

FUNERAL CONSUMER'S ALLIANCE OF SARASOTA-MANATEE, INC.

Visit our *NEW* website www.fcasarasota.com

P.O. BOX 15833 SARASOTA. FL 34277

Nancie Edwards, Editor

Email FCASarasotaMan@aol.com

941-953-3740

July 2016

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE - Summer 2016

Greetings to all. As promised, we are publishing a Summer Newsletter. Since our Annual Meeting in January, much has happened that we want to update you on.

Last month I attended the FCA National biennial conference in Atlanta. This three - day conference included workshops, keynote speakers and members from chapters nationwide and Canada. I was one of about 100 to attend the conference. The attendees were highly educated, passionate and quite knowledgeable about funeral consumer rights. In this newsletter I have highlighted a couple of interesting things I learned during the conference.

One of the workshops I attended was how to survey funeral home pricing and present that data in a useful way to your local membership. I did a survey of Sarasota/Manatee counties last fall and shared the results at the Annual meeting, but this workshop, led by an affiliate in Ventura County, CA presented a more comprehensive method, providing much better data and a qualitative measure based on provider price sheets and conformance with the Federal Trade Commission "Funeral Rule." We plan to conduct a similar survey and present that information in our winter newsletter and at the Annual Meeting in January.

Enclosed in this newsletter is an envelope. I hope you will consider sending us a donation. The postage alone on this newsletter ends up costing us several hundred dollars, but we know it is important to get you news and information you can use.

We have also enclosed a brightly colored reminder card. If you have an email address, please send us an email and include your name in the email. With that information, we will update our membership roster and also send this newsletter to your email. We never release our member emails to any third parties.

Finally, a big thanks to our board members and trustees for the ideas they provide and contributions they are make on your behalf.

Christopher F. White - President

A NOTE FROM THE SECRETARY

Greetings Members,

I would like to thank our President, Christopher White, for attending the National Conference in Atlanta earlier this month. He represented us well and came back with lots of great ideas. Also, I would like to thank you for the donations that continue to come in all year. We need these donations to continue to represent our current members and help new members. We are always looking to add funeral providers to make sure our membership has choices to fit their needs.

We have a good supply of brochures and other informative pamphlets and are ready to send them to your friends and family. I am looking forward to gathering email addresses to help us stay in touch with you. We have room on our board if you are interested in serving let us know either by phone 941-953-3740 or email fcasarasotaman@aol.com.

Nancie Edwards

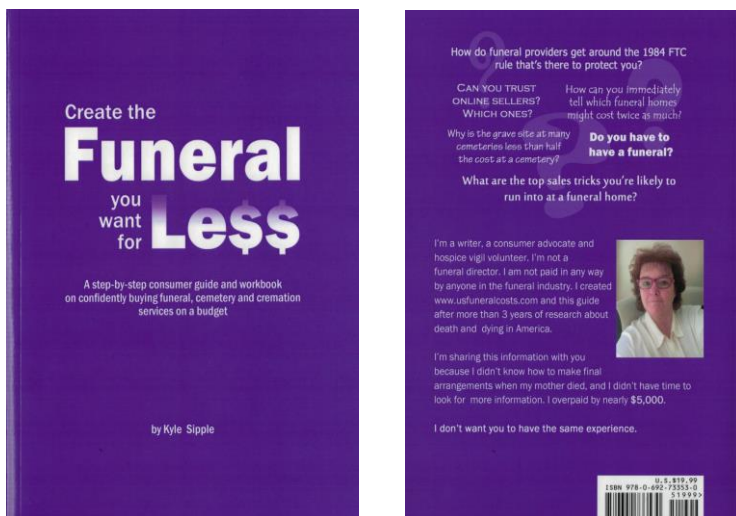
A MESSAGE FROM THE TREASURER

Fees collected from new members and general donations to the organization are both down compared to last year. Our expenses, as always, have been kept to a minimum. They consist mostly of administrative, printing, postage, telephone, promotion (marketing) charges and National FCA dues. These charges constitute a fixed yearly expense and they continue to far exceed the fees collected from new members.

Your generous contributions are vital to the mission of the organization.

Mohan Prasad – Treasurer

Create the Funeral You Want For Less



At the FCA Conference in Atlanta, I met Kyle Sipple, the author of Create the Funeral You Want For Less. Kyle is a chapter member of the Atlanta, GA FCA affiliate. She told me she wrote this book after experiencing the challenges of handling final arrangements for a loved one. She thought she was prepared and knowledgeable. Not nearly enough.

This book is loaded with ideas, facts and sources. There is room to note what plans you would like and to build a guide for whomever you expect to carry out your final wishes.

You can learn more about her book and research at www.usfuneralcosts.com. We are working to add provider price survey data to our own local website, www.fcasarasota.com.

**Wanted – FCA Member interested in joining the Board of Directors
Immediate Vacancy – Vice President - limited time commitment
Please contact Chris or Nancie.**

Provider Update

We continue to search for the most reasonable service prices from reputable, local providers. Getting a provider on board with FCA is a slow process. We still have our handshake arrangements with Wiegand Brothers and All Veterans/All Families. In each case, these providers will furnish services at a discount to members.

Last month a new provider, Sound Choice, opened on Bee Ridge Rd. I received an invite to their open house in June. I was out of town but decided to check them out on my return. Kay Waites is the Funeral Director at Sound Choice. Sound Choice is a hybrid between the old brick and mortar funeral homes and the new storefronts, like All Veterans/All Families, which can offer a full range of services, but no showroom or other overhead. Their catchphrase is “Low Cost, Simple, Convenient.” They are familiar with FCA, and excited to work with us. They are not offering any member discount at this time. However, they have prices considerably lower than other local providers.

Sound Choice has very competitive prices (see our survey info below). If you are in the market for a provider, shopping around for a better price or just don’t know enough about what to expect, I would encourage you to visit Sound Choice and decide for yourself.

Current Provider Survey Pricing

		Type 1		Type 2	Type 3	Type 4
All Veterans-All Families Funerals & Cremations	FCA	\$995	Services	\$1,640	\$1,295	\$2,950
			Casket	\$895		
Brown & Sons Funeral Home		\$1,895	Services	\$1,995	\$1,575	\$3,470
			Casket	\$1,495	\$375	\$1,095
Good Earth Crematory		\$845	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Griffith -Cline Funeral Home		\$1,748	Services	\$2,057	\$1,954	\$5,979
			Casket	\$1,495	??	\$995
Gulf Coast Cremations		\$850	N/A			
Jennings Funeral Home		\$1,185	Services	\$1,335	\$1,755	\$3,110
			Casket	\$1,695	\$425	\$1,320
Sound Choice		\$740	Services	\$1,195	\$1,100	\$2,305
			Casket	\$550		
Wiegand Brothers Funeral Home And Crematory	FCA	\$1,295	Services	\$1,695	\$1,695	\$1,895
			Casket			

Type 1 =Simple Cremation, Type 2 = Direct Burial, Type 3 = Out of State burial, Type 4 = Cremation with viewing and service
Pricing as of 07/22/2016

The Urban Death Project

The keynote speaker at the FCA biennial convention was Katrina Spade. She completed her masters in architecture at UMASS with this project. The reprint below from the NY Times captures the thoughts behind this effort.

The Urban Death Project *A Project to Turn Corpses Into Compost*

By CATRIN EINHORN NY TIMES

APRIL 13, 2015



Katrina Spade, the founder and director of the Urban Death Project, monitoring the temperature of a mound of wood chips that contains a human body. Credit Mike Belleme for The New York Times

Cullowhee, N.C. — The body of the tiny 78-year-old woman, gray hair falling over stiffened shoulders, was brought to a hillside at Western Carolina University still clad in a blue hospital gown and chartreuse socks. She was laid on a bed of wood chips, and then more were heaped atop her. If all goes as hoped, the body will turn into compost. It is a startling next step in the natural burial movement. Even as more people opt for interment in simple shrouds or biodegradable caskets, urban cemeteries continue to fill up. For the environmentally conscious, cremation is a problematic option, as the process releases greenhouse gases.

Armed with a prestigious environmental fellowship, Katrina Spade, a 37-year-old Seattle resident with a degree in architecture, has proposed an alternative: a facility for human composting. The idea is attracting interest from environmental advocates and scientists. The woman laid to rest in wood chips is a first step in testing how it would work.

“Composting makes people think of banana peels and coffee grounds,” Ms. Spade said. But “our bodies have nutrients. What if we could grow new life after we’ve died?”

Scientists agree that human beings can be composted. Already countless farms across the country, including at least a third of Washington State’s dairy farms, compost the bodies of dead livestock. In some states, transportation departments compost roadkill. “I’m absolutely sure that it can work,” said Lynne Carpenter-Boggs, a soil scientist at Washington State University who serves on the advisory board of the [Urban Death Project](#), a nonprofit that Ms. Spade founded.

The process is surprisingly simple: Place nitrogen-rich material, like dead animals, inside a mound of carbon-rich material, like wood chips and sawdust, adding moisture or extra nitrogen and making other adjustments as needed. Microbial activity will start the pile cooking. Bacteria release enzymes that break down tissue into component parts like amino acids, and eventually, the nitrogen-rich molecules bind with the carbon-rich ones, creating a soil-like substance. Temperatures reach around 140 degrees, often higher, and the heat kills common pathogens. Done correctly, there should be no smell. Bones also compost, though they take longer than tissue.

Ms. Spade has designed a building for human composting that aims to marry the efficiency of this biological process with the ritual and symbolism that mourners crave. Each Urban Death facility would be centered around a three-story vault that she calls “the core.” Loved ones would carry their deceased, wrapped in a shroud, up a circular ramp to the top. There, during a “laying in” ceremony, mourners would place the body inside the core, which could hold perhaps 30 corpses at a time. Over the next several weeks, each body would move down the core until the first stage of composting was complete. In a second stage, material would be screened, along with any remaining bones, and the compost would be cured.

Ms. Spade estimates that each body, combined with the necessary materials such as wood chips and sawdust, would yield enough compost to fill a three-foot cube. Weeks or months later, survivors could collect some of the compost to use as they saw fit, perhaps in their garden or to plant a tree. Ms. Spade foresees the rest going to nearby parks or conservation lands. Each human composting would cost about \$2,500, a fraction of the price of conventional burial, Ms. Spade estimates.

She hopes to build the first facility in Seattle, then to develop a template that other communities can use for locally designed facilities. “Like libraries,” she said. Ms. Spade, who smiles a lot, is the opposite of funereal; she buzzes with

energy and sometimes has to remind herself to talk slower. She studied sustainable agriculture before going to architecture school. The composting idea was inspired by the “nurse log,” a fallen tree in a forest that grows new life as it decays. Beyond the environmental benefits to composting humans, she believes there is a spiritual one: connecting death to the cycle of nature will help people face their own mortality and bring comfort to the bereaved. Conventional burial is anything but natural. Cadavers are preserved with embalming fluid containing formaldehyde, a carcinogen. They are buried in caskets made of metal or wood, and placed inside a concrete or metal burial vault.

These traditions, though commonplace in the United States, are relatively new, beginning in the Civil War when northern families needed to get their dead men home from the South. “American ingenuity,” said Gary Laderman, a professor at Emory University who specializes in the history of death in America. “Embalming stuck.” Death rites can go from repugnant to normal in a surprisingly short time, said James Olson, a funeral director in Wisconsin and chairman of the green burial work group of the [National Funeral Directors Association](#).

Cremation, for instance. “If I had told you 50 years ago that we were going to burn your loved one at 2000 degrees and pulverize their skeleton in a machine and give you back the crushed bone,” he said, “you would have said, ‘Eww.’” He called Ms. Spade’s concept “wonderful.” First, though, she and her supporters at the Urban Death Project will have to navigate an array of obstacles. Not least is the yuck factor.

Many Americans find the very idea of composting human bodies repulsive, a contravention of cultural and religious norms. One critic on the Urban Death website commented: “This MUST be a joke. If not, there’s only one word which could possibly describe your activities: SICK.” Another commenter wrote: “A pile of bodies is usually called a ‘mass grave.’ Please stop what you’re doing.” Then there are legal barriers. State laws vary: In the last few years, several have legalized alkaline hydrolysis, sometimes known as water cremation, in which bodies are dissolved in a heated mix of water and lye. But in many other states, bodies must be buried, entombed, cremated or donated to science.

Questions remain about how human compost should be used. Certain pathogens, like the prions related to [mad cow disease](#), can survive composting, and livestock that have died from certain diseases are banned from composting. Some experts recommend that livestock compost not be spread on fields where fruits and vegetables are grown for human consumption. As with cremation, heavy metal contamination could be a concern; perhaps dental fillings would have to be removed from bodies. “There are many discussions to be had with the medical community and the health department,” Dr. Carpenter-Boggs said. Ms. Spade, though, is forging ahead.

Recently, she and Cheryl Johnston, a forensic anthropologist at Western Carolina, returned to the university’s hillside research station. Twelve bodies lay decomposing in the open air, practice cadavers for forensic science students learning to analyze remains. Off to one side was the body of the 78-year-old woman, which had been donated by her family and had lain in wood chips for about three weeks. After raking, scooping and brushing the chips away, they exposed part of the woman’s jaw and chest. The temperature of the mound was a cool 50 degrees. “Nothing much has happened,” said Dr. Johnston. Ms. Spade tried not to look glum. “I’m not surprised,” she said. “I mean, I’d be jumping for joy if it was reading 120 degrees.”

On a conference call the next morning, Dr. Carpenter-Boggs, the soil scientist, suggested adding nitrogen-rich material to jump-start composting. For livestock, manure would be ideal, she said, but that was not appropriate for humans. Instead, she recommended alfalfa hay or pellets. Ms. Spade beamed. “Who doesn’t want to be laid to rest in alfalfa?” she asked.

FCA National Initiatives

Josh Slocum, the FCA National Executive Director, provided an update on legislative activities FCA is pursuing this year. Josh is young, energetic and an expert on what you can and cannot do regarding funerals and final arrangements. The funeral industry wants everyone to “need” their services using the model propagated over the last 150 years. In fact Service Corporation International (SCI) in an annual report to shareholders, stated an objective of \$15K for every service package they sell. Needless to say, Josh is not on their mailing list.

This year FCA National has partnered with the Consumer Federation of America (www.consumerfed.org) to petition the Federal Trade Commission to review the Funeral Rule (1984) and update the rule to require all funeral service providers to post prices on their websites (if they have one). Technology has changed the way consumers shop for services. The 1984 rule, while a milestone, is in need of an update. Getting the FTC interested enough to take this will require some effort. The funeral industry would like the old rule to go away. This will be an important initiative to watch. California passed a state law last year requiring providers to post pricing on their websites.

Follow this link to a press release from July 16, 2016 for an update on this topic.
http://consumerfed.org/press_release/funeral-homes-charge-wide-range-prices-fail-disclose-prices-adequatel

We have room for you! If you are interested in joining us, we would love to have you. We can nominate you at the meeting, or, if you can't make it to the meeting, just use the coupon below and we'll give you a call.

Need something? Want to help? Let us know by using the form below. Complete the form and return it to:
Funeral Consumer's Alliance of Sarasota - Manatee, Inc., P.O. Box 15833, Sarasota, FL 34277.
If you need additional information or have questions, call us at (941) 953-3740

NAME(S) _____

MEMBERSHIP NUMBER(S) _____

ADDRESS _____

- I WOULD LIKE _____ COPIES OF THE ALLIANCE BROCHURE FOR MY FRIENDS.
- I WISH TO UPDATE MY RECORDS. PLEASE SEND ME A BLANK SERVICE RECORD FORM.
- I WILL SERVE ON THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES. HAVE SOMEONE CALL ME AT _____.
- PLEASE ACCEPT MY DONATION OF \$_____ TO SUPPORT THE ALLIANCE.

Funeral Consumers Alliance
P.O. Box 15833
Sarasota, FL 34277

