



eNews

A monthly news update for the Wilbert® Licensee Network

November 2024

upcoming events

February 3-6, 2025
Wilbert National Sales Meeting
Miami Beach, Florida

February 4-6, 2025
ICCFA Dead Talks
Las Vegas, Nevada

February 26-28, 2025
CANA Symposium
Las Vegas, Nevada

what's news

- Wilbert National Sales Meeting2
- Elegant Ceramic Urns2
- Quality Control School Recap.....3
- Brutsche Concrete Columbarium Projects.....5
- Wilbert Foundation Announcements.....6
- WilbertEDU® October Recap.....7
- WilbertEDU Q4 Webinar Schedule.....8
- WilbertEDU Upcoming Sessions9
- Monthly Licensee Sales Collaboration Meeting.....9
- Commemorating First Responder Taylor Bristow10
- Commemorating First Responder Michael Clarke 11
- Commemorating First Responder Corey Thompson.....12

Any Personnel Changes for the Directory or eNews Subscription?

Kindly report any changes in your Licensee information to Susan Barry at sbarry@wilbert.com or call Susan at 708-865-1600 at your first opportunity when changes occur. Thank you!



We'd Like to Hear from YOU!

What have you found that works in your experience? Anything poignant or tastefully funny that you would like to share? Old photos of Wilbert products or employees from days gone by that would be interesting? Please email your stories to Ken Moore at kmoore@wilbert.com. If you're not comfortable writing, don't worry – he will be happy to help.



We encourage you to circulate this issue of eNews to others in your organization.

Wilbert National Sales Meeting

The 2025 Wilbert National Sales Meeting is scheduled for February 3-6, 2025, at the Grand Beach Hotel Miami Beach, Florida.

The meeting kicks off on Monday evening, February 3 with the Opening Reception at 6 PM. Meetings and group activities are scheduled all day Tuesday and Wednesday, with an Awards Banquet Wednesday evening. Attendees can schedule return trips home anytime Thursday, February 6.

Registration is \$500 for full attendees and \$250 for guest attendees.

[Meeting Registration](#)

The Grand Beach Hotel Miami Beach is located at 4835 Collins Avenue, Miami Beach, Florida. The Wilbert Group rate is \$279 per night.

[Hotel Reservations](#)

Contact [Royden Wood](#) or [Audra Hufford](#) with questions.

We're excited to have the Wilbert Licensee network's sales team come together to celebrate achievements, strengthen partnerships, and set the stage for an outstanding year ahead in 2025!

Appreciate the Elegance of Ceramic Urns



Discover the beautiful porcelain china urn by Lenox with its cream fluting and vine scroll motif, or the hand-crafted porcelain Antique English with its graceful blue floral styling, to the glazed ceramic Country Bouquet featuring a lovely blue and pink flower design.

Wilbert strives to provide only the highest value and finest quality urns.

Quality Control School 2024 Recap



This year's Quality Control School was held in Atlanta, GA, at Piedmont Precast. We had 40 attendees from across the United States and Canada. There were many new faces in attendance, and this year's school appeared to attract a younger crowd, which may symbolize a changing of the guard in many plants. The school kicked off with a great event at Top Golf, where attendees were eager to show off their golfing skills while enjoying a delicious buffet. It was a wonderful way to start this year's school.



As attendees arrived at Piedmont Precast, they were placed into teams, allowing friendly competition to begin and valuable points to be earned. Each team had the opportunity to score points throughout the school during various challenges. Day one started with everyone gathering in the training center at Piedmont for introductions and a session titled "Burial Vault 101," which included a Breaker Board demonstration. Then, attendees moved to the plant to observe best practices in form stripping, oiling, and cleaning. Piedmont demonstrated a Triune lay-up, the proper method for setting up and rolling Unidex, butyl installation, equipment buffing, and emphasized the importance of having everyone in the plant understand the burial vault manufacturing process.

In the past, Manufacturing Specifications were provided in binders or on a thumb drive. Since most of the modern workforce uses smartphones, we helped students access the Manufacturing Specifications on Wilbert.com. To reinforce their learning, group competition scoring included online quizzes, and students were directed to the appropriate specification sections. We were pleased to see that students explored more of the Wilbert.com website, discovering manufacturing videos and our concrete cylinder test database.



Quality Control School 2024 Recap continued

One individual who deserves special recognition is Paul Ramsburg with Sika, who delivered an excellent presentation on concrete mix designs and admixtures. With more markets moving to Type 1L Cement, often without cement manufacturers notifying their customers, it's valuable to gain insight from an industry expert like Paul.

Everyone had a productive day, learning and collaborating with their teams.

Day two began with a tour of Piedmont Precast's building, where all the concrete for their burial vaults, as well as many other products for various industries, is cast. It was impressive to see the full scope of their operations. Attendees were particularly interested in how Piedmont creates, batches, prepares, and tests the mix to ensure quality and compliance with state requirements. Upon returning to the plant, the teams reviewed questions from day one and were tasked with grading a graveside setup that contained some deficiencies. Each team had time to critique the setup and was graded on their observations. The day concluded with a delicious traditional Georgia dinner, which everyone enjoyed.



At each Quality Control School, much of the attention and many questions focused on achieving a score that qualifies for the Ultimate Service designation. The group was eager to understand this process, and we hope they returned to their plants with a clearer understanding of how to reach this level. There were numerous questions both during and after each segment, fostering excellent group interaction. This was a fantastic school, and attendees seemed to gain new insights and enhance their current practices. A special thank you to Piedmont Precast and its employees for helping make this an outstanding Quality Control School!



Some helpful links and points of contact for the school:

Paul Ramsburg
Sika
(864) 344-1409
ramsburg.paul@us.sika.com

Manufacturing Specifications

<https://www.wilbert.com/licensee/operations/manufacturing-specifications/>

Field Service Videos

<https://www.wilbert.com/licensee/operations/field-services-videos/>

To those who attended, we thank you. We are already looking forward to planning QC School 2025.

Brutsche Concrete Columbarium Projects

Harrison Cemetery, Climax, Michigan

This photo showcases the final step of grouting the joint for an installation by the Brutsche Concrete crew at Harrison Cemetery in Climax, MI.

With limited grave space, the cemetery chose to install the GP48NICHE columbarium in maple with mahogany shutters to serve local families. This impressive unit is four niches wide and six niches tall, featuring a double-sided design with double shutters.

Strategically placed in a previously unusable area, it provides a prominent option for the inurnment of cremated remains, thereby enhancing the cemetery's offerings.



North Gate of Strange Cemetery near Oneida, Michigan

This photo features an impressive installation by the Brutsche Concrete crew: a beautiful two-sided columbarium measuring six niches wide and four niches high. Crafted from maple and adorned with elegant mahogany shutters, this striking 48-niche structure is strategically located just inside the North Gate of Strange Cemetery, near Oneida, MI.

It provides a warm and dignified welcome for families seeking a final resting place for their loved ones. Plans are underway to further enhance the surrounding area, ensuring that additional services will be available to better support the families in our community.

Leek Cemetery, Alaiedon Township, Michigan

The recently completed project showcases a stunning 144-niche maple columbarium with elegant mahogany shutters, designed as a single-sided, V-shaped memorial dedicated to veterans at Leek Cemetery in Alaiedon Township, MI.

This thoughtful design features back walls that will honor our heroes with an engraved honor roll of names, along with additional engravings celebrating their service and dedication.



The skilled lettering crew at Brutsche Concrete will handle the on-site engraving once the design is finalized, ensuring a lasting tribute to those who fought for our freedom.

The Wilbert Foundation Introduces New Logo and Terry Whitlock Pediatric Chaplaincy Endowment

This year at the WMA Annual meeting the Wilbert Foundation introduced a new logo and mission statement. The foundation also introduced the Terry Whitlock Pediatric Chaplaincy Endowment.



As a founding member of the Wilbert Foundation, Terry led the effort to provide Foundation funds for pediatric chaplaincy...

helping the Wilbert Foundation to become the leading funder of pediatric chaplaincy programs in the USA and Canada. This fund will honor Terry's service and dedication, providing grants every year.



Pledge Card

Terry Whitlock Pediatric Chaplaincy Endowment

Name of Donor: _____

Address of Donor: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____



As a founding member of the Wilbert Foundation, Terry led the effort to provide Foundation funds for pediatric chaplaincy ... helping the Wilbert Foundation to become the leading funder of pediatric chaplaincy programs in the USA and Canada. This fund will honor Terry's service and dedication, providing grants every year.

Make a Gift in Person or Online



Giving Levels

- Wilbert Bronze: \$25,000 +
- Copper Triune: \$10,000
- Stainless Steel Triune: \$5,000
- Venetian: \$2,500
- Monticello: \$1,000
- Other: _____

- My gift was made online via the QR code. In the amount of \$ _____
- I would like to pledge a one time gift. In the amount of \$ _____
 - Check Bill Me
- I would like my gift to be a tribute....
 - in honor of _____
 - in memory of _____

Please return this card to the designated member of the Wilbert Foundation Board, upon completion.

Thank You!

If you would like to donate to this endowment, please scan the QR Code on the pledge card or you can mail a check to PO Box 226, Hagerstown, MD 21741.

WilbertEDU® October Recap



On October 3, Effie Alonik presented on a timely topic – online price lists – with her presentation, “Trust Through Clarity: Redesigning Your GPL to Build Trust.” Effie is the co-founder and CEO of Afterword, a technology startup that helps funeral homes support families in making informed decisions in-person or online. Her interest in bereavement started after her dad died in August 2018 and she planned her first funeral. She was surprised by how different the process was from everything else she had done.

Effie’s presentation addressed the anticipated FTC requirement to publish General Price Lists (GPLs) online and the opportunity to make them more transparent and user-friendly. Acknowledging that traditional GPL formats can be confusing, the presentation emphasized how clear, accessible GPLs can build trust with families. Demonstrating the importance of an online presence, she shared stats from the 2024 NFDA Consumer Survey showing that 78% of respondents started their arrangements online.

She discussed the complex choices families must make when planning a funeral and using examples (Zillow and [Funeralocity](#)) showed how the internet has made complex decisions easier for consumers. Using restaurant menus, she demonstrated structuring complex choices by mapping and showed an excellent example of mapping a complex GPL on a [funeral home website](#). Finally, she emphasized that while the FTC does not mandate online GPL format, funeral homes can build trust with families by mapping services, using simple language, and making their GPL easily accessible by adding it to their website navigation.

On October 17, Wendy Wiener and Lauren Pettine returned to the WilbertEDU stage for the third time to present “Unlicensed Funeral Directing: Why This is the New Regulator Hot Button.” In this informative session, Wendy and Lauren explored the recent regulatory focus on unlicensed funeral directing across the United States, addressing why this issue is gaining traction and what industry professionals should know to stay compliant.

The webinar began with an overview of recent regulatory shifts, discussing whether the focus on unlicensed funeral directing is based on actual risks or perceived concerns. Their message: the risk is real! The presenters noted a marked increase in attention from regulators due to several high-profile cases of unlicensed practice in [California](#), [Colorado](#), [Florida](#), [Indiana](#), and [Kentucky](#). They highlighted how these incidents have led to heightened scrutiny and new regulatory measures.

The presenters clarified the line between licensed and unlicensed funeral activities, detailing specific tasks that strictly require a licensed funeral director. They also discussed certain gray-area activities that might require licensure depending on state regulations, urging firms to verify their specific state's requirements. They discussed the criminal consequences of non-compliance and how some cases have resulted in staggering fines - [\\$950 million in restitution and fines](#) for the owners of Return to Nature in Colorado - and criminal sanctions, including prison terms.

The webinar concluded with practical advice on hiring unlicensed employees. They discussed best practices, including clear role definitions, training on compliance, and identifying tasks that can safely be performed by non-licensed staff without crossing regulatory boundaries and urged attendees to know their state rules and laws and to comply.



WilbertEDU® October Recap continued

On October 31, Barbara Kemmis and Brie Bingham from CANA returned to the WilbertEDU stage to present, "Cremation Trends and Staff Retention: A CANA-Inspired Approach." CANA has 3,700 members throughout the US and Canada and is best known for two things: cremation statistics and research, and the Crematory Operations Certification Program.

The presentation provided valuable insights into the evolving landscape of the funeral profession. It highlighted the continued growth of cremation rates in North America, projected to reach 75.3% in Canada and 60.6% in the U.S. in 2023. This shift reflects changing consumer preferences, with many families now favoring personalized celebrations of life over traditional funeral services. Cremation, they noted, offers flexibility and a range of memorialization options that appeal to modern families.

The presenters also addressed the significant challenge of employee retention, driven by the rising cost of living and relatively low wages in the industry. Median pay for funeral directors often falls below living wage levels in major cities, making it difficult to attract and retain qualified staff. To address this, they recommended offering competitive wages, fostering a supportive work environment, and creating opportunities for career growth and development.

Adapting to these changes, the presenters emphasized, requires funeral homes to expand their service offerings and educate families on cremation's versatility. Key skills for serving cremation families include an understanding of the cremation process and legal requirements, effective communication, and a high degree of adaptability. The presenters concluded by urging funeral professionals to review and update their service offerings, prioritize specialized training, and address compensation to remain competitive in a shifting industry landscape.



WilbertEDU Q4 Webinar Schedule

Download this one-page flier promoting WilbertEDU webinars for the months of October, November, and December. Perfect for funeral home break room bulletin boards, as a leave behind for sales reps, to place on your website, or to email to your customers.

[Download now.](#)

Find on [wilbert.com](#)
WilbertEDU Program

WilbertEDU Sessions for October, November and December, 2024.

<p>October 3 Trust Through Clarity: Redesigning Your GPL to Build Trust</p> <p>Ella Anvik, co-founder and CEO of Afterward, demonstrates how to create transparent, easy-to-understand GPLs that build trust with families.</p>	<p>October 31 Cremation Trends & Staff Retention: A CANA-Inspired Approach</p> <p>Barbara Kemmis and Brie Bingham share the latest CANA consumer research and provide practical strategies to align consumer expectations with professional services.</p>	<p>December 5 Michigan SMART team: Providing Assistance to Law Enforcement Agencies Following a Line of Duty Death</p> <p>Daniel Foley provides insights into the origins of the Michigan SMART Team, how the team is represented when it is activated, and the many services offered to agencies requesting assistance during a loss.</p>
<p>October 17 Unlicensed Funeral Directing: Why This is the New Regulator Hot Button</p> <p>Wendy Wempe & Lauren Peltine examine recent events that have caught the attention of state regulators and share best practices for hiring unlicensed employees.</p>	<p>November 14 An Update on the EPA Formaldehyde Review and What It Means for Your Firm and the Profession</p> <p>Leslie Vitter helps prepare funeral professionals for the changes coming with the EPA's new Formaldehyde Risk Assessment and regulatory updates that could significantly impact your funeral home operation.</p>	<p>December 19 Air Force Mortuary Affairs Operations Presentation</p> <p>Danielle Wlk and Jennifer Jacobs provide a behind-the-scenes look at Dover Air Force Base Mortuary Affairs, the final resting point for U.S. service members who have paid the ultimate sacrifice.</p>

WilbertEDU e-learning for today's funeral professionals

WilbertEDU (Upcoming Sessions Oct-Dec 2024)

WilbertEDU® Upcoming Sessions



November 14 | An Update on the EPA Formaldehyde Review and What It Means for Your Firm and the Profession with Lesley Witter

Details on the EPA formaldehyde risk assessment including their proposed new formaldehyde exposure limit and the implications for funeral businesses and funeral service.



December 5 | Michigan's SMMART Team: Providing Assistance to Law Enforcement Agencies Following a Line of Duty Death with Dan Foley

An in-depth look at the Michigan SMMART Team (Sheriffs & Municipal Memorial Assistance Response Team), exploring its origins, representation, and the criteria for activation.



December 19 | Air Force Mortuary Operations Presentation with Danielle Wilk and Jennifer Jacobs

This presentation provides a comprehensive overview of how the military honors and prepares the remains of fallen heroes, offering valuable insights into the practice of ensuring care, respect, and professionalism for the deceased.



January 25 | Facial Reconstruction 101 with Michelle Johnston

Gain confidence in the embalming room in this two-hour technical webinar focusing on major trauma cases to prepare remains for open casket viewing.

Monthly Licensee Sales Collaboration Meeting

Each month, Matt Ingersoll, Chief Commercial Officer for The Wilbert Group, leads an online meeting for licensees, creating an opportunity to strengthen the connection between the licensor and licensees. These sessions focus on collaboration, sharing best practices, and highlighting valuable resources for licensees.

October Meeting Highlights

The October meeting took place on October 31 at 9:00 AM and covered:

- Updates on casket and monument pricing
- An update on vaults from Royden Wood
- A progress report on Arnold Wilbert's monument journey by Bruce Tart and Trey McAvoy
- Details about the upcoming national sales meeting in Miami and more!

The next meeting is scheduled for November 21, 2024, at 10:00 am Central Time. To receive an invitation, please reach out to Audra Hufford at ahufford@wilbert.com. We welcome all interested licensees!

Commemorating First Responder Investigator Taylor Bristow



Carrollton, GA– Investigator Taylor Bristow succumbed to a gunshot wound sustained three days earlier while serving a warrant related to a child sexual exploitation investigation. He was assisting agents with the Georgia Bureau of Investigation to serve the warrant at a home at 8:30 a.m. The wanted subject opened the door and let the investigators into the house. As they entered the home, the man produced a handgun and shot himself in an attempt to commit suicide. The round also struck Investigator Bristow.



Investigator Bristow was transported to Grady Memorial Hospital where he remained until succumbing to the wound on Friday, August 23rd, 2024. He was 30 years old.

He is survived by his wife, two children, parents, sister, and two brothers.

Services were entrusted to the care of Miles-Odum Funeral Home and Crematory, Waycross, GA.

Bailey Monument & Vault, Waycross, GA, was honored to provide the family with a Stainless Steel Triune® burial vault with a Treasured Tribute image and a graveside service.



Commemorating First Responder EMS Michael Clarke



St, Louis, MO – EMS Michael Clarke was a paramedic for the St. Charles County Ambulance District. Shortly before 7 a.m. Monday morning, October 14, the advanced life support unit on which Paramedic Clarke was working was assigned to a 911 call. When Clarke did not report from the station to the ambulance to leave for the call, his partner found him unresponsive in one of the station's bedrooms.



Clarke's partner and other paramedics at Station 12 immediately initiated CPR and other lifesaving measures, which were continued at Barnes St. Peters Hospital following transport. Despite their valiant efforts, he did not survive. He passed away on Monday, October 14, 2024. He was 27 years old.

He is survived by his parents, siblings, extended family members, and many friends.

Services were entrusted to the care of Baue Funeral Home, Cave Springs, MO.

St. Louis Wilbert, St. Louis, MO, was honored to provide the family with a Stainless Steel Triune® burial vault with a Treasured Tribute image and a graveside service.



Commemorating First Responder Trooper Corey S. Thompson



Springfield, IL – Trooper Thompson was driving eastbound on East Leverett Road when a truck traveling southbound on Country Road 1300E entered the intersection, colliding with Trooper Thompson's police motorcycle. He was transported to a local hospital where he succumbed to his injuries.



Trooper Thompson passed away Friday, October 18, 2024. He was 28 years old.

The driver was cited for failure to yield right of way at a stop intersection and not having a valid driver's license.

Trooper Thompson served with the Illinois State Police for five years. He is survived by his wife and parents.

Services were entrusted to the care of Freese Funeral Home, St. Joseph, IL.

Kelley Vault Co., Inc., Champaign, IL, was honored to provide the family with a Stainless Steel Triune® burial vault with a Treasured Tribute image and a graveside service.

