



## **Family Funeral Home Changes Hands**

AUGUST 28, 2013 BY [MARCI REVETTE](#)

**BALLSTON LAKE** – While admitting her calling as a funeral director is a bit unusual, **Kathleen Lowes Sanvidge** said she always knew she wanted to be one.



“I consider this a very rewarding line of duty and ministry,” Sanvidge said. “It’s within me. It’s my passion to help people and I consider it a great honor to get them through a very difficult time in their lives.”

Sanvidge said everyone has told her it takes a very special person and she feels lucky that she found her passion.

“I wake up every morning and I am very grateful that I love that I do,” Sanvidge said.

Sanvidge, who is a licensed funeral director, recently purchased the **Townley and Wheeler Funeral Home** from Harold Townley in Ballston Lake, but that is only the beginning of the story.

Sanvidge started in the business in 1989 while still a student at Shenendahowa High School in Clifton Park. She worked at **Emerick Funeral home** in Clifton Park through the **Unique Career Placement Program** from **BOCES**.

Sanvidge said she first started with **Ellis Hospital** where she assisted in autopsies.

“I’m intrigued by the human anatomy and I learned a lot of things,” Sanvidge said. “Then I started to meet a lot of the funeral directors that came to the morgue and that’s how I developed an interest.”

Sanvidge said Gail McKee, who was a director of the **Unique Career Placement Program**, set her up with an interview with Gordon and Beverly Emerick.

“Gordon and Bev agreed to keep me on through the ten hours of the program,” Sanvidge said. “The ten hours obviously turned into something much more than that. It was a perfect fit and I knew right away that was what I was intended to do.”

After graduating from Shenendahowa in 1990, she attended **Hudson Valley Community College** and graduated in 1992 with an Associates’ Degree in Applied Science. She then completed a year internship residency at Emericks. Finally she took the state law and national board exams and became licensed.

Besides directing funerals, Sanvidge said she enjoys restorative art and cosmetics, and can also embalm if the occasion calls for it.

**The Townley and Wheeler Funeral Home** does not have an embalming room, but Sandvidge does have plans for one and said it has already been approved by the **Ballston Planning Board**.

“I’m not required by state law to have an embalming room, but I would like to have one,” Sanvidge said.

Sanvidge said this was the first time she has owned a funeral home, having continued working for **Emerick Funeral Home** after getting licensed.

Sanvidge said she made Townley's acquaintance at an **Occupational, Safety and Health Administration** (OSHA) training meeting and learned about the availability of the funeral home.

"We struck up a conversation and the rest is history," Sanvidge said.

Sanvidge said the transition has gone very smoothly and Townley has been helping her with any questions and has even come back for funerals when people have requested him.

"I'm happily open for business," Sanvidge said. "I have had business and it's very encouraging."

Since the closing on June 27, Sanvidge has had eight calls and it's a nice start to the whole transition.

"It gave me encouragement that business was going to continue to come," Sanvidge said. "I've been so blessed and supportive by many funeral directors in the area. I'm very blessed that a lot of good people are in this trade."

Sanvidge believes that besides her love for this trade, her faith is also what drives her and makes her who she is.

"Because of my religion and the way I was raised and my strong feelings, it helps me to work with families that are grieving," Sanvidge said. "It helps me to understand what is important to them and make the funeral a tribute to the life that was lived."

Sanvidge is proud of the way she made the funeral home feel homey. In fact, she and her three daughters live there.

"I think this place has so much charm and character," Sanvidge said.

Among the special touches are a Tiffany lamp owned by her grandmother, a teddy bear made out of clothes her father wore, and several antique pieces owned by her mother.

Sanvidge said the name of the business will remain the same out of respect for the Townley's.