

American Academy McAllister Institute of Funeral Service (AAMI) Military Newsletter

Issue #3 September 2017

This issue includes:

- ➔ News Headlines from AAMI

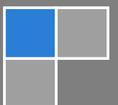
- ➔ Ask the Executive Vice President –
Dr. George Connick

- ➔ AAMI launches its Crosswalk
Program designed specifically for
92Ms and those service members
on active duty.

- ➔ Meet members of the AAMI team:
 - SFC Ret. Alisa Karr (Military
Affairs)
 - John Fraser (Faculty)
 - Charles Becthold (Faculty)

- Facts about AAMI
- A guide to joining AAMI
- Conclusion

Alan Loveder Director of Admissions and Military Affairs Liaison
American Academy McAllister Institute Of Funeral Service Inc.
619 West 54th Street. New York., NY 10019 Tel: 212-757-1190



Welcome to the third issue of the AAMI Military Newsletter

NEWS HEADLINES



AAMI launches its **Crosswalk Program:**
See page 4 for complete details.

AAMI will **welcomes SFC. Ret. Alisa Karr to the AAMI team: See page 8 for her story**

AAMI will **be available at The Education Center on Ft. Lee** – on Fridays, from 900 to 1400 hours.

AAMI is excited by the feedback to its **military video:** go to www.aami.edu and click on our video link.

Military Student Success: AAMI is excited to announce **that 5 additional military service members have graduated** from AAMI in 2017. Congratulations to all! In coming newsletters we will bring you their stories; in this edition we highlight **Matthew Ratliff** who serves in the US Army and came to AAMI in the Fall of 2013 as a part-time student. He graduated from AAMI on August 11, 2017. We are very proud of Matthew!

ASK THE EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT – DR. GEORGE CONNICK

- **From your perspective, what are the key benefits of the Crosswalk Program to Service Members?**

The most significant benefits of the Crosswalk program are: (1) an opportunity for a military student to enroll in the initial courses of an associate degree program in order to determine if they have an interest in pursuing the entire degree, (2) enrollment in a focused curriculum that can be put to immediate use to improve job performance while in the military, (3) courses that are fully transferrable to the associate degree program offered by AAMI, (4) a stepping stone to earning an Associate Degree in Funeral Service and, ultimately, to a civilian career after the military, and (5) a tuition-rate that is supported by military funding.

- **Does the Crosswalk Program prepare a service member for the Associate Degree?**

The 5 Crosswalk courses were carefully chosen as an excellent introduction to the associate degree program. Together, they provide the historical foundation and conceptual framework for both the associate degree and the funeral service profession. These 5 courses provide an overview and context for the remaining courses in the associate degree program.

- **What would you recommend service members think about as they consider enrolling in the Crosswalk Program?**

Although we certainly can't know what the future holds for any us, we do know that change in all aspects of our lives is occurring at enormous speed. Jobs that were the mainstay of our society, only a decade ago, are changing fundamentally or disappearing. Consider UBER and the impact it has had on competition in the taxi business and the opportunity it affords for many to earn extra income. Or, Airbnb and the opportunities it has offered people to travel economically and stay in locations where there are no hotels or motels. There are hundreds of other examples, large and small, and we don't know when or where the next dramatic change will take place.

The one thing we do know is that higher education is a major part of the required preparation for a future we can't predict. Knowledge and advanced skills are the tools of the future.

Although some may think that funeral service hasn't changed much over the years, nothing could be further from the truth. Here is one example: Several decades ago, cremation was chosen by fewer than 10% of the U.S. population. Today, 46% of the population chooses cremation and that percentage is expected to rise to approximately 55% by 2025. That choice by the consumer has fundamentally changed the funeral service profession in a host of ways.

The Crosswalk program will introduce students to the changing world of funeral service and help them prepare for a career in which it will be critical to understand how societal, cultural and technological changes will continue to drive change in funeral service.



AAMI LAUNCHES ITS ONLINE CROSSWALK PROGRAM

CROSSWALK PROGRAM QUICK GUIDE

The AAMI Crosswalk Program, **dedicated to active duty military** service members, has been created as an **introduction to the world of Funeral Service and the AAMI Associate Degree.**

The Crosswalk Program has two objectives:

1. To offer a service member, whose Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) is 92M (Mortuary Affairs), an educational program dedicated to providing them with additional knowledge in support of their military career in mortuary affairs.

2. To give all active duty services members the opportunity to experience the AAMI Associate Degree and consider the Funeral Service profession without committing themselves to the full AAMI Associate Degree Program. Upon successful completion of the Crosswalk Program, AAMI provides a Certificate of Completion.

The Program:

The Crosswalk Program consists of 5 courses that are equal to 9 credits. The cost is \$250 per credit.

The Courses:

1. Death and Human Development
2. History of Funeral Service
3. Professional Ethics
4. Funeral Service Psychology and Counseling
5. Sociology of Funeral Service

The Programs Structure:

A new Crosswalk Program offering will start approximately every 8 weeks commencing in January 2018 and the students will have 18 weeks to complete the 5 courses.

Who is eligible?

All Active Duty service members are eligible to enroll in the Crosswalk Program, including those who are on duty with the Reserves and National Guard.

How do you apply?

Service members must complete a specific Crosswalk Program Enrollment Form; that Enrollment Form can be completed over the phone with an AAMI Admissions Advisor by calling 212-757-1190 or in person on the Ft. Lee base with our Military Admissions Advisor, SFC. Ret. Alisa Karr. Please call her at 917-891-0182 to schedule an appointment.

What support documents are required?

- AAMI must be able to download your Joint Services Military Transcript from the GoArmy website. Otherwise, you must provide an official high school transcript.
- In addition, you are required to provide a copy of your most recent Active Duty Military Orders.

What funding sources can you use?

- If eligible, Department of Defense Tuition Assistance (TA) funding
- Personal Resources
- The GI Bill through the Veterans Administration (VA) if your Letter of Eligibility relates to a previous tour of duty and you are now back on active duty and for some reason you are not eligible for Tuition Assistance

How do you progress into the AAMI Associate Degree Program?

At the half way point in the Crosswalk Program, therefore at the 9 week mark, Admissions will send you a survey asking you about the program and if you wish to continue on into the AAMI Associate Degree after you complete the Crosswalk Program.

- If your answer is **“yes”**, then you will be required to complete a standard admissions application, provide all the required support documentation and go through the AAMI acceptance procedures and protocols. If accepted, you will then be enrolled in the Associate Degree program for the next available regular Semester. The credits you have taken in Crosswalk will be transferred into the Associate Degree Program. Upon successful completion of the Crosswalk Program, AAMI will issue you a Certificate of Completion and report the statistics and results to the US Military.
- If your answer is **“no”**, then upon successful completion of the Crosswalk Program, AAMI will issue you a Certificate of Completion and report the statistics and results to the US Military. You will have the option to apply for admission into the AAMI Associate Degree Program at a later time and the credits taken in the Crosswalk Program will still transfer. AAMI’s policies as contained in the official AAMI Catalog will apply.



SFC RET. ALISA KARR MILITARY AFFAIRS ADVISOR

During my 20+ year military career, I have filled numerous positions. Each position had a different purpose in the role of the Mortuary Affairs Specialist within the US Army.

While stationed in South Korea, I filled the role as the Mortuary Affairs subject matter expert, responsible for advising the Theater Support Commanding General. I participated in numerous anti-terrorist/force protection exercises; developed a Mass Fatality Plan for the four support areas within South Korea; coordinated with Medical, Law Enforcement, Fire and other emergency services to ensure viability of plans; developed policies for the handling of biological and chemical contaminated remains.

I served as an Instructor/Writer in the analysis, design, development and instruction of institutional and extension instructional materials while assigned to the Joint Mortuary Center. I instructed over 500 students to standard with a 100% graduation rate. I played an integral role in developing doctrine and training materials for the

search and recovery of human remains; scene documentation associated with recovery sites; and mass fatality response and the development of JP 4-06 Mortuary Affairs in Joint Operations and FM 10-64 Mortuary Affairs Operations.

While assigned to the 54th QM CO, I provided technical input to numerous Mortuary Affairs MARC studies and Critical Task studies; provided Mortuary Affairs subject matter expertise to numerous Warfighter exercises; managed 31 soldiers assigned to a Search and Recovery platoon; responsible for the recovery, protection, identification and evacuation of human remains.

My role at AAMI is to assist US Service Members, current and past, as well as their family members with their interest and application needs to join AAMI. I am working closely with the military education centers to provide service members with ease of access to information and support with a clear understanding of all that AAMI can offer. I will be an active participant at education fairs and events at military installations.

I joined the AAMI team because nothing is more important than spreading the word about this great Funeral Service Education Program.

I feel all service members, past and present, family members and civilians alike need to hear about this great opportunity to join the ranks of the time-honored profession of Funeral Service. As a 20-year veteran of Mortuary Affairs there is no greater satisfaction than helping a family in need, with dignity and respect for the loved ones.



Meet some of the AAMI faculty!

JOHN FRASER – FACULTY

Greetings to All! I am John Fraser, an instructor at American Academy McAllister Institute of Funeral Service. Over the last thirty years, I have been active in funeral service as well as ministry. Like the mystery of the chicken and the egg, it is tough to remember a time when the two were not together. However, I do know which one came first. I started in funeral service when I was in high school. It was a summer job of washing the hearse and other vehicles and taking care of the outside of the funeral home in my hometown. Gradually the proprietor saw I was not “unsettled” by my surroundings and he eventually became my mentor and sponsor so that I could study here at AAMI. It would be several years into the business before a mundane trip to the cemetery changed my life.

When you are learning the funeral business, you learn to do it all. Some tasks are far more glamorous than others; viz. leading a

procession into church rather than scrubbing the toilets after a visitation. One fine day, I had the privilege of driving the hearse and my front seat passenger was a Jewish Rabbi. We chatted about the weather and the ball scores and a few current news items and then, silence. "Oh boy," I thought. "Oy vie," I am sure he thought! And then he said, "So, what are you doing for G-d?" I admit I was a little caught off balance with the question. Taking a moment, I began a litany of things a good Christian man did around the church and with various service groups. The Rabbi laughed and held up his hand. "NO! What are you doing for G-d?" Mustering up as much courage as I could, I said "I am not sure I know what you mean. Those things I mentioned are for Him." Again he laughed and said "My son, it is a rhetorical question. The answer is: your life." My life, eh? What about the money, the new car, the nice clothes, the relationships and my own funeral home? You can only imagine his surprise some years later when I appeared at his temple (in full religious garb) and thanked him for the nudge. "Rabbi, I got a life!"

Our journey together in learning will look at different faiths, different approaches and different cultural responses to the question of "what are you doing with your life to help another." Funeral service beckons to the individual who seeks to help the person in need. For the rest of your lives, you will be helpers. That is a very satisfying life! I doubt I would be as effective in ministry if I had not first studied mortuary science and practiced, full-time, in the profession. I learned a lot. Some of that, I even remembered! The greatest revelation was

that if I could be with people at the worst time of their life - the loss of a loved one - I could be with them at other times, too. So, the helping profession pulled me in a little deeper than where you may want to go right now. That's fine! As I said, funeral service satisfies the mind and soul in a very rich way. The learning environment offers a wealth of experiences for us to share in that discovery.

In our wealth of experiences, we will look at grief psychology and basic counseling techniques. While you will not be qualified to offer professional grief counseling, by the end of the course you should be able to identify basic characteristics and feel confident in making referrals to a client in need or consult with a professional counselor or therapist. The most essential skill is: listening. Later in your studies, we may meet again in funeral home directing and funeral merchandising and management. Both courses are very practical in their content, but we will strive to make them come to life through discussion boards, short essays and any other interactive experiences we can employ. The most essential skill there: tolerance.

Your life experience will animate our discussions. If I do my job correctly, I will aid in the art of discovery as you learn about the funeral service profession. For the last seventeen years it has been very enriching for me to serve in this way. Along with a busy, urban congregation and a great circle of family and friends, you and your classmates round out my life. I look forward to meeting you, learning

with you and perhaps having you chauffeur me to the cemetery one day! Preferably, in the front seat.



CHARLES BECHTOLD – FACULTY

Hello, I will be your Restorative Art instructor. I am a full-time funeral director, involved in all aspects of funeral service. I am also a ruling elder in my Church, a member of a local Masonic lodge and President of the New Jersey Board of Mortuary Science. One may think that I have been involved in funeral service since high school. That is not my story. I came to funeral service in my late thirty's and graduated from AAMI and became licensed when I was 40.

In high school, I wandered through school without much direction. Needing to find a career path that my parents would approve of, I decided on photography and graduated from the School of Visual Arts with a Bachelors of Fine Arts. During my college and many post-college years, I was active with a local first aid squad and was part of a mobile ICU team before paramedics came to be. I loved training and education which led me to become involved with CPR

instruction with the American Heart Association. Before long, I was asked to get involved with regional level instructor training and later moved to a state level CPR committee.

After I was married, I had to let go of my volunteer work to concentrate on making a living as a photographer. I had many great experiences but I was not making enough money to make ends meet. My father-in-law introduced me to a few local funeral directors who would occasionally hire me as a pallbearer, driver, and door person. They told me that I should consider becoming a funeral director but the idea of dealing with dead bodies scared me off. Eventually, I decided to give it a go, thinking I could force my way through the embalming portion of the training and secure work where I would not have to embalm again. I am glad I pushed myself. I did not think I would ever embalm on a regular basis – and never thought I would teach others about it!

You may have heard about “foxhole conversions” or people promising God they will become a follower if he would just grant a wish. Starting mortuary school with a wife, child, shortage of funds and an uncertainty of my future, I did ask my creator for help. I started by promising that regardless of what would happen to me that I needed to put him back into my life. My request was that he help me not to just get through school but to either help me excel and become a great funeral director who would provide excellent care to people in my charge – or to make me fail fast and help me to find my true calling. Well, this (former) “C” student graduated Cum Laude and received several awards at graduation.

I learned that the key to success is to have a clear goal or outcome in mind, coupled with the conviction that you will achieve your goal. In funeral service, failure is not an option –we have a 100% completion rate! Every (deceased) body that comes into our funeral home will get to its place of disposition without exception. The duty of a good funeral director is to provide the best possible care to both the deceased and survivors. The funeral director's mission is not simply to show up for the prescribed hours to receive a paycheck. The goal is not to be the manager or top person of the organization. The goal is to provide meaningful service to each and every family who calls on you. The rewards will come.

I have learned that when things do not go well on a funeral, it is usually when I am not considering the family's needs but rather my own. I also learned that there is no way around hard work. While a student at AAMI, I spent every night and weekend either retyping notes, researching more about what was covered in class or working as an apprentice at a funeral home. Within less than two years from leaving photography and closing my business I became a full-time licensed funeral director. With failure not being an option and prayer, I did more than just make it to the end, but I did extraordinarily well.

I have been licensed for over 17 years and teaching at AAMI for almost as long. Looking back at my past I would not change a thing. I believe that many of life's lessons I had before entering funeral service have helped me to become the person I am today. I could

not imagine doing what I currently do right out of high school. The journey through life has its ups and downs and sometimes we find ourselves in circumstances we do not understand. Sometimes it is hard to know where to go next. For me, when I focus on helping others, everything else seems to work out. Find your passion and purpose. When you provide service to others, place the interest of your clients before yourself and you, too, will exceed your expectations!





FACTS ABOUT AAMI

Founded in 1926, AAMI has a rich history as both a pioneer and a leader in funeral service education. AAMI is the only funeral service program accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE) that is also approved and authorized in 44 states. AAMI is a not-for-profit, private, single-purpose academic institution that is Veterans Administration and Military Career Advancement Account approved and has an Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Defense that enables the institution to provide special tuition rates for active duty service members, retired military personnel, those serving in the National Guard, Reserves and military spouses.

We offer our Associate Degree in Occupational Studies (AOS) in Funeral Service both online and on campus. AAMI's online program is organized to provide instruction and student services WORLDWIDE. AAMI's objective is to educate students so that they may reach their full potential and achieve success in their goal of having a career in the funeral service profession.



YOUR GUIDE TO JOINING THE AAMI ASSOCIATE DEGREE PROGRAM

ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS FOR THE ASSOCIATE DEGREE PROGRAM

- ✓ View our full presentation at https://mail.funeraleducation.org/Military_Presentation_June_2016.mp4
- ✓ www.aami.edu or
- ✓ Complete the application using our online form at <https://sonis.funeraleducation.org/studapp.cfm>

Note 1: No application fee is required for service members:

- ✓ Schedule a one-on-one interview with one of our Admissions team members, over the telephone or online via Webcam
- ✓ Provide an official high school transcript and an official transcript from each college attended, if applicable
- ✓ Supply all additional supporting documentation, details of which will be supplied with the application acknowledgement receipt

Note 2: To support you through the admissions process, a dedicated advisor will be assigned to you.

TUITION FUNDING

- ✓ For those on active duty using Tuition Assistance, a copy of your most recent orders must be provided.
- ✓ For retired service members using the GI Bill, you will need to supply a copy of your DD214 and a copy of your letter of eligibility from the VA.
- ✓ Spouses entering under the GI Bill benefit program will need to supply a copy of the service member's most recent DD214 and the applicable letter of eligibility from the VA.
- ✓ Financial Aid is also available for those that qualify.

REQUIREMENTS TO BE AN ONLINE STUDENT

- ✓ Access to a computer 24/7 with internet capability
- ✓ An appropriate email address to communicate with faculty, students and staff
- ✓ Further information about browser and computer requirements can be found at www.aami.edu Click on Online Program, then Associate Degree-Get Started!, then Technical Requirements.



CONCLUSION

Everyone at AAMI looks forward to our continued relationship with all military service members, active duty, veterans and spouses of those serving in our armed forces.

We welcome recommendations for articles that would be of interest to our readers for inclusion in our subsequent issues. It is hoped that all of you reading this newsletter will recognize its value and be proactive in forwarding it to others across our military community. Your assistance in doing this will give AAMI the best opportunity to help others who wish to consider a career in the Funeral Service profession.

Alan Loveder, Director of Admissions and Military Affairs Liaison
American Academy McAllister Institute Of Funeral Service, Inc.

619 West 54th Street, 2nd Floor. New York, NY 10019

Phone 212-757-1190 Mobile 646-634-2205 Fax 212-765-5923

Email aloveder@aami.edu www.aami.edu



Thank you to everyone who contributed to this third issue.