



FUNERAL CONSUMERS ALLIANCE OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS

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

Newsletter

Fall 2011

ANNUAL MEETING & PROGRAM:

Sunday, October 23, 2011
1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

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

Program

“Your Last Gift: Anatomical Donations”

A panel of speakers
knowledgeable about
organ, tissue, and whole body donations
(see p. 8 for names of panelists)

Community Room
Rockridge Retirement Community
25 Coles Meadow Road
Northampton, MA 01060

Light refreshments will be provided.

To a Medical Student

*This is my body,
the shell of my being,
which is given to you
in final offering
to the world.*

*I share the elements of
life.*

*From these old bones,
these ligaments,
my sinews and my
nerves,
may that life force
that ran in me
shine forth once more
and pass to you
the knowledge
and the power
that help sustain
the miracle of life.*

*- Claire Small,
an anatomical gift donor*



See article “Giving Life when Life Ends” by
Miryam Ehrlich Williamson, p. 4.

President's Report *by Sandy Ward*

What a year this has been! We accomplished our goal of obtaining approval from the IRS for tax-exempt status. Thank you to our members who voted for the revised Articles of Organization at last fall's Annual Meeting. I'm pleased that the IRS approval was granted retroactively to March 1962. FCAWM is now officially an 501c3 organization and all your donations may be deducted on your income tax forms.

We published our Funeral Home Price Survey in new formats on our website, as well as in the spring newsletter. (If you wish extra copies of that insert, let me know.)

Josh Slocum and Lisa Carlson published their well-researched book, Final Rights: Reclaiming the American Way of Death. I recommend it.

I want to thank our donors who contributed almost \$1500 in the 9-month period January-August 2011. Your voluntary contributions help sustain this volunteer-run organization. We could not publish this newsletter or re-stock our supply of Before I Go planning kits without such donations. Our treasury hovers at the break-even point each year. The extra fees of the IRS application process presented a special challenge this year. We appreciate any help you can offer (see form p.7).

I would especially appreciate recommendations of good candidates for our Board of Trustees. Building our board has been a priority, but progress has been slower than hoped. One of our Trustees, Don Bourcier, is retiring from the Board after several years of good service. Ted Ennis had to resign for health reasons last winter. Two excellent candidates who wish to serve in future years are not available. Many good volunteers help us behind the scenes (e.g., Webmaster Ed Brown), but we still need to fill several board vacancies. (See list of openings, next column.)

I'm looking forward to our October 23 program, an educational panel about anatomical donations. Please read the related articles in this newsletter. I hope to see you there.



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www.FuneralConsumersWMAss.org
Editors for this issue: Sandy Ward, Neal Jameson.

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.

Funeral Consumers Alliance of Western Massachusetts

Candidates for Election on October 23

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

Officers for the coming year

- President - Sandy Ward
- Vice-President - Neal Jameson
- Treasurer -
(assisted by Miryam Williamson, bookkeeper)
- Secretary - Joan Pillsbury

Board of Trustees

- 3-year term: Ceil Lewonchuk
- 3-year term:
- 3-year term:
- 2-year term:
- 1-year term: Miryam Williamson
- 1-year term:

NOTE: Nominations for Trustees or any of the officer positions may be made from the floor during the meeting.

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 openings. THANK YOU. The Board now meets only every other month, conserving gas and time of our volunteer trustees. We communicate by email or phone as needed between meetings.



Education and Outreach

Speakers from FCAWM are available to talk with groups about topics related to our 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).

Carol Coan spoke September 18th to a church group in Springfield (see report on p. 6). On June 21st Sandy Ward spoke with residents at the College Highway Apartments in Easthampton.

You, too, can help with outreach. Please talk with your family and friends about the benefits of thinking ahead about end-of-life choices. Share this newsletter or tell people about the resources on our website, including downloadable versions of our funeral home price survey.

And if you know of a GROUP that might invite us, please let us know. Thanks!

Newsletter Fall 2011

Funeral Planning for the Living

Why leave all the decisions about your funeral to your grieving survivors, when you can calmly and thoughtfully plan it ahead of time? “Funeral Planning for the Living” is a two-session workshop taught by Carol Coan in Greenfield Community College’s credit-free Community Education program. A former FCAWM president and board member, Coan developed the workshop as a way of reaching a broader community than the senior citizen groups and hospice volunteers she had previously given talks for.

“We tend to associate funeral planning with people who have already died, or at least with old people,” Coan explains, “but unfortunately young people are not immune to death. And people who are not themselves ‘old’ may have aging parents who, they know in the back of their minds, they should talk to about this stuff”—dying, death and disposal. “I don’t deal so much with the dying part,” says Coan, “because there are a lot of other people now who do, and better than I. But the disposal part—we tend to avoid thinking about that, and we certainly don’t want to call it ‘disposal.’” She points out that, regardless of how long (or short) the dying process, once death occurs “there is a body that something needs to be done with, and pretty soon. It is such a gift not to have to hurriedly figure out what to do, what the person might have wanted, how much it will cost and how we will pay for it, but instead to be in the moment, be with the person, be with our grief. Learning about our options ahead of time, making decisions about what we know in our hearts is inevitable, I believe makes us stronger people, not to mention better consumers!”

The first evening of the workshop focuses on conventional whole-body burials, working with a funeral home, legal requirements and consumers’ rights. The second evening delves into alternative approaches, including cremation, body donation, home funerals and green burials. For some participants, taking the workshop is a way of making themselves get started on something they know they need to do. Others have already done some planning but not gotten very far, or gotten stuck, and the workshop can help them get back to work. “All questions are welcome,” says Coan.

The next Funeral Planning for the Living workshop will be offered on two successive Thursdays, October 20 and 27, 6-8 pm, at GCC’s downtown Greenfield campus. The class fee is \$45. To register, go to www.gcc.mass.edu/shopcreditfree/ or call (413) 775-1661. To learn more about the workshop, call Coan directly at (413) 774-2320.

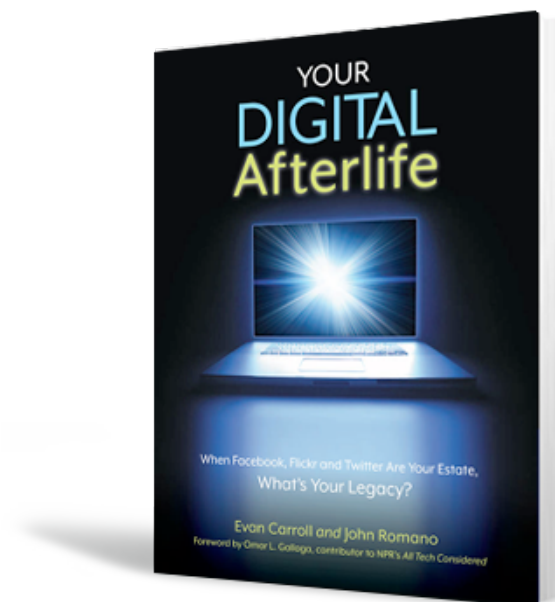
Your Digital Afterlife

A book review by Sandy Ward

Evan Carroll and John Romano’s new book, Your Digital Afterlife is dedicated to “everyone who lives the digital lifestyle.” Their subtitle asks, “When FaceBook, Flickr and Twitter are your Estate, What’s your Legacy?” Even if you think your participation in the digital world is minimal, and not important to your heirs, think again about photographs. Many of us have switched to digital cameras and store most of our family photos on computers rather than in physical albums of printed photos. Who will have access to these photos when we die?

The authors encourage planning ahead; they provide advice about how to safeguard important digital assets and record your decisions about what should be kept, what should be deleted, and who should have access. They recommend creating a list of passwords for important accounts, but caution against putting such information in your will, which will become public. They suggest designating a “digital executor” -- a person or service to distribute or delete your digital assets.

In this book I learned about the new and rapidly growing industry of “digital afterlife services.” Chapter 9, The Birth of an Industry, describes Digital Estate Planning, Posthumous messaging, Online Memorials, as well as services to backup and archive digital files. An Appendix lists tools and resources for locating forgotten accounts, archiving social websites, or hiring a service to take care of these tasks for you. See <http://www.yourdigitalafterlife.com/> for more information and lists of resources.



Giving Life When Life Ends *by Miryam Ehrlich Williamson*

Whole body donation is one of the lesser-known ways to serve science and humanity when life ends. Other possibilities are donation of

- the brain, for research in a variety of neurobiological and psychiatric illnesses, as well as the functioning of the healthy brain; and
- organs and tissue – heart, lungs, kidneys, pancreas, liver, and small bowel for immediate transplant; and transplantable bones and tissue – blood vessels, heart valves, skin, and corneas.

This article provides information on each option, with ways to learn more online or by phone. Another way to inform yourself is to come to FCAWM's program on Sunday, October 23, 1-3 p.m. (see pages 1 and 8 for details).

Whole Body Donation

Dissection and study of human remains is essential to the education of future medical professionals at all levels. Additionally, physicians and others involved in biomedical science often need access to bodies to conduct anatomical studies. The number of bodies needed grows with every passing year.

People who donate their bodies for anatomical research are promised respectful treatment and complete confidentiality. Students often develop a sort of loving relationship with their cadavers, out of gratitude for the opportunity offered.

By signing a document and making sure that people who will be able to express your wishes in this matter – next of kin, health care agent, primary physician, for example – you can place yourself on the list of anatomical gift donors. You may change your mind at any time by notifying the medical school where your donor statement is on file. Anyone who is 18 or older and in sound mind can become a whole body donor. There is no upper age limit and no requirement that every organ be present.

There is no guarantee that the institution will find the remains suitable at the time of death. In addition to having been autopsied or embalmed, conditions that may render a body unsuitable include

- certain infectious diseases, such as AIDS, hepatitis, and tuberculosis
- extensive injury at the time of death
- advanced decomposition
- extreme obesity or malnutrition

Because of the possibility of rejection at the time of death, people should make alternative plans for disposition of the remains.

Brain Donation

The Harvard Brain Tissue Resource Bank accepts the donation of healthy brains and those of people who have died of ailments such as Alzheimer's Dementia, Parkinson's Disease, and Huntington's disease, as well as the brains of their parents, siblings, and offspring.

There is also a need for the brains of people who had serious psychiatric diagnoses such as primarily schizophrenia and bipolar disorder (manic-depression). Again brains of their parents, siblings, and offspring are welcomed.

Healthy brains are also needed; without them, scientists would find it difficult to discern what is normal and what is not.

Transplantable Organs and Tissue

There are no age restrictions on who may donate organs and tissues. Adults 18 and over register their intention to be a donor. Medical conditions at the time of death determine which organs and tissues can be donated. Also, donors can indicate which organs they don't wish to donate. Or they can specify tissue donation only.

More people are eligible to donate tissue than organs because tissue survives death longer than organs do, typically up to 24 hours after brain death (usually from an injury or stroke) or cardiac death (after a family's decision to withdraw breathing support.)

(continued on next page)

(continued from page 4)

Hospitals typically notify the organ procurement organization (OPO) that covers the region where death occurred, whether or not the deceased has signed a donor card. OPOs are independent, non-profit organizations. If an organization offers money for a deceased person's organs, it is likely to sell them at a profit, rather than distributing recovered organs in an equitable manner.

Donating one's body, whether in whole or in part, after death is a way to give life to others. The matter should be discussed with one's family and, in some cases, close friends. Everyone should be aware of the individual's wishes and encouraged to see that they are honored.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Whole body donation:

Albany (NY) Medical College Anatomical Gift Program
<https://www.amc.edu/AnatomicalGift/DonorProgram.html>
(518) 262-5379

Harvard Medical School Anatomical Gift Program
<http://agp.hms.harvard.edu/>
agp@hms.harvard.edu
(617) 432-1735

Tufts University School of Medicine Anatomical Gift Program
<http://www.tufts.edu/med/anatomy/anatomical-gift.htm>
(617) 636-0837

University of Massachusetts Medical School Anatomical Gift Program
<http://www.umassmed.edu/anatomicalgiftprogram/index.aspx>
dianne.person@umassmed.edu
(508) 856-2460

Brain Donation:

Harvard Brain Tissue Resource Center
<http://www.brainbank.mclean.org/>
hbtrc@mclean.harvard.edu
(800) BRAIN BANK / (800) 272-4622

Tissue and Organ Donation:

Organ and Tissue Donation
Register to donate at
<http://www.donatelifenewengland.org/register.html>

New England Organ Bank
<http://neob.org>
Email form http://neob.org/mailreq.asp?mode=gen_info
(800) 446-6362

Feeling generous? But confused? Whole body vs. organs? Here's ADVICE
from Joe Manzo, Harvard Brain Bank:

- A) Register for everything that you are interested in,
- B) Let your legal Next Of Kin know how you would prioritize your potential gifts,
- C) Make sure that the Next Of Kin knows who to call near or at time of death,
- D) Trust that whatever is possible (based on medical/death circumstances at the time) can only happen with the legal consent and cooperation of the Next Of Kin.

Questions? Come ask Joe at FCAWM's program October 23.

Recycle Your Medical Devices

by Neal Jameson

Regardless of how you feel about organ and tissue donation, donating your medical devices is an easy way to help those in need. Sadly, a large amount of expensive devices or equipment are not allowed to be re-used in the United States. But, through the diligence of several hard-working organizations, some items can still be passed on, often internationally.

In the United States, non-implanted devices such as the telemetry transmitters for monitoring and resetting pacemakers are permitted to be re-used, though pacemakers themselves are not. However, through Heart Too Heart, pacemakers can be recycled and hand delivered to other countries. If you wish to recycle your pacemaker to someone in need, you should carry a "recycle" card and have a release form, available through Heart Too Heart, 220 34th St. W., Billings, MT 59102.

Hearing aids can be recycled through the Hear Now program, where low-income individuals can purchase them for a nominal fee. Send hearing aids in a padded envelope to: Hear Now, 6700 Washington Ave South, Eden Prairie, MN 55344. Include a return envelope if you would like a donation receipt for income tax purposes. For more information, call (800) 328-8602.

Eyeglasses can be donated through your local Lions Club (several drop boxes are listed on their website). Or if you would like them to be distributed to those in need in another country, eyeglasses can be mailed to Operation Eyesight Universal, 4 Parkdale Crescent NW, Calgary, Alberta T2N 3T8, Canada; www.operationeyesight.ca

Insulin pumps can be recycled locally through the doctors who prescribed them. Ask your doctor for more information.

The International Medical Equipment Collaborative (IMEC) is a non-profit organization that distributes donated medical equipment and supplies to professionals working in underprivileged locations worldwide. They accept a wide range of equipment, such as wheelchairs and walkers, which must be in good working order. They also accept unopened/unexpired medical supplies. For more information, IMEC may be reached at 1600 Osgood Street, North Andover, MA 01845; phone (978) 557-5510.



Talking about Green Burial & FCAWM

The Green Burial Movement was the topic of the First Hour Forum at the Unitarian Universalist Society of Greater Springfield on Sunday September 18, 2011. Carol Coan presented information about green burials and the quest to establish a green or natural cemetery in Massachusetts. A lively discussion followed. Sandy Ward and Doug Barnshaw (formerly FCAWM Vice President) participated.

Ceil Lewonchuk and Sandy Ward staffed an FCAWM information table before and after the morning worship service, answering questions and distributing FCAWM brochures. Carol and Sandy later walked in the Memorial Garden (see below).



*With appreciation and respect
to those who journeyed
this way before us*

Finding History in a Memorial Garden

The Unitarian Universalist Society of Greater Springfield, 245 Porter Lake Drive, Springfield, MA, has a Memorial Garden in a lovely wooded area accessible from the parking lot. As you stroll the paths, you'll see small ground-level plaques with names and dates, for example, Lewis Whiting (1911-2002), a founder of this organization. His signature appears on the first Articles of Organization filed with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts incorporating the Springfield Memorial Society (original name of FCAWM) in March 1962. Barbara Meltzer, another important leader in our early history, is also remembered in this garden.

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

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Address: _____ E-mail: _____

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An Educational Journey

by Susie Maddern

Mommy had a very independent, free, and simple soul. She cared about education, working for years at Northfield Mount Herman School. She loved to travel; she made over 50 Elder Hostel journeys.

On May 11, 2011, Mommy made her last journey. She traveled to UMass Medical School in Worcester to further the education of medical students. I like to say that her body was organic; her diet was mostly from her garden and local organic sources. She was not wasteful. Giving her body to education made sense, as did saving our family the expense of a funeral. "Short and simple" was one of her favorite expressions. This donation was a short and simple solution at the end of 95 years well lived.



Ultimate Recycling

by Joe Manzo

Why bury or cremate anything that can help another person, either directly through transplantation and therapy or indirectly through research and education? For those that are (or are interested in becoming) more "green" conscious: this is the ultimate in recycling!

Harvard, At Last!

by Sandy Nichols Ward

My father, Nathan P. Nichols, was an inventor, skier, electrical engineer, sailor, square dancer, and a Class of 1934 graduate of Mass State (as UMass was then called). He was also a body donor. He and my mother made arrangements to donate their bodies to Harvard Medical School. My father enjoyed telling people, "At last I'll get to go to Harvard!"

My mother's body did go to Harvard in 1976. My father lived on until 1996 and by then was living in southern California instead of New England. One day he took me for a drive and showed me the rose garden near UCLA where his remains would be buried after UCLA was finished with his body. We agreed that it was a lovely spot -- on a hill with a view. He seemed just as happy to be headed for UCLA instead of Harvard. After all, the point was to help medical education and to feel that a good use would be made of a body you no longer need. This thrifty New Englander also appreciated the fact that the medical school, not our family, would cover the costs.



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Sunday, October 23, 2011, 1:00-3:00 pm
Annual Meeting and Program

Community Room, Rockridge Retirement Community, 25 Coles Meadow Road, Northampton, MA

Your Last Gift:
Anatomical Donations

Come learn about options for donating your organs and/or whole body.

Have you considered donating your body to a medical school? Or donating your kidneys to sustain life in another person? Or donating your brain to science? Or donating eyes to improve another's sight? Come hear about agencies that accept organ, tissue, or whole body donations. Panelists will include

- Ginnie Teed, Program Manager for Tissue Development, New England Organ Bank
- Joe Manzo, Administrative Coordinator, Harvard Brain Tissue Resource Bank
- Carol Coan, author, Unwrapping the Anatomical Gift (UMass Anthropology PhD)

A short video about the Anatomical Gift Program at the UMass Medical School will be shown. A question and answer period will follow the panel presentation. Bring your questions!