The Texas State Florists Association's (TSFA) display at the 2010 International Cemetery, Cremation, and Funeral Association's (ICCFA) convention, held this year from March 10 to March 13 in San Antonio, featured sample memorial floral arrangements along with printed materials designed to promote flowers and discourage the "in lieu of" phrase in obituaries and memorial announcements.

While TSFA has worked with other funeral industry groups, including the Texas Funeral Directors Association, the convention represented the first collaboration with a group representing such a wide variety of memorial planners. ICCFA's 7,400 members include not only funeral homes but also crematories and memorial service planners. (At press time ICCFA had not reported its final convention attendance.)

"We were able to make a bigger impact," said Dianna Doss Nordman, AAF, TSFA's executive director. Nordman spearheaded the display effort with Clay Atchison III of McAdams Floral in Victoria, Texas. From the TSFA booth, they greeted attendees and gave away yellow roses in honor of the Texas setting. To keep costs in check, Greenleaf Wholesale Florist and Virgin Farms provided flowers – the yellow roses and the flowers used in the sample designs. David and Oralia Espinoza, AIFD, of Spring Garden Flower Shop, volunteered their shop and designers for pre-conference prep and design work, and a delivery driver and a van for transportation. The Espinozas, who were in Washington, D.C., for Congressional Action Days during most of the conference, also organized booth set-up and teardown.

"I was impressed with how well TSFA represented the floral industry," David said. "(The 'in lieu of' issue) isn't a huge problem for us personally, but it's important to the industry, and we need to get that information out there. This seemed like a good opportunity."

Atchison also said the display let TSFA showcase the floral industry’s willingness to adapt to funeral and memorial trends, including shifts toward increased personalization in services and an increasing preference for cremation.

An arrangement featuring an urn garnered "double-takes" from attendees, said Atchison, who advocates for funeral flowers on his educational site, www.inlieuofflowers.info. "Lots of the attendees didn't realize how much a florist can do with an urn, and since cremation is a big trend right now, showing that design was a big plus for our industry," he said. "The fact that so many people were surprised by the urn makes me think we can do a better job overall promoting flowers for cremation."

Try this:

- Get tips on how to work with your local funeral homes to eliminate "in lieu of flowers" phrasing at SAF's Web site, www.safnow.org/sympathy.
- See what happens when funeral directors and florists sit at the same table to discuss "in lieu of flowers" and some of the other issues at the root of the tensions between funeral directors and florists, in the February issue of Floral Management.

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