

## Funeral directors help with practical details of death

GENESEE COUNTY

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### JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

When Kristin Stambersky included a funeral project in her Family Decision Making classes at Davison High School, she wasn't sure how students would react.

"Adolescents focus on the moment; they feel immortal, and I wasn't sure they would be comfortable exploring the concepts of death and dying," Stambersky said.

In her teaching program at Central Michigan University, Stambersky took a class that focused on adolescent grief. She learned that teens experience grief very differently from adults - often not understanding the emotions they feel or what is acceptable.

"Sometimes they don't want to talk about death," she said. "It makes it too real for them, and they don't want to face that reality."

One goal of the project is to help teens comprehend the practical details of planning a funeral. They meet with a funeral director at either the Allen or Hansen funeral homes in Davison to discuss costs, casket choice, monuments and embalming.

"The visit is designed to remove the mystery that surrounds death and funerals for the students," Stambersky said.

Jim Hansen, owner of the Hansen Funeral Home, 421 N. Main St., has collaborated on similar programs at the high school and college levels for several years.

"The students have mixed responses to the assignment," Hansen said. "Some just want to get the questions answered and leave. Others are more curious. They come in with more questions about death and the funeral process."

Stambersky also asks the students to write their own memorial or obituary, and that activity focuses them on the topic of life choices. They have to think about how they will be remembered if they died today or 10 years from now.

"I've had students realize that they aren't nice to others," Stambersky said. "They see that they might be remembered for that, and it forces them to review their life and perhaps decide to make changes."

Junior Ashley Dunton thought it was a "pretty weird project at first." She approached the assignment as if she were planning her own funeral and found that she learned more than she expected.

"I went to the Allen Funeral Home. I saw the caskets and urns, and talked about cremation and death certificates," Dunton said.

Paul Allen, funeral director at the Allen Funeral Home, 9136 E. Davison Road, thought the students this year had a different attitude from previous years.

"The recent teen deaths in the community seemed to prompt more questions from this group of students," Allen said. "They tended to take the project quite seriously and wanted their parents to know what they would like for their own funeral."

Talking with people they know and trust is one of the most important aids for teens coping with loss. Counseling programs in schools following the death of a student provide a valuable resource, but grieving takes longer than a few days to resolve, especially for teens.

Stambersky said adults often disregard adolescent grieving.

"They think that because young people have limited life experiences, they won't feel deeply about loss and can get over it quickly," she said.

Actually the opposite is true, she said. Teens do feel deeply, and when first loss is experienced during adolescence, it is complicated by their lack of knowledge and preparation.

"At some level we are all ill-prepared for loss," Stambersky said. "I hope that through this project, the students will appreciate the significance of our funeral practices and rituals. That they will start to view death as a part of life - like marriage and having babies."

Here are the funeral homes in the county:

t Allen Funeral Home, 9136 Davison Rd., Davison; 653-2171; Wayne Allen.

Brown Funeral Home, 1616 Davison Rd., Flint; 239-8636; Gary Wayne.

Brown Funeral Home, Hill Road Chapel, 1480 E. Hill Rd., Grand Blanc Twp.; 606-1300; Gary Wayne.

Collins Memorial Funeral Home, 4305 Clio Rd., Flint; 787-6605; John L. Collins or Mary Broadus Piert.

Dodds-Dumanois Funeral Home, 901 Garland St., Flint, 232-0187; Donna Dodds Hamm.

Hansen Funeral Home, 421 N. Main St., Davison; 658-3136; Jim Hansen.

Hill Funeral Home, 11723 S. Saginaw St., Grand Blanc; 694-4141; Kris Niessen. E-mail: [hillfhgb@yahoo.com](mailto:hillfhgb@yahoo.com). Web site: [www.hillfhgrandblanc.com](http://www.hillfhgrandblanc.com).

Hudson Funeral Home, 116 Grove St., Otisville; 631-2525; Arden Hudson. E-mail: [arhudson@tir.com](mailto:arhudson@tir.com).

Martin Funeral Home, 1194 E. Mt. Morris Rd.; Mt. Morris; 686-2210; Miles T. Martin. Web site: [www.martinfuneralhome.com](http://www.martinfuneralhome.com).

McConnell Funeral Home, 500 Main St., Fenton; 629-2533; Maryann McConnell.

Lawrence E. Moon Funeral Home, 906 W. Flint Park Blvd., Flint; 789-6666; Lawrence E. Moon or Isha Whitaker. E-mail: [lemoonfh@bignet.net](mailto:lemoonfh@bignet.net). Web site: [www.lawrenceemoonfuneralhome.com](http://www.lawrenceemoonfuneralhome.com).

Plumb-Smith Funeral Home, 1208 N. Ballenger Hwy., Flint Twp.; 238-7657; Brady D. Smith. E-mail: [plumbsmith@ameritech.net](mailto:plumbsmith@ameritech.net).

Reigle Funeral Home Sunset Chapel, 5501 W. Pierson Rd., Mt. Morris Twp.; 732-1448; James B. Reigle Jr.

Rossell Funeral Home Inc., 307 E. Main St., Flushing; 659-6342; Ralph Rossell. E-mail: [rossell@usol.com](mailto:rossell@usol.com).

Sharp Funeral Home, 8138 Miller Rd., Swartz Creek (main office); 635-4411.

Other locations:

Bowles-Sharp Linden Chapel, 209 E. Broad St., Linden; 735-7833.

Funeral and Cremation Center, 6063 Fenton Rd., Grand Blanc Twp.; 694-4900.

Fenton Chapel, 1000 Silver Lake Rd., Fenton; 629-9321 or 877-53-SHARP; Roger L. Sharp, Jennifer L. Sharp Scully, Stephanie A. Sharp Foster, Michael T. Scully, Roger L. Sharp II or Troy M. Williams. Web site: [www.sharpfuneralhomes.com](http://www.sharpfuneralhomes.com).

Swanson Funeral Home, 2210 King Ave., Flint; 232-7469; O'Neil D. Swanson II, Vanessa Renfro.

Swartz Funeral Home, 1225 W. Hill Rd., Mundy Twp.; 235-2345; Harry C. Swartz. Web site: [www.swartzfuneralhomeinc.com](http://www.swartzfuneralhomeinc.com).

Whipple-O'Guinn Funeral Homes, 503 N. Mill St., Clio; 686-5070; or 239 E. Hickory St., Montrose; 639-6181; Don O'Guinn. E-mail: [oguinnfh@aol.com](mailto:oguinnfh@aol.com).

Wright Funeral Home, 775 E. Jamieson St., Flint; 787-1441; Marian E. Martin.

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