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Web presence brings requests

Our Web presence generates a lot of our inquiries. Because we and Virginia Beach are the only affiliates in Virginia with an e-mail link on the national directory, we continue to receive requests from all over the country. Here are samples of how our organization is serving a real need in our area.

A woman in Arizona was concerned because her mother had a problem with a Hopewell cemetery. We explained that we were far away from Hopewell, but we would try to help. Her parents had purchased several plots in a cemetery in Hopewell many years ago when they lived in Virginia. They kept meticulous records about these plots, including the deed, and also kept the cemetery informed of their

address changes. When the woman's father died last fall, the family found out that the cemetery had "transferred" the parents' plots to another section of the cemetery in 1988 and resold the plots for which they held the deeds. The woman and her sister had contacted the Hopewell Police Department and the Virginia Attorney General only to be told that this was not that department's responsibility. We received their e-mail and a plea for help.

With the help of Lisa Carlson, Executive Director, of the national Funeral Consumers Alliance, a letter was promptly written by the Board Administrator for Cemeteries in Virginia stating that a case has been docketed against the cemetery.

See Web presence, p. 2.

Choices for Cremation Urn

If you are considering cremation and are looking for a suitable container for the cremains, you might want to look at urns and vases in a gift shop rather than limit your selection to those provided by funeral homes. Michael Workerger of Troutville writes, "We did purchase an urn at the Bombay Company at a significant savings. I

can't recall the exact figures because of the emotional turmoil of the time, but it was substantial." If you plan to scatter ashes, no purchased container is necessary. The crematory will deliver the cremains in a container that allows you to transport the ashes to the scattering site.

We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.funerals.org/fcavbr/

Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Virginia Blue Ridge

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We have received requests from people in Ohio and Chicago wanting our forms on whom to notify in case of death or incapacitation. A member of the *Funeral Consumers Alliance of North Texas* wanted information to send to his wife's brother and sister-in-law who live in Roanoke. A daughter from Potomac Falls contacted us about arranging cremation for her father in Roanoke.

Not all e-mail correspondence is positive. An anonymous "longtime member of the clergy in SW VA" wrote that we were being unfair in recording the results of our price list survey.

We take all communications seriously and we do know that we have made some mistakes.

For instance, we inadvertently did not contact a funeral home in Narrows for our first survey. It is now on our list for next time. However, we are trying our best to provide accurate information.

We are a completely volunteer organization and strive to be fair and honest. We welcome help and feedback from all. This correspondent cited above was concerned with our listing of funeral homes that were either in or out of compliance with the Federal Trade Commission's Funeral Rules. We stand by our assessment. We hope and expect that all funeral homes will be in complete compliance by the time we do our next survey. We feel that is one of the services we can provide to consumers. Many of the noncompliance issues were fairly minor, but some were not. Even the minor ones need to be addressed. Our work seems to be helping that to happen.

Celebrate Generosity with tax deductible gift

The IRS has just recognized us as a tax exempt, 501(c)(3), publicly supported organization. This status is retroactive to October, 2001.

**Gerry Anderson
Michael & Judith Campbell
Dennis & Anne Folsom
Morton Nadler**

Our members and friends continue with generous contributions that help us with our work. We appreciate the generosity of folks and organizations:

Thanks also for in-kind donations from **Luther Memorial Lutheran Church**, Blacksburg and the **Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of the New River Valley**..

Would you like to serve on the FCAVBR Board of Directors? The nominating committee is beginning to work on the slate for our annual meeting to be held in October. It isn't too early to think about volunteering to serve on the Board and hence participating directly in the ongoing activities of this affiliate. If you are interested or have someone to recommend, please send e-mail to fcavbr@bev.net or contact Franklyn Moreno, nominating committee chair, at 381-0119.