

# Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Virginia Blue Ridge

## FCAVBR Annual Meeting

The meeting was held on Zoom on September 20, 2022.

The meeting started with a presentation by **Dr. Kami Fletcher**, Professor of History at Albright College, Reading, Pennsylvania, who spoke on *The Mourning and Funeral Practices of Black Americans*. An interesting topic of the address was the use of T-shirts as “walking memorials” of the departed. These can be personal, or political, or both.

Dr. Fletcher also showed slides of dancing pallbearers in Ghana and other unusual funeral practices.

After a question-and-answer period following the presentation, FCAVBR President Sandy Schlaudecker gave a short summary of recent service and activities. Excerpts from her talk are given on the next page.

Three board members were elected for the 2025 term, and after the general meeting, board members elected officers for the coming year. The side-bar shows both Officers and Board members.



### Board of Trustees

#### 2025 Term

Jo Burroughs  
Cynthia Luke  
Inga Solberg

#### 2024 Term

Linda Plaut  
Todd Solberg  
Phil Olson

#### 2023 Term

Ben Crawford  
Darrell Clowes  
Dianne Rencsok

### Officers

President:  
Dianne Rencsok  
Vice President:  
Phil Olson  
Secretary:  
Linda Plaut  
Treasurer:  
Inga Solberg

## FCAVBR Service and Activities by Sandy Schlaudecker

This is our first annual meeting without our friend and co-founder, Isabel Berney, who died last November. She was in horrible pain due to cancer and chose to die under her terms. We miss her terribly. She was the volunteer administrator for the *Funeral Consumer's Alliance of the Virginia Blue Ridge*, but truly ran our organization and kept us "honest".

The past couple years have been different for our FCA. Most fairs in which we participated were via Zoom, though that is changing. We were able to staff an information table at the AARP Health Fair this year, and we look forward to future in-person opportunities.

We have assisted concerned people who have emailed, written, or called us. One gentleman from the Norfolk area found our website and called asking for help getting a death certificate from the funeral home that took care of his deceased mother. We were successful in attaining the certificate for him. Another woman needed help with pre-planning, something we recommend doing, though other than in rare cases, we recommend against paying the funeral home in advance of need. We were also able to remind callers of the US government's payments for COVID-19 funerals.

We completed our bi-annual [Funeral Home survey](#). We sent out around 100 requests for general price lists and after a little prodding got all but 18 back. We called those establishments and received 17. One complaint was filed with the state for their noncompliance.

Volunteers are needed to help monitor the Virginia Legislature. Many bills are proposed over the short period of time the Virginia legislature is in session. The website [<richmondsunlight.com>](http://richmondsunlight.com) provides a way to view bills sorted by subject. Members of the FCAVBR have used this website to identify bills containing such terms as *funerals* or *cemeteries*. The bills, once identified, can be found with a few clicks on your mouse. This work has resulted in our writing letters to committees or congress people, voicing our approval or disapproval of proposed bills and why. We provided comment to the recent committee review of *Alkaline Hydrolysis* (AH) and have an expectation that it will become legal in Virginia. AH is sometimes called "water cremation" It is better for the environment than regular cremation, and FCA has promoted its becoming legal.

As you know we are an all-volunteer organization. There are numerous other tasks that need to be done, including short term — perhaps only once a year — tasks. We would love to have you volunteer for one of these. Please let us know if you have some free time and would like to help — perhaps via an email message to [<fcavbr@gmail.com>](mailto:fcavbr@gmail.com) with the subject header : "I want to help".

## Thank you, Sandy!

Sandy Schlaudecker has stepped down after leading FCAVBR since 2014.

In addition to wielding the gavel, Sandy co-taught classes with Isabel Berney for the Lifelong Learning Institute. Called “Getting Your Ducks in a Row”, these classes encouraged students to make things easier for their descendants by planning their own funerals, writing their own obituaries, and making their last wishes known. She spent many hours creating the Funeral Home and Cemetery surveys, which are among our most valuable resources.

Sandy represented FCAVBR at many health fairs and other public events, and she answered questions via telephone from people around the state. She wrote fundraising letters and thanked donors, and she checked the FCAVBR mailbox frequently. She also attended national conventions, collected information on new developments in death care, and participated in many “Death Cafes”, teaching others to talk more openly about death.

Sandy may be moving to join family in another state as soon as this summer. We’ll miss her greatly but wish her a very happy next chapter.

## FTC Seeks to Improve Access to Funeral Service Prices Online

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is exploring possible steps to strengthen and modernize the Funeral Rule, which requires funeral providers to give in-person visitors price information to make informed decisions. The FTC found that fewer than 40 percent of the funeral provider websites the agency reviewed provide any prices online.

The Funeral Rule requires funeral providers to furnish consumers with itemized price information. But, because the rule was first issued in the 1980s, it does not require them to provide price information online and via other electronic means like email or text messages.

On February 14, 2020, the Commission initiated a routine review of the rule, which received 785 comments. Several commenters asked the Commission to require that funeral providers make price information available on their websites and via other electronic means.

After carefully reviewing all the comments received, the staff report, and the FTC’s enforcement and outreach efforts in the area, the Commission has decided to retain the Funeral Rule and issue an [Advance Notice of Proposed Rule](#) — making concerning potential amendments to the rule, including whether and how funeral providers should be required to display or distribute their price information online and through electronic means.

*Continued on the next page.*

Information about how to submit comments on the FTC's Advance Notice of Proposed Rule-making is included in the Federal Register notice. **The deadline for submitting comments is January 3, 2023.** Submitted comments will be posted to Regulations.gov.

Philip Olson  
[full press release](#) (October 20, 2022)

## What To Do When a Loved One Dies

- Immediately after a death, you need to get a “legal pronouncement of death”— a *Death Certificate*. A hospice nurse can provide this, or, if the death occurred at a hospital, they will take care of this. Without a declaration of death, you cannot proceed with a funeral or handling all the legal documents needed, such as insurance claims.
- You should also notify family and friends of the death. An address book can be a big asset as you may not know of all your loved one’s contacts’ information.
- Hopefully you know your loved one’s funeral wishes, whether they have pre-paid at a local funeral home or whether there is a “payable on death” bank account and who has access to those funds to pay for the funeral. Unfortunately, we have heard of a case where a funeral was prepaid for by the decedent, but the family didn’t know that and paid again, and then had difficulty getting funds returned!
- Newspapers are happy to assist with obituary writing, but you must have basic information.
- Make sure your loved one’s home is secure during the funeral. Thieves love knowing when everyone will be at the visitation/funeral, knowing the house will be unattended. Consider having a house-sitter.
- AARP recommends getting help from professional advisors, such as a lawyer or a CPA. Having family members assist can be a blessing — or a curse.
- The more you can do in advance, the better you will be ready for the many things that come with a death. More information can be found on our website: [fcavbr.org](http://fcavbr.org).

Sandy Schlaudecker



**Saturday, Dec. 10**

**10 AM, Radford, VA**



# DEATH CAFE

*Talking about death won't kill you!*

December 10, 2022  
10:00 AM - Noon

Radford  
Public Library  
30 W Main Street  
Radford, VA

For more Information:  
Find us on Facebook and  
visit our website

[www.fcavbr.org](http://www.fcavbr.org)

540-953-5589

## What?

*Death Café*\* is a global movement that brings people together for lively conversations about death over coffee and tea. Join us for a group-directed and candid discussion on issues

It is a free, all volunteer event, with no political or religious agenda.

## Why?

We don't want to talk about it even though we know everything dies. Together we can ease our fears and breathe life into our conversations about death.

## Who?

Everyone is welcome!  
The conversation is free; coffee, tea, sympathy, and goodies provided.

\*There are more than 5,734 *Death Café* gatherings in more than 52 countries ([www.deathcafe.com](http://www.deathcafe.com)). *Death Café* is a discussion group rather than a grief support or counseling session.

## Kroger Community Awards & Amazon Smile

Funeral Consumers Alliance of  
the Virginia Blue Ridge

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

E-mail: [fcavbr@gmail.com](mailto:fcavbr@gmail.com)

[www.fcavbr.org](http://www.fcavbr.org)

Affiliated with Funeral Consumers  
Alliance  
[www.funerals.org](http://www.funerals.org)

If you shop at **Kroger**, consider signing up through *Kroger Community Awards* to give a percentage of your bill as a donation to FCAVBR.

Go online to <https://www.kroger.com>. Just log in to your Kroger account, or create an account. When asked to select the organization to receive your rewards, enter **TK761**, or type in our full name.

There is a similar procedure you can use if you have an **Amazon** account. In your browser, type [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com). Sign in to your Amazon account, and select a charity. If you type in *Funeral Consumers Alliance*, several affiliates come up. Scroll down to select *Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Virginia Blue Ridge*. Then use [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) to sign in to Amazon every time you shop.

