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## Texas Paper Nixes Use of 'In Lieu Of Flowers'

Printing the "In Lieu of Flowers" phrase in obituaries isn't worth the ink to one Texas paper. Lisa Chappell, publisher of the Herald Banner in Greenville, Texas, has made it a policy to eliminate the floral unfriendly phrase in obituaries as she recently explained to SAF member Tubby Adkisson, AAF, TFMA.

"I noticed an obit with 'Family Requests' and assumed the family had turned that into the paper," Adkisson says. "When 'in lieu of' did not appear over the next weeks, I was convinced it was Lisa, not the family who was responsible."

Adkisson decided to find out. She sent Chappell a floral arrangement and thank-you letter, emphasizing the role of sympathy flowers. When Adkisson thanked her in person, she told her: "We believe in supporting our local community and especially our local florists. To change the traditional wording in our obits to positive rather than negative wording actually was a joint decision between our entire newsroom staff and me. Everyone involved felt the term was unfair and detrimental to our local florists, and we wanted to support them in a positive manner."

SAF also sent a letter of appreciation on behalf of all florists to Chappell.

"If only more editors were like Chappell," says Jenny Scala, SAF's director of consumer marketing. "Over the years, SAF has sent dozens of letters to newspaper editors and asked them to use an alternative phrase. In response, editors have told SAF they view obituaries as paid advertising and print what funeral directors provide them verbatim. That's why it is so vital for florists to maintain and establish relationships with their local funeral directors."

Try this:

- Reach out to local funeral directors and ask them to stop using the "in lieu of" phrase. SAF provides suggested letters, advice and supporting sympathy materials.

- Show your appreciation for funeral directors and local papers that choose not to run the "in lieu of" phrase. Send a personalized thank-you note with SAF's cards and envelopes.

- Show all vendors gratitude for jobs well done. Reinforce relationships and rapport by saying you appreciate their business every chance you get.