



Funeral Consumers Alliance of Central New York, Inc.

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Spring 2021

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Jenifer Breyer

In March 2020 COVID-19 necessitated our quickly pivoting to on-line meetings. FCA of CNY board member Nancy Aureli became our Zoom host for all meetings. Note her list of upcoming events on our website (fcacny.org) under Special Events, and please plan to join us if and when you can. Some of our presentations have been recorded so you can play them back when your schedules permit.

At board meetings we reviewed, revised and agreed to the following as our current Mission Statement: "The Funeral Consumers Alliance of Central New York is a nonprofit organization that educates and advocates in our community about end of life and death choices including expenses."

During discussions, we raised the issue of how best we might provide you with valuable information. Considerable time and energy were spent on our triannual price survey. What emerged is the most detailed price guide of any such guide we have ever seen by any FCA, including our own. Please go to the website to learn from and enjoy the final product.

Since our usual community outreach events like State Senior Fair and Westcott Street Fair were cancelled and Plowshares was virtual, we included our brochures in Nancy Aureli's Senior Fair In A Bag events which got them circulated to several senior centers. In March we offered programs (again via Zoom) on the Health Care Proxy (provided by Nancy Aureli), and an Obituary Writing Workshop featuring Joyce Homan and Jan Lane. In April the MOLST Form was presented by our own Dr. Joel Potash.

Lanny Freshman did a workshop titled Letter to Your Children. Go to the website for details and link to join all such future meetings. We welcome your feedback on our presentations and look forward to your suggestions for future subjects.

We are looking forward to our Annual Meeting, which is scheduled for **Saturday, June 12**. It was our hope we could do it live but, recognizing the continuing threat posed by the coronavirus. So this year's meeting will be delivered via Zoom. **Dr. Gregory Eastwood** is our speaker, and he will be looking the pandemic squarely in the eye with a talk titled "Dying is Different Now." He says, "I will talk about how COVID-19 has affected the end-of-life experience, the allocation of scarce resources, and how we create the narrative of our life. The presentation should take 35 – 40 minutes, leaving some time for dialog."

Attendees to the Annual Meeting need to register and can do so by going to this link: <https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJEgc-6vqzwpHNcrVhLoy5056-uvFcpXIAeG>. The Zoom meeting can only accommodate up to 100 persons which is why registration is essential.

Please be aware the Annual Meeting begins at 2:00 p.m. We are allotting 15 minutes for the business agenda, and Dr. Eastwood's presentation will begin shortly after the meeting is adjourned.

2021 ANNUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM

Use this link to register and attend:

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJEgc-6vqzwpHNcrVhLoy5056-uvFcpXIAeG>

This link is also available on our website: fcacny.org. See page 4 for more details.

The 2020 Price Guide is Available

You can view the current price survey of local funeral homes at our website (fcacny.org) or request a printed copy. The survey lists the costs of basic funeral services based on each establishment's General Price List. You can also see a more detailed breakout of costs by going to the funeral home's website. Not all have those prices on their website, but many do.

Our national FCA is working toward requiring that prices be displayed on each website.

Special thanks to the board members who worked to create this valuable asset:

Cory Kinane, Diane Case, Robert Sarason, Joel Potash, Lanny Freshman, Joyce Homan.

REASONS TO GET YOUR NEWSLETTER VIA EMAIL!

An electronic newsletter, rather than a hard copy? It's a no-brainer! You can easily follow links to related articles. Just click on them. Electronic versions of the newsletter are better for the environment. Email versions of this newsletter save us some money. If you would like to take advantage of this opportunity, please send us an email with your email address.

GOOD NEWS FOR VETERANS BY MICHAEL GOINS

Josh Slocum from Funeral Consumers Alliance recently led a workshop entitled Veterans' Funeral and Burial Benefits (what you get, and what you don't) and I have to say it jogged my memory as to the benefits available to eligible veterans. The key word is "eligible" and if the veteran is dishonorably discharged, these benefits are not available. I kind of doubt that situation will apply to anyone reading this newsletter, enough said. The first step in claiming any benefits is to provide the Veterans Administration a copy of your DD214 (discharge document) which in my case was filed with the local County Clerk when I separated from active duty.

Although there are a number of benefits available, the key takeaway for me is that a veteran is entitled to a plot and burial in a National (emphasis added) veterans' cemetery and a government marker is provided free of charge. If burial happens in a VA cemetery, installation is free. When burial happens outside a VA cemetery, the family must pay for the marker's installation. In addition, you are also entitled to a flag and an honor guard to perform a military funeral.

Please note that benefits may also be available to spouses of veterans, and minor/dependent children.

If you elect to be buried at a National Cemetery, they do not generally bury on weekends and only select former military members may be buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

Another option is to have the cremated remains of veterans, spouses, and dependents be scattered at sea by the Navy or Coast Guard; these sea burials are scheduled at the convenience of the service, and will be done on their schedule, not based on the family's preferences.

The long story short is that in order to determine the specific benefits which are available to you and your spouse, etc., I suggest that you contact the Veterans Administration at www.va.gov/burials-memorials/ or call 800-827-1000 for further information.

In addition, you can also use this link that will take you to a Funeral Consumers Alliance pamphlet on this subject. 2020-12-3-veterans.pdf (funerals.org).

FCA of CNY BOARD

President.....Jenifer Breyer
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Nancy Aureli
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 Robert Sarason
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Lively Lunch Talk Turns Helpful and Memorable

Last March, several board members and I were feting Joyce Homan over lunch at a local restaurant. Jenifer, our president, mentioned a phone call she had received from an elderly woman living alone in a neighboring town. The woman had made funeral arrangements many years before, but had forgotten the name of the funeral home. Since she is now blind, she couldn't easily check her files or look up names in the phone book. Jenifer did some research, identified a likely business, and put them in touch with each other. He had no record of her plans, but they were able to settle on what was to be done.

As the discussion ensued, I began to suspect that I knew this woman, or at least had known her back in the '70s. In fact, we had a number of connections, from working for the same institution to buying a house from her. So I called her up and went out to see her. We talked for a couple of hours. Unfortunately, the world shut down soon after, so I haven't been back, but expect to return as soon as I can.

Susan Rainey

YOU CAN HELP US GROW

Share this newsletter with friends and family. It's a good way for potential members to discover what we are all about. Tell people about our website (fcacny.org) where they can read previous newsletters, study the price survey and discover valuable resources they can read online or download.

We would be happy to send you copies of our brochure that explains the mission of FCA of CNY and contains a simple application form to fill out and send in.

Are your end-of-life preferences up to date? This is a good time to check and make sure. If you would like a new Preferences form, send us an email or letter.

HOSPICE HOSTS CAMP HEALING HEARTS

Camp Healing Hearts is a program for youth provided by The Hospice Grief Center. Camp Healing Hearts provides creative healing activities and an opportunity to connect with other children who have experienced a loss. Campers include children related to Hospice

patients that have died, as well as **any child in our community** that has experienced the death of someone they cared about. Some children have experienced loss related to illness, while other children have experienced traumatic losses. We also understand that as a child develops they may start to process past losses differently, and Camp may be a way to help them with this.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, GO TO THE HOSPICE WEBSITE (hospicecny.org) AND CLICK ON GRIEF CENTER.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

BY LANNY FRESHMAN

End of Life Decisions: Cremation?

Amongst the many decisions at the time of death, or ideally well before, is the question of what to do with your body or the body of your relative. Often, the euphemism, "final disposition of the body" is used.

There are two principal means of final disposition: burial of the deceased or cremation. A third, less frequent but increasingly frequent disposition is donation to science, generally a medical school. A very small number of people use yet other means of disposition including human composting or chemical decomposition.

In 2005 approximately 60% of Americans were buried and 30% cremated. By 2015 these numbers had dramatically changed and according to the National Funeral Directors Association burials had decreased to 42% and cremations increased to 48%. Cremations have risen to 53.5% in 2018.

Many people choose burial or cremation based on their religious association. For Christians burial may be preferred but many denominations have no objection to cremation. In the 1960's the Catholic Church lifted its prohibition against cremation. For those of the Jewish or Muslim faith, cremation remains prohibited and rapid burial is the expectation. Within Judaism as within Christianity there are various denominations that may accept cremation or donation of the body. In Eastern religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism cremation is the rule rather than the exception. These are clearly questions to be discussed with your own spiritual leader, ideally before the time of need.

Major reasons that people choose cremation include desire to use less of our land for cemeteries,

ability to move final remains as families move to new areas , and for many the greatly decreased cost of cremation compared to burial. Even direct burial costs, which do not include cemetery fees, can be several thousand dollars more than direct cremation. In addition cremation does not preclude a service with the ashes present, whereas a service with the body and visitation adds very significant additional costs.

As in all aspects of end-of-life decisions, joint discussion with all involved family members can minimize discord and lead to the most satisfactory ending to a difficult part of life.

It is with great sorrow that we learned of the recent death of Jae Evangelisti. Jae served for more than ten years as an active member of our board. We will have much more to say about this amazing man in the Fall newsletter.

**ZOOM IN TO THE ANNUAL MEETING,
JUNE 12 AT 2:00**

Be sure you have the latest version of the Zoom application on whatever device you will use. Follow this link address to register for the meeting:

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJEgc-6vqzwpHNcrVhLoy5O56-uvFcpXIAeG>

If you don't have an internet connection, call this number and enter the meeting ID.

646 558 8656 US (NY)
Meeting ID: 957 4775 7363

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**THANK YOU FOR YOUR
CONTRIBUTIONS**

We rely on your donations to continue the work of the organization. We thank these members who made contributions since the last newsletter:

- Catherine Bart-Patterson, Johanna Biagiarelli, William Billingham, Mark Briggs, Diane Case, Robert Coye, John Ellis, Jane Feld, Lanny Feshman, Ramish Gaonkar, Peter Garner-Richards, Nan Gartner, Michael Goins, Jane Guiles, Elizabeth Haswell, Joyce Homan, George Kirkpatrick, Ann Lewis, Coy Ludwig, Deborah Mitchell, Leslie Monostory, Franics Morigi, Margaret Muller, Thomas O'Connor, Mildred Owens, Caroline Palmer, Shirly Quinn, Audrey Salzman, Vicky Schipper, Scott Shablak, Anita Slagel, Janet & Warren Solomon, David Tatham, Ann Tussing, George Ward, Jr., Shaila Wood, Richard Weiskopf and Linda DeStefano.

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Your name: _____

Check here if you would like to receive your newsletter by email. Print your email address as clearly as possible: _____

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 preferences and contribution back to us. Contributions to FCA of CNY are not tax deductible.

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