

Tidewater Community College offers funeral directing degree

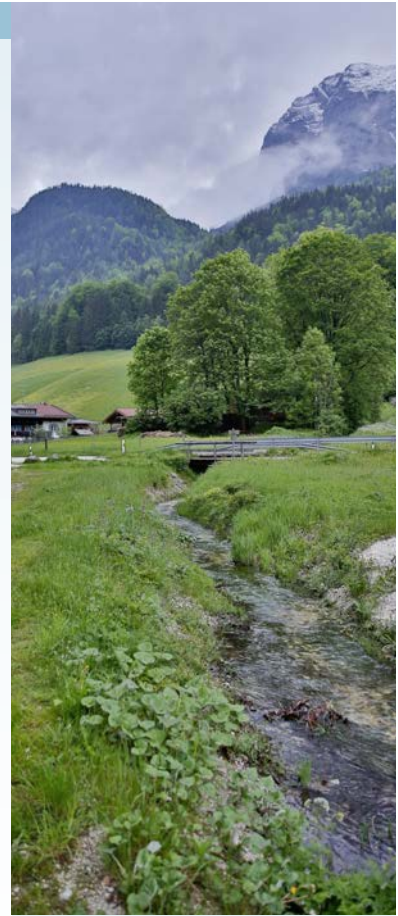
The first funeral directing degree in the state is available now at Tidewater Community College (TCC) in Norfolk. This is designed to be 100% online. It is the first college in the country to offer an associate degree in funeral directing.

The funeral directing program emphasizes business management and public speaking. It involves an externship to learn what it means to be a funeral director. The four-semester program requires 61 credits. It prepares students to be certified crematory operators and provides a path to licensure for those who don't want to be in the preparation room. This is a competitive program and requires a separate application in addition to the TCC application. Graduates can expect a starting salary around \$55,000.

TCC has an established funeral service program which is designed to prepare students for careers in mortuary science. Tyler Community College in Chester also offers a funeral service program. Like TCC, this degree emphasizes grief-related needs of the bereaved, embalming and restorative arts, burial and cremation. It prepares students for the National Board examination.

Newsletter via email

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Did you know?

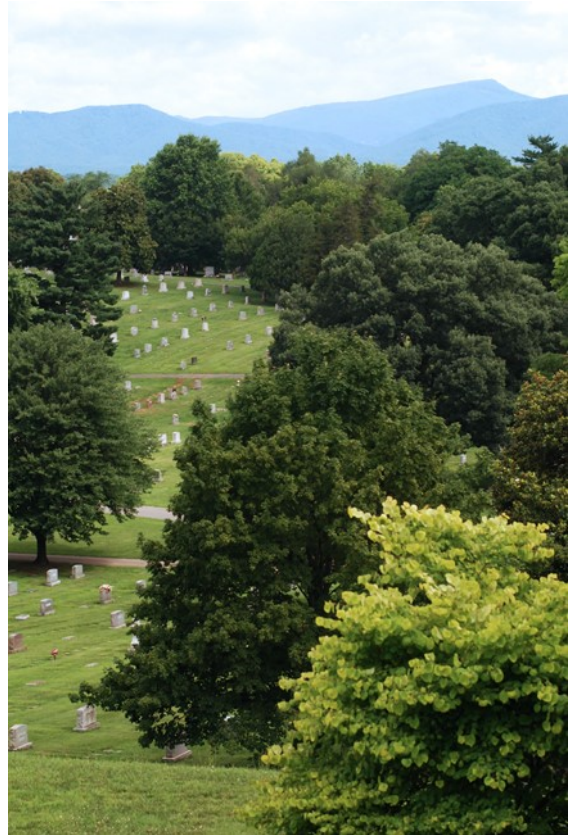
Funeral Service Provider workforce in Virginia is now 33% female.

The median age of the workforce is 54. The median income is \$60K-\$70K. Of the full-time equivalency (FTE) workers, 77% have an associates degree, 16% have a baccalaureate degree.

Southwest Virginia has an abundance of FTE workers who are funeral service providers. In our area there is 1/3 FTE for every 1,000 residents. In Northern Virginia, that goes down to .07 FTE per 1,000. Some of our less populous areas have three funeral homes, while a neighboring town of 45,000 may have just one. Supply and demand play a role in determining price.

Arboretum and cemetery in Roanoke

One of our local cemeteries, Evergreen Burial Park and Arboretum, is the only accredited arboretum in Roanoke. It has over 385 trees, native and non-native species. Designed in 1916 by the landscape architecture firm of Hare and Hare of Kansas City, this cemetery was once on the outskirts of town. Roanoke has grown up around the cemetery.



The arboretum contains several trees on the Virginia Big Tree registry, including the biggest Red Horse Chestnut tree in the state. The arboretum hosts an annual free public tree walking tour in observance of Arbor Day. It welcomes visitors to its grounds all year long. Notable people from the area are buried there including veterans from all wars back to the Civil War.

Volunteers needed

In January, we begin working on our biennial survey of funeral homes. We gather information from Abingdon to Richmond and rely on volunteers to help us. If you are interested, please send us email that you will help. We need the current General Price List of each funeral home. We send letters to the establishments and most are cooperative. However, we always need some volunteers who will make a personal visit.

Annual Report 2020-2021

Our usual activities were again curtailed by the pandemic. The health fairs and programs in which we have participated in the past were all canceled. We provided programs via Zoom and our internet presence continued to generate phone calls and emails with requests for help.

We continue to get referrals from area hospices and from VA2.1.1, a referral for local resources.

Many inquiries were for aid in paying funeral expenses. Sadly, we receive these calls often after a body is already at a funeral home, but if people call before that happens, we can provide ways to save money.

We published our biennial cemetery survey and were encouraged to see that several post their price lists online. A few still have no web presence, which is not helpful to consumers.

Outreach

Held 2 Death Cafés via Zoom drawing participants from Virginia, Florida, and Missouri

Presented programs via Zoom.

- Blacksburg PEO – Funeral Consumers Alliance (FCA)

- Virginia Tech Women’s Club – Going out Green

- Blacksburg Rotary Club – Dust to Diamonds

- Radford Rotary Club – Dust to Diamonds

- Christiansburg Library – Going out Green

- Virginia Tech Women’s Club – Getting your Ducks in a Row

Interviewed by Newsy and posted on its blog

Shared startup information with Blue Ridge Green Burial

Shared AARP partnership activities with FCA and AARP of New Mexico

Provided information - to our area and beyond, some examples:

Answered requests from our service area as well as from Chesapeake, Rockingham, Virginia Beach, Fluvanna, Norfolk, Farmville, Independence, and Charlottesville.

Out of state inquiries from California, North Carolina, New Mexico, Massachusetts, and Colorado.

Legal advocacy

Monitored the State legislature

Monitored the Board of Funeral Directors and Embalmers and gave citizen comments

Sent comments to the Federal Trade Commission

Membership

Membership was maintained at 350

Annual meeting elects board/officers

The annual meeting was held on September 28 via Zoom. Although meeting this way is difficult for people who don't feel comfortable using this technology, it does allow people who live farther away to join in. **Caitlin Crenshaw**, graduate student at Virginia Tech, spoke about her work this past summer on the history and funeral practices of Native Americans in SW Virginia.

Three board members were elected for the 2024 term. After the general meeting, board members elected officers for the coming year. See the side bar at the right for these details.



Funeral homes are first responders

Doctors, Nurses, and emergency workers are usually thought of as first responders, but funeral homes are first responders too. In this COVID pandemic, many are having a very difficult time. Staff shortages have taken their toll and coming in contact with someone who had COVID or family members infected with COVID adds another dimension making the removal process very difficult.

Mike Hamlar, president of Hamlar-Curtis Funeral Homes, was quoted in *The Roanoke Times*, "People might think funeral homes benefit financially from COVID-19, but that's a misconception. Many families are not holding services or are choosing cremation, which does have an impact on the business' bottom line."

Sammy Oakey says that they are strict with staff and guests about masks and social distancing. Serenity Funeral Home in Roanoke experienced three funerals in one day and in the midst of those came a call to pick up a body. Many funeral homes are short on staff and with this surge in deaths, it makes it very difficult to provide the service they pride themselves in offering to the public. One member of the Funeral Consumers Alliance requested Direct Cremation for her husband, but it was in the middle of the night and Serenity didn't have the staff to transfer the body to the funeral home. Serenity had to engage a removal service at an additional charge of \$300. Direct Cremation includes removal of the body so this means an extra expense to the funeral home. If the family had understood this problem for the funeral home, they would have agreed to the delay until staff was available.

Board of Trustees

2024 Term

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Todd Solberg

Phil Olson

2023 Term

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Darrel Clowes

Dianne Rencsok

2022 term

Leanne Mitchell

Helen Renqvist

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Funeral Consumers Alliance of
the Virginia Blue Ridge

PO Box 10082
Blacksburg, VA 24062

Phone: 540-953-5589
E-mail: fcavbr@gmail.com

www.fcavbr.org

Affiliated with Funeral Consumers
Alliance www.funerals.org

Kroger Community Awards & Amazon Smile

Thanks to our members who have connected their Kroger Loyalty Cards to us. If you have a Kroger Plus card, consider signing up for **Kroger Community Awards** to give a percentage of your bill as a donation to FCAVBR.

Go online to <https://www.kroger.com>. If you already have a Kroger account, simply log in. If not, you will be asked to create one. When asked to select the organization to receive your rewards, enter this number:

TK761 or type in our full name.

Amazon also supports us. At your browser, type smile.amazon.com. If you have an Amazon account, sign in and you will see the choice to select a charity. If you type in Funeral Consumers Alliance, several affiliates come up and you can scroll down to select Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Virginia Blue Ridge.