

# The Importance of Giving Back

By Kevin McKay, manager of the cremation division, Cremation Recycling

**“We’re all in this together” has been a common theme the past year during this global pandemic. As we try to support hospitality, entertainment and dining workers, as well as sympathize with the millions of furloughed and laid-off workers, there has been a communal desire to help others in a time of great need. Personally, I feel very fortunate to be in a profession that needs more of me than it ever has. It got me thinking of how much a lot of our crematory clients were already giving back a great deal even before the pandemic started.**

An outpouring of love and support has been bestowed on our first responders, which I think is fair all the time, but certainly during this crisis. I can’t imagine doing their job. I’ve also gotten to know a lot of funeral directors in my time working closely with them. I’ve heard the stories of being on call to go remove a deceased loved one at two in the morning and everything that is involved after the removal. The life of a death-care professional is not an easy one. Again, I tip my hat, because I don’t think I could do it. Final responders deserve to be recognized with this love and support as well.

I’d like to highlight the role crematories have in charitable donations. As recycling has become more mainstream within the cremation profession, I have had in-depth conversations with crematories about what to do with the significant amount of money they receive for their recycled metal. We routinely have crematory owners who have \$10,000 to more than \$100,000 annually that they didn’t



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have before. Most want to find a way to allocate these funds. One large client of ours has very generously donated on average close to \$2 million a year.

More of our clients are engaging with the families they serve to let them know how they properly recycle the metals left behind post cremation and then use the

proceeds from recycling to give back to their community. I have long urged crematory owners to highlight this aspect of their service, instead of avoiding it. A lot of good can come from the proceeds generated from cremation recycling, and the families will often appreciate this final gesture on your part. We often write the checks for the charity on behalf of the crematory so their business doesn’t show it as income and then send it either directly to that charity or to our client, so they can drop it off personally.

Whether it’s by directly answering a question to a family they’re serving or by donating a large sum of money, this is essentially an extension of your marketing program. We see large checks going to churches, food banks, hospices, veterans services, disease research, and shelters, as well as to groups within your profession, like the Selected Independent Educational Trust or Funeral Service Foundation. All of this can be done at a local or national level.

## Upkeep

Another great way crematory owners can gain support in their community is to better their services at a better cost. To achieve this goal, it is essential to constantly maintain upkeep of their grounds and equipment. Of course this can be expensive, but some changes can pay for themselves. We have also seen a lot of our clients defray these costs by applying some of the funds toward these expenses.

The most common way of updating your facility is replacing your old processor with a separating processor, which separates out all the nonorganic material – usually metal that can be recycled.

This type of processor was

created to help crematory owners hand back the cleanest cremated remains possible to the family. Without one, it can take quite a bit of work by hand to remove all these pieces. Invariably, we see a significant increase in the yield of metal when a separating processor is used. A separating processor mitigates the extra time needed by the operator by preventing these smaller pieces of metal from passing through during the grinding process. These metals are left sitting on a screen to be added to the recycling metal.

An increase in the yield means an increase in the revenue we're able to generate for our clients. We have countless examples of clients who were getting \$2,000 to \$5,000 annually for their recycling. Once

we helped them replace their processor, those same locations increased their recycling revenue as much as five to 20 times. For example, if a crematory that does 500 cremations annually uses a separating processor and properly collects all the small pieces of metal left on the screen, they can easily generate an extra \$25,000 to more than \$40,000.

With such an increase in revenue, it makes it easy for the majority of crematories to be generous in their community while at the same time maintaining their equipment to help keep costs down. Businesses are always looking for ways to improve their image, enhance productivity and increase profitably. This is a great and easy place to start. •