



Funeral Consumers: Re-Organizing & Expanding To Pursue Our Vision

For the two Funeral Consumers organizations, 2013 has been an eventful year. In this newsletter, we'll share our latest news and benefits, report on last year's member survey, ask for donations to expand our activities, and describe how you can become involved. Below are the topics on which we would like to seek your opinion and ask for your help. More information on many of these topics is on our web sites, fca-oregon.org and fcef-oregon.org.

The 2013 Price Survey Is Underway

As part of our mission to serve the public, FCEF of Oregon surveys providers of funeral services, asking about prices, "green" burials and support for home funerals. A number of volunteers have e-mailed the providers in Oregon, downloaded all the information that's available online, and personally walked into funeral homes to ask for General Price Lists (GPLs) and casket price lists. The Portland section of the survey is now complete, and has been posted on the FCEF web site.

As in previous years, the results of the survey will be provided online as a service to the public. New Board member Steve McCarthy, who has extensive experience with the Arizona FC affiliate, is managing the survey. We are still working to gather GPLs from a number of towns; if you would be willing to ask for a GPL in your area, send an e-mail to fceforegon@gmail.com. We may also reach out to you directly, but of course participation is voluntary.

Feedback from Our Members

Thanks to the 243 of you who responded to the member survey in last year's newsletter. Of those responding, 88% intend to use an FCAO contract mortuary (80% for cremation, 8% for burial). But less than half had completed the Personal Instruction Form (PIF) that allows them to quickly and easily access their benefits.

Our Common Vision: Funeral consumers in Oregon know their rights and choices, achieve their goals for final arrangements, and access fair and reasonable prices for all mortuary services.

The mission of FCEF is to inform and protect Oregon funeral consumers through education, monitoring legislation and industry, and conducting state-wide price surveys. We are affiliated with the nationwide Funeral Consumers Alliance (funerals.org).

The mission of FCAO is to unite funeral consumers to obtain fair, reasonable and predictable costs for end-of-life final arrangements through negotiated contracts, and to enable members to pre-plan and record preferences, to minimize stress and turmoil for those left behind.

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Funeral Consumers Education Foundation | fcef-oregon.org | fceforegon@gmail.com

Contract Mortuaries and Personal Instruction Forms

As we promised last year, FCAO has been working even more closely with our contract mortuaries, and seeking contract mortuaries for the parts of Oregon where those relationships are not currently available. Our web site shows this information on an interactive map. In response to the survey findings, this year Sandy Lofy organized a trial of a seminar to help members fill out their Personal Instruction Forms. The first meeting was in Portland, hosted by River View, and we plan to expand this program state-wide.

Speakers' Bureau

As we promised last year, FCEF has established guidelines for leaders of our educational seminars, spearheaded by past Board member Johnette Orpinela and new Board member and gerontologist Susan Paulson.

Multiple programs have been presented in Portland, by FCEF volunteers speaking on behalf of the organization working through churches and community groups, and we now have an experienced FC speaker in Medford, Dolores Evers.

By calling attention to their events on our website, we are also networking with other organizations working on end-of-life issues, including:

www.deathcafe.com (Facebook: PDXDeathCafe)

www.theconversationproject.org

Nancy Ward of www.sacredendings.com

Let's Meet In Person

Both the FCAO PIF planning meeting and the FCAO end-of-life educational events have demonstrated the value of meeting each other in person to discuss how preparing for our deaths can remove burdens from our loved ones and allow them to concentrate on what's most important to them.

As Gail Rubin reminds us, "Talking about sex won't make you pregnant, and talking about funerals won't make you dead." If you would like to organize an FC discussion meeting in your local neighborhood or retirement home, contact us and we will be happy to start the process of setting up a meeting.

New Staff Member, New Office Address

Our beloved administrator, Sandy Lofy, retired this summer. We are grateful to Sandy for five years of passionate advocacy for members and the general public! Our interim Executive Secretary, charged with supporting both members and volunteers, is Lee Melchior, and you can reach her using the contact information on the front page.

Lee moved to Oregon last year from Pennsylvania. She has worked with people living and dying with cancer and other devastating illnesses for many years as an occupational therapist and support group leader. She recently earned an additional degree in Women's Spirituality with an emphasis on End of Life issues. She reports she loves the landscapes of Oregon and has already visited many parts of her new home state.

Using Online Resources More Effectively

Many of you may have relationships with banks that are constantly nagging you to "go paperless." FCAO/FCEF are also joining the move to digital communications, to save paper and reduce costs. There are many aspects to this.

First, many thanks to our new Board member and webmaster, John Staehli, for many improvements to our websites. Announcements from partner organizations, assistance for readers needing larger font sizes, and improved maps and charts are some of the many improvements. You can now download educational resources and membership forms, make donations and will soon be able to fill out your membership forms and apply online.

Second, a senior FileMaker programmer, David Chilstrom, has helped make our member database more accurate and comprehensive. Over the next few years we plan to check with you to make sure we have e-mail addresses for as many members (including optionally multiple addresses per family, so everyone stays in the loop) as possible, and that everyone who would like to fill out a PIF has had a chance to do so.

If you'd like to check NOW that your records are correct, or request a new PIF, contact Lee by telephone at 503-647-5590 or 888-475-5520, or email her at fcaoregon@gmail.com

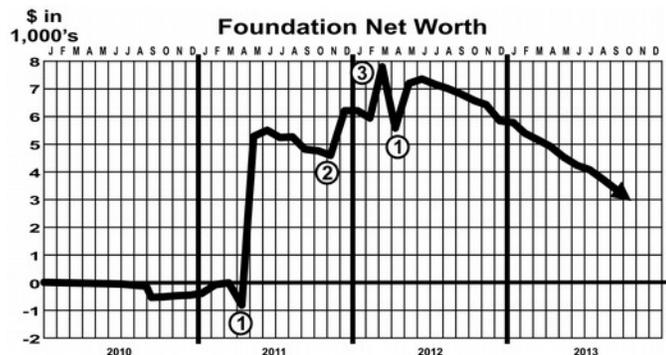
Update From The Board

Early in 2013 the Board of Trustees worked with a facilitator to plan the future of the organizations. After thoughtful deliberation, the decision was made to wind up operations, most notably because of the challenge of supporting twelve thousand active members using antiquated systems.

When this decision was made public, additional volunteers offered to join the Board, to make the changes necessary to support members and the public in the digital age. Some Trustees whose terms were ending joined a newly created Advisory Board, so they could continue to offer their expertise. We welcome additional volunteers interested in serving on either Board or participating in the activities described in this newsletter. During this organizational re-launch, we decided to omit the public Annual Meeting in 2013, but to hold the Annual Meeting as usual again in 2014.

You Make Our Work Possible

The Foundations work is supported by your contributions and the work of our volunteers:



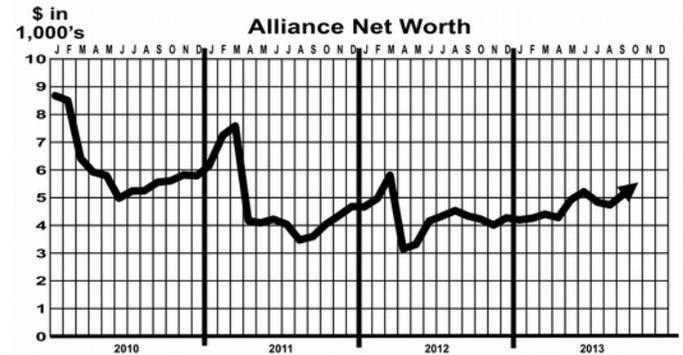
1. Appeals in our annual newsletters produced donations and increased Net Worth in 2011 and 2012.
2. Responses to an appeal letter in November 2011 increased Net Worth by more than \$1,000 in the following month.
3. A member made a \$2,000 memorial donation in March, 2012.

We are grateful for your strong support in the past and hope you will use this opportunity to use the "Donate" button on the web site to support us again this year with a **tax deductible** donation.

Funds received will be used to continue the services described in these pages, including the expansion of our educational efforts with a free monthly e-newsletter. Thank you in advance for continuing to make this work possible!

In contrast, the Alliance relies on membership fees and record fees from mortuaries to cover the costs

of services to members. Net worth builds month by month throughout the year and plunges annually when cash is spent for newsletter printing and mailing.



Treasurer's Reports are online at:
[Treasurers FCAO Report.pdf](#)
[Treasurers FCEF Report.pdf](#)

Timely Topics

Beginning in 2014 we will be sending a monthly, one-page informational email to all of you who have provided an email address. (You may un-subscribe at any time.) Topics will include:

- options beyond traditional burial in a casket in a cemetery, or cremation an placement in an urn
- reducing the costs of final disposition
- prepaid or not: what are your options?
- obtaining a speaker from Funeral Consumers for your area
- topics suggested by members

The first newsletter topic will be, "What is Funeral Consumers' relationship to the mortuary?" To receive Timely Topics, please be sure we have your preferred email address. If there is any chance that your contact information may not be current, please use the telephone, email, or web sites to contact our office.

The Talk

Have you had the "talk" with your family? This is the talk in which YOU tell them what you would prefer to happen at the end of your life, and in which THEY tell you what would be most meaningful to them to honor your life and passing. Its a good time to ask them for the same information and encourage thoughts regarding their own end of life planning and arrangements.

This is a rich topic, and not as difficult to discuss as you might imagine. Funeral Consumers can help you get started with a variety of insightful brochures and resources. Just ask!

Opportunities for Volunteers

In addition to your financial donations, we welcome all of you who would like to become more involved. Upcoming volunteer opportunities include:

- Visit a funeral home in your area and ask for the GPL and a casket price list
- Organize or host a talk about end of life issues in your neighborhood or community; speakers will be provided
- Become trained as a speaker yourself, and share funeral consumers' resources with others
- Write a short article for our monthly e-newsletter

Find us on the web:

Funeral Consumers Alliance of Oregon
fca-oregon.org
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Keep It On Ice

Did you know? The freezer compartment of your refrigerator makes a good "safe" for important documents. Funeral Consumers recommends that you place each resident's end-of-life documents in a sealed zip-lock® bag. These may include contracts you may have with a mortuary, proof of military services (if you plan to take advantage of those burial options), an advance directive, and any other instructions you may wish to be read after your death.

The contents of freezers tend to survive natural disasters and you can access a freezer more quickly than a safe deposit box. Make sure that your loved ones know where to look for your information! ("Under the vanilla ice cream" is easy to remember.) Some members place a copy under a magnet on the front of the refrigerator as well.