

Final Wishes Planning for North Dakotans

A funeral is one of the most expensive purchases a consumer will ever make. Traditional funeral, including a casket & vault costs about \$6,000-8,000. Extras like flowers, obituary notices, acknowledgment cards, plot marker, etc. can add thousands of additional dollars, so that many funerals today run over \$10,000. The average cost of a traditional funeral in the Fargo area is now \$10,000!

Each year, Americans spend billions of dollars arranging more than 2 million funerals for family members and friends. In fact, for many Americans, a funeral is often the third highest single item purchase expense, following a family home and vehicle.

"Dying is one of the few events in life certain to occur, yet one we are not likely to plan for. We spend more time getting ready for two weeks away from work than we do our last time on Earth."

Time Magazine, Sept. 2000.

NDSU
Extension Service

Response

Consumers can be better prepared for one of life's biggest challenges by putting funeral preferences in writing, giving copies to family members, an attorney, the funeral home, and a copy in a handy place at home. Preplanning relieves survivors from the stress of making difficult decisions under the pressure of time and strong emotions, it allows them to make informed and thoughtful decisions about funeral arrangements, such as: type of funeral, where to be buried, music, flowers, eulogy, pallbearers, cultural traditions. In 2006, the NDSU Extension Service developed and made available a packaged program for community groups "Final Wishes Planning in North Dakota." A website with additional information, <http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/money/finalwishes/finalwishes.htm> was also developed.

Selected Impacts

Participants were asked about knowledge and planned behavior change as a result of participation in class. Responses to selected questions include:

- More than 89% had a better understanding of the options available for final arrangements
- More than 92% indicated that their knowledge of funeral/cremation planning in North Dakota has increased
- More than 83% planned to fill out a Final Wishes Planning form
- More than 85% planned to fill out an Advance Directives form
- 73% planned to write their own obituary
- More than 81% planned to write (or update) their will
- More than 93% planned to discuss my final wishes with their family
- More than 97% indicated that they now know where to find accurate and unbiased information related to funeral planning