

Spring 2019

Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Virginia Blue Ridge



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Find out more

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Cemetery survey updated online

Our biennial cemetery survey will be posted on April 1 on the fcavbr website at <https://www.fcavbr.org/surveys>. It is arranged by region and then alphabetically. It is in a downloadable PDF file. If you request one, a hard copy will be mailed to you.

We have complete information from our service area which is the Roanoke and New River valleys, and we have information from other parts of Virginia. For the first time we have a significant amount of information for Richmond and Charlottesville because of the work of dedicated volunteers who are members in those areas. Another volunteer has collected information from the far southwest portion of the state. If you see an area that is not covered and you are willing to help us collect price lists, let us know.

We survey only public cemeteries. Virginia has many private cemeteries, family cemeteries, and church cemeteries, but they are not regulated by the state or generally open to the public. Public cemeteries are required to have a general price list and to share those prices with anyone who requests that information. We are heartened to see that some cemeteries are posting their prices online. Price is a consideration for most consumers and that is a feature we applaud. If you see **YES**

See **Cemeteries, 2**

Board of Directors opportunity

Would you or someone you know like to join our Board which meets monthly to do the day-to-day work of FCAVBR? Our meetings last one hour and this is an opportunity to serve as well as learn. Our meetings are always open.

We do not make decisions for others or have an agenda other than keeping consumers informed and providing our information at no cost. If you have a name to suggest to our nominating committee, please call 540-953-5589 or send an email to fcavbr@gmail.com.

Consider the ecological impact



Ecological impact is a consideration for many.

A member in Floyd suggested we explore the ecological impact of burial versus cremation. The environmental impact of death is a growing concern for funeral consumers. Most environmentalists come down on the side of burial, if it is green burial with a biodegradable container or wrapping which allows for natural decomposition.

Cremation requires a lot of energy, 285 kilowatt hours of gas and 15 kilowatt hours of electricity, about the same amount that an average person uses in a month. Cremation, while far from perfect, remains a relatively inexpensive and low-impact form of disposition, especially compared to traditional burial in a conventional cemetery. The

common burial practice in the United States each year uses 827,060 gallons of embalming fluid, 30-plus million board feet of hardwoods (much tropical forest, destroying 4,000,000 acres; caskets), 115 tons of steel (caskets), 2,700 tons of copper and bronze (caskets), 2 billion tons of reinforced concrete (vaults), and 14,000 tons of steel (vaults). Cemeteries also use water and fertilizer to maintain the lawns.

Alkaline hydrolysis, now legal in 16 states, uses 1/8 the energy of cremation, and provides a 75% reduction of carbon footprint. It is not yet available in Virginia, but it is gaining in popularity elsewhere.

Cemeteries, From 1

next to the cemetery name, hover over it to get to the URL and the price list online. Prices change with no notice to us, so it is important to verify the price, perhaps visit the cemetery, and carefully read the contract before making a purchase. Cemetery lots are very difficult to resell and many cemeteries have restrictions about reselling.

Remember that Americans move, travel, or have life changes that may not be in line with purchases made before a need arises. It is often better to study current prices and then set aside money for when it is needed. Then, there is no problem with being stuck with a purchase that is no longer suitable.

Generous support continues

Thank you for responding to our once-a-year request. This organization depends on the generosity of our members. Perhaps we have not made it clear that we levy no yearly dues. You really are a member for life. We leave it to you to remember us when you receive our letter. We have no paid personnel. Our primary expenses are telephone, P.O. box, postage, and printed materials. Thank you to everyone who donated to our cause. It is through you that we can continue our work.



Although some donors wish to remain anonymous, these folks agreed to be thanked publicly:

Anonymous **in memory of Rhoda Lau**
Adrienne Berney **in honor of Isabel Berney**
Isabel Berney **in honor of Yvonne Olson**
Richard Bauman **in memory of Peg Bauman**
Jim Bier **in memory of Jerryanne Bier**
Susan & Bill Baker
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M. K. Hill
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Daniel & KellyAnne Kitchin **in memory of Leah Hoffman**
Linda Lancaster
Jim & Bobbie Littlefield

*Some donors
agree to be listed,
others prefer to
remain anonymous*

Continued on next page

Richard & Cynthia Luke
Marie Magon in **memory of mother Louise Magon & brother Jean Magon**
Paula Markham
Molly McClintock & Irene Peterson
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Wava Osborne **in memory of Dorothy Osborne**
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Interesting findings from funeral directors

According to the National Funeral Directors Association's (NFDA) Consumer Awareness and Preferences Study, 62.5 percent of consumers felt it was very important to communicate their funeral plans and wishes to family members prior to their own death, yet only 21.4 percent had done so. Only 18.9 percent of consumers visited or called more than one funeral home, to compare prices and services. Our surveys help make comparing prices and services easier.

The study also found that the religious component of funerals has dropped from 49.5 percent in 2012 to 39.5 percent in 2017.

Space saving for burials

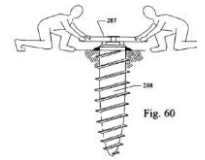
The first vertical ground burial cemetery opened in western Victoria, Australia nine years ago. “Upright Burials” is also a green cemetery created with the idea of a minimal environmental impact.

Australia requires that almost a meter of soil cover the grave, so this means that standing burial requires a much deeper grave. Bodies are buried in biodegradable shrouds made from corn straw. They are placed facing east, the rising sun.

This type of burial is not to be confused with the towers or terraces in congested urban areas, also often referred to as vertical burial. In places

such as Taiwan, India, Israel, and Brazil, cemeteries resembling skyscrapers are found. The highest is in Santos Brazil, a 32-storey tower. Each floor houses 150 tombs. According to the Population Reference Bureau, there are approximately 101 billion dead people on earth, With the dead far outnumbering the living, it’s not surprising that space at cemeteries has become premium.

Another idea to save space is the screw-in coffin. It has an additional advantage of not having to have heavy equipment to lower the bodies into the ground. The screw-in coffin can be used for vertical burial or edgewise diagonally. It comes with a lid with a religion-appropriate top.



Screw-in casket is one answer.

What funeral directors read

The *Funeral One* blog offers this advice on how to make cremations more profitable:

- Eliminate direct cremations by creating “service packages” that include things like tribute videos, web casting and a private ceremony for the loved one.
- Stop offering temporary urns.

This advice seems to ignore the fact that offering a Direct Cremation by itself on the General Price List is required by the Federal Trade Commission’s Funeral Rule. This rule has the force of law.

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Death Café – April 7



Our next Death Café is 3:00 PM at the Christiansburg Recreation Center, Senior Lounge. The Rec center is located at 1600 North Franklin Street in Christiansburg.

Death Café is a global movement that brings people together for conversations about death. It is free with no political or religious agenda. Coffee, tea, sympathy, and goodies provided