

August 2025



Get to Know 2025 Ambassador of the Year Paul St. Pierre

Each year, the Trust honors two individuals for their outstanding contributions to the mission and vision of the Selected Educational Trust through the Ambassador

of the Year Awards Program, sponsored by [Physicians Mutual](#). We recently sat down with Paul St. Pierre, named the 2025 Ambassador of the Year - Funeral Service Professional, for a conversation about honoring legacy and looking forward to the future.

Tell us about the history of your firm and where it is today.

“St.Pierre Family Funeral & Cremation Services is the current name of six generations of family-owned funeral service. While my heritage lies as far back as Frank W. Flanner (Flanner Buchanan Cremation Burial, Indianapolis), our current locations date to the J.C. Wilson & Company Funeral Service founded in 1897.

“One of the things I value most are the people that make our business happen—our staff. This isn’t just a workplace; it’s a team built on trust, compassion and shared purpose. I care deeply about each person who works here. The care and dedication they show to the families we serve doesn’t go unnoticed. Whether it’s the quiet attention to detail behind the scenes or the steady support offered in moments of grief, every contribution matters.

“Our staff represents the heart of our business. I’m proud to work alongside them, and I’m committed to supporting their growth, well-being, and success—because when we care for each other, we’re even better able to care for our community.”

Did you always know you were going to join the family business?

“I knew I’d be a Funeral Director in high school. I worked at a shoe store for seven years beginning at age 15. On the first day, I learned about features and benefits—in other words, basic selling. I came home and said to Dad, ‘isn’t this what you do, help the customer with explaining features and benefits?’ Of course, he knew then as well that I’d join the business.”

Who has inspired you over the course of your career?

“My inspiration is of course my father, not for just the way he operated his business, but for the path he put me on to pursue multiple core values that have guided my life. Others that have inspired me in many ways include Glenn and Marilyn Gould, Courtney Gould Miller, David Tudor, Tom and Jake Johnson, Andy Clayton, my Selected Study Group, and every board member I served alongside with at Selected.”

You have made some very generous contributions to the Trust, including the establishment of the Michael R. St. Pierre Memorial Scholarship. Why do you give?

“I choose to give because I believe education has one of the most lasting and meaningful impacts on a person's life. When you support an organization focused

on education, you aren't just funding books or buildings; you're opening doors. You're giving someone the chance to learn, grow and contribute to their community in ways they might not have otherwise. Education has a ripple effect: helping one student often helps an entire family and, eventually, future generations. My contribution helps create opportunities that can shape careers, strengthen communities and inspire others to do the same. It's not about giving for today; it's about building a foundation for a better future. That's the kind of impact that matters to me."

Lifelong learning is a core principle of the mission of the Selected Educational Trust, one that you clearly uphold. What does lifelong learning look like to you?

"My efforts in lifelong learning for funeral service are rooted in both respect for the profession and a deep sense of responsibility to the families we serve. This work requires not just technical skill, but empathy, cultural understanding and the ability to adapt to evolving needs and expectations.

"I stay committed to continuous education—whether through formal courses, certifications, attending professional conferences, or learning from peers—because funeral service is about more than tradition. It's about providing comfort, clarity and dignity during some of life's hardest moments.

"By investing in my own learning, I ensure that I can offer families thoughtful guidance, uphold the highest ethical standards and stay informed about new practices in a variety of areas. Lifelong learning helps me serve with both competence and compassion."

Tell us about your family and what you do outside of the funeral home.

"No question, I'm most proud of my family. My wife joining the business has been a spark to how we operate. My son, Avery, is a successful college graduate working in Cincinnati; my son, Ryan, is a college student with much eagerness for his musical talents and our funeral profession. Both are possibly on the cusp of joining the family business. At home, we never have a quiet night; we are usually with family or friends. We travel as much as possible as well, with many frequent trips to Fort Myers Beach."

Be an Ambassador Envoy! Make a gift to the Trust in honor of this year's Award recipients and be recognized as an Ambassador Envoy to show your support of these outstanding professionals.

Make a Gift in Paul's Honor



Trust to Award \$5,000 to One Lucky Student in Georgia

Congratulations to Payton Twilley, the 2024 recipient of the Ralph S. Turner Memorial Scholarship, on her graduation from Gupton-Jones College of Funeral Service! Payton was presented the award earlier this summer by Cy Hume of A.S. Turner & Sons.

Applications for the 2025 Ralph S. Turner Memorial Scholarship are now open. This scholarship will grant one \$5,000 award to a student graduating from mortuary science school in the state of Georgia in 2025 or 2026. The deadline to apply for this scholarship is October 31.

[Apply Now](#)



Introducing Our Four Most Recent Scholarship Recipients

The Board of Trustees of the Selected Educational Trust has awarded four scholarships totaling \$9,500 this spring. Recipients of the Second-Career Scholarships include two students awarded scholarships sponsored by Gunderson Funeral Home, as well as one recipient of the [Michael R. St. Pierre Memorial Scholarship](#).

Each recipient brings a powerful personal story and deep commitment to the profession. “My goal is to become a licensed funeral director and embalmer so I can give back to my community by guiding others through grief, with dignity and respect,” said McCann. “Being able to have support from scholarships and from mentors, knowing that you’re on the right path — that’s what this scholarship has meant to me,” said Pickrell. “I’m currently interning as a funeral director and embalmer with the goal of owning my own mortuary service one day. This support brings me closer to that dream,” said White.

In addition, the Trust awarded the [Mark and Nancy Justen Memorial Scholarship](#) to Amber Swedberg, attending Worsham College of Mortuary Science in Wheeling, IL. Established in 2025 through a generous donation from Robert Justen of Justen Funeral Home & Crematory, McHenry, IL, this scholarship provides a \$5,000 award to a student enrolled in a mortuary science program in the Midwest.

“This scholarship is really such a blessing,” said Swedberg. “As a single mom of five who doesn’t really get any help, finances are always so hard. Now I can go into residency week with confidence. I can just actually focus on what I’m doing and not have that worry in the back of my mind.”

[Watch](#) their acceptance videos to hear more of their stories. Applications for the next round of [Second-Career Scholarships](#), sponsored by [Chptr](#), are now open and due by **October 31**.



Are You Excited for This Year's Silent Auction? We Sure Are!

It's almost here! Our auction donors just keep outdoing themselves; check out just some of the items that could be yours as part of this year's Silent Auction:

- Vincero The Sapphire Trio Bracelet
- Solo Stove Ranger 2.0 smokeless portable fire pit
- Six pack of mixed Red Wines from New Mexico's Sheehan Winery
- Marc Jacobs Softshot Denim Chain Bag
- Breville Bambino Plus Espresso Maker
- Tory Burch Kira Quilted Metallic Leather Card Case
- Four tickets to a Cubs game
- Four tickets to a Red Sox game
- Two handcrafted custom shirts from M. Kenny

Been thinking about donating an item? There's still time and it couldn't be simpler! Just submit an online form describing your item and email a photo to [Ashley Gottlieb](#) by **August 29**.

All auction proceeds go directly to supporting the Trust's scholarships and programs.

Donate an Item to the Auction



Unlock the Tax Benefits of Your Charitable Contributions

In this month's issue of the Trust's Guide to Smart Giving, written by Chad Davidson of Good Fellow CFO, we dive into charitable deductions. Charitable giving is a powerful way to make a positive impact on the world while also benefiting from tax savings. By understanding how to maximize the tax benefits of your donations—whether through itemizing deductions, bunching contributions, donating appreciated assets, or using tools like Donor-Advised Funds—you can ensure that your generosity has the greatest possible effect, both for the causes you care about and your financial health. [Read more about maximizing the tax benefits of your charitable contributions.](#)

Thank You to Our Donors

July 1 - 31, 2025

Answering Service for Directors (ASD), Kevin Czachor, Media, PA
Busch Funeral and Crematory Services, James H. Busch, Cleveland, OH (*In memory of Frank Dawson, James Rawlings, and James Weber*)
C.R. Lyons & Sons, Inc., Clarence R. Lyons, Danvers, MA Flanner Buchanan, Indianapolis, IN (*In honor of Paul St. Pierre and Lisa Baue*)
French Funerals & Cremations, Tom Antram, Albuquerque, NM (*In honor of Paul St. Pierre*)

and Lisa Baue)

Geisen Funeral, Cremation & Reception Centre, Larry Geisen, Crown Point, IN *(In honor of Paul St. Pierre and Lisa Baue)*

Haisley Funeral and Cremation Service, Richard F. Haisley, Fort Pierce, FL

Hinsey-Brown Funeral Service, Inc., Kevin D. Brown, New Castle, IN *(In honor of Paul St. Pierre and Lisa Baue)*

Johnson Consulting Group, Jake J. Johnson, Scottsdale, AZ *(In honor of Paul St. Pierre and Lisa Baue)*

Keohane Funeral Home, John E. Keohane, Quincy, MA *(In honor of Paul St. Pierre and Lisa Baue)*

Larkin Mortuary, Lance C. Larkin, Salt Lake City, UT *(In honor of Paul St. Pierre and Lisa Baue)*

Luce, Luze & Reck Funeral Homes, Tiffany Hofer, Miller, SD *(In honor of Paul St. Pierre and Lisa Baue)*

Panbaker Funeral Home & Cremation Care Center, Inc., C. Michael Newman, Hanover, PA

Pines Funerals, Robert Nunnaley, Carthage, NC

Washburn-McReavy Funeral Chapels, Inc., William McReavy, Minneapolis, MN

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