BEST OF THE BEST

Our lives are filled with expectations of which we may not be aware--things that we take for granted, well…with no true understanding as to why, just because. The moon and the stars will be in the sky tonight and the sun will surely rise tomorrow. There is no question that I will shower because I know that there is running water, food for nourishment, electricity and phone service to respond to my necessities and pleasures. And at anytime day or night that I have an emergency, I can dial 911. First responders will arrive to assist me with my situation, get me to a hospital where there will be nurses and doctors to take care of me, no matter the risk for their own lives.

During this COVID-19 pandemic, our first concern was how do we protect ourselves? How does this impact the funeral profession, staff members and the families that we serve? Almost immediately, a shortage of hand sanitizer, disinfectants and PPE occurred.

Our society moved into survival mode, me included. What we did not think about were those on the front line. Then, a conversation between a staff member and her friend whose son is a police officer brought to light that the first responders and health care professionals--typically are out-of-mind until we need them--now needed us.

Our funeral home immediately launched a community campaign, #HenryStrong, "We Will Get Through This Together." We promoted the campaign over social media and through our Chamber of Commerce including a pod cast, local newspaper, radio stations, and local businesses. Cannon Cleveland Funeral Directors designed and purchased several hundred signs for businesses and residences to help promote the need for sanitation items and food. We set aside a special recognition day to show our appreciation for first responders, our local 911 center, health care professionals and support staff at our local hospital.

On May 6, 2020, Cannon Cleveland Funeral Directors hosted a parade to show our entire county's appreciation to our first responders and health care professionals. At 10:00 am, four mayors representing the municipalities in Henry County, along with other county officials, gathered on the campus of Piedmont Henry Hospital. Staff of the hospital gathered outside and also at the hospital windows to participate in this appreciation day. In addition, we streamed this event live on the Cannon Cleveland Funeral Directors Facebook page.

We worked very closely with the hospital and law enforcement to make this happen. Each mayor had an opportunity to say thank you and local citizens presented a specially selected piece of music in recognition of hard working, dedicated, selfless people.

One of our local pastors offered a prayer of encouragement, protection and hope. And then: A parade with 134 vehicles decorated with signs, balloons and Superhero personalities drove past the hundreds of hospital staff. The parade participants were waving, calling out encouragement and blowing their horns.

The parade then drove past the 911 center. Over 1,500 meals were donated and presented to first responders and health care professions. This included participation by local restaurants, the McDonough Junior Women's Association, and monetary donations from other businesses and local citizens.

This day was covered by local media as well as Atlanta news. With 42 years in funeral service and the many things that we have done in our community over these years, none compare to this event in levels of community participation. I am immensely proud of Henry County.

Amy Cannon