



Spring 2015

Funeral Consumers Alliance of Central New York, Inc.

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<http://www.funerals.org/affiliates/syracuse/Welcome.html>

From the President's Desk

By Peggy Chestnut

It is that time of year again. We are having our annual meeting and getting ready for summer. We are excited to talk with you this year at the annual meeting about proposed legislation in the State Senate and Legislature regarding "Dignity in Dying". We are pushing the local legislatures and senators to vote positively for these bills.

Also this year, we have spoken to The Upstate Body donation people and wanted to let you know that body donation has become a much more popular choice for some people, so there have been a lot more donations in the past year than ever before. Therefore, Upstate is scrutinizing donations for height/weight, and infectious diseases, so we are advising people to make sure they have a second plan in case your body does not get accepted as a donation.

We will again be at the Westcott Street Cultural Fair this year, so seek us out and get some good information from us. (Plus we have good snacks to give out.) As always it is a pleasure for me to serve on this board and try to continue to spread our word in the community. If you know of places that would like to have us speak about our organization, or other opportunities to get our mission to the public please let us know. We are always willing to speak at churches, senior centers, or any other place that is interested in knowing about wise end-of-life choices. Thank you again and I hope to see you at the Annual Meeting.

FCA of CNY Officers

President.....	Peggy Chestnut
Vice President.....	Peter Moller
Secretary.....	Jenifer Breyer
Treasurer.....	Susan Rainey

THE FUTURE? CORPSES AS COMPOST?

An article in the NY Times on April 14, 2015 describes a plan by a 37 year old architect, Karen Spade, supported by the Urban Death Project to build a building with an open top into which of corpses could be lowered, a carbon source (wood chips) added. The bodies would decompose over time to form usable compost (about 3 cubic feet per body). Apparently many states already allow the composting of dead livestock and road kill, and a third of dead dairy livestock are already handled his way in Washington state. The cost is estimated at around \$2,500. The process is similar to composting you may do in your backyard. In a second stage the composted remains would be screened and the compost cured. Weeks, or likely months later survivors could collect the compost to use as they see fit. Composting would avoid the increased carbon release of cremation, but might not kill certain disease agents, such as those causing Mad Cow Disease in humans. Currently some bodies are undergoing this process to see how it works.

FCA of CNY ANNUAL MEETING, JUNE 13

This year's program for our annual meeting will feature Ms. Laurie Leonard (MSW) who is the Associate Director of End of Life Choices New York. Her organization has been actively involved in passing legislation in states that have Dignity in Dying laws in place. (See Dr. Joel Potash's related article on page 2.) Dignity in Dying options are gaining momentum, but the New York state legislature is still debating and discussing the issue. You can join the discussion and ask questions of our guest, Laurie Leonard. Go to the organizations web site for more information: <http://endoflifechoicesny.org>.

See page 4 for time and place details.

Are Your End-of-Life Choices Up-to-Date?

There's never a better time to review your end-of-life decisions than right now. Go over your Preference Form with your family/friends. If you need a new form, send us a stamped, self-addressed envelope and it will come right back to you.

We Say Thank You!

As we thank those who have donated money to FCA of CNY since the publication of the last newsletter, you might wonder how these gifts are used. Much of it helps defray our routine operating costs, such as the production and mailing of this newsletter.

Please use the form on page four of this newsletter to make your contribution to FCA of CNY.

The following list of donors is incomplete; it doesn't contain the names of those who made donations but asked that their names not be published.

Helen Ashley, Richard Askeland, Joanna Biagiarelli, June R. Bomberger, Mark Briggs, Geraldine Chapman-Aird, Robert Coye, Peter Cronkright, Mary Lou Dopyera, Francis Durgin, Jane Feld, Richard and Deanna Granville, Dorothy Harrold, Elizabeth Ingram, Mary Iverson, Richard Kinsey, Richard Manier, Jr., Mark Monmonier, Margaret Muller, Caroline Palmer, Ruth Pinckney, Joel Potash, Daniel Rabuzzi, Daniel Rakoske, Edith Schmitz, Judith Setla, Cynthia Shane, Sidney Shiffman, David Stam, Ann Tussing, Joyce Ucci, Susan Vanmaarseveen, Joan Welch, John Wyman, Raymond Yahnke, Dr. Robert Zimmer

LATE BREAKING NEWS!

China says, please stop hiring funeral strippers.

In China, friends and family of the deceased may have to do without a special form of funeral entertainment: strippers.

According to a statement from the Ministry of Culture on Thursday, the government plans to work closely with the police to eliminate such performances, which are held with the goal of drawing more mourners.

Pictures of a funeral in the city of Handan in northern Hebei province last month showed a dancer removing her bra as assembled parents and children

watched. They were widely **circulated** online, prompting much opprobrium. In its Thursday statement, the Ministry of Culture cited "obscene" performances in the eastern Chinese province of Jiangsu, as well as in Handan, and pledged to crack down on such lascivious last rites. (From the *Wall Street Journal*)

NEW ACTIVITY IN AID IN DYING

Joel Potash

Three new bills have been introduced in the New York State legislature, 2 in the Assembly and 1 in the Senate to allow aid-in-dying (formerly called physician-assisted suicide): A.5261 (Pauli et al.); A2129 (Rosenthal et al); and S.3685 (Savino et al.). The bills would amend existing Public Health Laws, and allow terminally ill patients with a life expectancy of 6 months or less to obtain medication from a physician in order to hasten death. Patients would have to be capable of decision-making, and would not be considered suicidal for purposes of the law or insurance benefits. Active euthanasia, where the physician or others administer a lethal drug, would not be allowed.

Additionally, a lawsuit in New York has been instituted by several terminally ill patients and their doctors and other consulting physicians to allow aid-in-dying under "equal protection of the law." The premise is that a patient on a ventilator may have the ventilator discontinued to hasten death, but this option is not available to other patients who are dying and may be suffering. New York State law currently requires physicians to offer terminally ill patients a discussion of all options for care, including palliative care and Hospice. There is no information available as to how often such discussions actually happen. There is also concern that discussing ways in which terminally ill patients may end their life may leave physicians legally culpable.

In a previous decision regarding a New York State case, the U.S. Supreme Court concluded that there was no Constitutional right to assistance in dying, but that patients were entitled to palliative care, including sufficient pain control, even if medications unintentionally caused their deaths. The Supreme Court stated that individual states could enact legislation allowing physician-assisted suicide.

A Humorous Anecdote from our Treasurer, Susan Rainey

Last month, I went to a cousin's funeral. Sad but as he'd been sick for a long time, not a surprise. He was cremated, so the cemetery had to dig only a small hole. To keep people from tripping and falling in, the diggers inverted an old road sign over the hole. Come time for the burial, we pulled the sign off, and on the side that had been face down in the earth, we read "Dead End."

How You Can set Money Aside to Pay for Your Funeral.

According to Wikipedia, "A Totten Trust (also referred to as a Payable on Death Account) is a form of trust in the United States in which one party (the "settlor" or "grantor" of the trust) places money in a bank account or security with instructions that upon the settlor's death, whatever is in that account will pass to a named beneficiary." It is important to put enough money into the account to cover the anticipated costs of the funeral AND to make sure the beneficiary knows about the trust and will use to proceeds to pay for your funeral. A Totten Trust can be set up at your bank. Be sure that, as with any financial instrument that has beneficiaries, you keep them up-to-date! If you sign the form designating your funeral agent, you should indicate where that the Totten Trust exists and where it is to be found and who is the beneficiary. More information about Totten Trusts can be found online. One source is NOLO.com. (Thanks to Phillis Byard of the FCA of Central Ohio)

Looking for a Speaker?

One of the missions of the FCA of CNY is Outreach. We welcome opportunities to meet with church groups and community gatherings of all kinds. Just contact our President Peggy Chestnut and she'll make sure two or three of our Board members show up to speak and answer questions.

Digital Footprint Hint

Do your heirs and/or friends a favor. Make it easier for them to handle your affairs by keeping your IDs and passwords in a safe accessible place. This would include all your computer passwords and online accounts including Facebook, PayPal, Social Security, email, etc.

Go to the Mother-ship for Valuable Updated Resources

You may be familiar with the treasure trove of resources on the National Funeral Consumers Alliance website. (funerals.org) What you may not realize if you haven't visited the site lately is that many of the familiar brochures, pamphlets and forms have been revised and updated. Don't worry; you won't have to read everything on your computer screen. Many of these items have been formatted for printing. To find those, go to funerals.org, click on For Consumers and then Printed Pamphlets.

Here are some of the highlights to look for:

- *How to Choose a Funeral Home*
- *Common Funeral Myths*
- *Cremation Explained*
- *Death Away from Home*
- *Embalming Explained*
- *Four-step Funeral Planning*
- *Green Burial*
- *Should You Pre-pay for Your Funeral*
- *10 Tips for Saving Funeral Dollars*

The Times They Are a'Changing?

No doubt you've heard about "crowd sourcing." But how about "crowd funding" a funeral? FoxBusiness's Kayleigh Kulp reports that websites such as GoFundMe.com have helped fund more than 22,000 "open funeral, tribute, and memorial campaigns that collectively raised \$40 Million at that one website." Another site, YouCaring.com raised more than \$23,000 to pay funeral expenses for a couple killed by an alleged drunk driver.

FCA of CNY Annual Meeting. June 13, 2:00. Corinthian Club, 930 James St., in Syracuse.



Help Your FCA of CNY Save Money!

One of this organization’s biggest expenses is the printing and mailing of this twice-yearly newsletter. Many members elect to have their newsletter emailed to them and this helps us save on postage costs. If you would like to help, send us a message requesting that we email all your subsequent newsletters. The best way to let us know? Send an email to: fcacny@gmail.com

“Be yourself. Everyone else is already taken.”
Oscar Wilde

Don’t miss this summer’s annual meeting! Laurie Leonard (MSW) will talk about pending legislation in the New York State Assembly regarding Dignity in Dying. Ms. Leonard is the Associate Director of End of Life Choices New York. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions of the FCA of CNY board members, chat with other members and enjoy summer-time refreshments. This meeting is open to the public, so please bring friends or relatives who might be interested in the mission of your FCA of CNY.

I would like to support the work and mission of the FCA of CNY. Please find my check enclosed in the amount of \$ _____.

Your name: _____

Your address: _____

May we honor your gift with your name in our next Newsletter? _____

Please use the pre-addressed envelope enclosed in this newsletter to mail your contribution back to us.

May we contact you about serving on the FCA-CNY Board? _____
