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## Essay 2019

### June Remembrance Picnic

The staff at Anderson Funeral Home truly cares about each family that we serve. We understand that grief isn't easy and that it is a never-ending battle. Because we want families to know that our services extend beyond their loved ones' funeral or memorial service, we decided to invite all the families we have served, along with everyone in our community to a remembrance picnic. We sent out personal invitations to each family served in the last 14 months which included a packet of "Forget Me Not" seeds. We also placed an invitation in the local newspaper, Echo Press.

On June 19th, 2019, Anderson Funeral home held the June Remembrance Picnic. As guests arrived, they had the opportunity to watch a slide show with a picture of their loved one which included decedents from the past 14 months. We provided a picnic supper in the park and while participants were eating, Pastor Jeffrey Ross gave a meaningful sermon. After, we provided balloons to each family and suggested they write a message to the loved one they lost. We guided everyone to the beach, played the song "Pretty Balloon" and everyone released their balloons when they were ready. This event was put on by all full time staff and our valued support staff.

This remembrance picnic benefitted our families by showing them that they are not alone in their grief and that their loved ones will never be forgotten. It was centered on keeping memories of loved ones alive to help endure the days following a death. The balloon release provided an opportunity for families to feel close to their deceased loved one again by sending a message above.

This remembrance picnic was a great way for our staff to reconnect with families we have served in the past. Not only did we get to hear stories of families loved ones, but we were honored to witness how meaningful the balloon release really was. Unfortunately, many of our staff members have lost loved ones of their own and this picnic and balloon release helped us through our own grief journey. The staff of Anderson Funeral Home is truly a family and preparing and hosting this picnic allowed us to work together as a team, support each other and gain a deeper relationship. We are a family here, serving families. Tears were shed, memories were shared, and most importantly, we were able to show the families we served that we are walking with them in their grief journey.