

FFDA Announces Scholarship Winners

The Florida Funeral Directors Association is committed to excellence in funeral service education. This year the association had two scholarship funds, the first was paid for by the Doug Stowell Funeral Service Fund and sponsored by Funeral Services Inc., was established to support that commitment by providing scholarship funds that are awarded to qualified students at mortuary science programs in an accredited mortuary science school who plan to serve the profession in Florida. The second scholarship program was paid for by SCI in the name of FFDA Past President Lew Hall to honor him for his hard work and dedication during this past legislative session.

The 2009 scholarship winners are:

Jackie Trzyna is enrolled in the funeral service program at St. Petersburg College and is earning her associates in science degree. She has always had an interest in anatomy and a deep desire to help others. In high school, she was given the opportunity to work as a funeral home apprentice. The apprenticeship provided Trzyna with a strong foundation and the skills needed to make an outstanding funeral service professional. Trzyna's daughter was diagnosed with an aggressive childhood cancer at a young age. Later, she gave birth to a son who was also diagnosed with cancer. Both children received treatment and have now been declared long-term survivors. Today they are happy and healthy teenagers. The challenges that Trzyna has overcome in her life have served to better prepare her for this special vocation. She looks forward to sharing her strength, faith and perseverance with the families and community that she serves.

Richard Powers earned a bachelors of science degree in marketing from the University of Connecticut. He is working at a funeral home at the Dorsey-Earl Smith Memorial Gardens and Funeral Home and attending courses in the funeral service program at St. Petersburg College. Powers has witnessed first-hand the value of funeral service professionals. He feels that he has found a career that will truly enable him to make a positive difference, during the worst of times, in the lives of the families whom he serves. He is choosing to enter the funeral service profession as a second career and believes that his respect for others, tact, compassion, high ethical standards and desire to make a positive impact coupled with his business management experience will make him a successful funeral director.

Samantha Gonzalez earned her bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Central Florida in August 2008 and worked full time while going to college full time. She is pursuing her degree in mortuary science from the American Academy McAllister Institute of



Jackie Trzyna being presented with scholarship award at the convention.

Funeral Services. Samantha has received president's list honors. Gonzalez understood at an early age that the funeral service profession helps families in the community and does more than what society realizes. Wanting to commit to this profession at such a young age surprised her family, but she is still drawn to the profession. She is continuing her to pursue her passion for the funeral service profession, and educational background in psychology will give her a strong foundation to accomplish her goals.

Kenyetta Reed earned her undergraduate and a masters of science in health administration from Florida A&M University. She is enrolled in the funeral service program at Florida Community College in Jacksonville. Reed has been interested in funeral service since the death of her grandmother. This event left her with lasting memories and many unanswered questions. She believes that once the initial contact with the family has been established, families should receive nothing less than top-notch service and attention. She is dedicated to providing this valuable service to families in her community and meeting the needs and desires of each family.

Russell Gray, II, graduated from the Olivert Nazarene University with a degree in Christian education and a minor in psychology and physical education. Gray was raised attending church and his parents taught him at a young age that caring for other people would bring him greater satisfaction than caring for just himself. This is the principal that by which Gray has tried to model his life. He served as a youth minister for more than 14 years and in 2005 he became an ordained minister in the Church of the Nazarene. He is working at Gentry Morrison Funeral Home in Lakeland and pursuing a degree in mortuary science from St. Petersburg College. He has a passion to serve others and feels that this is what the Lord has called him to do.