



Funeral Consumers Alliance of Eastern Massachusetts

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

Annual Newsletter

February 2014

**We'll be looking for you at our
Annual Meeting
On Saturday March 29, 2014**

**Greetings from your FCAEM board!
Highlights from 2013:**

Please join us on Saturday March 29, 2014 from 2-4pm for our annual meeting. You will get the opportunity to see our current panel of volunteer speakers, and hear the valuable information that your support allows us to present.

We are proud of the program that we have been presenting at various events and speaking engagements, and look forward to sharing it with you.

We hope you will help us identify venues in your community that we can visit to help spread the word about FCA and FCAEM, and encourage your feedback.

Speakers

Raya Gildor (FCAEM President): The Funeral Consumers Alliance and your Rights and Options in After-Death Care

Eva Moseley (Massachusetts Green Burial Committee): Green Burial, Past Present and Future, with Massachusetts update.

Heather Massey (Home Funeral Guide, In Loving Hands): Family Directed and Home Based Funerals

Ruth Faas (Mourning Dove Studio): Helping people cope with the emotional, practical, and financial challenges that can arise

Where?

Mount Auburn Cemetery's Story Chapel
580 Mt Auburn St, Cambridge, MA 02138; Phone:
(617) 547-7105

Accessible via MBTA bus, and there is parking onsite. (MBTA bus 71 or 73 from Harvard Square; get off at the Brattle Street stop and cross Mount Auburn Street)

Our annual Meeting in March: Nearly 20% of Americans do not identify with any specific religious group. Katrina M. Scott spoke about "The Rise of the Religiously Unaffiliated", and how this shift affects who provides spiritual end-of-life care and bereavement services, especially funerals/celebrations of life.

Our volunteer speakers have been enthusiastically received at several talks including the 9th Annual Connecting for Change: A Bioneers by the Bay Conference presented by the Marion Institute in New Bedford in October.

We conducted our biennial funeral home price survey. The results have been posted on our website.

FCAEM was in the news in November on both WBUR and WGBH on the topic of home funerals.

Our ongoing mission is to support our members and educate the public to make informed, thoughtful end-of-life plans. There is much to do, and we are grateful to and energized by all the people committed to this work.



GREEN BURIAL IN 2013

Eva S. Moseley

The effort to establish a green burial ground in this state has been centered in the FCA of Western Massachusetts, specifically in its Green Burial Committee (GBC). After several years of talking to select boards, cemetery commissions, and boards of health of towns in or near Pioneer Valley, and to land trusts in that region, the GBC has hit pay dirt (so to speak!).

Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust (MGLT) is a major force in land conservation in its 23-town region mainly north of Quabbin Reservoir, with some tracts to the northwest and some to the east. MGLT staff, with approval of the Board of Directors, have agreed to explore the establishment of a green cemetery in one of its existing properties or a new one. MGLT uses standard land conservation practices and also engages in innovative projects: for example, the Campaign for Affordable Farms, in which MGLT and farmers own land jointly, allows first-generation farmers, and some long-time ones, to own land that they otherwise could not afford. A green burial ground also combines land conservation with practical, sustainable land use; a green cemetery continues to be open space, available to the public for “passive” recreation such as bird-watching.

At the time of writing, the GBC and Mt. Grace have

not yet concluded an agreement, but once the staff find the right tract of land, Green Burial Massachusetts will become a reality, perhaps this year or next.

There was a flurry of excitement for members of the GBC in May, when a film crew from the UK came to Massachusetts to record an episode of the Earthrise series shown on Al Jazeera English. The series explores “solutions to today’s environmental challenges through ecological, scientific, technological & design projects.” The resulting video was named Green Goodbyes. It features Russell Beard, who works for Al Jazeera English, first learning about conventional coffins from a funeral director. He then accompanies Glen Ayers and Carol Coan of the GBC to a conventional cemetery; they show him some detrimental results of the use of vaults and grave liners, and Glen Ayers explains the effects on soil of what have become standard burial methods, vs. effects of natural burial.

Next stop was Mourning Dove Studio in Arlington, where owner Ruth Faas showed Beard the various biodegradable containers she stocks. Materials include wood, cardboard, wicker, and banana leaves, as well as shrouds of various fabrics. The author of this article then appeared briefly, and at greater length during a trip to Cedar Brook



Banyak Films' Anson and Hugh Hartford, Russell Beard of Al Jazeera English, and Eva Moseley of FCAEM at Mourning Dove Studio, 11 May 2013, showing a few of Ruth Faas's biodegradable coffins. Photo by Ruth Faas.

Burial Ground in Limington, Maine. As I told the other members of the crew — brothers Anson (camera) and Hugh (sound) Hartford — the filming was like watching sausage being made, as bits and pieces from the three days were put together cleverly but not chronologically to present the basic information about, and arguments for, green burial. As is usual, some six hours of filming resulted in 10.4 minutes of finished program.

You can watch Green Goodbyes in either of two ways. It is probably available at Al Jazeera English (and perhaps the newer Al Jazeera America) with other Earthrise programs. Or go to the Green Burial Committee web site and in the right column on the home page you'll see a link to the video under the heading Recent Media Attention. The Hartfords, who have a London-based company called Banyak Films, assured me that they want Green Goodbyes to be seen and that they impose no restrictions on its use.

GBC members were glad to learn that the board of FCAEM has voted to support its efforts, both financially and in other ways that the committee might suggest. Together we will continue to spread the word and we welcome your help: for instance by connecting us with religious institutions, social clubs, retirement homes, or other groups to which we could send speakers on FCAEM's history and purposes, do-it-yourself funerals, and green burial. FCA's mission emphasizes consumer education and consumer choice. Green burial is just one such choice, but if you are concerned about the environment and disturbed by the pollution caused by conventional burial and by cremation, it is a choice well worth your consideration.

Late News:

Ruth Faas has had to close her Mourning Dove Studio (mentioned above) in Arlington Center, due to an unreasonable rent increase. She will, however, continue to provide some of the same services out of her house, which is not far away.

There will still be an array of biodegradable coffins and shrouds, as well as books on death, grieving, and choices in care of the dead and disposition of bodies. What there won't be are meeting rooms, so well used in the former space. But Ruth Faas herself will still be available, with all her knowledge of issues around death, and her understanding and empathy for both the dying and those who survive the death of a relative or close friend.

She will continue to have a web site: mourningdovestudio.com, and you may contact her via email: faas@rcn.com or phone: 781-290-7356.

ESM



Electronic Death Registration

The Vitals Information Partnership (V.I.P.) between the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Registry of Vital Records and Statistics will be introducing an Electronic Death Registration System (EDRS).

Why is this important to FCAEM? Requiring passwords for official access to the electronic system for filing death certificates, the V.I.P. would inadvertently make it impossible for families to complete a death certificate themselves. According to Peg Lorenz, we need to ensure that the right for individuals to take care of their own loved ones after death is protected. Peg is on the Board of Directors of the National Home Funeral Alliance, and an FCAEM volunteer. She approached the Vitals Information Partnership and is working to ensure that there will be inclusive language about families' rights in its regulations, and that special provisions will be put on the website stating that families would not be required to file electronically. Otherwise families would be forced to use the services of funeral homes, which will have access to the EDRS.



How is a Celebrant Funeral unique?

The Funeral Celebrant's mission is to create a ceremony that reflects the wishes, beliefs, cultural background and values - religious or non-religious - of your loved one and your family. You have complete choice of and final approval over the ceremony.

Nothing is imposed on you. Above all, a Celebrant funeral reflects the wishes of the family and the deceased. A Celebrant funeral honors death and celebrates life.

Visit the **Celebrant Foundation & Institute** at <http://www.celebrantinstitute.org/> for more information on Celebrants.

FCAEM IN THE NEWS

The advocacy and educational efforts and activities of the FCAEM volunteer leadership team have attracted both national and regional, and even international, press coverage during the past year.

In early February, the Daily Beast (formerly Newsweek) published “Inside a Home Funeral” by Melissa Rogers Weidman. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/02/05/inside-a-home-funeral.html>

This first-person account of a recent family-directed funeral introduces a Woods Hole family that has chosen to care for its 22-year-old son following his tragic death. The article brings the reader into the home, where the coffin is being built and the body has been brought by family from the medical examiner’s office. The author describes how the family and close friends bathe, dress and lovingly prepare the body for burial. The family was assisted by the advocacy and support of FCAEM’s Cape Cod volunteer, Heather Massey. The well-written piece is one of the best articles available to date that describes both the tasks and the benefits of family-led after-death care.

Ms. Massey was subsequently asked to be a guest on “The Takeaway,” NPR’s national radio show hosted by John Hockenberry. The piece, titled “Bringing Out the Dead, At Home,” aired on February 20th and can be accessed at <http://www.thetakeaway.org/story/270875-bringing-out-dead-home/>. The moving interview focused on fellow Cape Cod native, Alice Forrester, now of Tennessee, who also chose to care personally for her son following his death at age 19 while attending college in Arizona. Massey and Forrester discussed why families choose this option, especially in the wake of an unexpected death, and that of a child.

FCAEM board member Eva Moseley, and frequent FCAEM volunteer speaker Ruth Faas, were filmed and featured in “Green Goodbyes,” for the Al Jazeera English documentary series, Earthrise. Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_E_QFtBYxtQ&feature=youtu.be A full account of the experience is reported in Eva Moseley’s article appearing elsewhere in this newsletter. She has been a member of the Green Burial Committee since its inception and has provided educational programs and talks on green burial and its benefits around the state. She advocates for and emphasizes both the environmental advantages and the need for a green burial ground in Massachusetts that is open to all.

Later in the spring, Ms. Massey assisted and was interviewed by a film team from Vocative, a New York based film company producing a documentary on family-directed funerals titled “Do It Yourself Funerals.” FCA National Director Josh Slocum is featured in the piece showing a Falmouth family both discussing and carrying out after-death care from their home and transporting their family member themselves to a local crematory. The video is available online at: <http://www.vocativ.com/video/diy-funerals/>

WBUR’s Common Health reporter Rachel Zimmerman provided in-depth coverage of the home funeral movement both here and nationally with an article including video which appeared on November 22nd and was then picked up by national NPR: <http://commonhealth.wbur.org/2013/11/diy-death-natural-home-funerals>. The program features a young Wellfleet family who lost their 18-month-old daughter. Having received guidance from FCAEM’s Ms. Massey on their rights and the information they needed to care for her body at home, they were able to act as their own funeral director following her death. In this case, the father made the coffin, both parents cared for her body, prepared and filed the death certificate and then transported her by family car to a crematorium.

The article was followed on November 25th with a WBUR RadioBoston piece with interviews of Zimmerman, Slocum and Massey: <http://radioboston.wbur.org/2013/11/25/diy-death>

While FCAEM continues to provide education, guidance, support and advocacy to the Eastern Massachusetts region on all matters concerning funerals, it is important to note that there has been increasing interest in at-home funerals and green burial and that the FCAEM website, <http://fcaemass.org/>, has thorough information for consumers on these topics.

FCAEM

Funeral Home 2013 Price Survey

Funeral Homes charge dramatically different prices for the same services! You could pay as much as \$2500 more for Direct Cremation depending on the funeral home you choose.

Check out our **2013 funeral home price survey** results on our website: www.fcaemass.org

Death Cafés Come to Massachusetts!

What is a Death Café?

At a Death Café people, often strangers, gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss death. They are casual get-togethers, and there is no agenda. Each Café is different and the conversation goes in many directions and covers various topics. It is a discussion group about death rather than a grief support or counselling session. The objective is ‘to increase awareness of death with a view to helping people make the most of their (finite) lives’.

Whence the Death Café?

The Death Café model was developed in England by Jon Underwood and Sue Barsky Reid, based on the ideas of Swiss sociologist Bernard Crettaz, who offered “Café Mortels” in Switzerland and France. Now they are popping up all over the world.

Facts about Death Cafés

Death Cafés are always offered

- On a not for profit basis
- In an accessible, respectful and confidential space
- With no intention of leading people to any conclusion, product or course of action
- Alongside refreshing drinks and nourishing food – and cake!

Death Cafés are part of a global movement “to increase awareness of death with a view to helping people make the most of our (finite) lives.” Learn more at www.Deathcafe.com

FCAEM has observed with interest as the Death Café movement has grown in popularity and has decided to become further educated on the topic. Last spring, Heather Massey, FCAEM's Cape Cod representative, took a course with Jon Underwood and celebrants around the country to learn how to present and sustain Death Cafés in eastern MA.

Heather and fellow FCAEM volunteer Ruth Faas then traveled to Maine to observe and study ongoing Death Cafés there and to get ideas about presenting same in our community. Heather then partnered with the Congregational churches in the Falmouth area and they have since offered 3 Death Cafés on the Cape with monthly Death Cafés planned for the new year.

Meanwhile, Ruth and Raya Gildor, FCAEM president, hosted a joint FCAEM/Mourning Dove Studio trial Death Café for volunteers. Held at the studio at the end of the year, this trial was designed with possible regular FCAEM/Mourning Dove Studio co-facilitation of future Death Cafés in mind.

Forthcoming Death Cafés

date: 2/2/2014

location: Bull Run Restaurant, Shirley, MA

more information: Peg Lorenz 978-425-6602

date: 2/11/2014

location: First Congregational Church,
Falmouth, MA

more information: Heather Massey 508-457-1612

date: 3/23/2014

location: Mt. Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge,
MA

more information: call 617-607- 1980 or
www.mountauburn.org/deathcafe



Annual Donation Request

Please consider sending a donation in the enclosed envelope. In addition to our one-time membership fee, this is our primary fund-raising method. Your donation will ensure that we can keep:

- Providing help and support to consumers with questions about their rights and options in after-death care through both our phone line and email.
- Offering workshops and presentations to educate the public about meaningful and affordable after-death care
- Maintaining our website
- Mailing our annual newsletter
- Holding our annual meetings

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

Any size donation will be appreciated. Thank you in advance for your generosity.

Living Wills and Advance Directives for Medical Decisions

From *Mayo Clinic Housecall*, Vol 15, Issue 3, January 15, 2014, as adapted for Massachusetts by Peter Zug

Living wills and other advance directives describe your preferences regarding end-of-life care. Because unexpected situations can happen at any age, all adults need advance directives.

Living wills and other advance directives describe your preferences regarding treatment if you're faced with a serious accident or illness. These legal documents speak for you when you're not able to speak for yourself — for instance, if you're in a coma.

Living wills and other advance directives aren't just for older adults. Unexpected end-of-life situations can happen at any age, so it's important for all adults to have advance directives.

Advance directives: More than just living wills

Advance directives are written instructions regarding your medical care preferences. Your family and doctors will consult your advance directives if you're unable to make your own health care decisions. Having written instructions can help reduce confusion or disagreement.

Advance directives include:

Living will. This written, legal document spells out the types of medical treatments and life-sustaining measures you want and don't want, such as mechanical breathing (respiration and ventilation), tube feeding or resuscitation. In some states, living wills may be called health care declarations or health care directives.

Medical or health care power of attorney (POA).

The medical POA is a legal document that designates an individual — referred to as your health care agent or proxy — to make medical decisions for you in the event that you're unable to do so. However, it is different from a power of attorney authorizing someone to make financial transactions for you.

Do not resuscitate (DNR) order. This is a request not to have cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) if your heart stops or if you stop breathing. Advance directives do not have to include a DNR order, and you don't have to have an advance directive to have a DNR order. Your doctor can put a DNR order in your medical chart.

Do you need a living will and a medical POA?

A living will can't cover every possible situation. There-

fore, you might also want a medical POA to designate someone to be your health care agent. This person will be guided by your living will but has the authority to interpret your wishes in situations that aren't described in your living will. A medical POA also might be a good idea if your family is opposed to some of your wishes or is divided about them.

Choosing a health care agent

Choosing a person to act as your health care agent is possibly the most important part of your planning. You need to trust that this person has your interests at heart, understands your wishes and will act accordingly. He or she should also be mature and levelheaded, and comfortable with candid conversations. Don't pick someone out of feelings of guilt or obligation.

Your health care agent doesn't have to be a family member. You may want your health care decision maker to be different from the person you choose to handle your financial matters. It may be helpful, but it's not necessary, if the person lives in the same city or state as you do.

What treatments would you want?

In determining your wishes, think about your values, such as the importance to you of being independent and self-sufficient, and what you feel would make your life not worth living. Would you want treatment to extend life in any situation? Would you want treatment only if a cure is possible? Would you want palliative care to ease pain and discomfort if you were terminally ill?

Although you can't predict what medical situations will arise, be sure to discuss the following treatments. It may help to talk with your doctor about these, especially if you have questions.

Resuscitation. Restarts the heart when it has stopped beating (cardiac death). Determine if and when you would want to be resuscitated by cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) or by a device that delivers an electric shock to stimulate the heart.

Mechanical ventilation. Takes over your breathing if you're unable to do so. Consider if, when and for how long you would want to be placed on a mechanical ventilator.

Nutritional and hydration assistance. Supplies the body with nutrients and fluids intravenously or via a tube in the stomach. Decide if, when and for how long you would want to be fed in this manner.

Dialysis. Removes waste from your blood and manages fluid levels if your kidneys no longer function. Determine if, when and for how long you would want to receive this treatment.

Organ donation

You can also specify in your advance directives any

wishes you have about donating your organs, eyes and tissues for transplantation or your body for scientific study. If you wish to donate your body for scientific study, contact the medical school closest to your home for details.

Share your wishes with your family

Injury, illness and death aren't easy subjects to talk about, but by planning ahead you can ensure that you receive the type of medical care you want. You also relieve your family of the burden of trying to guess what you'd want done. Be sure to discuss your wishes with your loved ones. Let them know you're creating advance directives and explain your feelings about medical care and what you'd want done in specific instances.

Fill out the forms for Massachusetts

Your advance directives should be in writing. Each state has its own laws regarding advance directives. Although it isn't required, you may want to consult an attorney about this process.

Living Will: According to the Massachusetts Medical Society, "Massachusetts is one of only three states that recognizes Health Care Proxies but does not recognize Living Wills. Living Wills are still potentially useful because they guide Agents and physicians about the types of choices a person would make." A Living Will form can be found at www.massachusetts-wills.com/living%20will.rtf. A *Personal Wishes Statement* can be found at http://www.betterending.org/advance_care_planning.

Health Care Proxy: In Massachusetts, a Medical POA is known as a Health Care Proxy. The Advance Directive form *Massachusetts Health Care Proxy* can be found on the following website: <http://www.massmed.org/healthcareproxy>

Do Not Resuscitate Order (DNR) Massachusetts has no legal form called a DNR. However, there is a relatively new form called *Medical Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment* (MOLST), which is a bright pink, two-sided, standardized medical form containing valid medical orders about life-sustaining treatment for a person with serious advanced illness or injury. More information about the MOLST form can be found at www.molst-ma.org

Once you've filled out the appropriate forms, give copies to your doctor, the person you've chosen as your health care agent and your family members. Keep another copy in a safe but accessible place. You might also want to keep a card in your wallet that says you have a living will and where it can be found.

Review your advance directives from time to time

As your health changes or your perspective on life changes, you might reconsider some of your advance directives. Read over your advance directives from time to time

to see if you want to revise any of the instructions. You can change your mind about your advance directives at any time.

To revise your advance directives, you follow the same steps you used to create them. Get new advance directive forms to fill out. Discuss your changes with your friends, family and doctor. Then distribute copies of the new advance directives and ask everyone to destroy the earlier version.

If there isn't time to redo the paperwork, you can always cancel your advance directive by telling your doctor and your family. Remember, a living will or medical POA goes into effect only if you are unable to make medical decisions for yourself, as determined by your doctors.

Please Help FCAEM

FCAEM has many volunteer opportunities. Please stay after the annual meeting and learn how you can be involved, or else call 617-859-7990 or email fcaemass@gmail.com and let us know of your availability.

THE NEED FOR ADVANCE PLANNING

Reprinted from FCA Rhode Island

Have you considered what immediate decisions must be made by your family when you or they die?

Have you and your family discussed these decisions and arrived at an understanding?

Do your present plans provide for the memorial or funeral arrangements that you and your family really want?

If your answer to any of these is "no," you may not be facing the eventuality of death realistically. When death occurs in a family that has done no advance planning, the survivors may accept conventional and costly funeral arrangements because of social pressure, emotional stress, or lack of time.

Planning ahead is a loving gift you can give to your family and friends. By making plans now, you can make your wishes known and ease the burden on your survivors. Instead of having to figure out what you might have wanted and how to pay for it, your family will be able to focus on grieving their loss and celebrating your life.

Note: Advance planning is not the same as pre-paying. This is an important distinction. If you are considering pre-payment, we urge you to investigate agreements carefully.

**Funeral Consumers Alliance of
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We will not share it, and use it only for infrequent FCAEM member updates/reminders. Fill out the space on your donation envelope, or email it to:

fcaemass@gmail.com

Thank you!