



FUNERAL CONSUMERS ALLIANCE OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS

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

Newsletter

Spring 2014

Greetings! *by Sandy Ward*

This newsletter includes a special insert, an article by Josh Slocum, executive director of the national FCA organization, about the pitfalls of pre-need insurance:

No, it's not "all taken care of"

Josh outlines better ways to help your family plan ahead for the inevitable. I recommend his article, which was published in the Spring 2014 issue of The Grim Reader, a twice-yearly newsletter from FCA. We've included it here to bring it to the attention of all FCAWM members.

Please read it, and also Josh's letter on the back of that insert. He is co-sponsoring this mailing in order to help us financially. THANKS Josh!



New Trustee: Kathleen Winkworth

"I have been a social worker almost 40 years, primarily in a community mental health setting. Now that I have semi-retired to a private practice, I have time and energy to pursue other interests.

One of these interests is end-of-life issues. From the home birth to the home funeral movement has seemed like a natural progression to me and my particular interest is in caring for one's own after death. I know I have a great deal to learn and look forward to educating myself and others through the FCAWM Board."



In fall 2013, Kathleen brought one of Peg Lorenz's home funeral workshops to Leverett, MA. It was very well attended. Thank you, Kathleen!

Mark your calendar:

We hope you will join us ...

Sunday October 19, 2:00-4:00 pm
Annual Meeting and Program
CHOICES IN AFTER-DEATH CARE
Rockridge Retirement Community, Northampton
(see details on back of this newsletter).

You are also welcome at our board meetings. The next one is planned for...

Monday September 15, 10:00 am to 12 noon
FCAWM Board of Trustees meeting
Highland Valley Elder Services, Conference room
320 Riverside Drive, Northampton, MA.
Please RSVP to Sandy at 413-250-8079 or
fcawmass@gmail.com so we'll know how many chairs are needed, and also could notify you if the time or location changes.



New Trustee: J.M. Sorrell

J.M. Sorrell is the ombudsman director for Highland Valley Elder Services and a Justice of the Peace. She facilitates discussions with families and staff at long-term care facilities regarding care and conflict around end of life decision making. When she discovered FCAWM through a talk by Sandy Ward, she was immediately interested in spreading the word to potential consumers about their options for funerals and burials. She believes in helping people, especially with limited means, to spend their resources wisely and with choice. She is pleased to help FCAWM in any way she can.



Report of the 2013 Annual Meeting

On Sunday afternoon, October 20, 2013, at Rockridge Retirement Community in Northampton, we gathered for our annual meeting and program. Refreshments were provided by Eileen Pratt and her daughter.

We elected these candidates to the Board of Trustees:

- 3-year term: Kathleen Winkworth
- 3-year term: J.M. Sorrell
- 3-year term: Jill Strader
- 2-year term: Sandy Ward
- 2-year term: Elizabeth Chapman
- 1-year term: Joan Pillsbury

With continuing board members Susie Maddern, Dennis Pillsbury and Ceil Lewonchuk, this election filled all nine positions on the board.

Dennis Pillsbury was re-elected as Treasurer. Other officer positions (president, vice-president, and secretary) were left to be filled by the board, after the new board could meet and get acquainted.

Our Treasurer reported contributions of \$2887.63 during FY2013, which ended August 31 with a bank balance of \$1,179.63. He noted, however, an outstanding loan of \$609.55 (for Spring 2013 newsletter paid by a volunteer), and an anticipated \$400 filing fee for the IRS re-application process.

Annual Program:

Cremation Options and Trends

Four panelists spoke and answered questions. Tom Robinson, owner-operator of Eternal Blessings Crematory in VT, spoke about working directly with families. William "BT" Hathaway, a funeral director dissatisfied with typical cremation practices, described his invention of MemryStones on which family members can inscribe meaningful messages. The ceramic pieces accompany the body through cremation, provide positive identification of the remains, and become lasting mementos. Doug Barnshaw, M.D., spoke of his experience with his wife's cremation, and warned about unexpected "hidden" expenses. Carol Coan, PhD, and former FCAWM President, reported on new trends and options in cremation, including a liquid process called alkaline hydrolysis, biocremation, or resomation. Twenty-nine people attended this program and meeting.



Do join us for our **NEXT Annual Meeting/ Program:**

Sunday October 19, 2014, 2-4pm.

See details on page 4.

Update: Current Officers as of July 2014

- President - Sandy Ward
- Vice-President - J.M. Sorrell
- Treasurer - Joan Pillsbury
- Secretary - Kathleen Winkworth

We want to thank long-time board member Ceil Lewonchuk for her years of service to this organization. We hope she'll still attend the annual programs. We regret the loss of several other board members since October. Elizabeth Chapman and Jill Strader resigned because of serious illnesses. Dennis Pillsbury, to whom we owe a huge thanks for his service as Treasurer and his good cheer at meetings, died February 2 after an extended illness.



2014 Funeral Home Price Survey

Letters to all the known funeral homes in the four counties we serve -- Berkshire, Franklin, Hampshire and Hampden -- were mailed in mid-January, requesting a copy of the General Price List (GPL) from each. Although we provided a stamped, addressed envelope to make the reply process simple, only sixteen GPLs were received by the spring deadline. This summer FCAWM volunteers will make followup phone calls and/or in-person visits in an attempt to collect more GPLs. We aim to analyze the data in the GPLs and compile a comparative Price Survey ready for release to the public in fall 2014. In the meantime, our 2012 comparative Price Survey remains on our website.

Joan Pillsbury is coordinating this project. If you would like to help, please let us know.



Green Burial Massachusetts

A new name, reflecting state-wide scope, and a new collaboration with a Land Trust! Read about this good news on the Green Burial Massachusetts website:

<http://www.greenburialma.org/>

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..

Please make checks payable to FCAWM and send to P. O. Box 994, Greenfield, MA 01302.

___ YES! I want to support the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Western 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 \$ _____

___ YES, I want to receive *The Grim Reader* (twice a year newsletter by Josh Slocum, FCA)

___ Please send me ___ copies of the NEW expanded "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 \$12 per copy).

___ I'd like to become more active with this organization. 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

✂----- cut here -----

THANK YOU!

Note: Contributions to FCAWM are not, at this time, tax-deductible. Sorry!
(We re-applied in January 2014 to the IRS for tax exempt status, but are still awaiting approval...)

If it is important to you to have a charitable deduction in 2014 for your taxes, consider a donation to the national **Funeral Consumers Alliance**, the 501c3 organization of which we are an affiliate. FCA works hard advocating for the rights of funeral consumers throughout the United States. All FCAWM members are de-facto members of FCA; if you move to another state, your membership transfers to an appropriate local or regional FCA affiliate. See complete FCA directory, many online resources, and ways to donate at www.funerals.org.

National FCA Conference by Sandy Ward

One hundred funeral consumer advocates gathered in Bloomington, MN, June 5-7 for the biennial FCA Conference. Volunteers, home funeral experts, funeral directors, legislators, and mortuary school students discussed ways to help families get the funeral that fits their needs and budget. We attended workshops and toured a natural burial site in the prairie. For a sense of this remarkable conference, and the FUN we had, please read the captions as you view my photos in this online gallery:

www.smugmug.com/gallery/41600623_GVvN7B

(Tip: type an underscore, rather than space, before GV)

Website update by Sandy Ward, webmaster

In March 2014 a revised version of our website was launched. Improvements include a colorful banner, a new page "Immediate Need," as well as updating and reorganization of other sections. There is now a News & Events page and a link to "Sandy's Blog," a new commentary section I've added.

In June an updated list of funeral homes was added to reflect recent changes.

The web address remains the same:

www.FuneralConsumersWMass.org

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Address Service Requested

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Save the date! Mark your calendars now!

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

Rockridge Retirement Community, 25 Coles Meadow Rd, Northampton, MA

Choices in After-Death Care

Featuring a panel of knowledgeable volunteers presenting these topics:

The FCA and Consumer Choice, by the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Eastern Massachusetts

The Why and How of Home (or Do-It-Yourself) Funerals, by Heather Massey, home funeral guide of “In Loving Hands,” a center for natural death-care education

What is Green Burial and Why is it a Good Choice? by Eva Moseley, Green Burial Massachusetts

Finding Meaningful Ways to Honor and Grieve, by Ruth Faas of Mourning Dove Studio

Light refreshments will be served. A brief business meeting will precede the program.