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Wolverine

A publication of
Michigan Cemetery Association
United Cemeteries of Michigan

December 2007

Michigan Cemetery Association 2008 Winter Conference - January 22-23 It's All About Relationships!

63rd Annual Winter Conference

Join us at the Radisson Hotel
in Lansing, January 22 & 23!

MCA Conference Co-Chairs David P. Krall and David Krall, of White Chapel Memorial Association, on behalf of the MCA Board of Directors, invite you to attend our upcoming Winter Conference.

Robert W. Aldridge, LLC, Former Senior Vice President of Sales at Forest Lawn Memorial Parks & Mortuaries in Glendale, California, will be our Guest Speaker. Mr. Aldridge's presentation is entitled:

How To Sell Your Products & Services Through Relationship Selling

Other Featured Topics:

Generating Sales Through Direct Mail and Referrals

How To Conduct a Cemetery Tour at Your Cemetery

Plan to attend this Conference with your Sales Counselors and Salespersons. Take advantage of our Special One-Day Registration for Sales Counselors and Salespersons.

Registration Contact: MCA Secretary, 810.629.2847

Conference Registration Fee: \$199

Special One-Day Registration Fee: Tuesday - \$99, Wednesday - \$75

Rates valid for Registration before January 14th. More details inside...



Legislative Reception & Luncheon

Wednesday, January 23rd

Among the most important relationships for you to build are those with your Legislators. Michigan Cemetery Association and United Cemeteries of Michigan urge you to attend our Legislative Day.

Join us and our Legislative Liaison Brett Henderson, of Governmental Consultant Services Inc. (GCSI), at our Legislative Presentation on the 23rd, from 9:00 a.m. to 9:45 a.m. Mr. Henderson will provide a legislative update; Representatives Barbara Farrah (D-Southgate) and Michael Sak (D-Grand Rapids) will be our speakers.

Michigan Senators, Representatives, their staff, and members of Governor Granholm's administration are invited to attend our Legislative Luncheon, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on January 23rd. The Luncheon will be held at the State Capitol, in Room 252.

Invite your Legislators to attend!

President's Message

Happy New Year!

The New Year, as always, brings changes. MCA will have a new President, Vice President, and new Board Members in 2008. Please give them your full support as they face the continuing challenges of these changing times. Also, please support the proposed changes to MCA Bylaws that will be voted on at our winter meetings. The Bylaws amendments would allow our regular membership to be expanded to include funeral directors. This expansion will strengthen our Association.

On a personal note, I would like to thank everyone for the support you provided to me while I served as the MCA President. It has been a very, very fast two years – time flies when you are having fun! I pledge my continued support of MCA, as we work on new trust laws, the monument dealers law suit, new membership, and assisting the state in correcting the fiasco caused by Clayton Smart.

In closing, I again ask that you invest both time and financial resources in the betterment of the Michigan Cemetery Association. We will only get better if you, and I mean **you**, get involved.

Thanks again,

Bert Edquist

MCA Winter Conference Agenda January 22 and 23, 2008 • Radisson Hotel • Lansing

January 21, 2008

5:00 p.m. - Board of Directors Meeting

January 22, 2008

8:00 a.m. - Registration and Continental Breakfast

9:00 a.m. - Welcome, MCA President Bert Edquist

9:15 a.m. - Before Need Sales - Robert Aldridge

10:30 a.m. - Supplier Introductions, Break

11:00 a.m. - Before Need Sales (session resumes)

11:55 a.m. - Nominating Committee Report

12:00 p.m. - Luncheon

1:30 p.m. - Relationship Selling - Robert Aldridge

3:00 p.m. - Break

3:30 p.m. - Relationship Selling (session resumes)

4:15 p.m. - Legal Update

4:30 p.m. - Bylaws Discussion

6:00 p.m. - Cocktail Reception

7:00 p.m. - Dinner

January 23, 2008

8:00 a.m. - Continental Breakfast

9:00 a.m. - Legislative Update, Guest Legislators

9:45 a.m. - Elections

10:00 a.m. - Break

10:15 a.m. - Matthews Representative

11:30 a.m. - Legislative Reception (State Capitol)

IMPORTANT

Please remember to extend your personal invitation to your legislators. Encourage them to attend our Legislative Luncheon & Reception.

**Register before January 14th
810.629.2847**

Suppliers - Reserve your Display Space!
Contact MCA Secretary at 810.629.2847

**MCA Summer Conference Save The Date!
Wednesday July 16 - Friday July 18, 2008
Crystal Mountain Resort, Thompsonville**

GCSI and MCA Leading The Way on Cemetery Regulation

by Brett Henderson, Governmental Consultant Services, Inc.

For the past 18 years, Governmental Consultant Services Incorporated (GCSI) has been honored to represent the Michigan Cemetery Association in Lansing. We have survived many battles and live to fight another day. That day may be fast approaching as the Legislature and State regulators look to address potential deficiencies in state law in the wake of the Clayton Smart scandal.

GCSI and MCA owners have been leading the way in recent months to develop potential changes in Michigan that will increase accountability and restore the trust we have built over generations within our communities. That trust has been scrutinized recently, after an outsider was accused of robbing 28 Michigan cemeteries of \$70 million – money previous owners had set aside to maintain those cemeteries now and in the future. As family-owned businesses, Michigan cemetery owners have rightly been very concerned by the scandal and are working hard to make a positive change.

GCSI and MCA have worked tirelessly with Attorney General Mike Cox, the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth, state legislators and other leaders to protect the financial integrity of our cemeteries and keep out modern-day grave-robbers looking to cash in. Cemetery owners and leaders across Michigan have spent the past few months working on measures to safeguard

cemetery trust fund money, and to protect Michigan's families and our beautiful private cemeteries at the same time.

Proposed legislation would tighten control of cemetery trust funds and ensure that all cemetery owners follow high standards. The new rules would prevent new cemetery owners from acting on trust funds for at least six months; improve background checks of new cemetery owners; toughen penalties against cemetery owners who violate trust funds; and tighten overall control of the trust funds.

These proposals are currently being finalized and are likely to be acted upon in the Legislature in the very near future. As we continue our legislative efforts to strengthen our cemeteries and protect our families, we also have a tremendous opportunity to share our message of increased accountability, more transparency, higher standards and positive change to the communities that cemeteries serve.

In the aftermath of the scandal surrounding individuals such as Clayton Smart, MCA members quickly worked toward a solution. On behalf of my colleagues at GCSI, we look forward to an active and productive relationship in 2008, as we continue our collective efforts to protect your right to do business against those who would seek to capitalize on the regrettable acts of one individual by casting us all in an unfairly negative light.

Top Communications Firm Byrum & Fisk Hired to Help Cemetery Owners

In an era of term limits, sustained communications is crucial to getting our message out to the public, putting us in a position of strength and influencing policymakers, opinion leaders, elected officials and the general public.

Michigan cemetery owners have an important message to share. It is a message that revolves around helping families across generations, creating local jobs, supporting the local economy, giving back to the community – and now, leading the way in protecting Michigan families in the aftermath of the recent Clayton Smart saga.

Cemetery owners now have a tremendous resource that can help us communicate our message and put us in a positive position on upcoming legislation.

Byrum & Fisk Advocacy Communications, based in Lansing, has been retained by Michigan Memorial Park to help the members of the Michigan Cemetery Association with our grassroots advocacy and communications needs as we move forward.

Byrum & Fisk Advocacy Communications is a cutting-edge communications company dedicated to advocacy communications, political and grassroots organizing, media relations, coalition-building and fund-raising.

The company is led by partners Dianne Byrum and Mark Fisk, the team that recaptured the majority in the state House by gaining 11 seats in four years. Byrum & Fisk Communications has been nationally recognized for aggressive, effective and innovative commu-

nications. The company also brings deep relationships in the Legislature and media to the table, along with a wealth of political, legislative, communications, fund-raising, organizing and media experience.

With their effective methods and strong work ethic, Byrum & Fisk can help us take the lead in the message environment on issues affecting all cemetery owners.

Byrum & Fisk has already begun laying the groundwork for a sustained communications campaign aimed at putting cemetery owners in a position of strength going forward. They are ready to help our members communicate with the public about our role in crafting new measures that will rebuild trust with Michigan families by increasing public accountability and raising standards. Byrum & Fisk has also begun a communications campaign for individual cemetery owners to tell their stories of commitment, service and giving back to their local communities.

We should not stay silent about the good work that we do. We should also communicate aggressively about our central role in proposed legislation to raise standards on ourselves to protect Michigan families.

Working in conjunction with Brett Henderson at our lobbying firm GCSI, Byrum & Fisk Communications will help us share our message of positive change and build a positive message environment that can assist us in accomplishing our goals.

You Can't Fake It

by Dave Sadler, Fenton Memorials & Vaults

I am absolutely "heck-on-wheels" when it comes to customer service. Occasionally, my enthusiasm in this area comes at the chagrin of those accompanying me. As a customer, I expect excellent service. If I don't get it, I never return to that business.

If I must endure poor service, you can be sure that I will make life as miserable as legally possible for those providing it. I consider it a teaching opportunity.

There is a busy little business products and copy store in my town that I have used for a couple of years. No matter how busy they are, I am always acknowledged when I enter. While it does make me feel special, it's not just me. I've noticed that they greet every single customer. Amazing!

Recently, I arrived at their door shortly after 5 p.m., during their afternoon rush, to pick up some flyers. Four employees were waiting on eight or nine people. As I took my place in

line, one of the ladies waved and smiled and said "Hi! We'll be with you in just a minute!" She said the same thing to the man who came in behind me, too. The best part is that she meant it!

Though having copies made and buying a few erasers might not be the most exciting shopping experience, I enjoy going to this little store. I know they want and appreciate my business.

When a customer comes through your front door, they form an opinion about your level of customer service in just a few seconds. It's a rare day when someone actually wants to come into a cemetery office. A poor first impression is an obstacle you really don't want or need. A friendly and concerned reception makes a world of difference.

How does your customer service measure up?



Advertise in 2008 issues of

Wolverine

Ad Size	Price Per Issue
Full Page	\$400
Half Page	\$300
Quarter Page	\$200
Business Card	\$125

Call 517.484.6064 for further information.



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