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**ICCFA Magazine  
author spotlight**

► Rubin, The Doyenne of Death, brings a light touch to serious subjects as a speaker

who uses humor and funny films to attract people to discuss mortality, end-of-life, estate and funeral planning issues. She is a Certified Celebrant and Certified in Thanatology: Death, Dying and Bereavement by the Association for Death Education and Counseling.

[www.AGoodGoodbye.com](http://www.AGoodGoodbye.com)



► A pioneering Death Café hostess, she is author and host of the award-winning book, TV and radio programs “A Good Goodbye: Funeral Planning for Those Who Don’t Plan to Die” and “Mortality Minute” radio spots.



► Her award-winning 12-episode TV show, also called “A Good Goodbye,” helps bring the funeral planning conversation home. The four-DVD set is now available and the program is rolling out to cable systems across the U.S.

<http://agoodgoodbye.com/radio-tv-a-good-goodbye-tv-series/>

► Read Rubin’s “30 Funerals in 30 Days Challenge” under on her website’s blog.

► Her funeral planning conversation-starter, “The Newly-Dead Game” is available as an electronic download from the online store on her website.



**COMMUNITY OUTREACH/PRENEED**

Halloween and Dia de los Muertos aren’t the only death-themed October events. Create a Great Funeral Day is the perfect time for your funeral home or cemetery to invite people into your facility.

## How Create a Great Funeral Day can promote preplanning

The end of October, with the celebrations of Halloween, *Dia de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead) and Create a Great Funeral Day, is a great time to talk about death and funeral planning. What, you haven’t heard of Create a Great Funeral Day?

October 30, Create a Great Funeral Day, first appeared on the media’s go-to holiday guide, Chase’s Calendar of Events, in 2000. Over the past 15 years, Create a Great Funeral Day founder Stephanie West Allen’s approach to funeral planning has evolved.



Allen

Allen, the author of “Creating Your Own Funeral or Memorial Service: A Workbook,” originally viewed funeral planning as an autonomous, solo activity. She wrote the book in response to seeing her husband’s reaction to the death of his mother.

Her husband struggled to pull together a meaningful funeral for his mother, who had left no directions. Allen observed her husband’s grief and heard him ask frequently, “What would Mom have wanted?”

Allen came to believe that knowing her mother-in-law’s wishes would have made holding her funeral so much easier. Allen’s husband would not have been left trying to figure out what to do in the midst of his grieving.

The idea behind Create a Great Funeral Day is to help people consider how they would like to be remembered. It is similar to FAMIC’s Have the Talk of a Lifetime campaign in discussing values and experiences. When we all let each other know how to celebrate our lives, the survivors’ experience can be so much easier.

Ironically, even though Allen’s book helps people plan their own funerals in a thoughtful way, she was left without guidance from her own parents. Neither parent undertook any preplanning and left it to their two daughters to decide what to do.

Allen and her sister were left to negotiate their very different styles of decision-making about their parents’ funerals. “One of the things that’s happened over the 15 years since I wrote the book is that I understand how much more of a group effort [funeral planning] is,” she said.

### Why the resistance?

Why is there such resistance to funeral planning?

Social psychologists cite Dr. Ernest Becker’s terror management theory, spelled out in his Pulitzer Prize-winning book, “The Denial of Death.” The theory posits that all human behavior is ultimately motivated by the fear of death. As funeral directors and cemeterians see daily, death creates anxiety.

The awareness of our own eventual death, called “mortality salience,” affects our decision-making. Many people simply decide to avoid the topic. It takes great self-awareness and self-esteem to consider one’s own mortality and take steps to prepare for life’s only true inevitability.

Create a Great Funeral Day prompts people to be mindful of mortality and plan reflectively in advance. When this happens, families aren’t left disorganized and stressed after a loved one’s death.

Allen suggests one way families can start advance funeral planning conversations is sharing “never again” stories. “Never again” stories focus on things you have done that you would never do again and what you learned from the experiences.

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These stories highlight cherished values and reinforce the lessons learned after going astray from those values.

People planning a memorial service could discuss other funerals they've attended and what they "never again" want to see happen in a service. These discussions can prompt laughter and tears as the service horror stories are recalled. The value of these discussions emerges as individuals hammer out what is appropriate for their particular family.



Lola, the Albuquerque Death Café mascot.

### Public outreach ideas

Create a Great Funeral Day falls this year on Thursday, October 30. Take advantage of the Halloween celebration season to start the preneed funeral planning conversation with community outreach. Put your funeral home or cemetery in the media limelight

with an upbeat event. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- **Host a Death Café** at your funeral home or cemetery. Death Café events are sweeping the world. At these free events, people come together in a relaxed, confidential and safe setting to eat, drink and discuss mortality issues. Find out who is holding Death Café events in your market and learn the rules for hosting them at [www.DeathCafe.com](http://www.DeathCafe.com).

- **Hold a pre-Halloween open house or tour** at your funeral home or cemetery. Here's your chance to debunk the idea of funeral homes and cemeteries as scary places. Cemeteries can take advantage of sharing their histories and stories of residents buried there.

- **Host a movie night** in the funeral home or cemetery chapel. Funny films or television shows related to funerals can attract an audience, and laughter allows people to loosen up and relax into discussions about anxiety-provoking topics related to end-of-life planning.

Comedies to consider showing are "Death at a Funeral," "Undertaking Betty," "Elizabethtown," "Bernie" and "The Six Wives of Henry LeFay."

TV shows can include "Six Feet Under," "Dead Like Me," the "Chuckles Bites the Dust" episode of the "Mary Tyler Moore Show" and the "Stretch Cunningham, Goodbye" episode of "All In the Family."

You can get DVDs of these films and TV shows from Netflix, your local library or other sources. Do a door prize drawing to collect leads for preneed sales follow-up contacts.

To legally show these films free to the public, you'll need a license from the Motion Picture Licensing Corporation ([www.MPLC.org](http://www.MPLC.org)).

- **Use radio to raise preneed planning awareness.** Consider using "Mortality Minute" radio spots in your local market. These are 60-second messages that provide an ear-catching collection of tips about the importance of preneed planning and having a conversation today. You can listen to examples and get detailed instructions on how to work with a radio station at [www.AGoodGoodbye.com/radio-tv/mortality-minute/](http://www.AGoodGoodbye.com/radio-tv/mortality-minute/).

- **Place an opinion column** in your local newspaper. Create a Great Funeral Day presents a great opportunity to raise awareness about advance planning within your community. It doesn't cost anything to send in an opinion piece on the benefits of planning ahead to your local newspaper. Provided it's sent in a few weeks in advance, you have a good chance of your essay being used.

You are welcome to download the 500-word opinion piece, "October 30 is Create a Great Funeral Day—Don't Fear The Reaper" from [AGoodGoodbye.com](http://AGoodGoodbye.com). You can edit it and make the column unique to your community, or just sign your name and state your title and establishment. Visit [www.AGoodGoodbye.com/op-ed/](http://www.AGoodGoodbye.com/op-ed/) to download the document.

Take advantage of the Halloween season and use one of these ideas to help foster the preneed funeral planning conversation on Create a Great Funeral Day. □