



Winter 2016

# Funeral Consumers Alliance of Central New York, Inc.

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## Looking Ahead for FCA of CNY

Look at the list of board members in this newsletter. You will notice a number of new names on the list. We welcome them and look forward to their new ideas and contributions to this organization. The newbies are: Diane Case, Michael Goins, Mark Monmonier and Robert Sarason.

Each year the costs of communicating with the FCA of CNY membership have risen. Newsletter printing and postage are our biggest budget items twice a year. There are other ways to keep you updated on the work of the organization and developments in end-of-life issues. We are exploring them and ask you to weigh in. (See page four of this newsletter.)

**One option is a website** for FCA of CNY that you could access without charge at any time. The advantages of a website are: relatively low cost, ability to update the site frequently, flexible links to a large variety of articles and informational resources. But we understand that not all members are comfortable using the web. For those members we want to assure that this printed newsletter is not going away. But if you are web savvy and would prefer to use our website and not receive this printed newsletter, that would help reduce some of our printing and mailing costs.

**Another option is email.** This newsletter has always been available through email. If you would be comfortable with this delivery method, please use the enclosed form and pre-addressed envelope to let us know.

## GREEN BURIAL AND THE ANNUAL MEETING

The featured speaker at the FAC of CNY annual meeting, July 20, was Mr. Herbert Engman, the recently appointed president of Greensprings Natural Cemetery Preserve in Ithaca. With the help of an informative Power Point, Mr. Engman spoke of this burial site, located in Newfield, NY which “serves the dual purpose of cemetery and nature preserve.” “Greensprings offers ecologically sound burial options and a natural return to the earth” Engman said. This includes no embalming, and use of biodegradable caskets (no concrete vaults) and materials, such as boxes or shrouds. These options are legal in New York State. He added, “The concept is not new.”

Mr. Engman’s presentation included images of several burials, showing ceremonies particular to the deceased and their families, commemorative plantings of native grasses or trees that help restore the land to its natural state, and natural stone markers installed flush with the earth.

Mr. Engman discussed pricing and the process for setting up the sale of a site. He invited further inquiries as well as a visit to Newfield. He shared the following contact information: Greensprings Natural Cemetery Preserve, PO Box 415, 293 Irish Hill Road, Newfield, NY 14867. Call 607-564-7577. For information on Greensprings, go to their website: [naturalburial.org](http://naturalburial.org)

As Mr. Engman made clear, the green or natural burial movement is not new. You can find resources for arranging a green burial in many parts of the country online. Here are some websites that will be helpful if you are interested in this end-of-life option:

The Natural End Map, <http://www.naturalend.com/where-to-go/>

Green burial sites in the United States, <http://www.us-funerals.com/funeral-articles/directory-of-green-burial-sites-in-the-united-states.html#.WBucuHfMzb4>

## Online Shopping

By Joel Potash

An article in the Business section of the NY Times, on Thursday November 3, 2016, page B4, highlights 4 online shopping sights providing end-of-life planning. “**Willing**” provides state specific estate planning documents online that can be updated as needed for \$30. “**Wiling**” creates about 25,000 wills a month. “**Parting**” is a free web site founded a year ago. It provides an online directory of funeral homes, services and prices searchable by ZIP code. It features a data base of more than 15,000 funeral homes. If a funeral home gets a customer through the listing, “**Parting**” collects a fee of 12-15 percent from the funeral home. “**Grace**” provides guidance on what to do when someone dies, with a week by week checklist. Most of “**Grace**’s” customers call in and are helped by staff members. Customers receive a checklist of tasks to complete before and after a death. So far “**Grace**” is only offered in Southern California. “**Cake**” is a Boston start-up that asks users a series of questions about end-of-life preferences (such as life-support), creates a profile, stores choices in the cloud and shares them with designated others. Users can add notes and instructions to family members and others.

## Urns for Cremains

by Su Ann Farnlacher from the FCA of Columbus, Ohio

Funerary, cinerary, or burial urns have been used for centuries all over the world. A quick tour of the internet shows zillions of sites wanting to sell brass, wood and pewter urns. Prices range from \$39.99 to \$599, even in discount stores. For those favoring “going green”, there are biodegradable containers made of paper, salt, cellulose, even contain dirt and a seed for a tree. According to a Funeral Consumers Alliance newsletter, unscrupulous crematories will stamp words such as “Temporary Container—Not Suitable for Long Term Storage” on the initial plastic or cardboard container. Don’t be fooled; Grandma’s ashes can be placed in her favorite cookie jar if an attractive container is desired. If interment is planned, most cemeteries require urn vaults costing an additional \$59 to \$599.

### 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.

## Everything You Wanted to Know About Burial Urns

Vivian Fiscus from FCA of Central Ohio Newsletter

After you finish with the details of the funeral and the casket you will probably have one step left...the purchase of a burial vault or grave liner. Before you purchase this item make sure your cemetery requires one. State law does not require burial vaults or grave liners but funeral providers may not tell you this. Cemeteries often require them as it prevents the ground from caving in as the casket deteriorates over time. However, given that many of today's caskets are made of plastic or metal, casket deterioration will be minimal. Vaults/liners surround the casket with concrete or another material and come with a warranty of protective strength. There is no need to buy the most expensive vault/liner as they do not prevent the eventual decomposition of human remains. It is illegal for funeral homes to claim they will keep water, dirt or other debris from penetrating the casket. Before purchasing a vault/liner from the funeral home you should check with the cemetery to see if they or a third party dealer will offer you a better price. As usual compare prices from several sources before you select a model.

## From the Alumnae Quarterly of the Alumnae Association of Mount Holyoke By Joan McIver Gibson

These days, with apologies to Tina Turner, I’ve been asking myself, “What’s death got to do with it?” You can’t pick up a newspaper or magazine without encountering advice about preparing for death or documenting your end-of-life wishes. Are we starting at the wrong end of life’s stick? Is our preoccupation with legal documents misplaced...or at best premature?

### Form or Friend?

Since the late 1970s, when living wills appeared on the medical landscape, we’ve been pressured to document our end-of-life wishes. There’s even a federal law, the [Patient Self-Determination Act](#), which requires hospitals to ask us, upon admission, “Do you have an advance directive?” They are referring to a legal document that indicates a person’s

wishes with respect to future health care in the event that they are unable to communicate.

Ask physicians and other health care professionals, "What best helps you when caring for patients who can't speak for themselves, having a completed set of documents on file or having a person on hand who knows the patient's wishes, who has discussed over time what matters to them, and (ideally) who is authorized to make decisions?" Hands down they'll tell you it's the latter. Above all, each of us needs a health care companion throughout our lives.

**The Young People in Our Lives**

Many of us may have completed our advance directives and shared them with family and friends. We might even have had conversations about our later-in-life wishes, though some of our younger family members might not share our enthusiasm for such conversations.

Yet how many of us know the health care wishes of the young people in our lives? Have we asked? My late husband's kidney donor was a seventeen-year-old who had been in a mountain-biking accident. He had checked "organ donor" on his driver's license, but he and his family hadn't ever talked about what that really meant to him.

Throughout our lives, risks and responsibilities around health care change. We should encourage everyone, from mid-adolescence on, to find a health care companion and talk with them about health care values and wishes.

**Talk. Listen. Now.**

What we've learned since those early days of advance directives is this:

1. The need for health care and quality-of-life decisions can and will arise throughout our lives.
2. Most health care decisions are not end-of-life decisions. They are, however, quality-of-life and lifestyle decisions.
3. If we learn how to make good health care decisions early on, we are better prepared for later, serious decisions. The emergency room and intensive care unit are poor places to start. Let's grow a generation of skilled health care decision makers, from mid-adolescence on.
4. The most important planning piece is talking with a health care companion about our health care wishes, throughout our lives, not just as we approach the end. Keep a card in your wallet with your health care companion's contact information. Urge others to do so as well.

# "Thank You" to Our Donors

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

Beverly and George Adams, Judith Antoine, Helen Ashley, Richard Askeland, Jane Begley, Carol Bickart, June R. Bomberger, Mark Briggs, June Capels, June Card, Nicolas Caruso, Diane Case, Geraldine Chapman Aird, Peggy Chestnut, Malcolm Clark, Robert Coye, John Dodge, Mary Lou Dopyera, Francis Durgin, Jean Eschner, Jane Feld, Joseph Fischer, Howard Ford, Bettina Frisse, Richard and Deanna Granville, Richard Guyer, Dorothy Harrold, Elizabeth Ingram, W. H. Irish, Mary Iverson, Richard Kinsey, George Kirkpatrick, Carleton Laidlaw, Frederick Lyman, Richard Manier, Jr., Mark Monmonier, Margaret Muller, Lisa Mundy, Jean Nash, Ramon Nitzberg, Ron Osborn, Vance and Evelyn Osborne, Mildred Owens, Caroline Palmer, Alan Pike, Ruth Pinckney, Joel Potash, Daniel Rabuzzi, Daniel Rakoske, Milton Sack, Robert Sarason, Vicky Schipper, Lorraine Schmidt, Edith Schmitz (in memory of Henry Schmitz), Harry Schwarzlander, Cynthia Shane, Sidney Shiffman, David Stam, Ward Stevens, Jr., David Tatham, Ann Tussing, Joyce Ucci, Susan Vanmaarseveen, George Ward, Jr., Richard Weiskopf/DeStefano, Joan Welch, John Wyman, Raymond Yahnke (in memory of Gavin Yahnke), Robert Zimmer.

<b>FCA of CNY BOARD</b>	
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Treasurer.....	Susan Rainey
Diane Case	Cheryl McLeod
Michael Goins	Mark Monmonier
Josh Goldberg	Joel Potash
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**Our website is now available for you to browse at any time. It contains past and current newsletters, the price survey of central New York funeral homes and easy links to valuable information about end-of-life issues. Type fcacny.org in the address line of any browser.**

# Request to the Membership: Newsletter Delivery

we welcome contributions.

We are taking this space in the newsletter to ask you to help us make some important decisions for the organization.

### E-MAIL

We would like to have your email address so we can periodically send you information about the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Central New York, updates and related issues. We promise not to besiege you with too many emails.

### ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER

An electronic newsletter, rather than a hard copy newsletter, provides the opportunity to read the newsletters at your convenience, provide links to related articles, and are better for the environment.

### TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES

We now have a website: [fcacny.org](http://fcacny.org) This website has the newsletter as well as basic information about our organization, our survey on the various costs associated with different funeral directors, articles related to our basic mission and other related information. **We also have a Facebook page.** You can make a friend request of Funeral Consumers Alliance of Central New York and you will get up-to-date information plus interactive comments about our organization and our postings.

### CONTRIBUTE

If you would like to help cover the costs of printing our newsletter and our start-up costs for our website,

### IS THERE A LAWYER IN THE HOUSE?

The FCA of CNY does not currently have “charity” status. We are not a 501(c3). We would like to apply for this IRS classification so your donations would be tax deductible. The legal requirements to apply for the 501(c3) status are considerable and legal expertise expensive. We’re asking for someone with such legal expertise to volunteer time and services to complete the 501(c3) application process. If you are such a person or know someone who might be interested in this opportunity, please contact us by phone (446-0557) or email ([fcacny@gmail.com](mailto:fcacny@gmail.com)).



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*Your name:* \_\_\_\_\_

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