2026 IFDA Annual Convention
Walker's Bluff Casino Resort
April 7-9, 2026

Timeless Connections

Guiding the Future

Honoring Legacy & Leading Innovation

Illinois FUNERAL DIRECTORS association

Registration Guide

2026 IFDA Annual Convention at a Glance

2026 IFDA Annual Convention
Walker's Bluff Casino Resort
777 Walkers Bluff Way,
Carterville, IL 62918
April 7, 2026 - April 9, 2026

Illinois FUNERAL DIRECTORS association

Register ONLINE

ifda.org

Host Hotel Information

Why stay at the host hotel?

- Save time! Zero commute, no traffic, no need to look for parking.
- If you forget something, you can simply walk back to your room in a few minutes.
- Maximize networking opportunities!
- Enrich the Mind, Nourish the Body, & Soothe the Spirit! Book a service at The Spa at Walker's Bluff.
- Did we mention the Casino!

Walker's Bluff Casino Resort

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Walker's Bluff Casino Resort
777 Walkers Bluff Way,
Carterville, IL 62918

Call 618-993-7777 for Reservations.

Group Name:
Illinois Funeral Directors Association

Hotel Reservation Deadline is March 27, 2026!

2026 Convention Schedule

Tuesday, April 7, 2026		
Crematory Operator Refresher Course	(2FD)	2:00pm - 4:00pm
Early Arrival Meet & Greet		7:00pm - 10:00pm

Wednesday April 8, 2026		
Registration Desk Open		7:30am - 5:30pm
Opening Session		8:00am - 8:45am
Break		*8:45am - 9:00am*
Keynote - John T. Hill	(1EMB)	9:00am - 10:00am
Break		*10:00am - 10:15am*
Session 2 - Jeffrey P. Bellefleur, M.D.	(2FD)	10:15am - 11:55am
Lunch On Your Own		*11:55am - 12:35pm*
Session 3 - Anthony Fleege	(2EMB)	12:35pm - 2:15pm
Break		*2:15pm - 2:30pm*
Exhibit Floor	(1FD/1EMB)	2:30pm - 5:30pm
Member & Vendor Appreciation Party		6:30pm - 9:30pm
Thursday April 9, 2026		
Registration Desk Open		7:30am - 3:00pm
Service of Remembrance		8:15am - 8:50am
Break		*8:50am - 9:05am*
Session 4 - John T. Hill	(2EMB)	9:05am - 10:45am
Break		*10:45am - 11:00am*
Exhibit Floor	(1FD/1EMB)	11:00am - 2:00pm
Lunch on Your Own		
Illinois Sexual Harassment Prevention Training - Thomas Ripperda	(1FD)	2:00pm - 2:50pm
Break		*2:50pm - 3:05pm*
Session 5 - Michael D. Sharkey, Esq	(2FD)	3:05pm - 4:45pm

*Registration for the Crematory Operator Refresher Course is not included in the 2026 IFDA Convention Registration and will require an additional fee.

*You can only receive credit for the exhibit floor one time.

A multi-day registration can achieve 12 hours of CE. Depending on session selection, the maximum CE achievable by category is as follows: 6FD, 6EMB

*To earn credit, ensure your badge is scanned or enter the session code in the app, and complete the session evaluation following each session.

Exhibit Hall

The IFDA Exhibit Hall is the ultimate destination for funeral home innovation. Our exhibitors are on the cutting edge of the newest trends and technology in Funeral Service, Financial Planning and Transportation, to name a few.

The Exhibit Hall features the leading brands and services on display for you to see, try out, and compare. Visiting is a great way to:

• Stimulate new ideas for you and your funeral home.

• Get a hands-on feel for new products, equipment, technology, and best practices.

• Review offers from multiple suppliers at one time.

Early Arrival Meet & Greet

The **Early Arrival Meet & Greet** is the first official get-together of the Convention. Held on Tuesday evening, attendees include IFDA leadership, funeral directors, funeral home owners, guests, and industry representatives. This is a can't miss opportunity for anyone looking to get quality face-time with attendees while having fun.

Event Location:

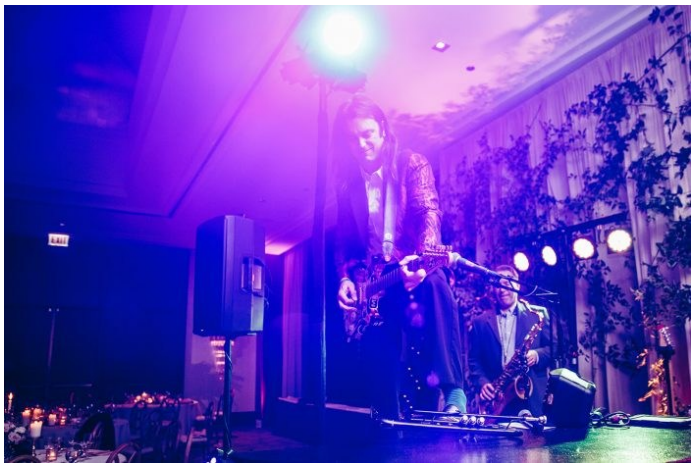
Draft Day

Walker's Bluff Casino & Resort

7:00pm—10:00pm

Member & Vendor Appreciation

Join us Wednesday evening for the Member & Vendor Appreciation Party! The Member & Vendor Appreciation Party has become the social highlight of the Convention and is attended by funeral directors, interns, students, guests, and industry representatives. Enjoy our party entertainment with Dueling Pianos!



Service of Remembrance

Service of Remembrance

Thursday, April 9, 2026

8:15am — 8:50am

Join us on Thursday as we take time to honor and remember our colleagues, friends, and family.

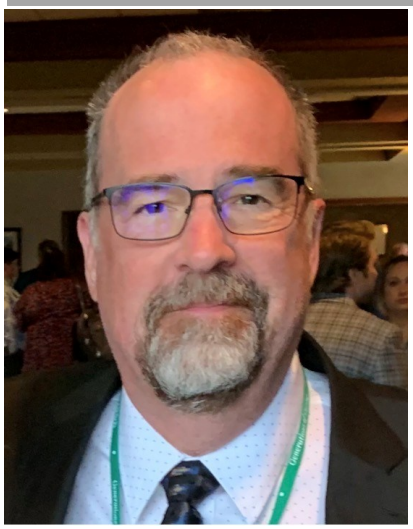
Wednesday Speakers

John T. Hill is a licensed undertaker in seven states and serves as the Clinical Coordinator for Pierce Mortuary Colleges, including Gupton-Jones, Dallas Institute, and Mid-America. Based in North Carolina, he also works with James Funeral Home and Northlake Memorial Gardens. As owner of Hill Mortuary Service & Seminars, John provides trade embalming and continuing education nationwide.

In 2024, he founded the RESTORE Program to instruct and inspire high standards of quality care in embalming, restorative art, and open casket viewing.

John's passion and dedication extends beyond serving grieving families; he desires to further this sacred profession by educating and showing the value, purpose, and benefit of funeral service. He aims to mentor and motivate current and aspiring funeral professionals, empowering them to excel, serve with excellence, and make a difference.

John T. Hill



Dr. Bellefleur graduated from Wayne State University School of Medicine in 1990. After two years in an OB/Gyn residency, he completed a residency in Anesthesiology, followed by a Fellowship in Pediatric Anesthesia at Children's Hospital of Michigan. Dr. Bellefleur was recruited to William Beaumont Hospital where he practiced for 20 years until his retirement. Dr. Bellefleur's interest in funeral service and embalming began at the age of 10. In 2013, his passion was further fostered when he became friends with Sharon Gee-Mascarello. Dr. Bellefleur was selected by Gee-Mascarello to serve as an Editorial Consultant to *"Embalming: History, Theory, and Practice, Sixth Edition"*. Dr. Bellefleur is an advocate for enhancing a better relationship between medicine and funeral service in hopes of providing excellent care for patients.

Jeffrey P. Bellefleur, M.D.

Anthony Fleege has been a professor at Southern Illinois University Carbondale since 1999 and the Program Director since 2009. He holds and AAS in Mortuary Science, BS in Healthcare Management and a MBA. He has taught funeral directing, regulations and funeral service law for over 20 years. He has been a licensed funeral director and embalmer for 27 years and a deputy coroner for 20 years.

Anthony Fleege

Thursday Speakers

Tom conducts continuing education seminars for various professionals around the country. He authored books on Long Term Care, National Flood Insurance, Index Products, Life Insurance, Disability, Viatical Settlements, Annuity Suitability, Ethics and Affordable Care Act.

Tom is a past president of NAIFA- East Side in Illinois and is a past Member of the Board of Directors for NAIFA-Illinois. He serves on an Continuing Education Advisory Council for the Illinois Department of Insurance. His outside activities include Rotary where he has served as District 6510 Governor in 2012-13 and as Zone 31 Visioning Coordinator.

Thomas Ripperda

Michael D. Sharkey grew up in the little village of Crivitz, WI, a place that time seemingly forgot as he had what he thinks of as the last Tom Sawyer- like childhood before the world became so connected and fast paced. He now lives in Minneapolis.

When not practicing law or out of the funeral convention speaking circuit Michael likes to cook, ride his Harley, visit cemeteries, and putter about his happy little backyard tending his flowers and veggies. "Shark"- as he is commonly known- served in the U.S. Marines.

Licensed to practice law in MN, WI, IL, SD, and WA.

Michael D. Sharkey

Download the IFDA Mobile App from your favorite App Store!

Get the most from your convention experience with the mobile IFDA App! You will find features like daily schedules, speaker information, attendee networking, exhibitor details, local area information and more. The App will also be used to track your continuing education hours with a unique QR code that will be scanned after each session.

Search IFDA in your App store. Accessing the convention App is easy. Just use the unique email you used to register for the Convention to sign in. No password required! We will always be on-hand to help you get started, should you need help. Note: there may be a delay between the time you register and when you have access to the App. Communication will be sent out when the App is available for download.

Registration Information

Fee Structure

Our **registration fee structure** allows you to pay one fee to attend both days or any single day of the Convention. Multi-day registration includes all social events and educational programs for every day of the Convention. Single-day registration includes all educational programs and all social events offered for the day on which you register unless otherwise stated. IFDA's Crematory Operator Refresher Course is not included in registration fees.

Refund Policy

All requests to cancel must be made in writing to IFDA by emailing info@ifda.org. Your registration can be cancelled at any time before March 30, 2026 for a full refund without any penalties. This policy is in place for the 2026 IFDA Annual Convention only. No refunds or cancellations will be issued after March 30, 2026. No-shows will not receive a refund.

All refunds will be processed after the 2026 IFDA Annual Convention. Registration may not be transferred to another attendee. Registration may not be transferred to any future IFDA events.

Liability Waiver

By registering for the IFDA Convention, you agree and acknowledge that you are participating in IFDA events and activities on your own free and intentional will. You acknowledge this freely and knowingly and that you are, as a result, able to participate in IFDA Convention events and hereby assume responsibility for your own well-being. **This acknowledgement includes your guest(s)' participation in any events.**

Attendee List

By registering for the Convention, you acknowledge that your contact information will be included on the attendee list made available to all meeting registrants, exhibitors and sponsors. If you do not want your contact information included in convention materials, please initial to opt-out from attendee list on the registration form or contact IFDA at 217-525-2000.

Photography Waiver

By registering for this event, you consent that photos and videos of you at the event may be published in print or posted online in online photo albums; on photo/video-sharing sites such as YouTube; on social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram; and in other web-based media at the sole discretion of IFDA.

Americans with Disabilities Act

IFDA only uses facilities that are in compliance with the ADA. If you require special assistance while attending the Convention, please visit the IFDA Registration Desk.

Thank you for supporting IFDA—we look forward to seeing you in April!