



FUNERAL CONSUMERS ALLIANCE OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS

P. O. Box 994 ♦ Greenfield, MA 01302-0994 ♦ (413) 774-2320
www.FuneralConsumersWMass.org

Newsletter

Fall 2013

ANNUAL PROGRAM 2013:

Sunday, October 20, 2013
2:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Rockridge Retirement Community
25 Coles Meadow Rd, Northampton, MA

Brief Business Meeting
to elect Trustees and Officers
(see slate of nominees, p. 2)

and Program

Cremation Options and Trends

a panel of speakers
and an opportunity to ask questions

Cremation Panelists

Our panel for the annual program will include an operator of a crematory that works directly with the public, and a man who has designed a ceramic marker to accompany the deceased through the cremation process. We'll also hear from a consumer who has analyzed and questioned some costs associated with his wife's cremation. Our own Carol Coan will report about some alternative techniques.

One local funeral director reports that 80% of clients now choose cremation rather than burial. Fifty years ago, when consumer advocacy groups such as ours were young, cremation was considered "alternative" and opposed by many. Come hear what's going on today.

Panelists:

- Tom Robinson, Eternal Blessings Crematory, or his co-owner Jim Curley will talk about operating their service and working directly with families.
- William "BT" Hathaway, a 4th generation funeral director from SE Massachusetts dissatisfied with the detached process of modern cremation, will describe his ceramic MemryStones (see p.7) and how people have used them.
- Doug Barnshaw, M.D., a consumer advocate and long-time FCAWM member, will share his experience with "hidden" costs of cremation.
- Carol Coan, PhD, former president of FCAWM, will report on alternative approaches to cremation, including alkaline hydrolysis (also known as resomation or biocremation) and "do it yourself" cremation.

Bring your questions. For background information, read pages 5-6, a recently revised version of our handout titled "Cremation Option in Western Massachusetts."

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Candidates for Election on October 20

The candidates listed below have been nominated and have agreed to serve if elected at our Annual Meeting:

Board of Trustees

- 3-year term: Kathleen Winkworth
- 3-year term: JM Sorrell
- 3-year term:
- 2-year term: Elizabeth Chapman
- 2-year term: Sandy Ward
- 1-year term: Joan Pillsbury

Officers for the coming year

- President:
- Vice-President:
- Treasurer: Dennis Pillsbury
- Secretary:

NOTE: Nominations for Trustees or any of the officer positions may be made from the floor during the meeting. Those elected will join continuing trustees Ceil Lewonchuk, Susie Maddern, and Dennis Pillsbury.

Please contact Sandy Ward at 413-532-4306 or sandy@nonotuck.us if you have questions about these roles or wish to nominate a candidate for any of the above positions. THANK YOU.

Meetings of the Board of Trustees

The Board meets only every other month, conserving gas and time of our volunteer trustees. The meetings are usually held at the Rockridge Retirement Community in Northampton, MA. We communicate by email or phone as needed between meetings.

The first meeting of the newly elected board will be a BRIEF one at 4:15pm Oct 20, after the close of the Annual Program. We'll compare calendars and set dates for future meetings. If necessary, we'll select officers for unfilled positions.



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Editor for this issue: Sandy Ward.

The FCA of Western Massachusetts is a non-sectarian all-volunteer non-profit corporation, dedicated to protecting a consumer's right to choose a meaningful, dignified and affordable funeral or memorial service.

President's Report *by Sandy Ward*

I am excited by the active line-up of programs and outreach opportunities this fall.

Two of our members attended Peg Lorenz's home funeral workshops in eastern MA last May and were so inspired that they have now organized TWO such workshops for western MA this fall. Peg Lorenz is coming to Leverett on Oct 26 and to Warwick on Nov 9 (see page 4 for registration details).

Loomis Village in South Hadley has invited us back to participate in a Wellness Fair.

I am pleased that we have strong new candidates on the slate for election to the Board of Trustees, as well as existing trustees who wish to continue serving.

I want to thank Neal Jameson for his three years of service on this board. Neal will continue on the Green Burial Committee, maintaining its website, but he has decided not to run for re-election. (Neal is now a dad and a homeowner with plenty of other projects on his plate.) I also thank Miryam Ehrlich Williamson for her years of service. She stepped in as Treasurer in winter 2011 when Ted Ennis had to rest for health reasons. Miryam has also been a helpful editor, writer, and wise advisor to our cause. Both Neal and Miryam have encouraged me and provided useful feed-back as I draft revisions of our website.

Speaking of the website, I am grateful for Ed Brown's ten years of conscientious service as webmaster for FCAWM. Since early August I have been learning to use the software and examining how the website works. As of August 21 a copy of the website was up and running on a server I use (at no cost to FCAWM) and the responsibility for its maintenance shifted from Ed to me. Since then I have been experimenting (on another copy) with new ways to present the content. Ed is still an invaluable resource as I try to figure out how to accomplish some of the desired changes.

In last fall's newsletter we mentioned the need to revise our handout on Cremation Options in Western Massachusetts. Bruce Callahan started that ball rolling by investigating options in Pittsfield. You can now see the revision on pages 5-6. I thank Bruce for his work and wish him well; he has resigned from the board for health reasons.

I'm looking forward to the program at our Annual Meeting program on Oct 20. I hope you'll join me then to hear the panelists' different perspectives on cremation. It promises to be a lively program.



Education and Outreach

Volunteers representing FCAWM educate the public by giving presentations to groups, staffing information tables at events, and arranging to host workshops or programs on topics relevant to our mission. This fall we will be especially active.

UPCOMING:

October 3 and 10 (Thursdays), 6-8 pm. Greenfield Community College, 2-session workshop by Carol Coan: “Funeral Planning for the Living.” This is a repeat of a well-received workshop. Register online via GCC at www.gcc.mass.edu/shopcreditfree or by calling 413-775-1661.

October 16 (Wednesday) Loomis Village Resident Wellness Fair. FCAWM will have a table of information.

October 20 (Sunday), 2-4pm. FCAWM Annual Program: a panel on “Cremation Options and Trends” (See page 1 for details.)

October 26 (Saturday), 10am-1pm. Home Funeral Workshop by Peg Lorenz. Mt. Toby Meeting House, Leverett, MA. (See page 4 for details.)

November 4 (Monday). Sandy Ward will speak on “Advocacy for a Meaningful Finale -- Look What We Started” at the monthly dinner meeting of the Alliance of the Unitarian Universalist Society of Greater Springfield. The roots of FCAWM go back to 1959 when the Springfield Memorial Society was founded by some activists in this congregation.

November 9 (Saturday), Home Funeral Workshops by Peg Lorenz. Warwick, MA. Details will be sent to those who register. Contact Miryam Williamson at homefunerals@mwilliamson.com. (See page 4 for details.)

In addition to these scheduled activities, we continue to be active behind the scenes, quietly answering questions that come in by phone, by email or via our website.

*If you know of a group that would like to invite FCAWM volunteers to speak,
please let us know.*



Caring for Our Own After Death -- by Miryam Ehrlich Williamson

For thousands of years families have been taking care of their loved ones at home after death. This choice is still possible. A traditional home funeral is a family-centered response to death. It differs from a conventional funeral in its emphasis on the family maintaining control and decision-making in the days after death. Home funerals allow time to honor your loved one and grieve in the privacy of your own home. The experience is unique and personal.

Two workshops this fall will allow community members to learn more about the growing home funeral movement, and the comforting spiritual experience that comes from preparing the body of a loved one for a burial or cremation. Leading both workshops will be **Peg Lorenz**, a home funeral guide, consultant and founder of Peaceful Passages at Home. She also has 20 years experience with hospice care, a certificate in end-of-life care from the University of Southern Maine, and training by Crossings: Caring for Our Own at Death. She is a board member of the National Home Funeral Alliance.



On October 26 the first of these workshops will take place from 10:00 -1:00 at the Mt. Toby meetinghouse. It will introduce you to home funerals. It will include the legal facts and logistical details. There will be time for questions, answers and discussion. Contact Kathleen Winkworth for more information and to register.

On November 9 a two-part workshop will cover both the legal facts and logistical details in the morning, and provide hands-on experience in caring for the body, which includes washing, dressing, moving and carrying, in the afternoon. A light lunch will be provided between sessions. There is no charge, although contributions will be gratefully accepted to cover the cost of the event. People who attend the October 26 workshop and want the hands-on training will be welcome at the afternoon session on November 9.

Saturday, October 26, 2013, 10am-1pm

Location: Leverett, MA

Mount Toby Meetinghouse

194 Long Plain Road (Rte 63), Leverett, MA

Introduction to home funerals

Peg will describe the enormous personal benefits that come with this profound moment in a family's life. She will also cover the legal facts and logistical details. There will be time for discussion, questions and answers.

Contact Kathleen Winkworth for more information and to register: kmw@crocker.com or 413-548-9757. Free of charge. Donations will be accepted.

Saturday, November 9, 2013

Location: Warwick, MA

Warwick Town Hall

12 Athol Road, Warwick, MA

MORNING WORKSHOP:

Introduction to home funerals

(See description, left.)

Lunch provided for those attending both sessions.
People can attend either or both sessions.

AFTERNOON WORKSHOP: This is a **hands-on workshop** for those who are interested in the details of performing a home funeral. You will learn how to prepare for a vigil as well as how to care for the body which includes washing, dressing, moving, and carrying. A basic knowledge of home funerals or attending the 1st workshop is recommended.

For more information or to register, contact Miryam Ehrlich Williamson, 978 544-7010 or homefunerals@mwilliamson.com.

A Personal Note -- by Kathleen Winkworth

Last spring I attended Peg Lorenz's workshop "Caring for Our Own After Death: Reclaiming a Loving Tradition." I came to the workshop with some experience, having prepared my mother's body after she died, but I learned so much more. Peg presents an excellent workshop and she herself is very warm and charming. For what would seem a heavy topic, some might say even frightening, the atmosphere was light and joy filled.

The Cremation Option in Western Massachusetts

Cremation is an increasingly common choice for the final disposition of human remains. Many who plan ahead and consider available options choose direct cremation. The reasons for this choice vary as much as the individuals involved, but often include personal preferences:

- for a quick reduction of their mortal remains to ash, versus the slow decomposition of their body in the ground;
- that family and friends focus not on their death or on the presence of their lifeless corpse at a wake or funeral but, rather, on their life through memories shared at a memorial service. Freed from requiring the presence of a body, the memorial service can be scheduled for more convenient time(s) and place(s) so that more people may be able to attend;
- for a more personally satisfying “final resting place” made possible by remains that have been reduced to ash, such as scattering in a place (or places) enjoyed during life;
- that less of our limited open space be devoted to cemeteries; and/or
- that large amounts of money not be spent on costly death-related expenses when it might be better used to meet the needs of living family or to support worthy causes.

All funeral homes that list any cremation services are required by the Federal Trade Commission to offer the option of “direct cremation” (with no “extras,” such as embalming, an elaborate casket or a funeral service). This is the least expensive option. Consumers who wish the funeral home to provide additional services, such as calling hours or a funeral service prior to sending the remains to the crematory, will pay more.

When comparing the cost of “direct cremation” on the General Price Lists from different funeral homes, consumers should be sure to find out whether or not the funeral home's stated price includes:

- the fee of the **medical examiner** who must view the body before it can be cremated and issue a cremation permit (now \$100 in Massachusetts); and
- the fee of the **crematory** for performing the actual cremation (varies, depending on crematory and circumstances; often in the range of \$250 to \$375 for an adult).

Massachusetts law requires, in addition to the cremation permit from a medical examiner, a 48-hour waiting period prior to cremation unless the death was due to a contagious or infectious disease. Authorization by next of kin or designated agent is required, and a pacemaker must be removed. Where there is an estranged or separated spouse, or there are next-of-kin opponents to cremation, it is essential for the decedent to have appointed an agent in writing. To appoint an agent, obtain (from a crematory) the form called a Declaration of Intent for Cremation; it should be witnessed and notarized.

Western Massachusetts crematories are located within cemeteries, and normally require that the consumer make arrangements through a funeral home that will (minimally) pick up the body, complete the necessary paperwork, and arrange for transport of the body to the crematory. A few funeral homes find Worcester crematories more convenient, and some use a crematory elsewhere.

We know of two crematories willing to work with families that choose to care for their own dead, rather than turning the body over to a funeral director. One is in Pittsfield, the other in southern Vermont. See list of crematories and their contact information (over).

Even though the necessary arrangements for cremation can be made through a chosen funeral home, the consumer may benefit by contacting the crematory directly (and even visiting it in person) to understand what is involved in cremation; to learn what options are available for observing the cremation, for having a service on site, or for storing, burying or scattering the ashes; and to discuss any associated charges.

Unless you have made other optional arrangements, the ashes are returned to the consumer. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health imposes no restriction as to the disposition of ashes. The consumer is free to keep the ashes, to bury them, or to scatter them anywhere—subject to the usual laws prohibiting trespass on private property without permission, or on public property that might forbid this activity.

[Continued on next page]

The Cremation Option in Western Massachusetts *(Continued from previous page)*

Massachusetts law does NOT require:

- embalming (a much smaller charge is permitted for washing and related procedures);
- a casket (instead, a considerably less expensive “alternative container,” often made of sturdy cardboard, fiberboard and/or pressed wood, is commonly used); or
- an urn (instead, a simple plastic or cardboard “temporary container” is often used, particularly if the ashes are to be scattered).

NOTE: A particular funeral home may require embalming if the consumer chooses to have the funeral home arrange a viewing of the body. However, a funeral home should not require embalming simply to comply with the state law mandating a 48-hour waiting period before a body is cremated. Similarly, a particular cemetery may require something more durable than the basic plastic or cardboard container if the consumer chooses to have the ashes buried.

Contact Information for Crematories

Hillcrest Cemetery Mausoleum & Crematory
895 Parker Street
Springfield, MA 01129
(413) 782-2311

All Faiths Cemetery & Crematory
7 Island Road
Worcester, MA 01603
(508) 753-8842
www.allfaithscem.org/

Pittsfield Cemetery & Crematory
203 Wahconah Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201
(413) 447-7953

Rural Cemetery & Crematory
180 Grove Street
Worcester, MA 01605
(508) 754-1313
www.ruralcemetery.com/cremation.html

Springfield Cemetery & Crematory
171 Maple Street
Springfield, MA 01105
(413) 732-0712
www.springfieldcemetery.com/

Eternal Blessings
286 Tubbs Drive
Guilford, VT 05301
(802) 257-0969 or toll free (877) 747-9443
www.eternalblessingscrematory.com/

Note: In Massachusetts funeral homes are not allowed to run crematories. Some funeral homes have the word “cremation” in their names, but they do not in fact cremate bodies; they contract with a crematory for that service.

Additional Resources

For more information, see [Final Rights: Reclaiming the American Way of Death](#), by Joshua Slocum and Lisa Carlson (Hinesburg, Vt.: Upper Access Books, 2011).

In addition, our website, www.FuneralConsumersWMass.org, provides links to many relevant documents from the Federal Trade Commission, the Massachusetts Dept. of Public Health, and the Massachusetts Board of Registration of Embalmers and Funeral Directors, among others.



Please make checks payable to FCA of W. Mass. and send to P. O. Box 994, Greenfield, MA 01302.
Your contributions are tax-deductible.

___ YES! I'm renewing my support for the Funeral Consumers Alliance of W. Mass. and its mission of promoting and protecting a consumer's right to choose meaningful, dignified, and affordable final arrangements: funeral or memorial services, care of the body and disposition of human remains (including burial, cremation or donation). I'm enclosing my voluntary contribution of
___\$15 ___\$25 ___\$50 ___\$100 or \$_____

___ I'm NEW. Please enroll me and send the "Before I Go" kit and membership package. (Suggested new member donation is \$30.) I am enclosing \$_____

___ I'd like ___ extra copy/copies of the "Before I Go" kit (suggested donation \$5-10 each)

___ I have time and interest in helping this organization. Please contact me about volunteer opportunities.

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Address: _____ E-mail: _____

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What is a MemryStone?

In July 2013, Josh Slocum wrote on his blog on the national FCA website:

A genuinely new idea in cremation

Much ink is spilled in the funeral trade press about "personalizing" funerals. Said personalization often amounts to little more than cutesy corners for caskets. Funeral director BT Hathaway of Fall River, Massachusetts, has come up with something different. We don't promote products on the FCA blog for obvious reasons, but BT's MemryStone deserves a look for standing out as something genuine in a crowd of overpriced highly-marketed gee-gaws. It's quiet, it compels hands-on participation by the grieving, and honestly, it's touching.

That paragraph introduces an article by BT Hathaway about why he invented the MemryStone and how it works. "A MemryStone is a ceramic 'token' or marker which survivors inscribe with a personal message, place with the deceased, and send through the entire cremation process with their loved one."

You can find the full article at funerals.org by typing 'memrystone' in the search box.

BT Hathaway will participate in our program Oct. 20 on Cremation Options and Trends (see page 1.)

Have you heard of Death over Dinner?

by Sandy Ward

Michael Hebb, a former restaurateur, artist and activist based in Seattle, has started a new movement, which he calls an "intervention" to get the American public talking openly about death.

He tells the story of how the idea came to him while riding on a train. Conversing in the dining car with two strangers, who happened to be doctors, he learned a few facts that shook him up and motivated him to act. He has now motivated others and together they have created an instructive website for conducting dinners. See <http://deathoverdinner>. The website includes a resource lists of articles, videos and audio clips to share with dinner guests in advance of the dinner.

I first learned about this in a hospice newsletter that cited the Huffington Post article, "Death Over Dinner Convenes as Hundreds of Americans Coordinate End Of Life Discussions Across U.S." (8/18/2013)

I recommend that article and a 17-min. video of Michael telling his story at a TEDMED conference. The video is linked in the HuffPost article and can also be viewed at this address:

www.tedmed.com/speakers/show?id=62068



Address Service Requested

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Sunday, October 20, 2013, 2:00-4:00 pm, Annual Meeting and Program
Community Room, Rockridge Retirement Community
25 Coles Meadow Road, Northampton, MA 01060

“Cremation Options and Trends”

A panel of speakers
See page 1 for details



Peg Lorenz, home funeral guide, consultant and founder of Peaceful Passage at Home, is coming to western Massachusetts this fall to offer **free workshops in two locations: Leverett (October 26) and in Warwick (November 9).**

See page 4 for more information and registration details.

We hope you will take advantage of this special opportunity, which is highly recommended by FCAWM members who have attended Peg’s workshops.