

# NEC Projectors Create Immersive Celebration of Life for Funeral Industry

**Challenges:**

- Upgrade funeral home client offerings to create a more meaningful way for family and friends to celebrate their deceased loved one's life

**Solution:**

- [NEC NP-M353Ws](#) projectors

**Result:**

- Successful installation of NEC projectors in several client facilities, creating immersive experiences to memorialize loved ones

Losing a loved one is never easy, and we often fill the void they leave with tears, regrets, sorrow and negativity – because grief is seen as synonymous with sadness.

But a critical part of grieving is remembering the joy, laughter and happy memories we shared with loved ones during their life, and being thankful for the time we had with them – meaning memorial services should be filled with light, not darkness, to help us heal.

A Pennsylvania business realized the benefits of this approach, and sought to revolutionize the funeral profession with a new memorialization method: a digital experience that goes beyond a traditional service to immerse mourners in a personalized celebration of their loved ones' life.

## The Challenge

Life Celebration, based in North Wales, Pennsylvania, creates custom memorial products for the families served by funeral homes all over the country. The company was founded in the early 2000s by two funeral directors with decades of experience who had become frustrated with the profession's lack of customized options and technology.

"Every service seemed outdated and not personalized, and the ceremony seemed to have moved away from being a celebration of the deceased's life," said Shannon Cummings, director of marketing for Life Celebration. "The two partners, Gerry Givnish and Jim Cummings, decided instead to start a business that focused on customizing products for family members who had passed."

Life Celebration's mission is to celebrate and honor the lives of the deceased while helping families heal. The company is membership based, granting exclusive rights to the products and services it provides within a specific location or geographical area. The company also provides training and other resources to its members' staffs to guide families through the grieving process.

The company's customized products include life-sized tri-folds, recipe books, flipcards, blankets, puzzles, posters and more – materials that help families and friends remember the deceased in a more interactive, permanent way than a collage or easel on the wall during a single service.

But as the business grew and technology advanced, the forward-thinking owners saw a way to future-proof the company.

"They realized print will only go so far for so long, and looked for a digital differentiator – something that would stand out from the crowd and provide a digital experience outside a traditional DVD," Cummings said.

Cummings added that the company had a basic idea of what they wanted, but was unsure how to execute it: "What if we could paint the walls of a funeral home with different scenes, and put photo and video from the family on the walls that played like a movie?"



Life Celebration began researching the technology that could transform a memorial service into an interactive experience, and realized that projectors were the perfect vehicle to bring the idea to life.

## Finding the Technology

In 2015, Life Celebration began working with a company that suggested a projector manufacturer that did not bring the hoped-for results. There were problems with the equipment, including electrical malfunctions, and the quality and resolution of the images on the wall was not what the funeral home clients were expecting, due to the system's design.

The company moved to a new integrator: a company called SRUI, which designs and installs large-format architecturally focused interactive glass/window solutions, and has worked with Life Celebration on a virtual merchandise selection room. Life Celebration presented its idea to Michael Holbert, president and founding member, and asked if he could help.

"We understood they were trying to have these immersive experiences that spark storytelling, and realized they needed a system designed and focused differently than their previous system, with life-sized images and projectors designed for mission-critical situations that could run with no issues," Holbert said.

Holbert and his team presented a newly designed and specified system that would help Life Celebration achieve its goals, centered around an [NEC Display Solutions M353WS](#) short-throw projector.

"The NEC projectors brought a number of features that were important to the company, including the right price point, the best quality overall, high-resolution images, and a system that would run the way it's supposed to, day in and day out," he said. "We evaluated other short-throw projectors for this application and only a handful of vendors could even offer us models for what we wanted to do, but this had the best price point and image quality [for] our hardware."

The Life Celebration team was happy with the system Holbert's team presented, and chose to move forward with the NEC technology as the backbone of the new memorialization method.

"Once we saw the power of the NEC tech, we weren't going to go back," Cummings said. "In NEC, we have a solid technology partner we can depend on. The funeral industry can't do a funeral again if something goes wrong with the tech, so we need 100 percent fail-proof technology, and that's what we found with NEC."

## The Installation

With the technology chosen, Life Celebration came up with a name for its new offering: the Envision System Experience, a digital projection system powered by NEC projectors, with which funeral home customers can transform the walls of memorial spaces with customized digital masterpieces created by Life Celebration's graphic artists.

Uniquely tailored to the deceased and the way their family wishes to remember them, Envision content – comprising imagery, video, slideshows, photos and more – plays on the walls of funeral home visitation rooms or chapels, projected like a movie. Life Celebration designers are guided by the funeral director, who is tasked with obtaining as much information and as many assets as possible from each family that comes into a community funeral home.



"The NEC projectors are projecting stories and scenes that directly correlate to the deceased's life," Holbert said. "When these images are all around you, attendees are more likely to be laughing and exchanging stories, not standing in a line with their arms folded and their head down. This is a celebration of memories and a person's life."

The wide variety of custom content types created for each service made it difficult to run a service off a laptop connected to the projector, so SRUI built proprietary servers to run Envision.

"The custom-built servers make it easy for an end-user to run each server, and for Life Celebration to upload content or run the service remotely," Holbert said.

In spring 2017, SRUI installed a "test kitchen" in the Life Celebration graphic design studio, with three NEC M353Ws mounted in the ceiling, so the company can show clients how the system works. Life Celebration has several members – funeral homes and funeral directors – that exclusively offer the Envision System Experience, including funeral homes in Virginia and New Jersey, as well as installations ongoing in funeral homes in Colorado and more proposals in the works.

## The Results

Clients have been wowed by the technology and the concept, Cummings said.

"The first time we brought this out, clients couldn't believe it," she said. "With this system, we're able to create high-resolution content intermixed with family-supplied data to tell a life story."

Envision has proven valuable to the families of the deceased as well, according to Cummings.

"They absolutely love it and don't want to leave the funeral home – they want to stay, or come back and watch it all again," she said. "It's changed their perspective on healing. People expect a gloomy day, but instead can watch their loved ones' images cascade on the walls. It totally changes the grieving and healing process."

The NEC projectors are a critical part of this process, she added.

"It really is a magical experience for families," Cummings said. "We are providing a valuable service not available in the industry otherwise, and we wouldn't be able to do it without the NEC technology."

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