



Funeral homes adjusting to COVID-19 outbreak

Directors find state mandates limiting their services

Tuesday, March 31st, 2020 1:42 PM

By JAMES KAY
Staff Reporter

As COVID-19 continues to upend the lives of locals in Riverside and Brookfield, funeral homes are adjusting to not being able to work at full capacity.

With stay-at-home orders and social distancing mandates in place, David Moravecek from Ivins/Moravecek Funeral Home and Chuck Hitzeman from Hitzeman Funeral Home told the Landmark this particular period has impacted their businesses in different respects.

"Our business was going OK before all of this happened," said Moravecek. "At the moment the virus came and things were starting to close down, my business was in a slow period anyway. It just happens to be that, in this industry, in the months of December, January, February and March that things naturally slow down by themselves."

Hitzeman recently sent out a message to the community that his funeral home will continue to provide services as it has for the last 116 years. However, the family-owned business has taken a slight hit.

"[The number of services] is sporadic during some months more than others but typically whether it is pre-arrangements or at-need arrangements, I meet with four to six people a week," said Hitzeman. "Now, we are not only bound by executive orders that are out there, but doing what is right by the community to curtail those interactions. This situation has impacted us, but we are trying to make sure families get the chance to say goodbye to their loved ones."

Creating an intimate atmosphere for people to grieve the loss of their loved ones is difficult to pull off due to social distancing restrictions. However, one of the hardest obstacles funeral homes face is the mandate prohibiting gatherings of more than 10 people.

"When you look at a lot of funeral homes and see the death notices, they are mostly private services or that they are going to have a memorial service at a later date," said Moravec. "A lot of services now are just with immediate family, so we are really limited by the restrictions of those kinds of gatherings."

While there has been a decrease of traditional funerals, those who have recently lost a loved one have opted to use alternative services that don't involve a large gathering of people. Burials are still taking place, while there are others who are opting for cremation.

"We have to carry on, since people are unfortunately still dying during this time," said Moravec.

Hitzeman has tried to balance safety while also helping those who need to be consoled in their time of grief. The business has hand sanitizer available by the register stand and, while there aren't a ton of people going into the building, the operation has rotated the pens people use to sign the register book. They also have electronic doors so that people don't have to touch door handles.

Even with these measures taken, the intimacy challenge still exists.

"We are still allowing people to come in and pay their last respects to their loved one," said Hitzeman. "There are still 10 people allowed at a time, and the services aren't what they normally are because of the limitations we face and the safety efforts we are making right now. So people are still able to say goodbye, but they aren't able to interact with their extended family and friends."

While funeral homes considered an essential businesses based on Executive Order 20-10 issued by Gov. J.B. Pritzker, the industry felt like officials haven't provided the necessary resources to do their jobs. Even before the pandemic, Hitzeman kept enough supplies to last his business four months. However, he said that funeral services' supply demand has been addressed.

"People do view us as an essential service, but we were forgotten about at the beginning of this," said Hitzeman. "Fortunately, there are [organizations] like National Funeral Directors Association that have gotten those orders amended

to include the supply chains to be able to supply us the necessary equipment we need."

Love the Landmark?

Become our partner in independent community journalism

Thanks for turning to Riverside Brookfield Landmark and RBLandmark.com. We love our thousands of digital-only readers. Now though we're asking you to partner up in paying for our reporters and photographers who report this news. It had to happen, right?

On the plus side, we're giving you a simple way, and a better reason, to join in. We're now a non-profit -- Growing Community Media -- so your donation is tax deductible. And signing up for a monthly donation, or making a one-time donation, is fast and easy.

No threats from us. The news will be here. No paywalls or article countdowns. We're counting on an exquisite mix of civic enlightenment and mild shaming. Sort of like public radio.

Claim your bragging rights. Become a digital member.

[Donate Now](#)