



Category 1 I

2019

National Funeral Directors Association

Pursuit of Excellence

Many funeral homes across the country have found value in employing a grief or funeral therapy dog. Dogs naturally help people feel at ease. Petting a dog is helpful in calming the nerves and even lowering blood pressure. The presence of a dog lessens anxiety in adults and children and provides a sense of unconditional love and support in a stressful situation. After much research, the staff of Radney Funeral Home and Langley Funeral Home discussed the possibility of bringing a grief therapy dog onto our staff. We overwhelmingly accepted the idea and began the search for our new employee. We brought our new puppy into our care in May of 2018. To name the puppy we held a facebook contest for the community. We gave three names to choose from and the participants chose the name "Radley Hope". Radley is a combination of the names of both funeral homes (RADney and LangLEY). Radley adapted to the funeral home family well and soon was placed into training at Ultimate K9. She spent two weeks in training and came back with all the skills needed to begin her work at the funeral home. One of her first days at "work" proved her worth to our client families. A lady came by the funeral home to receive the death certificates of her recently deceased husband during our morning meeting. She stopped in to thank everyone for their help and was crying as she did so. Radley left her place and went directly and sat in front of the distraught lady. She reached down to pet her and the tears immediately stopped. She loved on Radley for a few minutes and felt much better. As she left the room she said, "This is just what I needed today!" Radley has proven repeatedly her value in helping grieving families. She especially loves to visit with children. We saw how they love her and wanted to do something to help the children remember Radley and their experience with her. We purchased small stuffed animal goldendoodles to give to young children. Now we often see the Radley Hope toy dogs all over town. Another benefit observed from the presence of a grief therapy dog has been the effect she has had upon the staff. We often forget that our staff members are exposed to extremely stressful situations. Radley has been a stress reliever for our staff members as well. Her presence seems to help us all to be a little more relaxed. Radley continues to develop her people skills and is becoming more sensitive to the emotional needs of our staff and our client families. She seems excited to be the most popular dog in town and has helped many members of our community to begin the conversation about their life celebrations.