

Adam Grisier

Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science

It could be said that Adam Grisier was born into funeral service.

As a (soon-to-be) sixth-generation funeral director, the 21-year-old Archbold, Ohio, native grew up seeing first hand the difference a funeral director could make in a grieving family's life.

"I grew up watching my grandfather, Fred, care for families," Grisier said. "He was just so kind, caring and compassionate. I really wanted to be like him."

Still, Grisier wasn't convinced that he would be following in the family footsteps. "Early on, I thought about becoming a teacher," he said.

But when his father, Eric (who was not in the family business), died of kidney cancer in 2011, Grisier began to rethink his future. "I was 13 when my dad died," he said. "I think at that time I realized that I wanted to be there for others in their time of grief. One of the most personal and humbling things I could do is help others through their grief with humility and humanity."

Throughout high school, Grisier worked at the family firm – Grisier Funeral Homes – with his uncle, Todd, who now owns the business. He also had many long talks with his grandfather. "My grandfather is an incredible man," Grisier said. "He told me that I can't go into the business because of expectations ... if I wanted to follow in the family's footsteps it couldn't be because of expectations, it had to be because it was what I really *wanted* to do."

Grisier is set to graduate from Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science with a bachelor's in mortuary science in December, following in the footsteps of his grandfather and uncle.

"Every graduating class has a picture taken and they line the walls of the school," Grisier explained. "And when I have some free time, I love

looking at all of the people who have graduated from CCMS ... it's like a who's who of funeral service," Grisier said. "All of the history that is in those pictures ... and I will be up there soon. It's an amazing feeling."

His time at CCMS has provided a peek at the funeral professional he will be, according to Grisier's nomination letter, which was signed by three faculty members as well as Teresa Dutko, the school's academic chair; and Jack E. Lechner Jr., CCMS's president.

"Adam's interest (in funeral service) reveals an unwavering commitment to this profession and the grieving families for who he will care. For him, funeral service is a true calling," the letter read.

While at CCMS, Grisier has successfully balanced his academic work, employment at a local funeral home and leadership obligations. "Elected president of his graduating class, Adam has modeled for his peers how to be a responsible student, funeral director and community citizen," the nomination letter pointed out. "Adam is a true leader – one who leads by his own example."

One of those examples is the initiative he co-created with classmate Travis Riddle – "Pancakes with a Purpose."

"It was during a break that I started talking with Travis and told him that I had a crazy idea – let's start flipping pancakes for charity," Grisier said, explaining that many of his classmates have jobs in funeral homes but don't always have the funds to purchase work clothes. "We came up with the idea of 'Pancakes with a Purpose' as a way to raise money for dress clothes. It's a simple little thing, but it's made a difference, and in some small way I hope that in my 15 months here I've been able to leave my mark in a little way."



Outreach is a Grisier way of life. "We've been doing this since 1896 (when Grisier Funeral Homes opened its doors)," Grisier explained. "It's important to give back to the community in as many ways as possible."

Giving back for Adam Grisier includes returning to his roots after graduation.

"Archbold is one of the most supportive communities I know ... 4,500 strong," he said. "Archbold was there for us when my father died ... and I want to be there for them."

Being there for families means giving them information, laying out choices and helping families make the right decisions for them. "I think that sometimes, funeral directors – out of care – tell families what they need," Grisier said. "For me, if we give families information on traditional burials, cremation services or even green burials, we are giving them knowledge and are better able to facilitate what they need."

While there are many more options for families today, the basic concept of educating and facilitating services for families has not changed who funeral directors are, Grisier believes. "As long as we are helping families, it is not hard to be a good, kind funeral director," he said.