

# BUFFALO Business First®

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Charles Castiglia compensated for a youthful image by becoming part of the community.

## Family business

Castiglia son devastated by dad's death pushes on to make funeral home prosper

### ■ Lakeside Memorial Funeral Home Inc.

S-4199 Lakeshore Road  
Hamburg  
Phone: 627-2919

### ■ SMALL BUSINESS PROFILE

BY ANNEMARIE FRANCIZYK  
BUSINESS FIRST

**What's going on:** Owner Charles Castiglia, a licensed funeral director, provides services primarily to Hamburg and the Southtowns.

**History:** In 1969, Anthony Castiglia took a chance on the lottery and walked away with the \$25,000 prize, enough to purchase a house on Lakeshore and Camp roads in Hamburg. The graduate of Simmons Institute of Funeral Service in Syracuse converted the house that had belonged to Clara Milas, Buffalo's grand dame of wedding attire, into a funeral home and began operations there in 1970 while still running the Surfside Inn restaurant farther up Lakeshore Road.

Of his three sons, Castiglia's middle child, Charles, took to the funeral business the most. The father-and-son team worked side by side at three locations, including Tonawanda and Buffalo.

In December 1993, the senior Castiglia handed the keys of the place to his 27-year-old son intending to ease into retirement. He died a month later at age 54, leaving Charles in control of the business.

Today Castiglia has pared the business to one location, selling the homes in Buffalo and Tonawanda that helped finance the 3,500-square-foot addition that doubled the size of the Hamburg site last year.

**Who's who:** Assisting Castiglia is his wife Melissa, also a licensed funeral director; his mother Loretta; office manager Sharon Whyte and a part-time staff of 10 who help during wakes and funerals. Also, there is Lorian Steele, a new mortuary school graduate who is serving a New York state required one-year residency following graduation.

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**Revenues:** \$450,000 in 2000. The amount is a source of pride for Castiglia because it surpassed his father's record of \$440,000 in 1993.

**Clients:** Last year, Lakeside hosted 110 funerals which Castiglia said is about average for a funeral home the size of his.

**Biggest challenge:** Bearing the business after his father's death, Charles said.

"The loss of my dad, and the effect it had on me personally, the effect it had on the business. He meant everything to me emotionally and financially," Charles Castiglia said.

Soon after the funeral, business was cut in half when a competitor opened a \$2 million funeral home nearby. Further, the public didn't have confidence in a 20-something funeral director, he said.

Castiglia considered selling, and enter-

tained offers but felt he was getting a raw deal from one of the better prospects. He took the business off the market.

"That sparked a fire in me. I said I was going to turn the place around and I got real aggressive," he said.

Castiglia became involved in community organizations and began hosting grief counseling seminars, both activities that continue today.

He has brought thoughtful touches to Lakeside's services, such as the dove release added in the past year. There are plans for a Web site, [www.4sympathy.com](http://www.4sympathy.com), that will offer free inspirational readings, and books and other items for sale.

**Proudest moment:** The June open house that showcased the addition.

"It signified that I forged through all the difficulties and turned things around," he said.