

Get to Know our Student Members



Student Member:
Juliet Levine

Hometown:
Manhattan; currently
residing in Astoria, Queens

Mortuary School Attended:
American Academy
McAllister Institute

Graduated:
April 2020

What prompted you to choose a career in funeral service?

When I was little, I was obsessed with ancient Egypt and the mummification process. As I became aware of different jobs, I realized I could do something like that! The idea of becoming a funeral director continuously made its way into my mind over the years. I kept pushing it aside, thinking it was too weird or morbid, and eventually harbored a deep anxiety about death. I remained this way until about 5 years ago, when I realized that my last remaining grandparent, and the one I was closest to, was nearing the end of her life. I wanted to be able to take care of her, and my Mom. I also wanted know what was happening, because none of us really realized we were watching the death process. Almost immediately after she died, I found myself wishing I could have understood more, been more aware and prepared, and helped more. I started looking into a career in funeral service, hoping I would find some way to provide other families what I feel my family didn't get, which was mostly knowledge. While I researched becoming a funeral director, I had the epiphany that everything I had done in my life culminated into this career and my calling could no longer be denied.

I have a bachelor's degree in psychology with a minor in studio art and social work and have always wanted to help people. I worked in theatre running productions and an event entertainment company planning large scale events for special occasions. I've always loved playing with hair and makeup, and worked at a hair salon, and refined my "dealing with people" skills with years of working in customer service. All these jobs provided me with a fantastic framework to be a funeral director, and four months after Grandma's death, I attended my first class at McAllister. I love feeling like I'm making a difference for people and helping them through what is likely one of the most difficult times of their life. I am fascinated with the science of embalming and being able to use fluids and makeup to give families one last look at their loved one. Learning about the mourning practices of different cultures and religions has been another area of interest I hadn't expected. I feel like I'm doing the work that I'm meant to be doing.

What Do you hope to accomplish as a licensed funeral director?

I hope to be an integral part of ushering in the future of industry, helping to bridge the gap between tradition and whatever is next for generations who are less religious, more spiritual, or want to create different death rites for their family. I want to encourage families to be involved in caring for their dying loved ones. I not only hope to demystify what we do but also help families understand the signs of end of life so they can make the most of their time. Death is the only constant in life, and I would like to see it become a commonplace topic. Speaking as someone who used to fear death, I now know that fearing the inevitable is a waste of precious time. With planning and discussions about the end of life, one can focus on celebrating the life of those we've lost instead of having to make lots of impactful social and financial decisions at the time of need.

What do want people outside of this profession to understand about funeral service?

I want laymen to understand the time, knowledge, and skill it takes to prepare a body for viewing, the laws and regulations we must follow, and the people skills we employ to offer guidance and information to families when they're in an emotionally and perhaps mentally compromised state. We're not people trying to benefit from your sadness. We're people with a passion for helping and who have trained and continue to train tirelessly to be the best part of your worst experience.

What advice would you give someone preparing for their licensing exams?

If you're preparing for your licensing exams, STUDY. There's no way around the fact that you absolutely must make time to study and go over every single thing. Once you're sitting for the exam, read everything very carefully and trust your gut. If you don't know it immediately, come back to it, but definitely go with your first choice.

How do you like to spend your free time?

I like to read, specifically about the history of the medical field. Social activism is important to me, so some of my free time is spent supporting different causes I believe in. I also enjoy making chocolates, and have been very into growing my home garden and my taxidermy and animal bone collection. Otherwise, you'll find me on the couch watching scary movies with my partner and two sphinx cats.

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