Gent Funeral Home recognized As Small Business Of The Month

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GODFREY – Gent Funeral Home has been chosen as the September 2021 RiverBend Growth Association Small Business of the Month.

Operating now for 86 years, Ralph Bowles is the third-generation funeral director at Gent Funeral Home in Alton. Located at 2409 State Street, at the Y-intersection of State and Belle Streets, the funeral home was started by Ralph Bowles' maternal grandfather, Ralph A. Gent, in 1935.

"My father, Les Bowles, took over the business from his father-in-law in 1970. I left for years of college, then started working at the funeral home in 1987. My father semi-retired about 10 years ago," said Bowles.

"The only advice my father gave me after high school was to get a degree in business before attending mortuary school in case I discovered that a career in funeral services was not a good fit for me," Bowles added. "My father said to me, 'It's a calling, son, like a ministry. Don't come back here if you are not called.'"

Bowles has been a licensed mortician now for over 30 years and has led operations since his father's retirement. His son Ben works at the funeral home now as well, representing the fourth generation of the family to become involved in the business.

Gent Funeral Home continues with its mission to celebrate life and serve families. This mission may seem a bit different from the norm within the industry. The funeral home's website describes this unique distinction in more detail:

"Ever since we opened our gates, we have approached life (and death) differently. While some just see the end of a loved one's life as a time for grief and mourning, we prefer to think of it as a time for reflection, appreciation, and even celebration. This is evident in everything we do; from the way we conduct our services to the amenities, we choose to offer. We are not a burial ground. We are a close-knit community dedicated to honoring, sharing, and preserving the amazing and inspirational stories that are life."