



## Board of Trustees

### 2008 Term

Marcia Bailey  
Gary Schroeder  
Jenny Schwanke

### 2009 Term

Harriett Cooper  
Dick/Cynthia Luke  
Crosby Houston

### 2010 Term

Darrel Clowes  
Miriam Dakin  
Bob Youngs

### Officers

President: Marcia Bailey  
Secretary: Harriett Cooper  
Treasurer: Darrel Clowes

Isabel Berney, Exec. Dir.

## Find out more

- Wallops tombstone 2
- Biodiversity cemetery 3
- Directions to YWCA 4

## Annual meeting September 15

The annual meeting will be held Monday, **September 15** at 7:00 P.M. at the Blacksburg WMCA, 1000 North Main Street. Charles Johnson will speak on *Reflections on the Black Community and Last Rites*.

Mr. Johnson has intimate experience with the topic as an African-American growing up in the Wake Forest community of Montgomery County.

The program is open to the public. See page 4 for directions..

A short business meeting will follow the program. The nominating committee has submitted the following slate for the Board of Trustees whose terms expire in 2011.

**Marcia Bailey**  
**Christine Brownlie**  
**Linnette Petersen**

Nominations from the floor will also be accepted.

## Board appoints Dakin

Board member **Alan Bayer** resigned because he moved to South Carolina. Alan made a significant contribution in the five years he served on the Board, four of them as vice-president. He helped develop our surveys, staffed our display booths, helped with mailings and made Board meetings interesting and fun.

At the June Board meeting, **Miriam Dakin** was appointed to serve out the remainder of Alan's term.

Miriam is a hospice chaplain in Wytheville and brings a lot of experience to the Board. As an ordained Baptist minister she broadens the Board's perspective and represents the southwestern part of our service area.

## Legislative news

The Virginia legislature passed, and the governor signed, a bill addressing the order in which debts of decedents are to be paid. This increases from \$2,000 to \$3,500 the amount available from an estate to pay funeral

expenses where there are insufficient assets for the satisfaction of all the demands against the estate. As of January 2008, according to the National Funeral Directors Association, the **average cost for an adult funeral is \$7,323.**

## Tombstones fascinate, educate, and warn

We always welcome comments from our readers. A Dublin member, **Carl Epley**, sent this, "I noted in your last Newsletter the picture of a tombstone. I have one from way back in the early sixties that I have saved. If you would like to use it in an issue of the Newsletter, I would be pleased for you to use it."

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*Contributions are always welcome. You are encouraged to share your stories.*

This is the inscription:

***Capt Joshua L Chandler  
Born Oct 1829  
Died Oct 21 1877***

***Farewell wife and children dear  
I am not dead, but sleeping here  
As I am someday you will be  
Prepare for death and follow me***

Carl continues, "I went over to the Eastern Shore of Virginia in September of 1965 to help start the Eastern Shore Branch of the University of Virginia. We acquired a large housing development just outside of the gates of what had been the Chincoteague Naval Air Station. Both were on the

mainland. The Naval base was acquired by NASA and its name was changed to NASA, Wallops. There is a Wallops Island just south of Chincoteague Island and NASA had been there for quite a few years. Chincoteague Island was much like it had been for centuries. And yes, this is where they have the pony round-up and sales each year.

As you walked about the island, you saw many small private graves in yards. The island was subject to periodic flooding during heavy rain with high tide. This meant that graves were either above ground or in concrete boxes in the ground. All of this was a different time as the island itself had been isolated from the mainland until the forties when a causeway was built to allow people to drive to the island. This tombstone fascinated me! (I suppose I should confess that my mother and her mother used to go into cemeteries just to read tombstones and being a child, I was forced to accompany them.)"



## ***National Wildlife* touts green cemeteries**

"In the shadow of Mt. Tamalpais, more than 150 graves lie scattered across a windswept hillside in Marin County, California...[making] up a large portion of a 32-acre cemetery called Fernwood."

This is the surprising opening of an article in *National Wildlife* magazine (April/May, 2008), surprising because cemeteries are one of the last places one would associate with wildlife. But the article, "Peaceful Islands of Biodiversity," describes the efforts of several cemeteries around the country to create natural (or green) cemeteries, which use only biodegradable caskets; do not use chemicals to preserve bodies; use no cement liners in graves; and avoid using heavy equipment to dig graves. Many have no headstones, with only flat stones to identify graves. Often, invasive vegetation is removed and replaced by native plants. This has

had the serendipitous effect of creating natural habitats for wild creatures, including foxes, bobcats and many species of birds. Some cemeteries have been so effective in attracting wildlife that they have been recognized by the National Wildlife Federation as Certified Wildlife Habitats "that provide food, water, shelter and nesting places for wild creatures."

However, it is not only wild creatures that have benefited from this "island of nature within the city." Many local residents find enjoyment in the beautiful surroundings or take advantage of the opportunity to birdwatch in otherwise congested communities. Thus green cemeteries can be "peaceful sanctuaries" for both people and wildlife.



*Green cemeteries can be peaceful islands of biodiversity.*

## **Smith-Schwanke family has home funeral**

Virginia does not require families to use the services of a licensed funeral director to conduct a funeral or burial. Member Trev Smith and his wife Jenny Schwenke recently provided a home funeral and green burial for Trev's mother, Laurel Dawn Smith. Jenny has served on our Board for the past three years so both she and Trev were aware of the Virginia requirements and wanted to care for Trev's mother themselves. More Americans are interested in reclaiming the family practice of caring for one's own that was the norm until the 1940's. Trev made the coffin and his mother was buried within hours of her death on their land.

Trev and Jenny live just outside of Blacksburg on 60 wooded acres. Their story is told by David Mudd in the web magazine, *Daily Yonder*, at <http://www.dailyyonder.com/print/1276>. There is also a link on our own Web site. Click on articles about us in the local press, and that will take you to Mudd's article, "Backyard Burial – What a Way to Go."

## **Our Web address has changed.**

Our URL has changed slightly because of modifications made by our Web-site host, the national Funeral Consumers Alliance. Now you can reach our pages at [www.funerals.org/affiliates/fcavbr/](http://www.funerals.org/affiliates/fcavbr/). You will find our resources listed there.

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Alliance of the  
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[www.funerals.org/affiliates/fcavbr/](http://www.funerals.org/affiliates/fcavbr/)

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Affiliated with **Funeral  
Consumers Alliance**

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

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**Come One! Come All! Bring a Friend!**

**Annual Meeting**

Monday, September 15, 7:00 PM

Blacksburg YMCA  
1000 North Main Street

**Directions to the YMCA**

**From I-81:** Take the 118-B exit to Blacksburg. This is Rt. 460. Follow the signs to Virginia Tech. Go past the Virginia Tech exit, which is the first traffic light you come to on 460. Take the next exit Prices Fork TOWARD DOWNTOWN. Stay on this street until it ends at a T junction. There is a Wendy's on the right. Stay in the left or middle lanes because you turn left at the T junction which is Main Street. Go north on Main for about two blocks. The Y is on the right, next to a Citgo gas station.