

Because of the generosity of our sponsors we were able to cover all expenses including a private dinner with Madelyn and Daniel for our Platinum sponsors, as well as donating \$500 to the Orpheum Theatre and \$1000 to the local Relay for life.

Our platinum sponsors were Dave's Autobody, Galesburg Hospitals Ambulance Service, Hospice Compassus, and of course Watson Thomas Funeral Home. We had other levels of sponsorship as well, Gold Sponsor was Midwest Precast (our Wilbert Vault Dealer); Silver Sponsors, Templeton Roofing and National Coatings; Bronze Sponsor, Office Specialists; and our in kind donors, WGIL Radio who provided free advertising and two different on air interviews with the cast and Holiday Inn Express who graciously provided hotel rooms for the cast. We also had what we called our "Tree of Hope" a six foot tall artificial tree lit with LED lighting that people could write their wishes on leaves and then hang them on the tree. Our tree was sponsored by Seminary Village and Tompkins State Bank.

As you can see, it took a lot of effort and community support to pull off this event. It certainly was no small task. We created some fantastic relationships with the businesses who helped sponsor our event as well as relationships with the community. We have always thought of ourselves as the community funeral home and we feel this event helped us cement our status as such. To this day, we still talk to Danny, Madelyn, and Steve. As a matter of fact, we will be attending Steve's wedding on July 20, 2019 and spending the evening with Danny. Unfortunately I can't put into words everything this event meant to me as a person, a funeral director, and a proud supporter of my community, but I can tell you it did change the way people in Galesburg look at death, funeral homes, and funeral directors. We were also blessed to get two articles in the Memorial Business Journal, one leading up to the event and one after the event.

## Category 1 Criteria I

On March 26, 2018, I, Mark Thomas, went with my wife Tricia and two sons, Andrew and Luke to Peoria, IL to see the movie "Getting Grace." We had heard about the movie through several different ways, but mostly through NFDA. We thought the movie may have some different insight to the life of a funeral director, and boy did it ever. But what happened that evening led us on a journey I didn't ever expect.

There were only six people in the theatre to see the movie. My family of four and two people down front. After the movie was over we were walking down the steps to leave when the gentleman and woman who were in front stopped me and asked me why we came to see the movie and how we heard about it. I explained to him how and why. He then introduced himself as Steven Christopher one of the actors in the movie. He played the hospital administrator. As Steve and I continued to talk I told him I needed to figure out a way to get the movie to Galesburg, because I thought it was that good. We exchanged phone numbers and emails and went on about our evenings. Steve got me in touch with none other than Daniel Roebuck! Danny and I exchanged a couple of emails on possibilities of bringing the movie to Galesburg. Our emails turned into phone calls, which turned into planning the event. After numerous dates were discussed we finally settled on two showings, Friday, January 25 and Saturday, January 26, 2019 at our historical Orpheum Theatre in Galesburg. Not only were we able to get Mr. Daniel Roebuck to come to Galesburg, but his lovely wife, Tammy, who helped produce the movie came as well. We were also blessed to have Madelyn Dundon (Grace) come to our showings. Maddie's mom Kristy Dundon came as well. Kristy was a costume designer for the movie. Steve Christopher who I met in Peoria and who lives in Peoria came over for both showings. Daniel and crew spent 3 days in Galesburg with us as their tour guides. We were fortunate enough to become close friends while they were here, so spending the days with them became quite fun. Galesburg has a lot of history and they all enjoyed exploring our city.

Getting people to see this movie was important to me, so it had to be done right. The only way was to offer it free to the community. With the commitment from some major sponsors we were able to set everything up so there would be no cost to the community to see the movie.

Although the weather that weekend was extremely snowy and cold we had around 600 people come to see the movie. Prior to the movie screening on both evenings we had a meet and greet with the actors along with an autograph session. Following the movie the funeral home hosted a Q&A which was well attended.

Through the generosity of the Funeral Service Foundation we were able to get one hundred sets of the "Talk of a Lifetime" cards that we were able to give out as gifts to those who wanted them. We had an audience ranging from 8 to 88 in our crowds both evenings and we certainly feel it opened the door to people talking about death and having the "Talk of a Lifetime." Kids asked serious and silly questions which Danny and Maddie answered both silly and serious. They are true performers! My heart gleamed with honor seeing all of the people in attendance laughing and crying and understanding life just a little bit better. To this day I still have people thank us at the funeral home for bringing the movie to Galesburg. It was truly our honor to host such a great event.