

July 2026



**TRUST
UPDATES**

To provide the best educational opportunities for the advancement and support of all who work within and for the independent funeral service profession.



PREPARING FOR A JOB INTERVIEW

FREE ONLINE COURSE

New Free Online Course Helps Future Funeral Service Professionals Launch Their Careers

The Selected Educational Trust is excited to announce the launch of *Preparing for a Job Interview*, a free online course designed to help funeral service students, recent graduates, apprentices, and early-career professionals confidently prepare for their first—or next—career opportunity.

Finding the right position can be challenging, especially when navigating résumés, cover letters, interviews, and job offers for the first time. Developed specifically for the funeral service profession, this self-paced course provides practical guidance and profession-specific insights that help participants stand out as qualified, compassionate, and professional candidates.

Throughout the five-unit course, learners will explore topics including:

- Beginning the job search
- Creating résumés and cover letters that stand out
- Building a professional presence online and in person
- Interview preparation and performance
- Following up after interviews and evaluating job offers

The course is offered as part of the Trust's Workforce Development Tools, powered by Global Atlantic Financial Group. These resources are designed to strengthen the future of funeral service by connecting employers with emerging talent while providing students and professionals with tools that support long-term career success.

A Special Thanks to Our Host Partner

The Trust is especially grateful to [Certified Safety Training](#), the premier provider of online OSHA safety training, for generously partnering to host the course on its learning platform at no cost to learners. Their support makes it possible for this resource to remain freely available to anyone pursuing a career in funeral service.

Whether you are preparing for your first apprenticeship, exploring a new opportunity, or advising the next generation of funeral service professionals, *Preparing for a Job Interview* offers practical tools to help candidates navigate the hiring process with confidence and professionalism.

Program directors, educators, employers, and supporters of funeral service education are encouraged to share this free resource with students and early-career professionals.

Get the Course



Get to Know 2026 Ambassador of the Year John Wild

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 John Wild, named the 2026 Ambassador of the Year - Funeral Service Professional, for a conversation about serving his community and lifelong learning.

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

“LeRoy Dunn opened Dunn’s Funeral Home in 1913 and was a founding member of National Selected Morticians. He moved his business to its current location in 1926. In 1978, Charles ‘Chuck’ Iles acquired Dunn’s Funeral Home from the family of LeRoy Dunn. Chuck always considered membership in NSM an honor. The mission and values of the organization lined up with his own views of how families should be served. He never wavered in his commitment to the organization.

“I joined Iles Funeral Homes as a funeral director in 1983 and served families at both Dunn’s and Westover Chapels. Over the years we have acquired and built a number of funeral homes, now serving families with 7 chapels across central Iowa.

“When Chuck Iles hired me, I had just finished my internship with the Overton Funeral Home in Indianola, Iowa. I worked as a funeral director, embalmer and assumed responsibilities of the crematory. Over the years my duties grew to

include those of a Chapel Manager and then General Manager. Through it all I was still able to serve families as a funeral director.

"Iles Funeral Homes has been committed to find ways to serve our families in ways that are meaningful to them. Over the years this has meant investments in technology, infrastructure and most importantly in our staff. We have graphic designers, a video team, talented administrators, pre-need counselors, a dedicated care team, and arranging directors that utilize all of these teams to meet the needs of our families. As an organization, we are quite proud of our team and the impact that they have on the families we serve."

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?

"Our firm is committed to lifelong learning. We encourage our funeral directors to participate in a variety of continuing education opportunities. Over the years they have chosen to attend NFDA meetings, various vendor seminars, conventions, and of course Selected Roundtables, Selected NexGen Seminars, Selected Spring Management Summits (miss those) and Selected Annual Meetings. Personally, of all the educational opportunities I was able to take part in, I always looked forward to attend Selected events. I always came home with something that improved my performance or shared with team members."

What does membership in Selected Independent Funeral Homes mean to you?

"It is hard to put a value on the impact that our membership in Selected has provided. Although attendance at Selected events is important, it is the relationships that are built at those events that provide the most benefit. I can't tell you how valuable it has been to our firm to be able to connect with our peers, to share best practices, and to learn from each other's successes and mistakes. Donating to the Selected Educational Trust is a way to give back to the organization in an area that is so important to the future of funeral service."

You retired from your position as General Manager earlier this year. How does that feel?

"We had been working on this transition for a year or so, but as the date neared, I needed to clean out my office. Over the course of my 42 years at Iles Funeral Homes, I accumulated a number of plaques, certificates, awards, etc. They were all very nice, but none of those compared to the heartfelt notes I received from the families I had the opportunity to serve. This is a wonderful profession, and we are so lucky to be able to assist families in ways that have such profound meaning to them."

Iles Funeral Homes has an extensive history of giving, including support of the Selected Educational Trust. Can you speak to the firm's philosophy of giving?

"In addition to the organizations that most funeral homes support in their communities (churches, hospices, veterans' groups, etc.), Iles Funeral Homes has made a commitment to the Arts. The Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines Metro Opera, Des Moines Symphony, Ballet Des Moines, Des Moines Performing Arts, Shakespeare on The Lawn, Iowa Stage Theatre Company, and BRAVO of Greater Des Moines are a few of the Arts organizations we support. We believe the Arts nourish the soul of our community. In addition to financial support, we make in-kind donations, serve on boards and committees and attend many events, once again building relationships within our community."

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

"My wife Peggy and I have been married for 44 years and have 4 children, all of whom have picked wonderful life partners. We have 2 grandchildren and are fortunate to have them live in Des Moines enabling us to be present in their lives.

"Our family are fans of the Boston Red Sox. Over the years we have traveled to watch them play around the Midwest and have taken the family to see them play at Fenway Park. I also like eating and making ice cream. I enjoy creating seasonal flavors and sharing those with family, friends and a number of non-profit organizations we support."

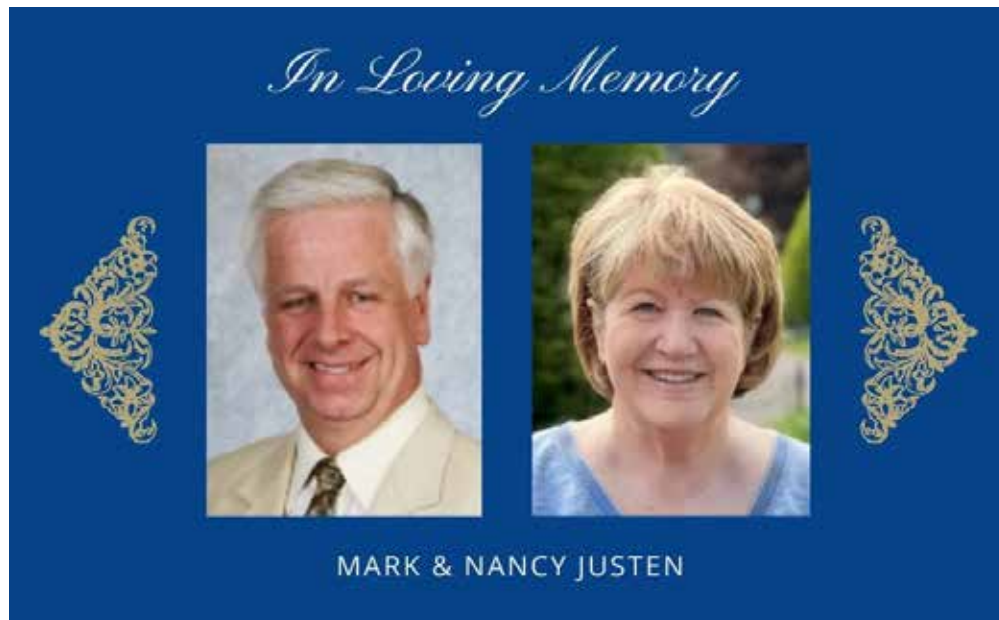
Be an Ambassador Envoy! Make a gift to the Trust in honor of this year's Award recipients and be recognized as an Ambassador Envoy to show your support for these outstanding professionals.

Make a Gift in John's Honor



Farewell and Good Luck, Ashley!

If you have made a donation to the Trust, applied for a scholarship, participated in a Silent Auction, attended a Selected Annual Meeting or interacted with the Trust in just about any way over the last three years, chances are that you had a pleasant exchange with the Trust's Administrative and Marketing Assistant, Ashley Gottlieb. Ashley has been an integral part of the Trust and Selected, but now we bid her farewell. Ashley has accepted an offer to complete her Master of Fine Arts at Colorado State University and will begin teaching and taking classes full-time this fall. Her last day with the Trust will be Thursday, July 30. Congratulations Ashley! We are so proud of you for your pursuit of lifelong learning and know you will thrive in this exciting new endeavor. [Send Ashley your well wishes.](#)



Applications Now Open for the Mark and Nancy Justen Memorial Scholarship

The Selected Educational Trust is now accepting applications for the [Mark and Nancy Justen Memorial Scholarship](#), which will award one \$5,000 scholarship to a student enrolled in a mortuary science program located in the Midwest. Applications must be submitted by October 31.

Established in 2025 through the generosity of Robert Justen of Justen Funeral Home & Crematory in McHenry, Illinois, the scholarship honors the extraordinary lives and lasting contributions of Mark and Nancy Justen. It supports aspiring funeral service professionals while celebrating two individuals whose dedication to service, education, and compassionate care continues to inspire others.

This scholarship builds on the legacy of the former Mark L. Justen Memorial Scholarship, which was awarded annually from 2021 through 2023 as part of the Trust's Second-Career Scholarship Program. Today, the expanded scholarship continues the Justen family's commitment to supporting the next generation of funeral service professionals.

Apply Now



There's Still Time to Join the Winner's Circle

The race isn't over yet! There's still plenty of time to enter the **Winner's Circle Raffle** and support the Selected Educational Trust while competing for an outstanding lineup of curated prizes.

Leading the field is our **Bourbon Collector's Bundle**—a prize package featuring five exceptional bottles that any bourbon enthusiast would be proud to own:

- Colonel E.H. Taylor Straight Rye
- Blue Run Kentucky Straight Golden Rye Whiskey
- Old Forester Single Barrel, Barrel Strength
- Blanton's Straight from the Barrel
- Old Louisville 7-Year Double Oaked Single Barrel #16/160

Tickets are just **\$25 each**, with progressive discounts available when you purchase multiple entries, giving you even more opportunities to win. The winning ticket will be drawn during the Selected Educational Trust Reception at Annual Meeting in Louisville on **September 2**, but the excitement doesn't stop there.

Additional raffle items will continue to be announced throughout the summer, offering even more chances to participate and win.

Every ticket purchased directly supports the Selected Educational Trust's mission to provide scholarships, workforce development initiatives, leadership programs, and educational opportunities that strengthen the future of independent funeral service. Don't wait until the final stretch—purchase your tickets today and help advance the profession while earning your chance to join the Winner's Circle.

Enter the Winner's Circle

Thank You to Our Donors

June 1-30, 2026

Answering Service for Directors (ASD), Kevin Czachor, Media, PA
Baue Family Charitable Fund, Lisa Baue, Parker, CO (In memory of David Baue)
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Michelotti-Sawyers Mortuary & Crematory, Seve Michelotti, Billings, MT
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Raymer-Kepner Funeral Home, John and Claudia Kepner, Huntersville, NC

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