



*Upcoming  
Program:*

**What Terry  
Shaivo Taught  
Us – Bob Benoit,  
medical ethicist**

Annual meeting  
Monday, 7:00 PM,  
October 10, 2005

Place to be  
announced, watch for  
September mailing

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## New materials for members

The packet that is sent to new members has been revised. The ["Dear Family"](#) letter is a shorter, easier form to complete and it replaces two forms: "In Case of Death or Incapacity" and "A Guide for My Survivors." No form is any good unless it is completed and given to those who will need the information. We hope this shorter form will encourage you to complete it and share it with the appropriate people. You might give a copy to your religious affiliation. Don't forget to designate a guardian for any

minor children and share this information with the guardian.

Our forms and pamphlets are available as Microsoft Word files and can be sent via e-mail upon request. [Click here](#) for a link to PDF versions for three of them.

A [listing of the resources](#) we have available accompanies this newsletter. Perhaps you would like to send some of this material to family members and friends. Information is yours to share.

## More on body donation

In our [Spring 2005 newsletter](#), we reported on the process for donating a body to the State Anatomical Division that supplies bodies for teaching and research to institutions in Virginia. If one wants to donate one's body to science, this is the avenue that often comes to mind. However, one needs to have a backup plan as the state may not need bodies at the time yours is available. There are also other restrictions that may make one's body ineligible for this state program.

For people who want to donate their body to science, there are commercial choices available. The Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Virginia Blue Ridge does not endorse any of these commercial establishments, but we provide this information as part of our mission to make data available to consumers to ensure choices are available. Two such organizations are

**BioGift Anatomical, Inc.**

<http://www.biogift.org/>  
Toll Free: 866-670-1799

**Science Care**

<http://www.sciencecare.com/>  
Toll Free: 800-417-3747

Such commercial organizations take bodies that the State Anatomical Division refuses. These companies will take bodies that have organs missing either through donation or surgery. They also accept emaciated bodies, overweight bodies, and bodies that have experienced trauma as a cause of death. These companies often dismember bodies and sell the parts to doctors, associations, research facilities,

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## Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Virginia Blue Ridge, Inc.

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

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

## Body donation from page 1

and other institutions and individuals that need body parts for their continuing education, research, or other uses. Skin is used for burn victims, joints are studied by prosthetic suppliers, legs and feet are used to test land mines, heads to test crash helmets. Although it may seem ghoulish to some people, others believe it is perfectly acceptable to use one's body after death to further knowledge and improve conditions for the living. Problems have arisen when some of these companies have not been forthright about their use of donated bodies and lawsuits have been brought by unhappy families when

they find out their loved one has been "chopped up" and dispersed to five or six different places.

There is no cost to families when donating a body to one of these companies. The companies have a designated funeral home with which they work. It may or may not be the one a family would choose. Families who decide to donate to these companies should not expect to receive cremated remains, although some say they will return ashes. While this is an appealing alternative to some people, it should be approached with a full understanding of how bodies may be used.

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## Noteworthy News

**Consumer Literacy Consortium** publicizes money-saving consumer tips. Its website, "66 Ways to Save Money," lists as #65, "For information about the least costly options (funeral and burial arrangements), which may save you several thousand dollars, contact a local Funeral Consumers Alliance."



In the April, 2005, issue of *Consumer Reports Money Adviser*, a one-page article entitled "Why it doesn't pay to prepay" states that while preparing in advance for your funeral can ease your family's worrying, prepaying is not so helpful. The information given is consistent with *Consumer Reports'* prior articles on pre-need.



According to the *Wall Street Journal*, May 4, 2005, the Funeral Consumers Alliance, Inc., on behalf of its roughly 400,000 members and a nationwide class of consumers, filed suit against three of the biggest funeral-home

chains and Batesville Casket Company, the leading U.S. casket maker, alleging they conspired to keep prices high and shut out casket discounters and online retailers

The suit also charges that the funeral-home chains flout federal rules intended to protect consumers. The rules permit people to buy caskets from anyone (or even build their own if they wish) while prohibiting funeral directors from charging extra to customers who choose to do so. But the suit alleges that funeral homes discourage such purchases by offering sham discounts for package deals that include caskets, while boosting prices for individual services, such as embalming, if a customer decides to buy a casket elsewhere.

## From a grateful member

"Last April when I obtained the information about the Funeral Alliance, I had no anticipation of what was to follow. My mother died in October and my wife's mother died in December. We were able to arrange what they wanted before they passed.

So this is a very profound thanks to you and the FCA."

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