



Funeral Consumers Alliance of Eastern Massachusetts

Promoting a consumer's right to choose dignified, meaningful and affordable after-death care.

Annual Newsletter

January 2012

Save the Date
Saturday, March 17, 2012

Our annual meeting and public information talk will take place on Saturday, March 17, 2012 at Mount Auburn Cemetery's Story Chapel from 2-4 pm. Please join us, and bring a friend. We are seeking a large and diverse audience this year. Josh Slocum, executive director of the Funeral Consumers Alliance, will be our speaker. The focus of his talk will be protecting our final rights and energizing the Funeral Consumers Alliance. Our mission is to educate the public about their rights and options when arranging funerals, burials, cremation, and other aspects of after-death care. The best way to fulfill this goal is to raise public awareness of our organization at the local level. Josh is familiar with ideas and suggestions from affiliates across the nation, which we can use to invigorate our group. Josh has a wonderful witty way of presenting the material and news of concern to all of us.

Special guest Ruth Faas, from Mourning Dove Studio, will also be joining us and bringing a wicker and other alternative and eco-friendly caskets and urns. If you have only seen "traditional" funeral containers, this will be a great educational opportunity.

Please make every effort to come and help increase attendance by spreading the word. On page 7 of this newsletter there is a flyer about the annual meeting. We would really appreciate it if you would make copies of this flyer and post them in public places such as libraries, co-ops, health food stores, houses of worship, etc.

Mount Auburn Cemetery is located at 580 Mount Auburn Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138 617-547-7105 www.mountauburn.org/visit/getting-here. It is easily accessible by car, bike or public transportation.

There is plenty of free parking available, and refreshments will follow the presentation.

**Funeral Consumers Alliance of
Eastern Massachusetts (FCAEM):
2011 in Review**

There has been a change to the FCAEM Board this past fall. Emma Crossen, president, moved out of state. Raya Gildor and Holly Haynes are the new co-presidents. They join Paula Chasan (treasurer), Eva Moseley (membership) and Peter Zug (databank) as well as board volunteers Heather Massey, Sophia Sayigh, and Tom Einstein.

We are delighted to announce that FCAEM has officially merged with FCA Southeastern MA and would like to take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to Southeastern members.

In July, we had our first volunteer training day in Arlington, MA. It was well attended and very informative. We learned how to respond to email and voicemail inquiries of many types.

In May, we conducted our biennial price survey of all funeral establishments in eastern Massachusetts. Survey recipients were asked to complete a one-page survey form and to return it with a copy of their General Price List (GPL), a document that all funeral homes are required by law to maintain. FCAEM sent the survey to 544 funeral establishments in our ten-county region. We were pleased that thirty additional funeral homes responded to this year's survey. These results are posted on our website, www.fcaemass.org, along with a summary and explanation.



Consider inviting FCAEM to speak to your community, professional, religious or family group.

New Directions for Green Burial

by Eva S. Moseley



Our sister organization, the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Western Massachusetts (FCAWM), has had a Green Burial Committee (GBC) for about two years. Its members have talked with several Massachusetts land trusts and towns about green burial, arousing some interest but not yet acquiring any land. Judith Lorei, formerly of FCAEM, has been one voice on this issue and on 11/12/11 hosted a “Green Burial Summit” so that the GBC could determine a new strategy for working toward opening a green cemetery.

The agenda was built around three presentations, each about a different model for establishing a green cemetery. Joan Pillsbury discussed the **stand-alone non-profit model**, based on the example of Rainbow’s End in Orrington, Maine. Some FCA/Maine members were given a small parcel of land and manage the cemetery as volunteers; fees for plots and for grave opening and closing are modest.

Carol Coan presented the **land trust model**. Her example was Foxfield in Ohio, where the director of an existing nature preserve persuaded the board (this took years!) to set aside 10 of its 42 acres for green burial. The cemetery is managed by a separate legal entity, which, as it sells plots, is able to repay, gradually, a loan received from the larger preserve. Its fees, much higher than those of Rainbow’s End but still comparable to those of most private cemeteries, struck the group as more realistic for the longer term.

Third, Judith Lorei described the **cooperative model**. While there is no cooperative cemetery in the US that we

know of, FCAWM members have had discussions with the staff of the Cooperative Development Institute, who believe that this model could work for a cemetery. It would, however, take a tremendous amount of equity investment and loans to accumulate enough money to buy suitable land in addition to starting a cooperative from the ground up.

After discussion (kept under control by facilitator Johanna Hall), there was unanimous agreement that the land trust model still makes the most sense.

Along with FCAWM’s contacts with land trusts, several of us have been attending the annual conferences of the Mass. Land Trust Coalition, with a literature table each year, at times a scheduled workshop, and always a good deal of talk with conservation-minded people. At the end of the “summit,” building on these efforts, the GBC set up two subcommittees to continue this work in a more businesslike fashion. One subcommittee will write a model proposal for land trusts, and the other will explore what is needed for GBC members and other interested parties to form a non-profit cemetery corporation, separate from any FCA and ready, if and when land is offered, to take on the task of actually establishing a working green cemetery — a place for simple funerals and non-polluting burial while also usable as open space.

By the time this newsletter appears, the work of each subcommittee should be close to completion. For up-to-date information, see the GBC’s website: www.greenburialma.org.



FCAEM Archives

The Special Collections department of Healey Library at the University of Massachusetts (Boston) has agreed to preserve the records of FCAEM. To begin with, we have donated correspondence and other papers created or collected by Byron Blanchard, a longtime member who kept a close eye on the funeral industry and on the state board charged with regulating it. These records date from the 1960s to the early years of this century.

Any members who have, or know of, additional records that document the history of the organization are asked to contact Eva Moseley (membership secretary and a retired archivist) at esmosley@mindspring.com or 617 868 7569.

Humor Corner:

A little old lady, aged 93, was getting married for the fourth time.

Her husband-to-be was a funeral director. A reporter asked her about her life and learned she had been married three times before. “My first husband was a banker and he left me a lot of money,” she said. “My second husband,” she continues, “was an actor. My third husband was a preacher, and this new husband is a funeral director.

“It’s a case of: One for the Money. Two for the Show. Three to get Ready. And Four to Go.”

How Members Can Help FCAEM's Mission and Spread the Word

by Heather Massey

The FCAEM board members and volunteers have held brainstorming sessions to discuss ways in which we can increase visibility for the work of the organization and resources available to our service area, as well as ways in which our membership can engage locally. Not all members are able to attend regular meetings or work on projects, yet there are opportunities we would like you, our membership, to consider to help us spread the word.

Price Surveys

The solicitation of GPL's (General Price Lists) from funeral homes in Eastern MA is an important part of our mission. We gather this data to inform the public and offer a way for consumers to compare funeral services locally. To increase the number of responses to our survey, and thus give a more accurate picture of costs and services available, please consider visiting your local funeral home, introduce yourself as a FCAEM member, and request its GPL.

FCAEM Brochure Distribution

You can help to inform the public of FCAEM and its resources by printing and distributing its brochure (available on our website, www.fcaemass.org in the membership section) to various community services and agencies in your town. Your local hospice, council on aging, senior center and nursing homes would be venues that you could deliver the brochures to, as well as your church, hospital chaplains office and local social workers. Thank you for helping to get this important information into the hands of those in need!

It's 2012: Do you know where your end of life kit is???

New members are provided with an end of life kit. This includes:

Before I Go, You Should Know: a 16-page fill-in the blanks booklet for all your funeral plans and vital information, featuring illustrations by Edward Gorey

Massachusetts advance medical directives ("living will" and health care proxy/power of attorney) forms and instructions

Death Away From Home, our pamphlet on economical arrangements when death occurs out of state

Directory of Funeral Consumers Alliance chapters nationwide

Checklist for important documents such as military discharge papers

Refrigerator magnet, "Matters of Life and Death Inside!"

Each kit comes in a heavy resealable plastic pouch, perfect for keeping in the freezer or tucking in your suitcase for travel.

This is all well and good, but did you ever actually fill out your booklet and forms?

Do your family/friends know about its existence and location?

Please make sure that the answers to both of the previous questions are **YES**.

That is the point of preplanning!

Alternative Funeral Containers



Friends and family members gather around a seagrass and wicker casket containing Patrick Ytsma's unembalmed body at Green Meadow at Fountain Hill Cemetery in Lehigh County, PA.

(Kevin Mingora, *The Morning Call* / December 10, 2011) Reprinted with permission of *The Allentown Morning Call*.

There is an increased interest and awareness about natural/green burial options. Actress Lynn Redgrave was also buried in a similar style of wicker coffin. Both the Ytsma and Redgrave families indicated a desire to honor their loved ones commitment to the environment, as well as a preference for the esthetics of these alternative caskets. Biodegradable options, such as a wicker coffin, a \$200 cardboard casket, and a recycled-paper urn will be on display at the FCAEMASS annual meeting this March 17th, at Mt Auburn Cemetery. Ruth Faas, natural burial proponent and owner of Mourning Dove Studio, will be on hand to answer questions about these and other eco friendly after-death care possibilities.

Organ and Body Donations

by Tom Einstein



Those who are charitably inclined may arrange to donate, upon death, either any of their vital organs or their entire body. These two types of donations (i.e. organ or whole-body) differ from one another, and are generally mutually exclusive. Thus one may be either an organ donor or a whole-body donor, but not both, except in the case of cornea donations.

In either case, the donation must be made within 24 hours after death (in the case of some organ donations, within an hour after death) and the body may not previously have been embalmed. Either type of donation is thus usually practical only if a person dies in a hospital or very shortly before being brought to a hospital. This applies especially to organ donations. The rationale for each of these two types of donations and the restrictions associated with each type are described in the following.

Organ/Tissue Donations

Organ donations are usually made for transplanting one or more healthy organs (e.g. heart, kidneys, liver, lungs, etc.) from the deceased into a living, but ill, person who requires a replacement for the corresponding diseased organ in his/her body. However, organs from potential donors who are over 85 cannot be accepted.

The subject organ(s) is/are surgically removed from the deceased as quickly after death as possible and then either immediately surgically transplanted into the body of the recipient or kept in a chilled sterile container until the transplant becomes possible. This is usually done in a hospital, but in a limited number of cases -e.g. cornea transplants - it may also be done at a funeral home, but by a surgeon. In many cases, the intended recipient may be in another hospital or even in a hospital in another city awaiting a transplant of the subject organ. In such cases the subject organ is placed in a chilled, sterile shipping container and transported to the recipient's hospital as expeditiously as possible.

Tissue donations include bones, corneas, skin, tendons, veins and heart valves. The transplantation process for such tissues is similar to that for organs but is usually less critical. Tissues can generally be stored for a longer period of time than organs. In contrast to organ donors, the age limit for tissue donors is 90.

A prerequisite for performing an organ/tissue transplant is that the organ(s)/tissues to be harvested be in good condition and free from disease. The condition of the subject organ/tissue is often not known a priori and can only

be determined when the surgeon doing the harvesting opens the body and examines the organ/tissue in question. The donor's body may not be embalmed until after subject organ(s)/tissue(s) has/have been harvested.

Once the organ/tissue has been harvested or rejected, the further disposition of the body is the responsibility of the deceased's family. The surgeon doing the harvesting generally sews up his incisions and takes other steps to prevent the body from becoming disfigured. The body of the deceased is then turned over to the attending funeral director who embalms the body, or not, as the family wishes. Thus once the transplant surgeon has completed his or her work, further care of the body proceeds as in normal cases where no harvesting was performed.

In 2010, nationally more than 22,000 organ transplants were made possible by the organs harvested from more than 8,000 deceased donors. In addition, there were more than 30,000 tissue donors and 40,000 cornea donors, together providing more than 1,000,000 tissue and cornea transplants.

Whole Body Donations

The purpose of a whole-body donation is to supply cadavers to medical schools for use by students who dissect these cadavers to learn about human anatomy. There is generally a shortage of cadavers, so up to 8 students often have to work on one body at the same time. Such a group will work on dissecting the same body over the course of several months. The dissected parts are replaced at the end of each day's work so that the body never loses its humanistic characteristics during this period. At the end of this process—usually 4-6 months after death—the remains are cremated and returned to the family.

Most major costs -e.g. transportation of the body from the place of death to the school, medical school embalming, subsequent cremation, and return of the ashes to the family—are borne by the medical school accepting the body. However, different medical schools appear to have different policies regarding payment of ancillary expenses such as those incurred in obtaining the requisite Burial/Removal permit and providing the donor's family with a certified copy of the Death Certificate. Not all medical schools pay these expenses -some do, others do not. Similarly, some medical schools will pay for the transportation from a place of death anywhere in the six New England states to the school, while others will pay only for transportation from locations within Massachusetts, if the death occurred in-

state, or from the point on the state line closest to the place of death to the medical school, if the death occurred outside Massachusetts. At time of death, the donor's family is advised to call the receiving medical school directly, and let them arrange for transportation, rather than calling a local funeral director. That way, only two parties (i.e. the medical school and their chosen funeral director) will be involved in the transaction rather than three, thereby minimizing the probability of any misunderstanding.

The process here is markedly different from that of the normal processing of a dead human body, including the organ donation process described above. A funeral director is not necessarily involved, at least not directly. Some medical schools have a blanket contract with a funeral director to transport the body from the place of death directly to the school, and possibly also to perform the requisite embalming.

The body must be in good physical condition and may not previously have been either autopsied or embalmed by a funeral director, as such embalming destroys many of the body's internal organs, thereby rendering the body useless for an anatomy class. However, some medical schools do accept amputees! For the same reason, a priori organ donation is also not acceptable, with the exception of corneas. The medical school will reject any body that is not in good physical condition or is otherwise not suitable for use in an anatomy class.

Upon arrival at the medical school, the body is immediately embalmed using a process similar to that used by funeral directors, but one that keeps all of the body's internal organs intact. The body is then ready for dissection in a well-ventilated work area, and is kept refrigerated when not in use.

A very good article, "Parting Gifts," describes the processing and use of a whole-body donation in a medical school anatomy laboratory. It is by Robert Bouchie, director of the BU School of Medicine's Anatomy Lab, and was originally published in the Fall 2009 issue of *Bostonia*, BU's quarterly alumni magazine. It may be found at: www.bu.edu/bostonia/fall09.

Local Teaching Hospitals Accepting Whole Body Donations

1. Tufts New England Medical Center, Boston

Contact: **Ms. Sharon Titus, Anatomical Gifts Coordinator: 617-636-0837**

2. Boston University School of Medicine, Boston

Contact: **Mr. Robert Bouchie, Anatomy Laboratory Manager: 617-638-4245**

Donation forms and further information on the details

of the donation process at each school may be obtained by contacting the contact persons cited above.

Further Information on Organ/Tissue Donation

Further information on organ/tissue donation can be obtained by contacting:

New England Organ Bank

60 First Ave.

Waltham, MA 02451

Tel: 1-800-446-6362 (9-5, M-F)

<http://www.neob.org>

Families Settling Differences through Mediation

Jane and her brothers, all in their 50s, are worried about their aging parents. Living arrangements and medical concerns need to be dealt with, and the parents' financial affairs should be settled. The children have ideas about what needs to be done but they each look at things differently and don't know how to resolve the situation. Meanwhile, Mom and Dad are struggling.

Disagreements are natural. Most get resolved peacefully, but some don't. When this happens families experience frustration, stress or anger, and the problems don't get resolved.

Mediation can help.

In mediation, families, friends, neighbors or co-workers who are concerned about an elder's situation meet with a neutral person, a mediator, to talk. The goal is to find a solution that everyone can live with. People who mediate often resolve their concerns, see their elders' circumstances and their own relationships improve, and they may feel calmer, less stressed and have a heightened sense of well-being.

People who have concerns about their elder parents can call 508-872-9495 for a free and confidential discussion to determine whether mediation might help the family.

Since 1979, MetroWest Mediation Services has been providing families and the community with mediation as a way of resolving disputes safely and respectfully. A non-profit entity, MWMS provides affordable and low-cost mediation, and never turns people away for inability to pay.

Janice O'Keefe

Case Coordinator

MetroWest Mediation Services

January 2012

National Home Funeral Alliance News

The National Home Funeral Alliance (NHFA) now in its second year, is a group of home funeral educators, guides, and advocates all across the country who have formed a non profit alliance for the purpose of educating the consumer about the intrinsic value of a home funeral. NHFA also promotes education and professional development, networking and community building among home funeral guides, green funeral advocates, and all those who support the rights of families and communities to care for their own dead.

The 2nd annual NHFA national conference titled "Peaceful Death: Music, Hospice and Home Funerals" was held in Boulder, Colorado this past September. FCA executive director, Josh Slocum, was among the presenters, offering the informative talk "Do You Know Your Final Rights?" For more information on the NHFA, visit www.homefuneralalliance.org. Our own FCAEM website, <http://fcaemass.org>, provides legal history, general guidance, required forms and other information regarding caring for your own dead in Massachusetts. There are currently two home funeral guides in eastern MA, Heather Massey from "In Loving Hands" on Cape Cod, 508-457-1612 and Peg Lorenz of "Peaceful Passage at Home" in Shirley, 978-425-6602.

Please Help:

Our members often ask what they can do to help us. Please consider why you joined in the first place, why this cause is important to you. Then, think of a place in your community where you could introduce yourself as an FCAEM member and leave our enclosed brochure. A church, temple, senior center, hospital, nursing home, hospice, library, or funeral home would be a wonderful location to share this information. We have over 1900 members! If each of us would do this, the results would be significant.

Another great way to help is to send us a donation in the enclosed envelope. In addition to one-time membership dues, this is our primary fund-raising method. Your donation will ensure that we can keep on

- providing help and advice to consumers inquiring about their rights and options in choosing after-death care through telephone, email and website.

- offering workshops, presentations and brochures to educate the public about meaningful and affordable after-death care

- mailing annual newsletters

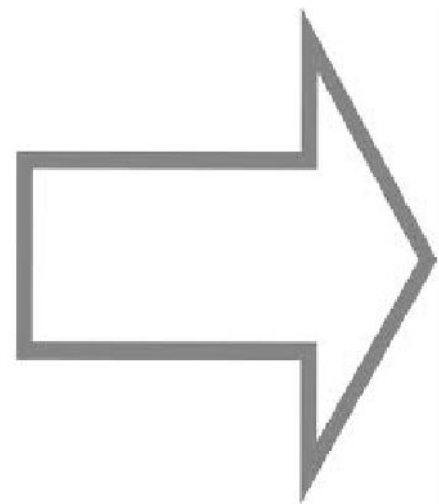
- holding annual meetings

FCAEM is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit. All contributions are tax-deductible.

Please Help

by posting (and feel free to make copies of) the flyer provided on the right hand page in public places such as libraries, co-ops, health food stores, houses of worship, etc.

Thanks



Funeral Consumers Alliance of Eastern Massachusetts

Invites the Public to its Annual Gathering and Speaker Series

Saturday, March 17, 2012 2-4 PM

Mount Auburn Cemetery (in Story Chapel)

580 Mount Auburn Street

Cambridge, MA

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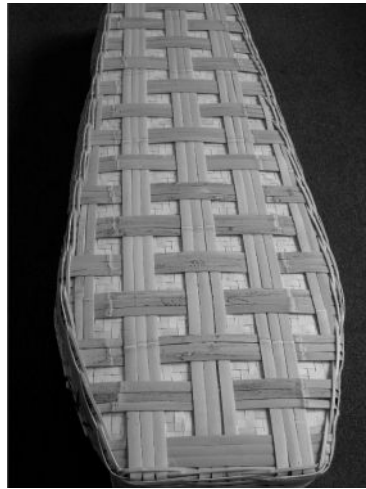
Featuring: Josh Slocum

Executive Director, Funeral Consumer Alliance

Coauthor of *Final Rights: Reclaiming the American Way of Death*

Speaking on:

**Protecting Our Final Rights and
Energizing the Funeral Consumers Alliance**



with Ruth Faas

Owner, Mourning Dove Studio / 485 Massachusetts Ave., Arlington, MA

Answering questions on: Natural Burial

Environmentally friendly caskets and urns will be on display

All are invited and refreshments will be served

Funeral Consumers Alliance of Eastern Massachusetts is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization, dedicated to consumer education, helping consumers to plan ahead without prepaying, and promoting a consumer's right to choose dignified, meaningful, and affordable after-death care.

For more information, see www.fcaemass.org

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Thank you!