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INDEPENDENT®

September/October 2008

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER OF THE GOLDEN RULE

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- What and Whom Are We Educating?
- Retirees Find New Home at Parthemore
- The Seven Sins of Strategy



Parthemore Funeral Home & Cremation Services

Where Retirees Find a New Home

By Linda Burkley, APR

"The strong work ethic and flexibility provided by retirees of baby boomer age is a win-win situation."

In her former career as a Pennsylvania state trooper, Kathy Kauffman was accustomed to dealing with people under all types of circumstances. Now, as a part-time worker at Parthemore Funeral Home & Cremation Services, an OGR member firm in New Cumberland, Pa., Kauffman has the opportunity to continue her dedication to assisting people in difficult times and providing compassionate service.

Kauffman joins a growing number of retirees who have found that there, indeed, is life after decades of working a full-time job. Some of those retirees have found a second home with the Parthemore family, who have owned and operated their independent funer-



Steve Parthemore

al home since 1969. None of these retirees employed at Parthemore are licensed funeral directors, and they only perform duties that benefit the funeral home and the families they serve.

In a published report, Mitra Toossi, an economist with the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, cited a variety of reasons for a boom in the retiree workforce, including the fact that, since the year 2000, the retirement age has increased and Americans are living longer, healthier lives. Toossi also contends that some seniors continue to need health care coverage, and that the trend away from traditional pensions to retirement plans based on ongoing contributions gives retirees an incen-



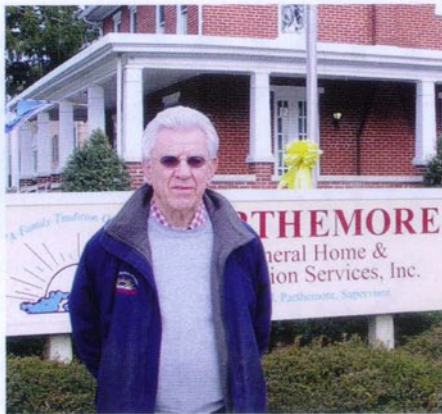
Gene Bowser

tive to keep working. She further asserts that the higher the level of education of retirees, the more likely it is that they will want to resume work activities.

A Win-Win Thanks to Boomers

Projections by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicate an annual increase of 6.3 percent in workers aged 65 to 74, bringing the total to almost 2 million in 2016. For small companies like Parthemore, the strong work ethic and flexibility provided by retirees of baby boomer age is a win-win situation, giving the company a competitive edge while providing seniors with schedules that can accommodate their active lifestyles.

The funeral home's president, Steve Parthemore, believes the company is truly blessed to have such wonderful retirees. The second-generation funeral director admits to never having to formally advertise to find good help. "Our 'part-timers' have come to us through word of mouth, old friends, church and community involvement such as Lions Club, or our involvement in local government." The retiree program has worked well for Parthemore, providing employees who have a



Wally Vernitsky

strong work ethic and even stronger roots in the community.

"It means a lot for people to see a friendly or familiar face," says Irv Kiehl, a retired flooring salesman who has been at the funeral home for about eight years. "I used to coach midget football, and at one point, I was called to pick up the grandmother of one of my former players. When he found out it was me who did it, he couldn't believe it, and I think it meant a lot to him. That's the kind of thing that makes working at Parthemore so special."

While many of Parthemore's retirees are new to the funeral business, Eugene Bowser had prior experience. A retired engineer, Bowser grew up with two uncles and three cousins in the funeral business and was accustomed to the attention to detail and customer care needed to do the job right. "The only thing definite about working at a funeral home," he says, "is that there's nothing definite."



Kathy Kauffman

Like many of the retirees, Bowser may, on any given day, be driving the hearse, parking cars, picking up flowers or greeting at a visitation. He likes the diversity, and as a lifelong resident of the area, enjoys being able to meet and greet old friends and acquaintances who stop by to pay their respects to loved ones.

Kiehl agrees and likes the flexibility Parthemore allows him and his active schedule. "I did everything I wanted to do in retirement in about the first six months," he laughed, adding that his work at the funeral home keeps him feeling productive and "out of his wife's hair." Like Bowser, Kiehl provides services such as greeting visitors, parking cars or picking up the deceased on an as-needed basis.

One of Parthemore's most noticeable retirees may very well be Walter (Wally) Vernitsky, who can be seen practically on a daily basis keeping the grounds around Parthemore in top-notch condition. The 72-year-old Vernitsky plants flowers around the property that he started as seedlings in his home, clears snow, rakes leaves and does just about anything he can to keep the outdoors in order. He sets his own hours and works as his own boss,



Irv Keihl

something far different from the 42 years he spent at the U.S. Postal Service. A self-proclaimed early riser, Vernitsky is up every day at 5 a.m. and works out at a local gym three days a week.

The Parthemore family receives plenty of compliments on Vernitsky's work and knows that his pride in what he does, along with his strong work ethic, make all the difference. Just this winter, the funeral home received a letter from a local resident complimentary of how the grounds look in every season

and noting "the kind gentleman often seen working outside."

"People see Wally out raking leaves, planting flowers, shoveling snow, whatever it takes. The community definitely notices his work, and it reflects well on our business," Parthemore says.

While all the retirees noted a sincere enjoyment in helping people, it truly is the consideration, caring and thoughtful way the Parthemore family treats their customers, their staff and their community that keeps them on

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Linda Burkley, APR, is a communications specialist at Adability, Inc., a marketing communications firm in Camp Hill, Pa., that aids professional service providers and affiliated associations fuel client growth and strengthen brand image. In addition to Parthemore, Adability provides services to the Pennsylvania Funeral Directors Association and several other funeral homes. Steve Parthemore can be reached at (717) 774-7721.

the schedule. Parthemore Funeral Home & Cremation Services has become a community steward in the central Pennsylvania area they serve. And part of the reason are the many retired ambassadors of good will who help Parthemore provide quality care, compassion and a friendly face just when families need them the most. ■



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