



Board of Trustees

2005 Term

Marcia Bailey
Gary Schroeder
Jim Shotts

2006 Term

Alan Bayer,
Isabel Berney
Darrel Clowes

2007 Term

Harriett Cooper
Dick/Cynthia Luke
Crosby Houston

Officers

President: Marcia Bailey
V. President: Alan Bayer,
Secretary: Isabel Berney
Treasurer: Darrel Clowes

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New trustees/directors elected

At the annual meeting, we elected three new trustees to our Board and passed an amendment to our Bylaws making the trustees also the Board of Directors of the corporation. President **Marcia Bailey** thanked the retiring trustees for their service and welcomed the new Board.

She expressed special thanks to retiring trustees, **Arthur Snoke** and **Goldie Terrell**, who were present at the original planning meeting more than four years ago. At that meeting six interested people decided to form a local Funeral Consumers Alliance in the Virginia Blue Ridge area. Both Arthur and Goldie have contributed immensely to the growth and development of our local

organization. Arthur will continue to be our webmaster and facilitate our internet access. (We receive many inquiries from people both locally and from all over the country who access our web page.)

Arville Stanley is also retiring from the Board. Arville lives in Meadows of Dan and became a Board member last year. However, his commute to monthly board meetings meant a four hour round trip. Arville belonged to an FCA affiliate in South Carolina and he was eager to connect with us as we become established.

We appreciate the service these Board members have given.

New board = new perspectives

Our new Board members are **Harriett Cooper, Crosby Houston** and **Cynthia/Dick Luke**. Harriett Cooper is a resident of Blacksburg, a retired research scientist who studied developmental disabilities. Harriett is on the League of Women Voters board, AARP board, actively working for the Land Trust, and plays in the Blacksburg Community Band and the Recorder Society.

Dick and Cynthia Luke are partners in Simple Pleasures, an organic sheep farm in Floyd County. They are sharing the Board position and will have one vote. Cynthia was the speaker at this year's annual meeting. She is a former hospice nurse and retired professor of nursing at Radford University. The Lukes taught for a time in Thailand and have insight into various cultural differences regarding death rituals. See Board, page 2

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Crosby Houston spent 23 years in the Air Force, then seven years in Saudi Arabia as a training consultant before coming to the area in 1988. For five years he served as adjunct geography instructor at New River Community College. Now retired, he is looking forward to serving on the Board.

The daily work of the organization is carried on by the executive board, but there is a place for anyone who wants to participate or contribute in some way. The monthly Board meetings are open to any interested persons.

If you would like to volunteer for survey work or in some other capacity, call 540-953-5589 or send email to fcavbr@bev.net.

Costco makes final goodbye a good buy



"Caskets have been absurdly overpriced for decades."

Costco, a warehouse discount retailer similar to Sam's Club, is now selling coffins at stores in the Chicago area.

Costco's coffins come in six models and several finishes, including gold, lilac and, Neapolitan blue. As with other big items that the retailer sells, Costco does not keep its coffins in stock. Instead, shoppers browse casket samples at a kiosk near the shop entrance. The price, including delivery to a nearby funeral home, is \$799.99. The same coffin from a traditional funeral-services firm would cost \$3,500-5,000.

All but three states (Oklahoma, Alabama, and Louisiana) allow coffin

purchases from parties other than funeral homes. Even in Oklahoma, where funeral homes have a virtual monopoly on coffin sales, consumers can order a casket from an out-of-state retailer, or they can build their own coffin for personal use.

"Caskets have been absurdly overpriced for decades, and competition could bring some relief to families struggling to afford the high cost of dying," remarked Joshua Slocum, Executive Director of the FCA.

Our latest funeral home survey compares the least expensive coffin options offered by funeral homes in the Blue Ridge area. All are required to accept coffins purchased from an outside source.

From the annual meeting

Cynthia Luke, former hospice nurse and retired professor of nursing, spoke on why she wants to die from cancer. She believes cancer provides time to say goodbye and prepare for death. This program now is available through our speaker's bureau.

The Bylaws were amended to make the Board of Trustees for our originating organization also the Board of Directors for the corporation we recently formed to protect our Board members.

Activity Report

- Because the syndicated column, *Annie's Mailbox*, published our letter on FCA work, we heard from folks in Modesto, CA; Houston, TX; Astoria, OR; Boston, MA; Chicago, IL; Gulfport, MI; and Columbia, SC. A copy is on our website.
- We continue to field inquiries from around the country, mostly as a result of our web presence. We acted on requests from Brownsville, TX; Magdalena, NM; Canby, OR; Eldorado, CO; Sacramento, CA; Pittsburg, PA, and the University of Massachusetts.

Here is a typical response from a Richmond, VA parent with a dying 16 year old child. "The references to the Virginia Code which you sent were tremen-

dously helpful. I used those references to help educate the attending physician (who had always relied on funeral directors) and the home health nurse (who had never heard that families could care for their own dead)."

- We provided programs for a Rotary Club, a Sunday church discussion group, and the area End-of-Life Coalition. We participated in AARP's Caring at the End of Life Seminar, and a retirement center's Care Fair.
- We supplied pamphlets to a financial advisor, an estate planner, a medical school, hospitals, social services, an Agency on Aging, a public health department, and a private care facility.
- The national FCA awarded us a grant of \$621 to get a business telephone line and subsidize the cost over three years.
- A generous member donation allowed us to expand our services and get a yellow page listing in both the Roanoke and Montgomery County/Radford phone books..
- Several favorable newspaper articles generated 28 interested contacts and five memberships.

For more annual meeting and activity details, see our website.



"The references to the Virginia Code which you sent were tremendously helpful."

**Funeral
Consumers
Alliance of the
Virginia Blue Ridge**

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.funerals.org/fcavbr

Executive Board elects officers

At the October Board meeting, these officers were elected to serve until the next annual meeting: President, Marcia Bailey; Vice- President, Alan Bayer; Secretary, Isabel Berney; and Treasure, Darrel Clowes. Officers can be contacted through our phone number or e-mail address.

Our latest pamphlet, ***The Funeral Consumer Movement, From One Local Society to a National Voice*** is now included with each new member packet. It details the history of our movement and our connection to the national and local affiliates. It is useful in talking to people about our work and the importance of a national voice. Additional copies are available upon request in addition to the 28 other pamphlets we have on various end-of-life issues. Pamphlet texts are available online at <http://www.funerals.org/fag/index.htm>.

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