

# BUSINESS DIRECTORY

## DEGRAFF FUNERAL HOME

*Compassionate • Respectful • Flexible*

**DeGraff Lakehurst Funeral Home, Inc.**  
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DeGraff Lakehurst Funeral Home is family owned and operated. Founded by Donald & Wanda DeGraff in 1979 in historic downtown Lakehurst. The building itself has a funeral history dating back to the early 1900's. "Our father was the type of person who was so very compassionate and caring," said Sherry DeGraff, Manager. "He was an entrepreneur, involved in a number of businesses, but his love was always for the funeral industry." DeGraff's mother Wanda is still alive and "still our boss, even if she won't admit it," said DeGraff, and her father, Donald passed away in 2004. Growing up with the funeral business surrounding her, DeGraff said she learned from an early age how to treat customers in their time of need. "You handle people in the same way you would want your own family handled," said DeGraff. "You have to be a good listener, have a lot of compassion and be very flexible.

While the core values – compassion, respect and flexibility – have not changed for the DeGraff family, the trends in the funeral business have. Years back, cremations were rare and some religious affiliations did not hold them in high favor. In 1990 the DeGraff family saw the future trends were leaning toward cremation, as a result, their daughter Sherry opened DeGraff Cremation Service offering a wide variety of cremation service options. The move towards more cremation represents the largest shift in the funeral industry. In fact, many consumers believe the cremation

itself is performed at the individual funeral home or cremation service they hired. This is not correct. Crematories are owned by cemeteries. Most people are surprised when they hear that. Many people are unaware that cremation must be authorized by a spouse or blood kin under New Jersey State Law. This can cause undue stress for people who do not have a spouse or family.

In 2004, New Jersey law provides for the designation of an individual to control the funeral or cremation of another person regardless of whether the named person is related by marriage or blood. People in relationships involving unmarried co-habitants, or just close personal friends may find this provision beneficial. This designated person is called a "Funeral Representative" and must be named as such in a will. With this designation, they can bypass any blood kin and can authorize cremation and control the funeral. Choosing cremation for final disposition in lieu of traditional burial does not change service options for a family. In addition to cremation, the services can still include a traditional viewing, memorial service at the funeral home or church or graveside services when or if the remains are placed in a cemetery. Additionally, said DeGraff, the funeral

services themselves have evolved over the years. While the typical viewing, church service and burial schedule is still largely followed by many, other families choose what is known as "celebration of life" to re-focus mourning one's death towards celebrating one's full life and its impact on others. Especially in troubled economic times, the cost factor of a funeral is a concern for many families. Cremation and traditional funeral services are often comparable in price, through numerous options such as viewings, final disposition and other factors that can increase or reduce the overall cost of a funeral. DeGraff said, "Our prices are very affordable because we're still an old-fashioned funeral home." DeGraff Lakehurst Funeral Home offer pre-arrangement services. Although nobody likes to think or talk about dying, it is one of the facts of life we all must eventually face.

The sad truth is, thousands of people die (whether expected or unexpectedly) each year without the proper end-of-life plan in place. Making funeral arrangements at the time of loss is extremely difficult for those left behind. Pre-arranging ensures that your family and funeral director know exactly what kind of funeral you want. Families tend to take comfort at the time of death, simply from knowing their loved one's funeral reflects their wishes. When the funeral and sometimes even payment, have been arranged in advance, most of the

decisions have been made, sparing uncertainty and confusion at a time when emotional stress may make decisions difficult. Although pre-arranging might sound morbid, it isn't. It is part of sensible estate planning. Upon your passing, the truth is that most people don't have any idea how to get started, what they should know or who they can turn to. Pre-planning your funeral can significantly minimize the many stresses and pressures that accompany the grieving process of losing a loved one. A properly structured preplan can not only ensure that your loved ones know what to do, but can also make sure your bequests are efficiently implemented. By reducing many of the obvious family pressures, this provides some extra time for them to work through some of the other struggles such as dealing with grief and loss, notifying your loved ones, designing your obituary, writing a eulogy and creating the best possible way to celebrate and memorialize your life. "I think the personalization of a funeral is important," said DeGraff. "We're willing to work with just about anything that a family wants to do, even if they think it might be away from tradition. We can make it happen."

DeGraff Lakehurst Funeral Home is located at 119 Union Avenue, Lakehurst. If you would like more information, please call our dedicated staff at 732-657-7868 or you may visit our website at [degrafffuneralhome.com](http://degrafffuneralhome.com)



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