



FUNERAL CONSUMERS ALLIANCE OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS

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

Newsletter

Fall 2014



Collaborating across Massachusetts and beyond

This has been a good year with many examples of collaboration, coalition-building, cooperation, and good communication among groups and volunteers with related missions and goals.

The Funeral Consumers Alliance of Western Massachusetts (FCAWM) and the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Eastern Massachusetts (FCAEM) have jointly planned the program for our Annual Meeting on October 19, 2-4pm (see page 5 for details). We've attended meetings together, shared information and ideas, and enjoyed the camaraderie of colleagues with a shared mission.

Green Burial Massachusetts (with active volunteers from both FCAWM and FCAEM) evolved from the Green Burial Committee of FCAWM, and now is working in partnership with the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust to find suitable land for Massachusetts' first green cemetery open to all residents.

The Chair of the Massachusetts Board of Registration of Funeral Directors and Embalmers, a 5-member board that oversees licensing and inspection, reached out to FCAWM this summer to learn why consumer advocates oppose pre-need contracts. We sat down together at a cafe and shared ideas. That conversation sparked the idea for an Educational Forum, which we are hosting on October 15, 1:00 - 2:30 pm (see page 3 for details). Consumers need to know more about safe and legal ways to set funds aside for future arrangements, if they intend to prepay.

On the national level, the FCA Conference in Minnesota in June was a wonderful opportunity to communicate with other FCA affiliates, as well as home funeral advocates (NHFA), and some young funeral directors and mortuary science students. Sandy Ward met Rachel Zeldin, founder of I'mSorrytoHear.com, and shared information to help update the MA part of her multi-state directory. Rachel invites consumers to post reviews of funeral homes. Also at the conference, Sandy talked with Josh Slocum about collaborating on a joint newsletter, incorporating his article, which we mailed to you this summer.

Coming soon! Our 2014 Price Survey is being compiled and will be ready in time for our Annual Meeting, October 19.

Candidates for Election on October 19

These candidates have been nominated and have agreed to serve if elected at our Annual Meeting:

Board of Trustees

- 3-year term: Joan Pillsbury
- 3-year term: Trevor Boeding
- 3-year term:
- 2-year term:
- 1-year term:

NOTE: Nominations for Trustees or any officer positions may be made from the floor during the Annual Meeting. Those elected will join continuing trustees Susie Maddern, JM Sorrell, Sandy Ward, Kathleen Winkworth.

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 occur before the end of October (in time to select officers for any unfilled positions, and file our annual report with the Commonwealth by November 1.) Tentative date for that meeting: Monday October 27, 10 am.

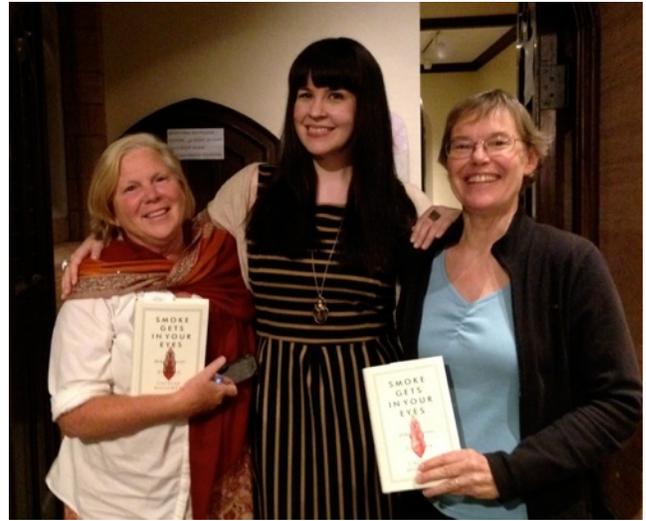


Published by Funeral Consumers Alliance of Western Massachusetts, Inc., P. O. Box 994, Greenfield, MA 01302-0994 (413) 774-2320
www.FuneralConsumersWMAss.org
Editor for this issue: Sandy Ward.

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.

Books of Interest by Sandy Ward

Caitlin Doughty, creator of the “Ask a Mortician” Youtube series, has written a book about her early experiences working in a crematory: *Smoke Gets in Your Eyes & Other Lessons from the Crematory* (2014). Her book talk in the Chapel at Mt. Auburn Cemetery on Sept. 25 drew a large audience of young and old, including me and many FCAEM board members. Caitlin is delightfully funny, frank and informative about the foibles of the funeral industry.



Heather Massey, Caitlin Doughty, Sandy Ward

Another book I recommend is *Changing the Way We Die: Compassionate End-of-Life Care and the Hospice Movement* (2013). The authors, Fran Smith and Sheila Himmel, not only relate the history of how hospice started and how it has evolved into big business, but also relate many heart-warming stories of people's experiences in hospice care.

Their book has changed the way I think of dying. For years I have said, “I’m not afraid of death, but I am afraid of the dying process.” Dreading the long debilitating phases that my parents suffered, I have wished for a sudden end. Now I have other models in my head, and smile as I think of the possibilities of a pain-free period at home during which family and friends visit to say good-bye or reminisce about the good times we’ve shared.



The Funeral Consumers Alliance of Western Massachusetts presents...

**An Educational Forum on
Legal and Financial Aspects
of Funeral Planning**

Dispelling Myths about Funeral Prepayments

Wednesday, October 15, 2014

1:00-2:30 pm

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

Come learn about your rights and options! A funeral director, an elder law attorney, and a consumer advocate will discuss the pros and cons of “preneed” contracts, insurance policies, funeral trusts, and pay-on-death accounts.

Panelists:

Sandy Ward, President, Funeral Consumers Alliance of Western Massachusetts

Morgan Mitchell, Funeral Director, Mitchell Funeral Home (Easthampton) and member of the state Board of Funeral Directors and Embalmers (Boston)

Seunghee Cha, Elder Law Attorney, Bulkley, Richardson and Gelinas, LLP (Amherst)

Free and open to the public. Bring your friends. Bring your questions.

A question and answer period will follow the panel presentation.

*For more information about this event,
contact Sandy Ward at 413-250-8079 or
email fcawmass@gmail.com*



Need an Oversized Casket?

Actor Richard Kiel planned ahead. Years ago, because of his size of 7'2" and 350 pounds, he purchased an oversized casket. In 2007 he told Pam Vetter, who was interviewing him, "I would like to share with you the story regarding my funeral planning as I had to have a custom (longer and wider) casket made in advance in order to avoid paying \$4,800 for a metal one plus the extra costs (\$1,000) of shipping by wide body aircraft, etc. I found that this larger casket required a larger concrete vault and neither would fit in a standard size grave. I did find that because the street-side graves had a 1.5' easement that they could use one of these to make it work. Everything has been arranged for so my wife doesn't have to deal with these problems..."

"My casket has been built and is in a crate in our storage shed that we rent. It's covered with cardboard so you can't see it. Instead of \$4,800 plus costly last minute shipping it only cost \$800 shipped."

He also commented that his job at age 19 "as a pre-need cemetery plot salesman" helped him become an actor.

Richard Kiel died September 10, 2014, age 74. A testimonial that he wrote for the company that built his casket can be seen at the bottom of this webpage:
www.casketsbydesign.com/oversized-caskets.html

Although Casket By Design is in Idaho, its website is a useful resource for learning about special size options, and current prices.

Locally, in Three Rivers, MA, there is a casket showroom called Alternative Options Affordable Caskets and Urns. Here is their webpage about oversized caskets:
www.spfldcasket.com/oversized-caskets-1.html



How to Mail Cremated Remains

The United States Postal Service has developed Label 139 to identify mail pieces containing cremated remains. A helpful pamphlet provides instructions:

How to Package and Ship Cremated Remains
(Publication 139. February 2014)

Request it at your local post office or download it from the USPS website:

<http://about.usps.com/publications/pub139.pdf>



New Report about Dying in America

"Patients don't die in the manner they prefer," Dr. Victor J. Dzau, president of the Institute of Medicine, said recently at the briefing about release of a significant new report. "The time is now for our nation to develop a modernized end-of-life care system."

*Dying in America:
Improving Quality and Honoring Individual
Preferences Near the End of Life*
(National Academies Press, 2014)

A 21-member committee, appointed by the Institute of Medicine, an independent research arm of the National Academy of Sciences, spent two years studying the issues.

According to the New York Times, September 18, 2014, page A17, "The \$1.5 million cost of the committee's two years of work was financed by an anonymous donor who had no control over who served on the panel or over the report." A year-long public education campaign will follow.



2014 FCAWM ANNUAL MEETING and PROGRAM

Sunday, October 19, 2:00-4:00 pm
 Rockridge Retirement Community, Community Room
 25 Coles Meadow Road, Northampton, MA



Choices in After-Death Care

A Road Show from the FCA of Eastern Massachusetts

Our colleagues in FCAEM have developed a series of presentations that they use regularly for public education. We have invited them to bring this show to western Massachusetts to share with our members and friends. A biodegradable casket, and other visual aids, will be displayed.

<p>* The FCA and Consumer Choice</p>	<p>by Raya Gildor, FCAEM President, with Sandy Ward, FCAWM President, doing this presentation.</p>		
<p>* The Why and How of Home (or Do-It-Yourself) Funerals</p>	<p>by Heather Massey, home funeral guide of "In Loving Hands," a center for natural death-care education.</p>		
<p>* What is Green Burial and Why is it a Good Choice?</p>	<p>by Eva Moseley, Green Burial Massachusetts and membership secretary of FCAEM.</p>		
<p>* Finding Meaningful Ways to Honor and Grieve</p>	<p>by Ruth Faas of Mourning Dove Studio, who will invite audience members to add decorations or reflections to a demonstration casket.</p>		

A Question and Answer period will follow these presentations. An FCAWM membership meeting (brief business meeting to elect new board members) will precede the program. Light refreshments, courtesy of Rockridge Retirement Community, will be served. Thank you, Rockridge!



Green Burial Massachusetts presents...



A Will for the Woods

Feature Documentary

"What if our last act could be a gift to the planet – a force for regeneration? Determined that his final resting place will benefit the earth, musician, folk dancer, and psychiatrist Clark Wang prepares for his own green burial."

"Must see...no documentary fan should miss." -TED

"An immersive, heart-warming tale." -Film Threat

Thursday, October 2nd, 7:00 pm

Greenfield Garden Cinemas

361 Main Street, Greenfield, MA

The film is free. Donations will be accepted to support the work of Green Burial Massachusetts and Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust in the creation of Massachusetts' first green cemetery.

Green burial meets a growing demand for alternatives to conventional burials in the United States, which are more expensive and have a considerable impact on the environment. A green cemetery sets aside open space for natural habitat, while at the same time encouraging the public to visit a beautiful spot that will be a destination for generations to come. Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust and the Green Burial Massachusetts are working together to find suitable land for Massachusetts first green cemetery.

Green Burial Massachusetts (www.GreenBurialMA.org)

is a joint project of the
Funeral Consumers Alliance of Western Massachusetts and
Funeral Consumers Alliance of Eastern Massachusetts.

Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust (www.MountGrace.org)

has protected more than 27,000 acres across central and western Massachusetts since 1986.



For more about this new film, and a short trailer, visit

www.awillforthewoods.com

Let us know if you would be interested in future showings of this film. We realize that the date of this screening may have passed by the time you open and read this newsletter.

Please make checks payable to FCAWM 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, You Should Know" planner and membership package. (Suggested new member donation is \$30.) I am enclosing \$ _____

___ Please send me ___ copies of the "Before I Go, You Should Know" planner. I enclose a donation of \$ _____ to reimburse FCAWM for the expenses of acquiring and mailing the 30-page, spiral-bound planners. (Suggested minimum \$15 per copy).

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

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Address: (if different from that on reverse side) _____

E-mail: _____ Prefer to receive newsletters via email? Yes No

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Good News from the IRS

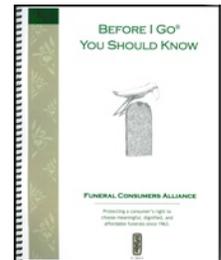
The Internal Revenue Service has approved our re-application for 501c3 status. The IRS determination letter dated August 28, 2014, informs us that contributions to FCAWM are deductible under section 170 of the Internal Revenue Code. We are also "qualified to receive tax deductible bequests, devices, transfers, and gifts under sections 2055, 2106 or 2522 of the Code." The effective date is "retroactive to the date of revocation." Thus, contributions given anytime in 2014 and 2013 are deductible.

THANK YOU for the donations you sent during this period of limbo. Thank you for supporting the mission of FCAWM, even when the deductibility of your charitable donation was uncertain.

We are glad to move forward and will of course be vigilant about filing all required IRS forms to maintain this tax-exempt status from now on.

Before I Go, You Should Know

This 30-page planner published by the national FCA in 2013 is an expanded and reorganized version of the old blue booklet that many FCAWM members probably still have stored in a freezer or other safe place.



Sandy Ward: "I thought my written plans were fine, but when I sat down to transfer information into the new booklet, I discovered that many facts had changed (e.g., my daughter had moved, some retirement funds had merged, and I had changed doctors). I recommend the new planner AND the process of reviewing what you wrote in the past."

You may order copies from us (see above) or from the national FCA. We provide a free copy to each new FCAWM member. Note: If you prefer a pdf version (to edit and save on your computer), order it via the FCA website: funerals.org. Do print your completed planner when finished.

* * * * *

October 2014 Events - open to all, free:

Thursday, October 2, 2014, 7:00 pm, Green Burial Film

***A Will for the Woods*, a feature documentary**

Greenfield Garden Cinemas, 361 Main Street, Greenfield, MA

See page 6 for announcement

Wednesday, October 15, 2014, 1:00-2:30 pm, Educational Forum

Dispelling Myths about Funeral Prepayments

Community Room, Rockridge Retirement Community

25 Coles Meadow Road, Northampton, MA 01060

See page 3 for flyer

Sunday, October 19, 2014, 2:00-4:00 pm, Annual Meeting and Program

Choices in After-Death Care – FCAEM’s Road Show

Community Room, Rockridge Retirement Community

25 Coles Meadow Road, Northampton, MA 01060

See page 5 for details