



ONE FOOT IN...

FUNERAL CONSUMERS ALLIANCE OF HUMBOLDT

SPRING 2012

Finding the “Oh, Wow” in Our Death Experience

ABOUT OUR KEYNOTE SPEAKER AND TOPIC...

“Oh wow. Oh wow. Oh wow.” These were reportedly the last words spoken by Steve Jobs moments before his last breath. Death is one of life’s great mysteries. Anecdotes like Steve’s give us glimmers of hope that there is something beyond and that perhaps it is even something beautiful. It is a journey each of us will make. Sadly, many of us avoid preparing for it. Yet, if we choose to, we can have a say in how we die, where we die, and what happens before and after death. In so choosing, we accept the responsibility of participating fully and consciously in our care and in our deaths.

Jim Lawer is our keynote speaker for the Annual Member Meeting. He will offer some insight on how we might consider preparing for our own journey to discover the “Oh Wow” so that we and our loved ones might feel a little more ready.

Mr. Lawer holds a Masters in Divinity, a Masters in Theater, and is a Certified Teacher for the Cuyamungue Institute in Santa Fe, New Mexico. A former chaplain for the United Church of Christ and for Hospice of Humboldt, he serves as a spiritual consultant for individuals and groups who desire to make transitions in their lives and their communal relations. Pulling from ancient practices of both Shamanic and Druid cultures, he utilizes a workable methodology that facilitates an inner shift that helps individuals and groups experience a return to inner wisdom and guidance. He is devoted to restoring the human capacity for ecstasy by helping people live fully and die consciously.

Come learn from Mr. Lawer’s insights at our Annual Member Meeting on March 24th.

Funeral Consumers Alliance of Humboldt Annual Meeting

Saturday, March 24th, 2012 1:00pm - 3:30pm

Humboldt Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

24 Fellowship Way, Bayside, CA 95524

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Dear FCA of Humboldt Members,

I would like to wish you all a Happy 2012. In the past year we have experienced both accomplishments and struggle. As for accomplishments:

- Senate Bill 658, which will require all California funeral homes that have websites to post a price list of their available services online, has been signed into law by Governor Jerry Brown and goes into effect January 1, 2013.
- Thanks to many of you the fundraising letter to our members was a great success. We donated 10% of the funds received to FCA National and we'll be able to continue to answer the phone 24/7, so that we can be here when you need us.
- In October, two of our Board Members, Nancy Ortiz and Aisha Coriell, participated in the FCA California Annual Meeting to network with other FCA affiliates and share our progress.
- We have a great Web Master and are keeping our website up-to-date. If you have not had a chance to do so, please visit our site at: www.fcahumboldt.org.
- The book Final Rights, co-authored by FCA National Executive Director Josh Slocum and Funeral Ethics Organization Leader Lisa Carlson, is the first book of its kind, shedding light on the modern funeral industry. Read this book to be informed of your rights and avoid being taken advantage of. The book is available for sale on the FCA National website, www.funerals.org and on loan from our library, located at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship.

A couple of struggles we are continuing to work on are:

- The application process for our official 501(c)(3) nonprofit status. This has required some tedious paperwork, documentation, multiple phone calls and much waiting on behalf of our undaunted and patient treasurer, Lionel Ortiz.
- Need for more Board Members... Could it be you? We need people who care about these issues to join our effort. The meetings average 6-8 times a year. We are a warm, friendly group and would love to invite you and your gifts and skills to the table. Areas of expertise that we are seeking, include legal, financial and publicity, as well as member services.

While the Funeral Consumers Alliance advocates for you by informing you of your rights in making end-of-life arrangements and in keeping costs low, I urge you to consider us as a valuable resource in getting your affairs in order while you are still young, in good health and clear mind. This is the time to make decisions in regards to your property, medical directives, the disposition of your body, what you want your loved ones to know, and any legacy you might like to leave behind. We invite you to have a voice in these matters and to spare your loved ones such decisions during their time of grief and loss. We have information and resources to help you preplan. Please take advantage of this, it's one of our most valuable services. Many of these resources will be available at the Annual Member Meeting on March 24th.

We hope you can join us.

Wishing you peace of mind and body,

Denise George, President FCA of Humboldt

MEMBER SERVICES SECRETARY

JAN ROWEN

As your member services secretary I respond to calls from members with questions and inquiries from the community. The latter are often folks who are dealing with a recent or impending death. Some are interested in preplanning for themselves—a great idea, no matter your age. Some are adult children whose elderly parents are sick or under hospice care and they are scurrying around at the last minute trying to get things in order. Sadly, all too frequently, the person who is dying may have made plans, and actually have pre-paid for services, but that information was never disclosed to the next-of-kin and is not discovered until well after the fact. Recently I've had calls from people who, years earlier, had signed up with the Neptune Society, an organization known for cremation services and scattering at sea. Neptune has no contacts here in Humboldt County. I was able to direct the families to a contact which has resulted in a *partial* refund. We say over and over "Preplan, DO NOT Prepay."

Frequently, we think we will die where we have lived for years, but often due to health issues, and wanting to be near family, people do move. You can transfer your FCA membership to your new locale. It is up to you or your family to notify the FCA of your new location.

Cemetery and mortuary agreements are not refundable. One option is to open a trust account at your bank or credit union for death expenses. Be sure and let your family know where it is and what your wishes are. It is very important to update it periodically.

Have that, oftentimes, awkward conversation with your loved ones. You can begin with something straightforward such as:

"Mom, I have no idea what your wishes are in terms of a funeral or burial. Have you made any decisions yet? If I am to be responsible I need to know." This may lead to a discussion in which funding can be addressed as well. The key to a good conversation is to listen respectfully. If you don't succeed the first time, you have planted the seed for future conversations. The tables can be turned when the children of the aging parent are not willing to discuss the death of their parent. This is equally hard as they may push for procedures to keep a parent alive when that may not be the true wish of the elder. Open communication is key when the topic is end-of-life choices.

DO YOU HAVE A POLST FORM ON FILE ?

(Physician Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment)

POLST forms are available from your clinic or physician. They are printed on neon pink paper and state your wishes for care at the end of your life. Generally they are kept in your medical chart with your physician. If you are ill or under hospice care it is a good idea to have one posted in your home. It is also a good idea to have one with you when you travel. They must be reviewed and signed by your physician. For more information go to www.capolst.org.

DON'T DELAY JOIN TODAY

Did you know you can give a Gift Membership Certificate? Call the office for more information. 707-822-8599

FCA OF HUMBOLDT WEBSITE

www.fcahumboldt.org

FREE TO CHOOSE

The national organization "Compassion and Choices" works to promote end-of-life choice in decisions about medical care and treatment. Their "...vision is to live in a society in which all people have freedom in making end of life decisions." Their mission is "...educating people about their choices at the end of life, especially for terminally ill patients and their families."

They have three chapters in California: Northern California, Orange County, and Laguna Woods.

They can be contacted at:

Compassion and Choices
PO Box 101810
Denver CO, 80250-1810
1-800-247-7421

www.compassionandchoices.org.

NEW BLOOD FOR THE BOARD

Do you know of someone, who might not be aware of the benefits of a FCA membership? Would you or they be interested in serving on FCA's volunteer board? At the Annual Meeting there will be handouts describing each individual position on the board. The current board has served many years beyond the term limits. The board is willing to work with any interested person-- an attorney who would be available for advice, a CPA for financial aspects, a "people person" for phone services, maybe someone who has been helped in the past and would like to give back. To share the gift of knowledge with people who are in need and to be of service to them is overwhelmingly satisfying. People are very grateful that FCA of Humboldt is there for them.

DO I NEED TO USE A FUNERAL HOME?

The FCA frequently receives telephone calls inquiring about cremating or burying a loved one without the services of a funeral home. Callers often want to know about the legalities of doing this, and what, if any, permits are needed. According to information provided by the California Department of Consumer Affairs, Cemetery and Funeral Bureau, the law does not prohibit consumers from preparing or transporting a body for disposition themselves. If you, as a consumer, make that choice, you must:

- File a properly completed Certificate of Death, signed by the attending physician or coroner, with the local registrar of births and deaths.
- Obtain a Permit for Disposition from the local registrar of births and death.
- Provide a casket or suitable container.
- Make arrangements directly with the cemetery or crematory.

You will be required to present the Permit for Disposition upon arrival at the cemetery or crematory.

HELP UP STAY AFLOAT

We are forever grateful for the response to our first ever fundraising letter. We have become aware of the importance of asking for continued support. If each member would contribute \$10 to \$25 each year we could stay in the black. Please consider a donation to add to the "coffin" at the Annual Meeting, or, mail your donation to:

FCA of Humboldt

P.O. Box 856

Arcata, CA 95518.

Thank you so, so much for your support.

The FCA of Humboldt Board Members.

Cemeteries in Rural Humboldt

By Aisha Coriell

I recently had a conversation with my mother about her end-of-life wishes. She stated her wish is to be buried on her land out in the mountains. Well, we all know we can't just bury someone on the "back forty," but having this conversation inspired me to learn more about what might be the next best option. While it may not be legal for her to be buried on her property in the mountains, maybe it would be an option to be buried in the small rural cemetery located closer to her home? For example, there is a small rural cemetery on the side of the road on the way out to her property. After contemplating it, I thought of two other small cemeteries close to her home. I wanted to learn more about rural cemeteries. Is there public access to rural cemeteries? Is it possible for new gravesites to be added to rural cemeteries? I did an Internet search, read through the California health and safety codes pertaining to death and cemeteries, and emailed back and forth with the Cemetery and Funeral Bureau of California.

Most rural cemeteries are family cemeteries created years ago. Family cemeteries are located on family-owned land and public access would require explicit permission from the land owner. Many laws and regulations that now exist may not have been in place when most of the family cemeteries started. It is possible that when a family cemetery was created, wooden markers were used to distinguish one gravesite from the next. Over time, wooden marker may have disintegrated. It may be difficult to determine the boundaries between gravesites, leading to the risk of disturbing existing remains.

When looking for information about a rural cemetery in Petrolia, I came across a website that stated the public is permitted to visit the cemetery. It is called the Pioneer Cemetery and the first burial was in 1857. According to the website, there haven't been any new plots available since 1978 but there are potential plans to start a new cemetery so residents of Petrolia can have an option closer to home. Among the many rules and regulations that exist today, one barrier to creating a new family cemetery is that "burial must be in an established cemetery, so you will need to check with the county registrar for local zoning laws to see about establishing a cemetery for home burial." According to a 1939 statute, six or more bodies buried in one place – not the cremated remains of six – constitutes a "cemetery" (Final Rights by Slocum and Carlson, 2011).

Is it possible for new gravesites to be added to existing rural cemeteries? I found that that depends on a number of factors. The sites would need to be well marked so as not to disturb existing remains. According to Ellis M. Kjer from the Cemetery and Funeral Bureau in California, "The County will not give you a permit until you have written permission from the land owner and you can provide such to the Office of Vital Records in Eureka." A Permit for Disposition would have to be obtained and approved by the public health department. In the end, the official whose job is to approve the Permit for Disposition has the final word. In addition, I wonder what would happen to access if the ownership of the land changes hands?

For those who live in rural areas of Humboldt County and wish to be buried, the options appear to be (1) going through the process of obtaining proper documentation and permission to access a site on a family owned cemetery close to home, or (2) purchasing a site at one of the established cemeteries in the more populated areas of Humboldt. A list of these cemeteries and their prices can be found on the FCA of Humboldt website.

Polls Shows: End-of-Life Wishes

RARELY Discussed

The California Health Care Foundation has released a poll showing that most people prefer a natural death, but don't discuss this with their families or put end-of-life care wishes in writing. As reported in The San Francisco Chronicle on February 12, 2012:

80% of respondents said they planned to talk to their doctor about their care in dying, but only **7%** had done so.

60% said it was "extremely important" to make sure their families weren't burdened by tough decisions about their care, but **56%** had not expressed their wishes to the person who would be making those decisions.

70% said they preferred to die at home, but just **32%** of those people had made those arrangements.

Thank You for You Generous Support!!

In 2011, the FCA Board of Directors made the decision to send out a letter for the purpose of seeking financial donations. The response we received was overwhelmingly positive and the generosity of those who were able to support this effort was truly beyond any of our expectations. We, the FCA Board of Directors, would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of our members for their donations.

Clarity

"If you live each day as if it was the last, someday you'll most certainly be right."

"If today were the last day of my life, would I want to do what I am about to do today?"

"Remembering that I'll be dead soon is the most important tool I've every encountered to help me make the big choices in life. Because almost everything-all external expectations, all pride, all fear of embarrassment or failure-these things just fall away in the face of death, leaving only what is truly important."

From the 2005 Commencement Address at Stanford University given by Steve Jobs who died on October 5th, 2011 after a seven year battle with cancer.

Funeral Consumers Alliance of Humboldt

P.O. Box 856 Arcata, CA 95518 • 707-822-8599 • fcahumboldt.org

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(707)822-8599 fcahumboldt.org

**Consumer
advocacy for
dignified and
economic
end-of-life
choices.**



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Arcata, CA 95518

707-822-8599

www.fcahumboldt.org

FCA of California

P.O. Box 1945

Turlock, CA 95382

650-321-6584

www.fca-calif.org

FCA National

33 Patchen Rd.

So. Burlington, VT 05403

802-865-8300

www.funerals.org

Pierce Mortuary

707 H Street

Eureka, CA 95501

707-442-3751

www.piercemortuarychapel.com

Paul's Chapel

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