

Winter, 2007

## Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Virginia Blue Ridge



### *Board of Trustees*

#### 2008 Term

Marcia Bailey  
Gary Schroeder  
Jenny Schwanke

#### 2009 Term

Harriett Cooper  
Dick/Cynthia Luke  
Crosby Houston

#### 2010 Term

Alan Bayer  
Darrel Clowes  
Bob Youngs

#### Officers

President: Marcia Bailey  
V. President: Alan Bayer  
Secretary: Harriett Cooper  
Treasurer: Darrel Clowes

Isabel Berney, Exec. Dir.

### *Find out more*

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## Fifth anniversary special edition

Five years ago, in January, 2002, we published our first newsletter. It reported on the first annual meeting held a few months before, where bylaws were adopted and a Board of Directors elected. That first newsletter went to 17

households, a total of 27 members. Today we mail to 130 households representing 172 members and an additional 16 friends or organizations who have requested to be on our mailing list.

See **Mailing**, p. 3

## Legislative watch

Part of our mission is to be a watchdog for consumers. We monitor our Virginia General Assembly to make sure that bills pertaining to the death care industry are in consumers' best interest. Last year we monitored seven bills. One such bill, HB 1300, was of interest because it weakened continuing education requirements for funeral home personnel. That bill was carried over to the 2007 session. We contacted all 22 members of the

Health, Welfare and Institutions Committee to voice our concerns about this bill. We are happy to report that the bill has died in committee.

Being part of a national network of more than 100 other groups that are affiliated with the national Funeral Consumers Alliance, we are able to get tips on legislative activity around the country and to be watchful of events in our own state.

## Meet the executive board

The executive board meets monthly to carry on the day-to-day business of the organization. Here is a brief introduction to these dedicated members.

**Marcia Bailey** moved to Blacksburg in 1993. She had lived in Buffalo NY and Ohio, where she was a social worker

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## Board: Hardworking volunteers

from 1

in child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, and employee assistance. She also worked for Hospice in this area.

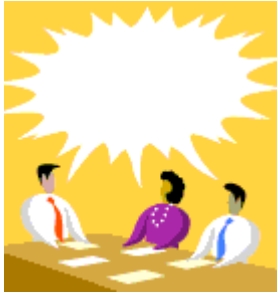
**Alan Bayer** is a sociologist who retired this fall from the faculty at Virginia Tech. He previously lived in Massachusetts, Florida, California, Pennsylvania, and Washington DC, before moving to the New River Valley from Omaha, Nebraska, where he had been affiliated with Boy's Town. He attended Penn State University and Florida State University.

**Darrel Clowes** has lived in the Blacksburg area for the past thirty years. He is a New

England native with degrees from Dartmouth, Oberlin, and the University of Texas. He served in the U.S. Navy, in the U.S. Peace Corps-Korea and worked several years in the insurance business. He has been a faculty member and/or dean at the high school and community college level and a faculty member at the University of Texas, Auburn, and Virginia Tech.

**Harriett Cooper** was born in New York City, and has a Ph.D. in biology. In addition to the Funeral Consumers Alliance, she is active in the League of Women Voters, AARP, and Citizens First. Her most enjoyable activity is playing in the Blacksburg Community Band and with her recorder group.

See **volunteers**, p. 3



*Board members bring varied experiences and ideas to the table.*

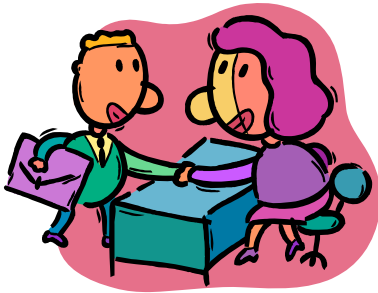
## Survey sleuths needed

If you can spare an hour to visit a cemetery near you, you can help collect information for our cemetery survey. One of our major activities is a biennial survey of funeral homes to compare costs and services. In the intervening years we survey cemeteries and crematories. This enables us to provide information about the many options available to consumers.

While some cemeteries are willing to respond to our request by mail, others are not

so cooperative. If the cemeteries are commercial and public (as opposed to religious and private), they are required to provide a General Price List to anyone who makes that request in person.

Because of our large geographic area, we rely on our members to help us. It takes only an hour or less to visit a cemetery and get the General Price List. Or, you can visit a cemetery near you and request the price list. Send it to our post office box and we will do the rest. If you are willing to help, please let us know.



## Volunteers, *from page 2*

**Crosby Houston** moved to Southwest Virginia in 1988. Prior to that time he spent six years working overseas preceded by 23 years in the Air Force. After moving to the New River Valley, he became a graduate student and then for five years was an adjunct faculty member at the New River Community College. Crosby has three children and seven grandchildren.

**Cynthia & Dick Luke** share one position on the Board. They moved to Floyd 12 years ago, where they raise sheep, chickens for eggs and have an organic vegetable garden. Before retiring, Cynthia was a hospice nurse and on the faculty of nursing at Radford University. The Lukes moved from Wilmington, NC, where they participated in a Memorial Society similar to FCAVBR. They both believe in enabling people to take control of their life decisions, including those at the end of life.

**Gary Schroeder** is a native of Cleveland, Ohio. In August of

1987, he was called to be the pastor of Luther Memorial Lutheran Church in Blacksburg. Prior to that, he served as pastor of the American Church in Berlin, Germany, and Holy Counselor Lutheran Church in Vernon, NJ.

**Jenny Schwanke** came to Blacksburg to attend Virginia Tech in the late 70s, fell in love with the area, and never left. Jenny currently teaches at the Children's Garden Primary School, and is the Director of the Blacksburg Farmers Market.

**Bob Youngs** moved to southwest Virginia in 1985 after a 35-year career in forestry research in the U.S. Forest Service. He was on the faculty at Virginia Tech for 10 years, and retired in 1995 as Professor Emeritus of Forestry and Forest Products. He was editor of a scientific journal for six years. He now conducts a course via the Internet in scientific writing in English for students at a university in Taiwan.



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*Board meetings are open. The board usually meets every third Thursday. Call for details.*

## Mailing, *from p. 1*

As a non-profit organization, we qualify for bulk mailing. The use of this permit is cost-effective if at least 180 pieces are mailed at once. The Board is committed to extend our outreach and increase public awareness. We welcome this as an opportunity to network with organizations that also deal with end-of-life issues, and we are adding them to our mailing list.



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Affiliated with **Funeral  
Consumers Alliance**

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

## Welcome new readers

If you are receiving this newsletter for the first time, we want to introduce you to the best kept secret in the Roanoke and New River Valleys. In an effort to let more people know about our existence and services, we have expanded our mailing list to include organizations and individuals that may find us useful to the people they serve. Our Web pages and internet presence continue to bring most of our inquiries, but we realize there are many people who rely on traditional forms of communication. As a not-for-profit 501(c)3 community organization, our mission is one of education. We exist as a public service to individuals, families, and organizations interested in understanding final arrangement options and costs.

We hope you will share our information with others, perhaps posting this newsletter, or making copies. Most Americans know very little about the death care industry and are unprepared when they face decisions that usually involve thousands of dollars. We have helped many individuals and families.

If you prefer to remove yourself from our mailing list, please let us know. We strive to be good stewards of our resources and those of our community.