

DIRECTOR'S CUT

BY VICTORIA KROUSE



A Job Grows Into a Rewarding Lifestyle

It all began in high school when a very good friend of mine lost their father, and then, two months later, their grandmother. Both were unfortunate situations, and the grief was heavy. Helping them through everything cracked open a door for me.

At first, I started looking at becoming a grief counselor. But as I researched what the job entailed, it didn't seem to fit my personality and what I wanted to do. So I continued my search and came upon an article about funeral directing. Reading through it made me feel like this was a job I could potentially see myself doing.

It took a little bit for me to become fully committed to starting my path to become a funeral director. As I do not come from a family of morticians, I did a lot of research to make sure this was the career for me. Luckily, I was able to sit down with a funeral director from my hometown to get all my questions answered, including about the demand the job called for. He was very helpful, and I have always appreciated his honesty about how tough the job can be.

Of course, it was slightly odd bringing this up to my family, as I was unsure of what their reaction would be. But when I told them my intentions and plans for the future, they also found it a perfect fit for me and expressed their approval with my decision. Thankfully, they supported me from the start, and I couldn't be more grateful.

I was pretty lucky to get where I am today. It was only by chance that my graduating class at Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science (CCMS) decided to ask Mr. Ernie Heffner to be a guest speaker. If that hadn't been the case, I might have ended up working in a completely different state than Pennsylvania.

While I have been saying 'job,' after working in the funeral industry for a little over three

years, I now see it as more of a lifestyle. It certainly takes up a lot of your time, both on and off the clock, but it's also rewarding in its own way that makes up for the time and energy I put in.

What has kept me motivated throughout this journey is seeing and hearing from families I serve. Of course, while all the positive feedback I've received is heartwarming, it's always the few negative comments that really push me to change for the better and always make sure that future families I serve do not have the same experience.

In addition, accepting the President's Choice Award from CCMS President Jack Lechner for Young Funeral Director of the Year, presented during the school's 2019 Gala, has motivated me even more. It was set up in a way that I had no idea I was being sent for this purpose, and it made it more meaningful when I finally realized what was going on. It was nice to be able to attend and see my professors and some of my previous co-workers. I'm grateful to know that all the effort I've put in during the start of my career has been recognized and that I can be an advocate for women who wish to join the profession.

In the future, I hope to be able to go back to school to obtain my master's degree. I am still trying to figure out what I would study, but I know I will be working as a funeral director for at least the next 15 or 20 years. I would, of course, be ecstatic to be able to teach at a mortuary college after going back to school.

While the future holds untold stories, I look forward to working at Heffner Funeral Chapel & Crematory for as long as I am able. The knowledge I've gained from working there for the past 2½ years has been [tremendous], and I'm sure I will only continue to learn more and more as the years go on.

Victoria Krouse is a Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science graduate who is currently with Heffner Funeral Chapel & Crematory in York, Pennsylvania.