



# eNews

A monthly news update for the Wilbert® Licensee Network

May 2025

## upcoming events

**April 30-May 3, 2025**

*ICCFA*

Las Vegas, Nevada

**July 5-9, 2025**

*NFDMA*

Secaucus, New Jersey

**August 6-8, 2025**

*CANA*

Phoenix, AZ

**September 15-18, 2025**

*Catholic Cemetery Convention*

Anaheim, California

**September 21-24 2025**

*WMA Annual Meeting*

Beaver Creek, Colorado

**October 26-29, 2025**

*NFDA*

Chicago, Illinois

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## Any Personnel Changes for the Directory or eNews Subscription?

Kindly report any changes in your Licensee information to Susan Barry at [sbarry@wilbert.com](mailto:sbarry@wilbert.com) or call Susan at 708-865-1600 at your first opportunity when changes occur. Thank you!



## We'd Like to Hear from YOU!

What have you found that works in your experience? Anything poignant or tastefully funny that you would like to share? Old photos of Wilbert products or employees from days gone by that would be interesting? Please email your stories to Susan Barry at [sbarry@wilbert.com](mailto:sbarry@wilbert.com). If you're not comfortable writing, don't worry – we will be happy to help.



## Death and Design: The Customization of Concrete Vaults in Modern Funerals

In a quiet warehouse in the state of IA, a team of workers smooth out wet concrete inside a steel mold, just as they've done countless times before. But this particular concrete burial vault isn't just any box—it's being custom-painted with a soft lavender hue, embossed with artwork, and finished with a bronze nameplate etched in a flowing script. The design was chosen by the deceased's daughter, who wanted to honor her mother's favorite color and lifelong love of art.

Welcome to the surprisingly personal world of custom burial vaults—where concrete meets creativity, and identity lives on beneath the soil.

### From Gray to Grand

Traditionally, concrete burial vaults were purely utilitarian: unadorned, gray, and built to last. Their purpose was—and largely still is—to protect the casket from collapsing under the weight of the earth and to maintain the neat, flat appearance of cemeteries over time.

Families are opting for vibrant color finishes, honoring line of duty heroes with images, religious symbols, military emblems, floral motifs, and even team logos. Some of our licensees offer fully customized designs, letting families submit artwork, favorite quotes, or even photographs to be etched or embedded in the cover.

"It's about honoring a life, not just burying a body," says Luke Collier, Director of Sales & Marketing for Wilbert Funeral Services, one of the largest producers of burial vaults in the United States. "People want something that reflects the personality, the passions, and the story of their loved one."

The shift in burial vault aesthetics reflects broader changes in how Americans think about death. While the funeral industry once leaned into uniformity and solemnity, today's services are more about celebration, storytelling, and individual expression.

It makes the goodbye feel more meaningful."

## Honoring a True Hero: Matthew Forand

We were deeply moved to receive the handwritten card and images from the mother of fallen firefighter Matthew Forand. Please know that our hearts go out to the Forand Family.

At Wilbert Funeral Services, we consider it an immense privilege to have been able to play a part in providing the SST Triune® Burial Vault for Matthew's final resting place. His sacrifice in the line of duty is an embodiment of the courage and dedication that our first responders show every day, and we are humbled to have been part of this process to ensure that his legacy is marked with the dignity and respect he so rightfully deserves.

We are especially grateful to Keating Wilbert Vault Co., Inc. of Wilbraham, MA for their generous donation of the vault and graveside service, and the recognition of the fallen firefighter's sacrifice. Their support in this time of grief has been an example of the strength of our shared commitment to honoring the service and sacrifice of those who give everything to their communities.

The images and card from Matthew's mother touched us deeply, and we know that the gravesite and vault will stand as a lasting tribute to her son's bravery and selflessness.

We hope that, through the vault and the graveside service, Matthew's family and loved ones find comfort, knowing that his heroism will never be forgotten.



Dear Dale L. Cameron

The day we buried our son, I was overwhelmed with the beauty of the vault that was donated along with the beautiful inscription.

We have reached out many times to the Department to know the donor of such an amazing tribute.

Only yesterday, March 20<sup>th</sup> did the Fire Chief drop off that information.

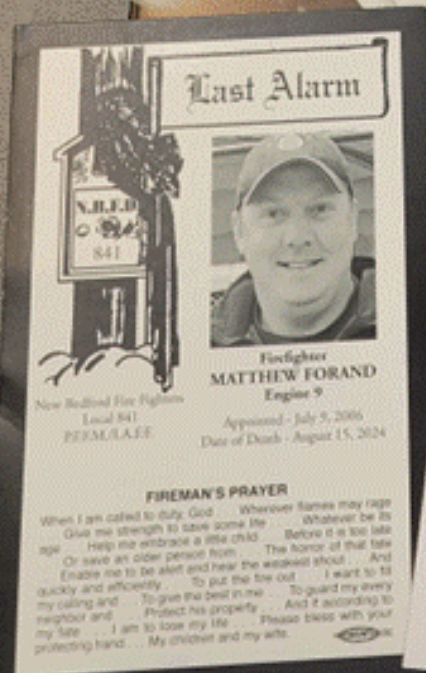
The Family of Firefighter Matthew E. Forand want you to know how grateful we are for that amazing gift.

As his mother, it is comforting knowing his remains are in such a beautiful vault.

We will always be grateful

Sincerely,

The Forand Family





## Wilbert Monticello® Vault: A Testament to Durability and Excellence

At Wilbert Funeral Services, we are proud to offer the **Wilbert Monticello vault**, a product that has earned a reputation for exceptional quality and reliability. Engineered to provide unparalleled protection for your loved ones, the Monticello vault is the result of decades of innovation and craftsmanship.

- **Superior Strength and Protection:** Designed with advanced materials and reinforced walls, the Wilbert Monticello vault provides maximum protection against the elements. Its durable structure ensures your loved one's resting place remains safe and intact for generations.
- **Weather Resistance:** Built to withstand the harshest conditions, the Monticello's advanced seal technology prevents moisture and contaminants from affecting the contents inside. Whether it's extreme temperatures, flooding, or soil movement, this vault offers unmatched security.
- **Aesthetic Design:** Not only does the Monticello vault offer strength and protection, but it also features a sleek and dignified design that can be personalized to reflect your family's wishes.

### Disinterment Reports: Evidence of Excellence

We take immense pride in the quality of our products, and recent **disinterment reports** have confirmed the Wilbert Monticello vault's performance in the most rigorous conditions. These reports, conducted by professionals in the funeral industry, highlight the vault's lasting durability and protective qualities.

### Key Findings from the Disinterment Reports:

- **Intact Structural Integrity:** Disinterment reports show that the Monticello vaults, even after years of burial, remain fully intact with no visible signs of degradation. The reinforced concrete and seal technology have proven to be effective in keeping the vault's contents safe and secure. These reports state reinterment was performed.
- **No Evidence of Moisture or Contamination:** After years of being underground, these vaults showed no signs of environmental damage. This confirms that the Monticello vault's protective seal does its job in keeping the contents safe from outside elements.

The Wilbert Monticello vault isn't just a product; it's a promise of excellence. The findings from the disinterment reports reinforce that our vaults provide unparalleled protection, and we stand by the craftsmanship and durability that make them a trusted choice for families across the country.

This not only highlights the Wilbert Monticello vault but also uses disinterment reports as evidence of its exceptional quality. It reassures customers of the vault's ability to withstand the test of time and environmental challenges, ultimately building trust in the product.



## A Fascinating Industry

The burial vault industry is a fascinating blend of tradition, innovation, and unexpected cultural significance. While most people don't think about burial vaults until they need one, these concrete containers have a deeper story—literally and figuratively.

**Here's something interesting:** The burial vault industry originally evolved not just to protect the casket, but to address a public health concern. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, grave sites were prone to collapse due to the weight of the soil and environmental conditions. In older cemeteries, this led to disturbing sights—caved-in graves and exposed coffins. Burial vaults came into play to prevent this, maintaining the integrity of cemetery grounds.

But beyond their practical use, burial vaults became symbols of status and permanence. Some vaults are lined with materials like copper or bronze, and can be customized with emblems, religious symbols, or even art. There's a surprising amount of craftsmanship and engineering behind something that most people never see.

And here's a quirky detail: The vault industry also played a role in space age tech. The same manufacturing techniques used in vault linings—such as protective sealants and reinforced structures—have parallels in aerospace engineering. Some companies even shared suppliers or technologies with the aerospace sector during the mid-20th century.

Plus, the industry has quietly supported famous funerals, including those of Presidents, celebrities, and cultural icons. Behind many of these historic burials is a vault, carefully constructed to preserve dignity and heritage for generations.

### Some of the famous people who have been buried in Wilbert vaults include:

Louis Armstrong, American jazzman	Senator Robert F. Kennedy
Pearl S. Buck, Nobel laureate author	Peter II, exiled king of Yugoslavia
Harry Caray, Chicago Cubs broadcaster	Gregor Piatigorsky, famed cellist and teacher
Richard J. Daley, Mayor of Chicago	Ezio Pinza, operatic singer
Jimmy Dorsey, American band leader	Elvis Presley, the "King of Rock 'n Roll"
President Dwight D. Eisenhower	Gilda Radner, comedienne
Mamie Eisenhower	Betsy Ross, creator of the first American flag
President Herbert Hoover	Rosalind Russell, actress
Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey	Frank Sinatra, popular vocalist
Conrad Hilton, businessman	Adlai E. Stevenson, U.S. ambassador to the U.N.
President Lyndon B. Johnson	Miles Standish, early colonial military leader
Joseph P. Kennedy, patriarch of the Kennedy family	John Wayne, actor
Rose Kennedy, mother of President John Kennedy	Harold Washington, Mayor of Chicago
President John F. Kennedy	Thornton Wilder, American playwright
Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis	

## **"What are the things that you can't see that are important?"**

"I would say justice, truth, humility, service, compassion, love. They're the guiding lights of a life." – Jimmy Carter

**The Carters' graves are situated within a memorial garden, designed by Rosalynn Carter.**

The Carter Home and Garden is currently closed to the public. The park is developing a plan to provide future access to the memorial garden and burial site.

Rosalynn Carter was interred on November 28, 2023, following her passing on November 19, 2023. Jimmy Carter was interred on January 9, 2025, after his passing on December 29, 2024. They rest in a modest plot within their former residence, now part of the park. Their graves are surrounded by a memorial garden designed by Rosalynn Carter. It overlooks a pond they built together and loved to visit. The simple headstones reflect their humble and down-to-earth nature.

The burial site of Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter at Jimmy Carter National Historical Park is a place of reflection and remembrance, honoring the legacy of the 39th President of the United States and the former First Lady.



## WilbertEDU® April Recap

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On April 3, Jill Lazar presented ***The Art of Active Listening and Other Ways to Build Stronger Arrangement Conference Skills*** to almost 700 funeral professionals. This webinar focused on elevating funeral professionals' arrangement conference skills by emphasizing the power of empathy, active listening, and personalized care. Attendees explored the nuances of the grieving process, learning how each family's experience is unique and how emotional challenges may influence interactions during arrangements. The session covered practical strategies for creating a comfortable environment, reading nonverbal cues, building rapport, and navigating difficult conversations with sensitivity. Participants also learned how to tailor services, provide relevant resources, and offer meaningful follow-up care. The key takeaway: by improving communication and truly listening with compassion, funeral professionals can create more supportive and healing experiences for the families they serve.

On April 17, David Hicks returned to the WilbertEDU stage to present ***Cosmetic Treatments***. In this presentation, David demonstrated a range of cosmetic and restorative treatments for trauma cases. The session covered techniques for addressing simple ecchymoses and concluded with demonstrations of basic cosmetic applications. David also showcased the use of both Necromantic Cosmetics and Oil-Based Cosmetics in the treatment examples presented. At the end of the talk, attendees had a clearer understanding of the cosmetics and techniques demonstrated, along with renewed insight into processes that may have been forgotten or never previously attempted.

## WilbertEDU Upcoming Sessions

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**May 1: Building Trust in the Funeral Industry through Ethical Practices and Strategic Response** *Essential tools to manage your online reputation, handle customer feedback, and safeguard your business success.*

**May 15: A Snapshot into Your Consumers': Attitudes & Behaviors that Define Your Future Business Model** *Trends in consumer attitudes and behaviors shaping the future of funeral service.*

**May 29: The Case for Proactive Preneed: Attract New Families, Grow Call Volume & Build Lasting Value** *Reach more families and build lasting value through a proactive preneed program.*

**June 12: OSHA's Formaldehyde Standards** *Review of OSHA's Formaldehyde standards, exposure identification, and control, monitoring, and compliance.*

**June 26: Introduction to Firefighter Honors and Benefits** *Awareness, benefits, and protocols for Firefighter line of duty deaths.*

[Download the quarterly Upcoming Sessions flyer.](#)



## Convention Calendar

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### ICCFA

Wed, April 30 - May 3, 2025  
Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino  
3950 S. Las Vegas Blvd., Las Vegas, NV  
[Annual Convention & Exposition - ICCFA](#)

### NFDMA

Saturday, July 5-9, 2025  
Secaucus, New Jersey  
[www.nfdma.com](http://www.nfdma.com)

### CANA Annual Convention

Wednesday, August 6-8, 2025  
Arizona Biltmore, 2400 E. Missouri Ave.  
Phoenix, AZ 85016  
[www.cremationassociation.org](http://www.cremationassociation.org)

### Catholic Cemetery Conference Convention & Exposition

September 15-18, 2025  
Anaheim, CA  
<https://catholiccemeteryconference.org>

### WMA Annual Meeting

Sunday, September 21-24, 2025  
Beaver Creek, CO  
[www.wilbertwma.com](http://www.wilbertwma.com)

### NFDA

Sunday, October 26-29, 2025  
Chicago, IL  
[www.nfda.org](http://www.nfda.org)

## WilbertEDU® QR Code for State Conventions

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Is your state convention coming up?

Are you looking for a way to promote the upcoming WilbertEDU Sessions?

The WilbertEDU team is pleased to offer this QR Code that you can display in the booth to keep your customers updated! It will take them directly to [www.wilbertedu.com](http://www.wilbertedu.com) for the most up-to-date details on dates, presenters, and subjects.

Since November 2020, WilbertEDU has consistently provided free, bi-weekly webinars on timely topics that allow funeral directors and embalmers to earn continuing education credits from the comfort of their homes or offices. Sessions are held on Thursdays at 1 p.m. central.

To date, funeral professionals have earned over 51,000 hours of valuable continuing education credits on various topics, including cremation trends, ethics, laws, grief, wellness, personal development, technology, communications, embalming, and more.

[Download QR Code.](#)





## May Urn Promotion

# Wilbert® cremation choices™

## Spring Forward with Wilbert Urns



Purple Butterfly  
P2020



P9081



Hummingbird  
P2038



P9095



Butterfly Urn  
P3038



Hummingbird Urn  
P3017

**Give your families unique choices with Wilbert's spring themed urns in both wood and metal.**

Pricing subject to change

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