

ASK THE EXPERTS

Women serving the funeral needs of the community with different perspective



Above
(Left) Randi Goldstein Casey (Right) Eileen Norman Perice owners and funeral directors

Over the years we decided that we could be more than just funeral directors. We are grief counselors, providing essential support before, during and after the funeral.

Q - What has changed in funeral planning since you started in the business?

A - (Randi) I started working for Goldsteins' when I was 18, and I saw how we helped people. Families who were struggling with their loss. I think that's why I tend to take the hardest cases, working with parents who lost of a child, or a death caused by some

Q - When did you become a funeral director and what sets you apart?

A - (Eileen) I have been a licensed funeral director for almost 40 years. I became a partner in 1991 when my father Albert S. Norman died, I was 34 years old with three young children. It was through my grief that I realized there was more that I could do for our families and community at large. It's not until you experience a death that you understand the difference between sympathy and empathy. I think as a woman and a mom, I listen and let people talk, so that I can get to know them a little more on a personal level to find the right arrangements for them.

Local funeral directors and owners of Goldsteins' Rosenberg's Raphael-Sacks, located in Philadelphia and Bucks County, and Roth-Goldsteins' Memorial Chapel in Atlantic City, Eileen Norman-Perice and Randi Goldstein Casey are 3rd generation directors with nearly 40 years of experience. With a focus on education and well-developed listening skills, these two women have helped to facilitate a change in the family-owned business and the industry. Both are granddaughters of the original owners and entered the business at a time when few women were becoming funeral directors.

traumatic experience/accident, because I know that I am helping them through their tragedy. Over the years we decided that we could be more than just funeral directors. We are bereavement counselors, providing essential support before, during and after the funeral. We made a shift years ago as a company to be more available, giving families our cell phone numbers and walking them through not just the funeral but the entire grieving process. Eileen is a certified bereavement facilitator, and she helped me to get educated as well, because we knew that it was another avenue to helping families. We spend time listening to our families, sometimes we cry, sometimes we laugh, but more importantly we aid them in getting through the hardest times in their lives.

Q - How has education played a role in funeral planning?

A - (Eileen) At our Broad Street location, I created one of the first grief support libraries, that was open to the whole community regardless of religion. Next, I developed a safe room for children, where they could draw, write a letter to give to their loved one that died, they could role play with puppets to express how they were feeling or just play until the religious service began. More recently, we started a campaign to explain why as Jews we do what we do when someone we care about dies. This includes explaining things like, why we wash and dress the body, why we use a liner, and why we wear a stroud. Most people don't know why, but once we explain it, they are free to make educated decisions about their loved ones.

Q - Why should someone pre-arrange a funeral?

A - (Randi) I say this all the time, pre-planning a funeral is a gift. Your family knows your wishes, and that takes so much of the stress and high-emotions out of planning. When we sit down with someone to discuss pre-planning, we explain the options and if they want something different, we provide them with cost conscious alternatives. Every funeral and every family are different, and we can customize the service to reflect the family's wishes. We encourage them to talk with their family about the plans they've made. It's important that their family understands why they chose what they did. No question, it's a hard conversation to have, but it's so important. There are also the legal and financial benefits to pre-arrangements as well, and we explain all of that in our initial meetings.



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But will appreciate forever**

Providing funeral counseling and pre-need arrangements

Pre-planning a funeral is a gift. Anyone who has ever lost a loved one knows how hard it is to make decisions at a time of grief. Let your family know your wishes, don't burden them with the costs of a funeral, and allow them to celebrate the life you lived. Our experienced funeral directors can guide you through the process, and assist you in making tough decisions.

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