

THE CASEY REPORTER

CASEY, IL 62420-1523

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0031809 09/27/2015



CASEY, ILLINOIS

THURSDAY, JANUARY 30, 2014

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One of the oldest businesses in Casey seeks to thrive through new partnership

Jay Markwell, owner of Markwell Funeral Homes, Inc., founded in 1927, has recently partnered with the Premier Funeral Management Group. The strategic relationship aims to support the locally managed and operated business.

Casey, IL - Markwell & Sons Funeral Home, a Casey business founded more than 87 years ago by the Markwell family, announces that it has partnered with Midwest-based Premier Funeral Management Group.

Locally Operated and Managed

The foundation of the strategic relationship is that Markwell & Sons and Greenwell Funeral Homes will continue to be locally operated and managed by the current team. Pre-



The staff of Markwell Funeral Homes is pictured with Barry Bedford, chief executive officer of Premier Funeral Management Group. Jay Markwell, owner of the 87-year-old business, recently partnered with Premier; however, the funeral homes will continue to be locally managed and operated by the current team. Left to right are Dee Partlow, Markwell, Bedford, and Phillip Winchester. —photo by Sharon Durham

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mier will provide the funeral home "back-office" systems and assistance in the areas of technology, accounting, payroll, benefits, legal, purchasing and others where needed. As part of its relationship with Premier, the funeral homes also will be able to receive price discounts from its vendors — at levels generally only enjoyed by much larger companies in the industry — and pass those discounts on to the valued families that they serve.

Additional Time and Resources for Client Families and the Community

"Succeeding — and even thriving — as a local funeral home in the 21st century requires creativity, which is why we affiliated with Premier. The team there understands small businesses because that's where they came from," says Jay Markwell, the third generation operator of the funeral home. "Our business' first priority has always been to provide the highest levels of personal service to the families that call on us during their time of need. Our new partnership will allow us to focus even more time and resources serving our community and our loyal families that continue to trust the services we provide."

A "Best of Both Worlds" Option for the Local Funeral Homes

Owner Jay Markwell considered options for the future of his third generation business and had no interest in a common choice for the owners of funeral homes: selling to a large public company and scaling back his involvement. His goal was to work with a smaller company that promoted values and beliefs that were aligned with his own. This was extremely important to the Markwell family, and they hope that this relationship will help continue to grow and build their legacy and quality of service to the community.

"The Markwell family has built a second-to-none funeral home with impeccable service," said Barry Bedford, chief executive of Premier. "Our main goal is to support Jay, Philip, Dee and his entire staff and eliminate the administrative burdens of running a small business and be able to focus on what they do best."

No Major Changes Planned

There are no major changes planned in regards to the way Markwell & Sons and Greenwell Funeral Home are operated, and all staff members are staying at the business. There will be no changes to guaranteed preneed funeral contracts or how they are managed and honored at the time of need. The only change will be that now the Illinois comptroller will place the preneed contracts under Premier's Illinois license number. Letters will be mailed out to all contract holders explaining when the change takes place. As always, there is a final audit and an annual audit on all preneed funds that are held by funeral homes in the State of Illinois. Jay Markwell plans to use additional resources provided by the Premier partnership to continue to support community events and support local organizations — a priority of the Markwell family that has spanned three generations.

The Premier Group will help manage specific areas of the business so that Jay and his staff can focus on serving families and the community. While other group practices promote a one-size-fits-all approach, Premier encourages businesses to retain their unique culture and personal approach that are based on their long-established reputations and legacies. The Markwell & Sons and Greenwell Funeral Homes, in Casey, Martinsville, and Westfield will remain locally managed and operated businesses with the strong focus of customer service, and helping families create ideal memorial celebrations that are just as unique and special as a lost loved one was in life.