



FUNERAL CONSUMERS ALLIANCE OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS

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

Newsletter

Spring 2012

SAVE THE DATE !

Sunday October 21, 2012

2:00 - 4:00 pm

Clarion Hotel, Northampton

Annual Meeting and Program

Gail Rubin

nationally known author and speaker
will give a humorous and informative
presentation.

See page 8 for more about Gail.

Election Results

At the October 23 Annual Meeting, these people were elected:

Board of Trustees:

- 3-year term: Ceil Lewonchuk
- 1-year term: Miryam Williamson
- 1-year term: Dennis Pillsbury

Officers:

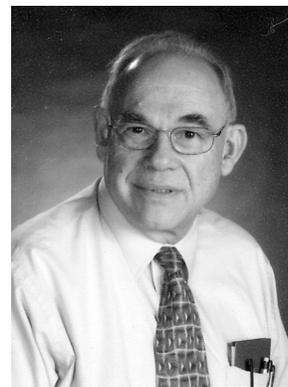
- President - Sandy Ward
- Vice-President - Neal Jameson
- Treasurer - Dennis Pillsbury
- Secretary - Joan Pillsbury

There are three open positions on the board. See Board information on page 6.



New Trustee Profile: Dennis Pillsbury

Dennis became aware of the FCAWM after his wife Joan joined the organization. Dennis joined the board after helping review the 2011 FCAWM financial records. Working with numbers has always come naturally for Dennis. Before retirement he was an engineer and a physics teacher. The treasurer's role seemed like a good fit.



Dennis's other interests include energy conservation and renewable energy. In 2010 solar collectors appeared in the backyard. "When combined with our energy saving home we are decreasing our carbon footprint." Dennis and Joan live in Gill, MA, and have two grown children and three granddaughters.

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Report of the 2011 Annual Meeting

by Sandy Ward

On Sunday afternoon, October 23, 2011, in the Community Room at the Rockridge Retirement Community, members and guests gathered for our annual business meeting, refreshments, and annual educational program. This year's topic, "Your Last Gift: Anatomical Donations," was well received.

I was touched that some members of the *original* Springfield Memorial Society, people who knew Lew Whiting and Mabel Lepper (founders of this organization), came and participated. That's many decades of loyalty to this organization!

Officers and Trustees were elected (see election results on page 1 and list of current Trustees on page 6 of this newsletter). Outgoing treasurer Miryam Williamson reported \$3024 income from contributions, \$3593 in expenses, with a \$400 filing fee for our 501c3 application. Although we had spent more than our income, she reported a bank balance of \$920 and recent contributions received not yet recorded in these figures.

After the brief business meeting, the program panelists did an excellent job of presenting information and engaging the audience. Panelists Ginnie Teed (New England Organ Bank, Program Manager for Tissue Development), Joe Manzo (Harvard Brain Tissue Resource Bank, Administrative Coordinator), and our own Carol Coan (PhD thesis on Unwrapping the Anatomical Gift) helped us understand the unique aspects of each type of anatomical gift. They answered questions about the agencies that accept organ, tissue or whole body donations and what we need to do in advance. Bottom line: sign up for all options that interest you, let your next of kin know your wishes, and trust that whatever is possible (based on the circumstances at time of your death) will be done to get your gifts to appropriate recipients.

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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

In recent months we have had fewer board meetings than usual and have focused outward, conducting many public outreach activities (see next page).

Speaking to public groups is satisfying and meaningful work.

The people who attend each information session appreciate what FCAWM offers, especially our comparative Price Survey. Our supply of printed copies of the 2010 survey is running low -- soon to be replaced by the results of the 2012 survey.

I thank Joan Pillsbury for again organizing the survey process. Letters were mailed in March to over 90 funeral homes. Within a week 17 had sent us their General Price Lists. Nice notes encouraging us to keep up the good work were attached in some cases. "Building relationships is what it is all about," commented Joan. As more results arrived, Miryam Williamson assisted Joan in compiling the data, which will be released in the coming months.

April 5 was an especially satisfying day. Carol Coan and I did a presentation in Amherst for SAGE Western Massachusetts, whose mission is to support LGBT elders. In February I had spoken to their Northampton group; good reviews of that session helped publicize April 5. We had a very receptive audience. In appreciation of our work, the SAGE director offered to print copies of our next price survey and to provide a half-page ad in their 2012-13 Resource Directory!

I thank Neal Jameson for helping me design that ad. The SAGE directory (with our ad on page 67) was distributed at the Northampton Health & Safety Fair. We submitted a similar ad to the Daily Hampshire Gazette and Amherst Bulletin for their annual Funeral and Estate Planning supplement published in May.

Recent inquiries about cremation services have brought to my attention an information gap we should address. Eternal Blessings (Guilford, VT) and other crematoria that deal directly with the public are omitted from our Price Survey. Why? Because we have not conducted surveys of *any* crematoria. We have only surveyed funeral homes and listed *their* prices for cremation services. Yet additional good and affordable cremation services are available.

Finally, inspired by last fall's Annual Meeting, I have made decisions, filled out forms regarding my own anatomical gifts, and updated my 'Before I Go' instructions. That feels good!



Education and Outreach

Volunteers representing FCAWM have been busy at a number of public events and workshops. We have given talks and staffed information tables for a variety of audiences. Here is a list of our outreach activities in the months since October 2011:

November 9. The Kiwanis Club of Springfield. Sandy Ward spoke on Funeral Planning for Those Who Don't Plan to Die.

November 13. First Hour Forum at the Unitarian Universalist Society of Greater Springfield. Joan Pillsbury and Sandy Ward discussed planning for final arrangements. (This was a follow-up in response to a September forum on natural burial, led by Carol Coan.)

February 22. South Deerfield Senior Center. Sandy Ward and Susie Maddern.

February 29. SAGE Western Massachusetts, Northampton. Planning Ahead for Final Arrangements: Rights, Options, Costs, and Communication. Sandy Ward.

March 28. FCAT TV studio, South Deerfield. Sandy was interviewed by Mary Wheelan for her show "From the Center." Mary is director of the South Deerfield Senior Center.

March 29 and April 5. Greenfield Community College, 2-session workshop on Funeral Planning for the Living, Carol Coan. This is a repeat of a well-received workshop.

April 5. SAGE Western Massachusetts, Bangs Center, Amherst. Planning Ahead for Final Arrangements: Rights, Options, Costs, and Communication. Sandy Ward and Carol Coan. (see Photo →)



April 21-22. **Green Fair** at Franklin Co. Fairgrounds in Greenfield. Green Burial Committee table.

April 21. **Sustainability Festival** on the Amherst Common. Green Burial Committee table.

May 17. FCAWM exhibit table at the **Health and Safety Fair**, 10 am-2 pm, at Northampton Council on Aging & Senior Center, Northampton. Sandy Ward, Neal Jameson and Susie Maddern.

June 5. Warwick Women's Guild. Planning funerals at a reasonable cost. Sandy Ward.

In addition to these public activities, we have been active behind the scenes, quietly answering questions that come in by phone, by email or via our website. We also have designed a new ad that has already been printed in three publications, and we have written Letters to the Editor for several newspapers.

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



Access to Hospice: Massachusetts Insurance Covers Hospice Services

"There is ready access to hospice care in all towns across the Commonwealth," reports the Hospice and Palliative Care Federation of Massachusetts (in its 2012 Membership Directory). "In Massachusetts, hospice is a covered benefit under Medicare and Medicaid (MassHealth) and, since 1994, all insurance carriers in the Commonwealth are required to offer a hospice benefit. As of 2007, the state's new health care plan for uninsured Massachusetts residents, Commonwealth Care, also provides hospice care among its benefits."

Final Resting Place: 60 MINUTES Special Edition

On May 20, 2012, a Special Edition of "60 MINUTES" aired on national television, including an interview with Josh Slocum, the Executive Director of the Funeral Consumers Alliance.

Final Resting Place

“Problems at America's cemeteries, including exhuming bodies so plots can be resold, are raising questions about whether the multi-billion dollar business needs more monitoring.”

You can watch the 12-minute video of this report online at www.cbsnews.com/video/watch?id=7409166n (or go to YouTube and search for “60 minutes cemetery”).

This report has generated much discussion. The **National Funeral Directors Association** (NFDA) issued a press release on May 21 including this supportive statement, “The 60 Minutes story reinforces NFDA's long-held position that the Federal Trade Commission's (FTC) Funeral Rule, a federal consumer protection regulation that all funeral homes must abide by, should be revised and updated so that key consumer protection elements also apply to cemeteries, crematories and all third-party sellers of funeral or burial goods and services. To that end, NFDA supports Rep. Bobby Rush's (D-IL) legislative efforts to direct the FTC to adopt regulations that would govern other providers of deathcare goods and services. This change is long overdue.”

In contrast, a press release from the **International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association** (ICCFA) was defensive. “...since 60 Minutes chose to relate the atrocities that occurred at Burr Oak Cemetery in 2009, we believe that it had a journalistic responsibility to also report that the cemetery staff involved were prosecuted and are now serving prison terms.” ICCFA's full statement can be found via <http://preview.tinyurl.com/7jjjx7f>
Note: Funeral homes tend to be represented by NFDA, while cemeteries have ICCFA as their trade association.

FCA worked with the 60 Minutes team for more than a year to represent the consumer's side of this grim story. Learn how to protect yourself; read the helpful guide on the national FCA website:

Consumer's Guide to Cemetery Practices, at www.funerals.org/faq/940-consumercemeteryguide.



Who ya gonna call? *by Miryam Ehrlich Williamson*

A natural impulse when a death occurs is to pick up the telephone and dial 911. That is almost never the best thing to do. If the person was apparently in excellent health and alone at the time of death, or when there is evidence of foul play, then you should call the police, but not the emergency medical service.

Death in itself is not an emergency. Calling 911 will make it one. There will be sirens, neighbors peeking out the windows, attempts at resuscitation because that's what EMTs do, and a trip to the hospital ER, where a doctor will affirm that the person you knew was dead when you called is actually dead.

Experiencing the death of someone you care about is stressful enough. You don't have to make it more so. Here's what to do.

First, give yourself the time you need to absorb the fact, to be alone with the person if that's what you want most. Then call the person you most want at your side for the next few hours. Next, call whoever was providing the person's medical care: the primary care physician, hospice, or visiting nurse association. Don't worry about the hour. Doctors, medical practice groups, and hospice and VNA organizations have people on call for exactly this purpose: to come to the house, pronounce the death, and issue a death certificate.

If organ donation was desired, whoever performs this function will know what to do. If you know that whole-body or brain donation was intended, try to find the contact information and make the necessary call. Best places to look are wallet, bedside table drawers, desk drawers, the refrigerator door, and freezer (for FCA planning kit).

You do not have to get the body out of the house right away. Most states give you two days to do that. Only if you plan to have a traditional funeral is it necessary to call a mortuary. The person who has died does not need you to do anything quickly. Think first of your own needs and those of others closest to the person who has died. There is no disrespect in taking your time, and much to be gained by acting deliberately and thoughtfully.

Green Burial Update May 2012

By Carol Coan

Hello FCAWM members--

The Green Burial Committee is working actively to establish a natural burial ground or conservation cemetery in Massachusetts. We are looking for a new, catchier name for our group—one that will better reflect what we do. If you have suggestions, we'd love to hear them.

We continue to give informational presentations on green burial (also called "low-impact" or natural burial) to a variety of audiences in a wide range of venues throughout Massachusetts. Our recent talk venues include the Hope Cemetery in Worcester, the Easthampton Council on Aging, the River Valley Market in Northampton and the Montague Bookmill.

If we haven't yet spoken to your group, and you'd like to invite us, please contact us by phone (413-774-2320) or by email (carol@greenburialMA.org).

In celebration of Earth Day, we staffed tables at both the Sustainability Fair in Amherst and the 2-day Home Show and Green Fair in Greenfield. We talked to hundreds of people and gave away innumerable copies of our newly revised brochure, "Green Burial in Western Massachusetts: Questions and Answers," as well as FCAWM brochures and the 2010 funeral home price survey. We received some nice coverage, including a photo of me holding a biodegradable urn, in the April 23 issue of the Recorder (find the link on the Media page of our website, www.greenburialma.org).

We were also interviewed on WOMR Provincetown radio, as part of a series on natural burial. (If you'd like to listen, you can find a link to the podcast on our Media page as well.)

The project that is occupying most of our attention now is developing a proposal to outline the ecological and economic benefits of establishing a natural burial ground, specifically targeted to the land trust community. While we know of only one land trust-conservation cemetery partnership in the US (Foxfield Preserve in Wilmot, Ohio), our research has shown us that this model successfully preserves open space while generating revenue for the land trust. In the coming months, we will be reaching out to local land trusts to discuss the benefits this type of partnership might provide to both them and Massachusetts residents who are drawn to this burial option. If you are a member of a land trust or know of land trust staff who would be interested in talking with us, please contact us through our website.

And, as always, if you are interested in volunteering with the committee, we would love to have your energy, ideas and enthusiasm.

Our next meeting will be **Thursday, June 28, at 7 pm**. Contact us for location and directions.

carol@greenburialMA.org
www.greenburialMA.org
413-774-2320

Green Burial Committee members include Barb April, Glen Ayers, Carol Coan, Judith Lorei, Kate Gehron, Richard Henning, Lexi Major Jameson, Neal Major Jameson, Eva Moseley, Joan Pillsbury, and Martha Reeves.



Dignity 2012

By Randee Laikind

We are all accustomed to Rights: Women's Rights, GLBT Rights, and Children's Rights, etc. Considering all these Rights shouldn't we also strive for the Right to Die with Dignity at a time of our own choosing and with the support of our own physician?

The Dignity 2012 group is working to get this question on the Massachusetts ballot in November 2012. The voters of Massachusetts should decide this basic human rights question. We collected over 60,000 signatures so that this initiative petition could be put to the state legislature, which could then choose to act upon it. No action taken, so we now have to collect another 12,000 signatures by June 15, 2012 to get this question on the ballot in November.

Death with Dignity has a proven track record in Oregon, the first state to pass this legislation. The moral safeguards have worked; and the law has not been abused. Since the law was enacted in Oregon in 1997, it has accounted for 525 deaths. About one third of the patients who had the medication at hand to end their lives never used it.

Hospice care can be very effective, but not in all cases. Some people may want the option to have the ability and power to control when their lives will end, before the loss of dignity occurs. We all know family members and friends who have been touched by someone who has died a prolonged and horrific death with intolerable suffering. This is not just about pain control. It is about a person's right to make this most important decision at the end of life.

The legislation proposed in Massachusetts is based on the Oregon law. It would require that a competent adult with an incurable disease and a prognosis of 6 months or less left to live as stated by their physician, could obtain a prescription for drugs to end their life. The time to use the drugs would be up to the individual --with support from those who care. The request must be made twice over a fifteen-day span and be witnessed by two people. The prescription would be in pill form, and the patient would administer the pills themselves. The actual wording of the bill can be found at www.dignity2012.org.

Physicians would not be required to comply with this legislation if they did not choose to. It would be up to each individual doctor.

Please seek and sign an initiative petition to put legalization of physician-assisted death with dignity on the ballot.

We have the ability to offer this ultimate act of compassion to our beloved pets when their suffering is intolerable. Isn't it about time we do the same for ourselves? A dying person is entitled to have the power to make this important choice. It will most likely be the most important one they make.

For more information you can contact Randee Laikind at 413-625-2075.



Board of Trustees of FCAWM

Who are we? Where do we live? When/Where do we meet?

Ceil Lewonchuk (Springfield), Neal Jameson (Northampton, but moving soon to Haydenville), Dennis and Joan Pillsbury (Gill), Sandy Ward (Holyoke), and Miryam Williamson (Warwick).

We have openings for three NEW board members, who could live anywhere in western Massachusetts.

We hold meetings in Northampton at the Rockridge Retirement Community, on Rtes 5 & 10, 1/2 mile south from the Exit 21 (Hatfield) from I-91, but to conserve gas and travel time, we communicate by email and phone between meetings, which are only called as needed (about every other month). Next one:

Friday July 27, 2012.

Our meetings are open to all. Come join us! Contact Sandy Ward at 413-532-4306 or sandy@nonotuck.us to learn the time and agenda of the next meeting.

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: _____

⌘<-----

The Top Five Regrets of the Dying*

Bronnie Ware, a palliative care nurse who spent several years caring for patients in the last 12 weeks of their lives, recorded their dying epiphanies in a blog called Inspiration and Chai and later in a book called The Top Five Regrets of the Dying. We summarize:

1. I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me.

"This was the most common regret of all. When people realize that their life is almost over and look back clearly on it, it is easy to see how many dreams have gone unfulfilled."

2. I wish I hadn't worked so hard.

"This came from every male patient that I nursed ... (they) regretted spending so much of their lives on the treadmill of a work existence. Some of her women patients had regrets also but most had not been breadwinners."

3. I wish I'd had the courage to express my feelings.

"Many people suppressed their feelings in order to keep peace with others ... they settled for a mediocre existence and never became who they were truly capable of becoming."

4. I wish I had stayed in touch with my friends.

"Often they would not truly realize the full benefit of old friends until their dying weeks and it was not always possible to track them down ... Everyone misses their friends when they are dying."

5. I wish that I had let myself be happier.

"Many did not realize until the end that happiness is a choice. They had stayed stuck in old patterns and habits."

*From an article by Susie Steiner in The Guardian (guardian.co.uk) February 1, 2012.



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Save the date! Mark your calendars now!

Sunday, October 21, 2012, 2:00-4:00 pm
Annual Meeting and Program
Clarion Hotel, One Atwood Drive, Northampton, MA
(just off Exit 18 from Route 91)

SPEAKER: Gail Rubin, author of A Good Goodbye: Funeral Planning for Those Who Don't Plan to Die and The Family Plot Blog.

“Just as talking about sex won’t make you pregnant, talking about funerals won’t make you dead – and your family will benefit from the conversation,” says Gail, who bills herself as The Doyenne of Death™. She has many creative ideas for funeral planning and will put a light touch on the subject.

Watch for more details in our fall mailing.