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2007 Term

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## Plain wooden casket available

Trev Smith, one of our members, who is a carpenter, has volunteered to build and sell simple wooden caskets for \$400 to our members and others. The price includes delivery within a 50 mile radius of Blacksburg. Trev has one casket made which he will store until it is needed and then he will make another so that he will always have one on hand. The casket is made of furniture-grade plywood with rope handles and no finish. It is suitable for a family to decorate as desired or to use as a simple casket. Because it has no metal nails or hardware, it can also be used for cremation.

Remember that all funeral homes must accept a third-party casket and supplying such a casket substantially lowers the price of a funeral or cremation. If you are interested in the casket built by Trev Smith, just let us know. Thanks to Trev for volunteering to provide this service. It is our volunteers that keep us going.

Our pamphlet, *What Would We, the Family Like*, may offer ideas of interest. It is included with the mailed copies of this newsletter or can be gotten [from our Web site](#).

Rope handles and no metal hardware make this casket suitable for cremation as well as a green burial.



## Biennial Funeral Home Survey Underway

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*Many area funeral homes cooperated with us by providing their information.*



We are conducting our biennial survey of area funeral homes. We sent a letter to all 28 funeral homes in our service area. This time more than half responded. That is an improvement over our last survey where only 1/3 of the homes responded to our initial request.

Volunteers make personal visits to those that do not respond. Federal regulations require the homes to supply their General Price Lists to anyone who requests the list in person. As soon as all are collected and examined, we will send out our draft report to the homes to make sure we have accurately recorded the information. We make every effort to ensure accuracy for our members when we publish the report. Look for it in the coming months.

Here are the homes that responded to our first request for information.

Bower, Pulaski  
Cremation Society of Virginia  
Gardner, Floyd

Hamlar-Curtis, Roanoke  
Horne, Christiansburg  
Lotz, Roanoke  
Maberry, Floyd  
McCoy, Blacksburg  
Mullins, Radford  
Penn, Pulaski  
Rader, Daleville  
Riffe, Narrows  
Seagle, Pulaski  
Vest, Pearisburg  
Serenity, Roanoke  
Stevens, Pulaski  
Wood, Floyd

Because of consumer inquiries, we are gathering information outside our usual service area. These homes have voluntarily supplied their price lists for our survey.

Frost, Abingdon  
Farris, Abingdon  
Norris, Martinsville  
Paitsel, New Castle  
Roselawn, Martinsville

Our volunteers make personal calls to the remaining homes to pick up the price lists so that we can provide you with a comprehensive survey of prices and services available in our area.

In the coming months the nominating committee will be looking for members to serve a 3-year term on the board of directors. Please consider volunteering for a position. The board meets monthly for about one hour to carry on the business of our alliance. If you are interested in serving on the board, or want to recommend someone, call Jenny Schwanke, nominating committee chair, at 540-951-7928 or our office at 940-953-5589.

## Generous gifts

Two notable donations were made recently. Last September, two board members presented a program to the Catawba Community Club about alternatives to traditional funerals. Our speakers bureau is available at no charge, and we gladly provide programs to all sizes of groups. In December, Catawba Community Club sent a check for \$50 in support of our work.

This fall, member Dr. Beth Nelson provided three family gift member-

ships for her three adult daughters. She wrote, "You do such good work, and my girls need to know about it."

Our members continue to support our work with their generosity. These gifts also help to protect those in coming generations so they too are served by an organization dedicated to funeral consumer advocacy.

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*"You do such good work, and my girls need to know about it."* Beth Nelson

## Homecoming for eternity

As reported in a recent issue of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (December 12, 2005), more universities are offering burial plots to alumni in campus cemeteries.

The University of Virginia has had a cemetery since 1828 for distinguished faculty and administrators. There are no more plots available, but a recent columbarium provides niches for ashes. The University of Richmond and Hampton University also have cemeteries as well as the University of Louisville, Notre Dame, Iowa State University, Norwich University, and Clemson University

Some schools maintain a cemetery for those who participate in their anatomical gift program. The University of Buffalo, (State University of New York) and the University of New England are examples.

All of this gives new meaning to the question, "Is there life after college?"



Since 2001 it's been illegal in North Carolina to use "profane, indecent, or obscene language in the presence of a dead human body." As far as we know, none of the dead has complained.

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

PO Box 10082  
Blacksburg VA  
24062-0082

PHONE:  
540-953-5589

E-MAIL:  
fcavbr@bev.net

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We're on the Web!

*See us at:*

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

## Of interest

Members of the Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Virginia Blue Ridge keep an eye on the media for any current information about our concerns. Sometimes we come across an article that is somewhat on the sideline, but which nonetheless may interest our readers. The story printed in *The Roanoke Times* on November 13, 2005 (p. A23) is one example:

It seems that in Taiwan there is a tradition that involves hiring mourners to accompany the funeral of a loved one. As reported in the *Roanoke Times*, the mourners are professional entertainers paid to "wail, scream, and otherwise create the anguished sorrow befitting a proper funeral." Taiwanese death rites may also include processions with elaborate floats that feature drummers, trumpet players, and other colorful entertainers. Professional mourners charge around \$600 for half a day's work. Processions can cost anywhere from \$6,000 to \$30,000.

Taiwan might benefit from an organization such as the FCAVBR.