

Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Virginia Blue Ridge

Annual meeting & program via Zoom invitation—Tuesday, September 22, 7:15 PM

Every year we hold our annual meeting where we elect new officers and have a guest speaker. Those speakers have covered topics such as body donation, hospice care, and home funerals. This year, we have decided to hold our meeting via Zoom. For those who are not familiar with Zoom, you are invited via your email and once you have downloaded the Zoom app, you can click on the link and join the group. It is a bit intimidating the first time, but the more you use it, the more comfortable you become. You can join with video and audio, or just audio. If you join with video, others can see you and you can see them.

We have decided that important information needs to be given to those in need of funerals during this pandemic. For example, is Covid-19 spreadable from a deceased person (no), how can I have a funeral when no more than a few are permitted to be together? Should masks be worn? (yes, but not to protect you from the deceased, but from each other.)

If you would like to join our Zoom meeting, please send your email address to: fcavbr@gmail.com. You will receive instructions the day before the meeting on how to join it. We hope you will consider this our way of helping our members during this difficult time. If you have friends or relatives who are also looking for this information, please have them send their email. The more we can reach at this challenging time, the better. There is NO CHARGE for this meeting. We don't share your email with anyone else. We have tried to reduce our carbon footprint by emailing our newsletter which we send 3-4 times a year, but we know many prefer a hard copy which we will continue to send unless you opt for the email version. Just let us know if you would like the newsletter sent by email.



Inside this issue

Legislation enacted	2
Death industry trends	3
Board members and officers	3
Kroger & Amazon rewards	4

Special points of interest

- Nominating committee presents slate.
- Cremation rates continue to rise.

Elections to the Board of Directors at the Annual Meeting

The nominating committee, chaired by member Franklyn Moreno and including member Crosby Houston and board representative Sandy Schlaudecker, presents this slate for the 2023 term:

Leanne Mitchell

Helen Renqvist

Sandy Schlaudecker

Nominations “from the floor” are accepted at the annual meeting via Zoom. Please be sure the nominee agrees to the action.

Legislation enacted in 2020

Each year we monitor the legislature to be sure that bills introduced are in the consumers’ interest. This year we followed five bills and were pleased with the outcome.

As of July 1, here are changes to the Virginia statutes.

- The remains of cremated pets now can be interred with human remains.
- Funeral homes must accept caskets from third parties. This eliminates the prohibition on the sale of, or offering for sale, caskets by a person other than a licensed funeral service establishment or funeral service licensee in cases in which preneed funeral arrangements for funeral services are being made. The change now requires funeral service licensees to accept caskets provided by a third party in accordance with the requirements of federal law but makes clear that no funeral service establishment or funeral service licensee shall be required to store a casket provided by a third party when preneed arrangements for funeral services have been made.

This means that one can purchase a casket or make one, but one must arrange for storage. The funeral home is not required to store such a casket until needed. This brings Virginia into compliance with federal regulations. We have been working for this legislation for several years and appreciate the assistance from members who helped us contact legislators to see this pass. If you are interested in helping in this way, please send us your email. We will let you know if legislative committee members need to be contacted and send a sample script to you. Many legislators now respond only to their constituents so it is helpful to have you join us in this effort.

Cremation popularity rises

According to the Cremation Association of North America, cremation continues to grow in popularity.

In Nevada, 78.8% of families select cremation. This high is followed by Washington at 78%, Oregon at 77.6%, Maine 76.9%, Montana 75.8%, New Hampshire 75.1%.

The five bottom ranked states are Mississippi at 26%, Alabama 31.4%, Kentucky 33.4%, Louisiana 35.4%, Tennessee 37.2.



Interesting changes in the funeral industry

According to the Cremation Association of North America (CANA), alkaline hydrolysis (or aquamation) has been legalized in about 20 states although it is not yet available in all of those states. The law permitting it in California, for example, goes into effect this summer.

Some opposition to aquamation comes from those whose economic interests are at stake. A bill to legalize aquamation in Indiana was unanimously passed out of committee but defeated on the floor of the Indiana House of Representatives following a speech by Rep. Dick Hamm, who just happens to own a casket company. Rep. Hamm compared the process to “flushing” a loved one. “We’re going to put [dead bodies] in acid and just let them dissolve away and then we’re going to let them run down the drain out into the sewers and whatever.” Alkaline hydrolysis takes less energy than cremation and is often referred to as green cremation.

According to the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE), 65% of mortuary science graduates in 2018 were female; only 27% were white males. In 2018, 16.5% of mortuary science graduates were African American; African American women graduated at twice the rate as African American men. ABFSE does not publish statistics on the gender identity (other than male or female) or the sexual orientation of mortuary science graduates. In other words, change is coming quickly to the funeral industry.

How it will react to that change, and how employees will be impacted, remains to be seen.

Board of Trustees

2020 Term

Leanne Mitchell

Helen Renqvist

Sandy Schlaudecker

2021 Term

Linda Plaut

Harriett Cooper

Phil Olson

2022 Term

Ben Crawford

Darrel Clouse

Dianne Rencsok

Officers

President: Sandy Schlaudecker

Vice president: Phil Olson

Secretary: Linda Plaut

Treasurer: Dianne Rencsok

Isabel Berney, Administrator
(volunteer)

Funeral Consumers Alliance of
the Virginia Blue Ridge

PO Box 10082
Blacksburg, VA 24062

Phone: 540-953-5589
E-mail: fcavbr@gmail.com

www.fcavbr.org

Affiliated with Funeral Consumers
Alliance www.funerals.org

Kroger Community Awards & Amazon Smile

Thanks to our members who have connected their Kroger Loyalty Cards to us. If you have a Kroger Plus card, consider signing up for Kroger Community Awards to give a percentage of your bill as a donation to FCAVBR.

Go online to <https://www.kroger.com>. If you already have a Kroger account, simply log in. If not, you will be asked to create one. When asked to select the organization to receive your rewards, enter this number:

TK761.

Amazon also supports us. At your browser, type smile.amazon.com. If you have an Amazon account, sign in and you will see the choice to select a charity. If you type in Funeral Consumers Alliance, several affiliates come up and you can scroll down to select Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Virginia Blue Ridge.