

Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Virginia Blue Ridge

Annual Meeting

The Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Virginia Blue Ridge (FCAVBR) Annual Meeting meeting will be held by ZOOM on Tuesday, September 20, 2022 at 7:15 pm. All FCAVBR members and friends are invited.

The meeting will start with a presentation by **Dr. Kami Fletcher** on the Mourning and Funeral Practices of Black Americans.

After the presentation, we will elect three persons for positions on the FCAVBR Board of Directors. Current FCAVBR members may make nominations from the floor. If you want to nominate someone to the three year term, be sure to obtain their agreement before the meeting.

If you wish to attend the Zoom meeting, please send an email to fcavbr@gmail.com requesting the ZOOM access codes. An email response will be sent with the link for the meeting. The link will be active beginning at 6:45pm to make room for troubleshooting. If you have trouble connecting, contact Phil Olson at prolson@vt.edu.



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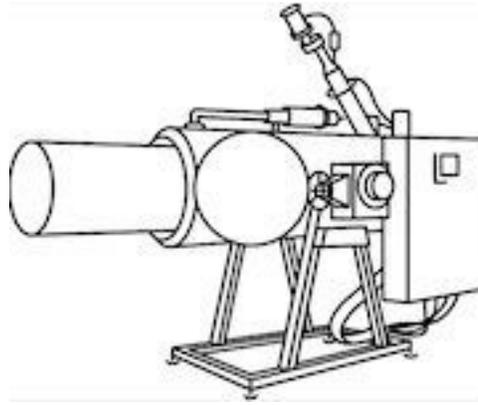
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Did you Know?

Natural Organic Reduction is now legal in three US States (Washington, Oregon, and Colorado). Natural Organic Reduction involves the composting of human remains in a mixture of straw, alfalfa, and wood chips.

It takes between six months and one year for a body to be completely composted into soil.

Lend a Hand

The FCAVBR is always looking for new volunteers and board members.

If you would like to help us advocate for funeral consumers in the NRV, please let us know!

fcavbr@gmail.com

Virginia To Consider Legalizing Alkaline Hydrolysis

A lot can change in ten years. In 2012, Virginia Delegate Brenda Pogge proposed legislation that would have made it illegal for funeral directors in the Commonwealth to offer alkaline hydrolysis to their customers. At the time, less than ten US States had legalized alkaline hydrolysis, a funereal disposition process that dissolves human remains in a solution of hot water and strong alkali (potassium hydroxide or sodium hydroxide), leaving behind a liquid effluent, which can be disposed of through the municipal sewer system, and bone matter that can be processed and returned to the decedent's next of kin, just like cremated remains.

Today, alkaline hydrolysis (sometimes called "Resomation," "Aquamation," or "water cremation") is legal and available to funeral consumers in fifteen US States. And during this year's session the Commonwealth passed legislation (sponsored by Senator Joseph Morrissey) that directs the Virginia Board of Funeral Directors and Embalmers "to convene a work group to study how to legalize and regulate the process of alkaline hydrolysis in the Commonwealth" (SB 129). The board's report is due by November 1, 2022.

Supporters of alkaline hydrolysis point out that the process uses much less energy and produces much less pollution than flame cremation.

In Memoriam

Recently, the FCAVBR has lost two founding members: **Isabel Berney** and **Harriet Cooper**.



On November 16, 2021, **Isabel Berney** died at home, in the presence of her daughters.

This image is the lead for a [Roanoke Times article](#) about how Isabel and others brought the concept of the *Death Café* to the New River Valley.

[Here is a link to her obituary](#)



Harriett Cooper died on April 18, 2022. Born in Bronx, NY on August 7, 1927, she was the oldest of three children. She earned her PhD in animal behavior from Hunter College and searched for a cure for epilepsy.

The FCAVBR will always be indebted to Harriet for the service she provided. She joined the board in 2005, helping to complete the administrative process to obtain our Federal status as a 501(c)(3) organization. Over the years, Harriet served the board in many ways. She was President in 2011.

As Secretary, Harriet kept us organized and on track at meetings. Clarity and efficiency were hallmarks of her service. “No meeting should last more than an hour” was Harriet’s mantra and with her help, we usually managed to meet that goal. Skilled with words, Harriett created some of the information brochures on the FCAVBR website.

Life of a Casket

On October 2021, FCAVBR Vice President Phil Olson led a conversation about green burial practices at an event sponsored by Virginia Tech's West Ambler Johnson Residential College. During the conversation, students assembled a simple, home-made, pine casket using plans found on the internet, and wood purchased at Lowes.



In early 2022, the casket was Displayed at the Blacksburg Public Library, with a beautiful lay-in of LIVE plants and mosses, as well as pine cones, antlers, colorful leaves, and a turtle shell. The display was a collaboration between Blue Ridge Green Burial (visit blueridgegreenburial.org) and the FCAVBR. Linda Haas of Blue Ridge Green Burial (pictured below with the casket) designed and installed the lay-in display. The casket remained in the library for one month, at which point it became very welcoming to a colony of ants. While on display, library visitors were invited to share thoughts about death by writing comments on the lid of the casket. By the time the casket was removed, it was COVERED with comments about death.

While the casket was on display, the Blacksburg Library hosted a conversation about green death care practices. During the event, students who built the casket shared their thoughts about what they learned when building the casket and talking about green death care. Representatives from both the FCAVBR and Blue Ridge Green Burial were on hand to talk about their organizations, and how we share information about green burial and other environmentally conscientious death care practices.



Upon leaving the library, the casket began a new life as a book shelf in Virginia Tech's Department of Science, Technology, and Society.

Continued on next page.



The ongoing and evolving life of this casket is meant to remind us of how connected life and death always are. Death is a part of our lives. And our understanding of death shapes how we think about ourselves, our relationships with the living, and our relationships with the environments in and through which we live. What might be the next steps in the continuing life of this casket? Let us know by contacting us at fcavbr@gmail.com



We thank the following donors for their support!

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Donald Wilson and finally Alison Wilson **in memory of Isabel Berney**

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Funeral Consumers Alliance of
the Virginia Blue Ridge

PO Box 10082
Blacksburg, VA 24062
Phone: 540-953-5589

E-mail: fcavbr@gmail.com

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