

# Catholic Cemeteries

WYANDOTTE AND JOHNSON COUNTIES

SUMMER 2009

## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Earlier this year, the national *Catholic Cemetery* magazine invited us to submit an article about the importance of delivering excellent customer service during an economic downturn. A condensed

version of that article appears on page 2 of this newsletter.

What pleased me most about our staff responses to the interview was that they consider customer service as part and parcel of our Mission and ministry. Whether the economy is good or bad, the nature of our work as a ministry of the archdiocesan Church compels us to strive to be responsive and compassionate.

This requires sensitive listening and openness on our part. It involves communicating options for burial arrangements and informing clients about our no interest finance plan. It means gently walking people through decisions they face at the time of a loss or helping them pre-arrange and plan at their own pace.

Like organizations across the country, Catholic Cemeteries has felt the impact of the recent recession. This has delayed our timing of plans for some new memorials, but it has in no way hindered our efforts to respond to client needs. Our office staff and counselors remain highly focused on your needs. Because of their attentiveness, we receive high marks for service and keep raising the bar on standards for customer satisfaction. Pre-need arrangements have picked up momentum in recent months as Catholics consider this option a wise investment for the future. Even with the fickle Kansas weather, our grounds crew works diligently to maintain the lawn, trim trees and ensure the general upkeep of our cemeteries.

Beyond the services offered at our cemeteries, members of our staff are also available to assist parishes with starting bereavement support groups. The bereavement ministry of Church of the Ascension, Overland Park, Kan., initiated by parishioners and featured on page 3, demonstrates the value of this type of service.

As you read the articles in this newsletter, I hope that you continue to get to know us better at Catholic Cemeteries. We are here to serve by easing the burden at your time of personal loss and by providing sacred space and prayer opportunities for remembering.

If you have questions or concerns, I encourage you to call our office or email us to let us know how we can continue to improve our services.

Thank you,

Robert W. Chenoweth  
Executive Director

## New developments at Gate of Heaven, Resurrection

AS OUR CATHOLIC CEMETERIES ORGANIZATION SEEKS ONGOING OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE PARISHIONERS OF JOHNSON AND WYANDOTTE COUNTIES, PLANS ARE UNDERWAY FOR FURTHER ENHANCEMENTS AT RESURRECTION AND GATE OF HEAVEN CEMETERIES.

### *New mausoleum nearing completion*

Contractors are placing finishing touches on the new Holy Family Mausoleum at Resurrection Cemetery, 83rd and Quivira Road, Lenexa, Kan.



Bob Chenoweth, Catholic Cemeteries' executive director, said that the stained glass in the new mausoleum will be stunning, particularly with the chapel running east and west and one of the large windows brilliantly reflecting sunrises.

The new mausoleum will feature striking interior finishes and a comfortable, new office for client meetings with family service counselors. There will be 1,226 interior and exterior crypts and 70 glass-front cremation niches.

The ceremony to bless and dedicate the new mausoleum is pending completion of the facility and arrangements with Church Offices. For more information about Holy Family Mausoleum, call 913-371-4040.

### *Veterans Memorial planned for Gate of Heaven*

Plans are in the initial stages to develop a Veterans Memorial in the beautiful, park-like setting of Gate of Heaven Cemetery, 126th and Parallel, Kansas City, Kan.



Plans are in the works for enhancements to the beautiful landscape of Gate of Heaven Cemetery, Kansas City, Kan.

"We believe there will be strong interest in this memorial and the adjacent veterans' section," Bob said. "We are working to identify the right location for the memorial as we plan for future development of the cemetery."

The Catholic Cemeteries' executive director also said that plans are progressing with Wyandotte County Knights of Columbus councils to place a memorial at Gate of Heaven to victims of abortion. Plans for other shrines/memorials are also being considered.

Currently, 25 of the 40 acres at Gate of Heaven are developed.

### *Assumption Memorial beautified*

The Assumption Memorial at Resurrection Cemetery is transitioning from a painting to a mosaic designed with materials from Italy to beautify the Marian shrine. The memorial is located in the northeast corner of Resurrection bordering 83rd Street and Quivira Road. Surrounding stonework has been renewed with staff awaiting arrival of the mosaic to be set in the black granite.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ANY OF OUR SERVICES,

call Catholic Cemeteries, 913-371-4040, e-mail us at [information@catholiccemeterieskc.org](mailto:information@catholiccemeterieskc.org) or visit our website at [www.catholiccemeterieskc.org](http://www.catholiccemeterieskc.org).

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Meg Rosenthal  
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*Field operations manager*  
Jerry Frederes



## Customer service flows from Mission, ministry

Rose Shaffer and Sharon Vallejo (foreground) along with Jenny Lancaster strive for customer satisfaction in their office roles with Catholic Cemeteries.

**IN THESE DISTRESSED ECONOMIC TIMES, MANY OF OUR CLIENTS ARE NOT ONLY SUFFERING THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE, BUT THEY MAY ALSO BE DEALING WITH THE LOSS OF A JOB OR WORRIES ABOUT KEEPING A JOB. ECONOMICALLY, EVERYONE'S INVESTMENT IRAS OR 401KS HAVE LOST SIGNIFICANT VALUE.**

At Catholic Cemeteries of Wyandotte and Johnson Counties, our ministry's Mission remains constant in good economic times or bad:

*"We bury the dead with dignity and respect;  
we comfort the living with compassion and concern;  
and we provide sacred space for remembering."*

This Mission is foundational as our employees strive to communicate with compassion and concern, bring comfort to our clients, and address customer service issues.

### Sensitive listening

From answering the telephone, to offering consolation to grieving families, to signing a pre-need contract, staff of Catholic Cemeteries understands that customer service is embedded in our Mission and essential to our work. In these challenging economic times, they find that people especially appreciate openness, responsiveness and compassion.

For Catholic Cemeteries' staff, the tools of their trade include good listening skills, sharing their personal stories, sensitivity and relationship building. Sharon Vallejo, office manager, told the story of a man who had lost his wife and was upset about the delayed arrival of the grave marker to the extent he was considering canceling his order. Sharon talked with him about her own experience of losing her mother and used the image of a butterfly as a joyful while fleeting spirit. That conversation calmed the client who subsequently placed a butterfly on his wife's grave marker.

Listening with a sensitive ear is job one for Rose Shaffer, receptionist. Rose is the first person most people hear when they call or see when they enter our 38th Street Catholic Cemeteries' office. Her focus is on providing people with information they need, resolving their concerns, or directing them to a family service counselor. Rose, too, has shared her personal stories surrounding the deaths of her parents to empathize with clients and to emphasize the importance of pre-need arrangements. Her bilingual skills are an asset in sharing information and expressing comfort to our Spanish-speaking clients.

### Ministry perspective

"I don't think of what I do as a business," said Anne Riley, family service counselor. "I consider it more of a ministry."

In his work as a pre-need counselor, Charlie Owens is quick to establish that he is calling on behalf of a ministry of the archdiocesan Church and to keep that association front and foremost in continuing conversations. He said this establishes credibility and sets the tone of helpfulness. Consistent with this concept of ministry, Charlie and other pre-need counselors can offer clients, who are concerned about expenses, our Catholic Cemeteries' no interest finance plan. Charlie said this feature appeals to clients especially during the current economic downturn.

Jenny Lancaster, accounting clerk, said that she's learned the value of patience as clients struggle with wording and approval of grave markers. "It may seem like a small thing," she said, "but to the client, this is a forever thing."

In the end, Jenny summed up the customer service philosophy of our Catholic Cemeteries' staff, "We do whatever we can to help people and to keep them happy. That's our job."

## Private mausoleum option available



Catholic Cemeteries in Johnson and Wyandotte Counties currently feature some private estate mausoleums dating back several years like the one above at Mt. Calvary Cemetery, Kansas City, Kan.

While three Catholic Cemeteries' locations feature large mausoleum buildings, a private estate mausoleum for members of an individual family is another burial option available. Individual family mausoleums and private estates are receiving renewed interest across the country.

Historically, mausoleums were large, stately buildings built for persons of importance. Smaller mausoleums became favorites of the royalty and civic and religious leaders in many countries.

Today, private estate mausoleums for a family can be of a "vestibule" or "sarcophagus" design. Vestibules resemble small homes with a door that opens to a hallway that has crypts on both sides and often stained glass windows. A sarcophagus has burial vaults above the ground, and the caskets are entered in the crypts by removing the front panel. They can be organized side by side or placed in multiple rows and levels.

Private estate mausoleums are normally made of granite in a variety of colors and design options. They offer many options for personalization including stained glass, vases, etchings, columns and other features.

**For more information, call 913-371-4040.**

Source: [funeralresources.com](http://funeralresources.com)

### TAKE NOTE

#### Pilgrimage opportunity coming this fall

Watch for future announcements about a special pilgrimage Catholic Cemeteries is planning for fall 2009. Without leaving the Greater Kansas City Metropolitan Area, you will have the opportunity to visit Marian shrines, walk a prayerful path to other monuments, pause in reflection and enjoy the company of other people of faith.

#### More to come in parish bulletin announcements and in *The Leaven*.

*Our Lady of Lourdes will be one of the prayer destinations for the fall pilgrimage being planned by Catholic Cemeteries.*

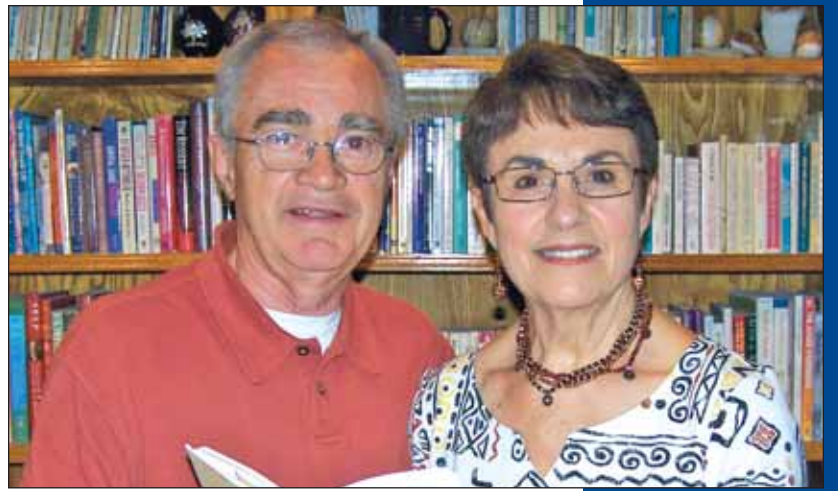


#### Memorial Day Mass

Father Michael Hermes, pastor of Our Lady of Unity Parish, offered Memorial Day Mass at Mt. Calvary Cemetery, Kansas City, Kan., with liturgical music by the choir organized annually by Ed Grisnik.

# Ministry helps bereaved 'find new normal'

RECOGNIZING THAT ULTIMATELY IT IS GOD WHO HEALS PEOPLE WHO ARE MOURNING THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE, KAREN AND DENNIS SCHEMMEL BELIEVE THAT THE BEREAVEMENT MINISTRIES OFFERED BY SEVERAL AREA PARISHES PROVIDE TREMENDOUS SUPPORT ON THE JOURNEY OF HEALING.



Dennis and Karen Schemmel

The Schemmels have coordinated the bereavement ministry at Church of the Ascension, Overland Park, Kan., for almost four years. They work with a committee of seven other parishioners – all of whom have lost loved ones and who actively participate in different elements of the bereavement ministry.

## Multiple contacts express caring

At Church of the Ascension, the bereavement ministry includes the following outreach:

- Within two to three weeks following a death, a committee member attempts a personal phone call to the bereaved family member(s) to extend condolences and support.
- Shortly thereafter, the newly bereaved receive a letter from the ministry, offering prayers and sympathy and describing the parish bereavement group. An accompanying packet of materials includes information about bereavement groups in the area and helpful resources.
- On the second Saturday of each month, Church of the Ascension hosts an 8:30 a.m. memorial Mass followed by the bereavement group from 9:00 to 10:30 a.m. This group is open to parishioners and other interested persons from the surrounding community.
- Within three months and then a year following the loss, the newly bereaved receive additional mailings from the parish.

“With this number of contacts,” Karen said, “people know that someone has cared to follow through with them.”

## Faith and community important

The Schemmels, both of whom have professional backgrounds in counseling, believe that there is great value in offering this bereavement ministry in the parish environment. It gives testimony to the community’s role in providing support and to the importance of faith in the healing process.

The monthly bereavement group at Church of the Ascension starts with prayer and features a guest speaker every other month. In alternate months, Karen and Dennis facilitate discussion based on handouts shared with the group. The meetings incorporate scripture and time to socialize.

“Participants in the group take comfort that other people have experienced losses similar to theirs and that they are not alone,” Dennis explained. “Together, they are seeking support and normalization.”

Karen added, “We want people to be able to move beyond their grief. We tell them they won’t go back to what they may have experienced as normal, but that they will find a new normal.”

For more information about the Church of Ascension bereavement ministry, contact the Schemmels at 913-897-5079.

## Parishes offer bereavement support

A number of area parishes offer helpful and comforting outreach to parishioners who have lost family members. In addition, the following parishes offer bereavement support groups that meet regularly and are open to adults.

- Church of the Ascension, Overland Park, Kan.
- Cure of Ars Parish, Leawood, Kan.
- Prince of Peace Parish, Olathe, Kan.
- St. Patrick Parish, Kansas City, Kan.

# Employees support Catholic Cemeteries’ Mission

## Amazed, impressed by ministry

The many different aspects that go into the management and operation of Catholic Cemeteries amaze **Jenny Lancaster**, accounting clerk. She is also impressed that “we offer a great ministry.”



When she began working at the 38th Street office in Kansas City, Kan., in 2008, Jenny’s responsibilities included ordering markers, monuments and plaques. Her contact with clients was by telephone, email or mail as she strived to ensure the accuracy of the wording and to achieve customer satisfaction. Jenny recently transitioned to the role of accounting clerk with Catholic Cemeteries. She loves numbers and math and said, “There’s always something new to learn.”

Originally from Holton, Kan., Jenny attended Benedictine College, Atchison, Kan., and graduated from Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kan., with a degree in family studies and human services. Her first job was with the Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging, Lawrence, Kan.

When Jenny relocated to the Kansas City area as a newlywed, she was interested in finding employment with a Church-related organization. It was by chance that her husband came across information about the job opening at Catholic Cemeteries.

The Lancasters are members of Cure of Ars Parish, Leawood, Kan., where they volunteer with the youth group and attend holy hour weekly. Jenny said that “babyland” is a happy preoccupation for the couple as they anticipate the autumn arrival of their first child.

## Making options known

**Tim Streff** is relatively new to the Catholic Cemeteries’ staff, but he has quickly come to appreciate the many options he can introduce to people in his role as a pre-need counselor.



When Tim describes options, he includes traditional ground interment; lawn crypts; mausoleums with interior and exterior crypts and cremation niches; and cremation with either ground interment or niches in the mausoleum interior. Clients make choices based on personal or family preferences.

“It’s very rewarding to present these options and to help set the stage for important decisions in clients’ lives,” Tim said. “It may be several months before they get back to me, but I want them to be comfortable with their decisions, particularly in these tough economic times.”

Tim joined Catholic Cemeteries’ staff in January 2009. Prior to that, he had a 33-year career with Nabisco in sales, marketing and management in the Kansas City area and Nebraska. Tim earned his bachelor’s degree in business management from Park University, Parkville, Mo.

A member of Good Shepherd Parish, Shawnee, Kan., Tim serves as a Eucharistic minister and sings on the choir. He and his wife have four children and seven grandchildren. Tim enjoys woodworking, remodeling, golf, reading and gardening.

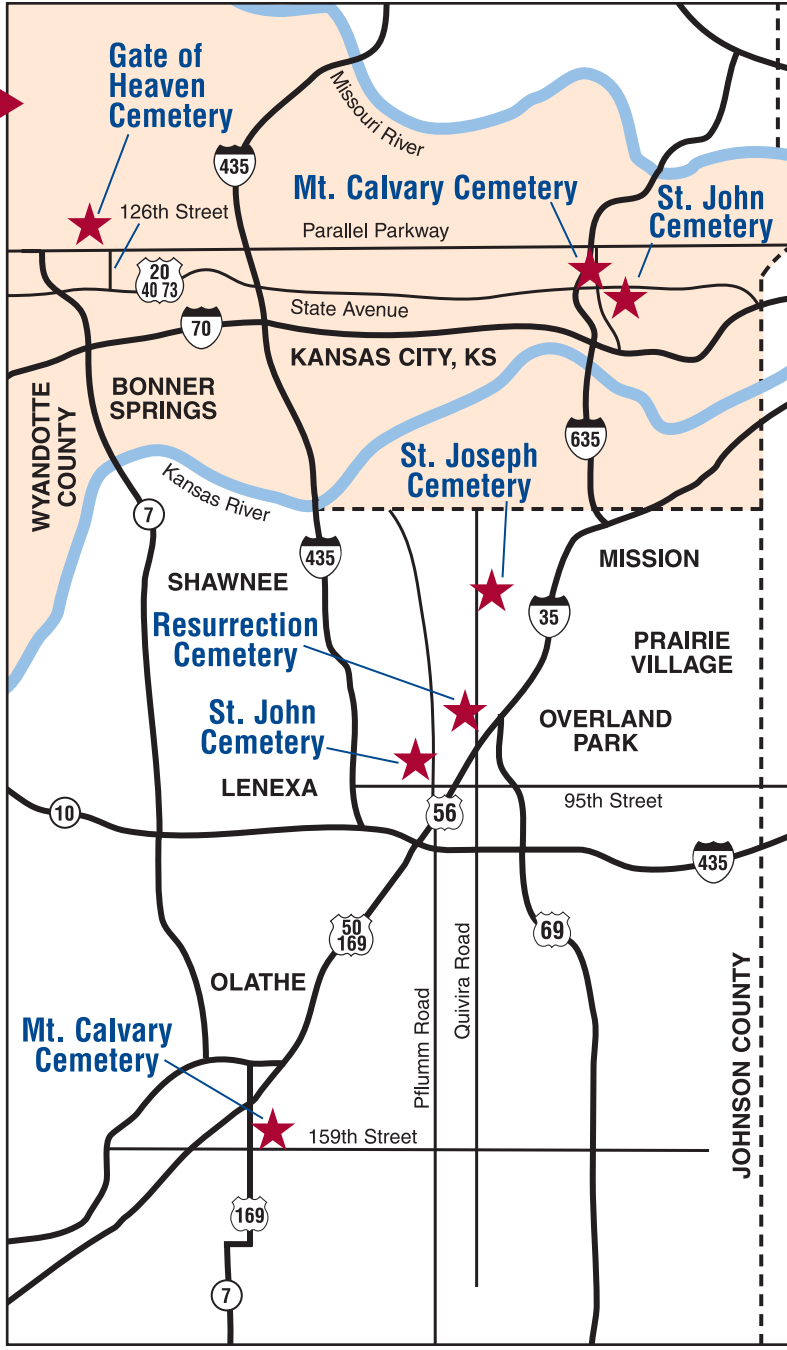
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# CATHOLIC CEMETERIES LOCATIONS

Office and more information  
913-371-4040  
information@catholiccemeterieskc.org  
www.catholiccemeterieskc.org

- **St. John Cemetery**  
36th and State Ave.  
Kansas City, Kan.
- **Mt. Calvary Cemetery**  
38th and State Ave.  
Kansas City, Kan.
- **Resurrection Cemetery**  
83rd and Quivira  
Lenexa, Kan.
- **Mt. Calvary Cemetery**  
158th and S. Hwy. 169  
Olathe, Kan.
- **St. John Cemetery**  
89th and Pflumm  
Lenexa, Kan.
- **St. Joseph Cemetery**  
61st and Quivira  
Shawnee, Kan.
- **Gate of Heaven Cemetery**  
126th and Parallel  
Kansas City, Kan.



# Testimonials & Thanks

*When my adult son Joe died unexpectedly in Miami, Fla., in April, Bob DeHaven, Catholic Cemeteries' family service counselor, was very helpful and patient with me as I could not make a decision on a burial site at Resurrection Cemetery. Similarly, as my four daughters and I chose wording for Joe's marker, Sharon Vallejo, office manager, was prompt and complied with our many drafts until we selected Joe's final engraving.*

*During one of my visits to Resurrection, I noticed the prettiest red rose bushes around the Faith, Hope and Charity monument – very nice and quite an improvement over what had been in that area. It is indeed refreshing to deal with people who truly care! Thanks to all of you at Catholic Cemeteries!*

—Peggy Schmiedeler  
Church of the Nativity  
Parishioner  
Leawood, Kan.



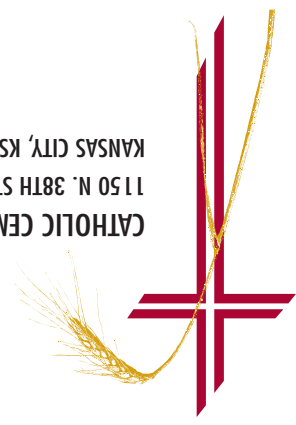
*The Faith, Hope and Charity monument at Resurrection Cemetery, Lenexa, Kan.*

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