local funeral providers here in town."

The staff of three at Funeral Advocates, all of whom have experienced the loss of a loved one, provides bereaved family members experienced representation. That representation comes with the knowledge and negotiating skills necessary to secure funeral products and services at the lowest possible cost.

O'Laughlin started Funeral Advocates after his father's sudden death in 1999. He learned first-hand about the vulnerability of family members during the funeral-planning process.

"As I took my mother to the funeral home, we were both dealing with a huge sense of grief and loss," O'Laughlin said. "We put our faith in the funeral director, trusting that he would help us make decisions based on what was in our best interest."

The funeral home sold his mother a casket, even though O'Laughlin's father was to be cremated. O'Laughlin has since learned that a casket is not required. That's the kind of knowledge Funeral Advocates shares with its clients.

"We encourage our clients to — pardon the pun — think outside the box," said O'Laughlin.

Funeral Advocates' on-staff hospice nurse, Jeanne Enna, RN, calls on hospice firms and senior living facilities to promote the services of Funeral Advocates and to educate families about end-of-life issues.



"Each of us is going to die someday," said Enna. "It is important to make our wishes and desires known to our family members. Funeral Advocates helps families develop a plan and make it push-button ready."

To create this push-button-ready plan, Funeral Advocates asks families or individuals to complete a questionnaire to determine what they want to happen when they die. By exploring funeral alternatives, Funeral Advocates coaches clients to their final decisions. The company functions as a buyer's agent.

"We take the clients ideal plan, shop their requirements to as many vendors as is appropriate, negotiate the costs, and recommend the best value for the client," he said. "Then we hold their hands through the entire funeral process."

And while O'Laughlin recommends preplanning, he does not recommend prepaying for services.

"You might change your mind or relocate to another part of the country," he said.

O'Laughlin recently met with a couple who had a bid from a local funeral home for direct cremation and add-on features totaling \$5,620 per person. They wanted a simple yet elegant service. The funeral home offered a memorial service with catering afterwards.

After the Funeral Advocates planning session, the couple decided to have their celebration of life at an intimate local restaurant.

"The actual cost of the mortuary services is under \$1,000 and the celebration dinner will be significantly less than the \$4,600 in additional fees," said O'Laughlin.

O'Laughlin's favorite part about advocating for grieving families is watching the stress melt from their faces.

"We refer to this as 'stress transference,'" he said. "We want our families to get their perfect memorial service without worrying that someone is taking advantage of them in their emotionally compromised state. The byproduct is saving tons of money."

# Testimonials

When you lose a child, you don't know where to start or what to do. People around you try to help, but they don't know what to do either. I was in no state of mind to be making decisions when my son died. I was put in touch with Funeral Advocates. They absolutely took care of everything. They took that task away for me. I could, then, be with my family to comfort and be comforted. I would highly recommend Funeral Advocates. They were wonderful to work with - so kind and caring.

—Mary

Words cannot adequately express to you the gratitude and love I hold in my heart for all you have done for my family. Being there for us from the very beginning and throughout was so reassuring, comforting and wonderful.

(March 25, 1018)

Your calm presence and advice helped me through some rocky waters.

—Nikki S.

As you well know, when suddenly faced with planning a funeral, it's a little overwhelming. You don't know where to turn, or what to do first. I Imagine that's part of why you started Funeral Advocates in the first place! You were just what we needed, so thank you for being there for us. I would recommend you highly to anyone!

—Robb Edmonds

I could not have gotten through this very difficult time without you.

—Pam G.

I want to thank you for your support and kindness during the difficult time of my son's passing. You have been a blessing I'll never forget. Thank you for being the wonderful men that you are.

—Carmen, Las Vegas, Nev.

I do not think that I need to tell you both how I feel about what you did for my mom and family. But just in case, you are a very rare breed of humans that the world needs more of. You guys were 'the light at the end of a very dark tunnel.' Thanks from the bottom of my heart, which is lighter because of the two of you.

—Debi H.

We consider ourselves so lucky to be connected with you two at this difficult time. Thank you so much for your genuine kindness and patience as we fumbled our way through Mom's funeral. It was perfect in my estimation. She would have been proud.

—Susan & Donna

Brian, thank you so much for doing such a wonderful job organizing Nancy's funeral. It couldn't have gone any better...I can't put into words how much I appreciated your patience and your friendship.

—Frank M.



Brian O'Laughlin, Founder of Funeral Advocates, LLC, at The National Cemetery, Leavenworth, KS

Funeral  Advocates  
compassion • competence • clarity

*For a no-obligation consultation, feel free to contact*

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