

Funeral Consumers Alliance of Idaho



WE'RE FLATTERED, SORT OF

The Idaho Funeral Service Association (www.ifsa.us) took the trouble to copy our fall newsletter, and send it out as an enclosure to its newsletter subscribers.

The text about us in the shadowy box on page 3 of their newsletter made us sound frightening and powerful, even though they had to misrepresent our position to create the effect.

Responding to our suggestion to the Board of Morticians in July of last year that state law and the interests of Idaho consumers might be improved by not requiring crematories to have embalming facilities and a casket display room, they wrote that we "also want to change the law to allow 'a crematory only' without the full compliment [sic] of facilities or personnel required by Idaho law."

Yes, we think that eliminating unnecessary government regulation is a good thing. If someone has no interest in having their corpse pumped full of toxic chemicals for one last "viewing," why should his or her loved ones have to contribute to the overhead of the mortician's "art"?

HELP WANTED

Your Alliance runs the energy of volunteers motivated by our mission: to promote the dignity, simplicity, and spiritual values of funeral rites and memorial services without the burden of unnecessary or unjustifiable expense left to survivors. Can you help?

We have opportunities of every size: helping with newsletters and our annual price survey of Idaho funeral homes, keeping track of the Idaho Legislature, helping spread the word about the benefits we offer, or serving on the Board of Directors or the Nominating Committee.

Come to the Annual Meeting on Saturday, May 10 at the Boise Public Library and meet the current Board, other members, and enjoy our featured speaker, then join us in this satisfying work! Send us an email, or give a call if you can't be at the meeting, but want to lend a hand.

Notice of Annual Meeting SATURDAY, MAY 10, 2008, 10:30AM AT THE BOISE PUBLIC LIBRARY WM. F. HAYES MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM 715 S. CAPITOL BLVD

Our principal order of business is the election of Board members. We have two Board positions (the expiring terms of President Tom von Alten, and Vice-president Mary Lou Brownson) to be filled, and at press time, we do not have nominees for these positions to announce. Continuing Board Members are: Sheryce Davis, Bryan Jennings (terms end 2009), and Ritta Nielsen (term ends 2010).

WRITING YOUR LIFE STORY: HOW TO START—AND KEEP ON WRITING

Mary Owen, of Senior Solutions, a non-profit agency dedicated to preserving the dignity and independence of older individuals will be our featured speaker after the business meeting. She is an experienced writer, editor, and member of The Cabin, a local literary center in Boise.

When our parents have left us, will we be left with unanswered questions, wishing we knew more about their history, and what mattered to them? Did they sacrifice their pleasure for our well-being? What was important to them beyond food and shelter?

For most people these questions were never discussed with their parents, let alone written down. Those of us who want our children to remember important aspects of our lives will want to hear Owen's presentation, and take inspiration to record our thoughts, opinions and advice to the next generation. We'll have time for discussion, and refreshments will be served.

The presentation is free of charge and open to the public.

Funeral Consumers Alliance of Idaho

PO Box 1919
Boise ID 83701-1919
Phone: 208 426-0032
E-mail: fcai@fortboise.org
Web: fcai.fortboise.org

Board members

Mary Lou Brownson, Vice-president
Sheryce Davis, Membership Sec'y
Bryan Jennings, Treasurer
Ritta Nielsen, Secretary
Tom von Alten, President

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fcai@fortboise.org

JOHN'S MEMORIAL

One of our founders and long-time supporters passed away this January. John Harms joined with Vernon and Mary Jones, Sharon Slocum and Paul Tracy in incorporating the Idaho Memorial Association on May 24, 1972. (We changed our name to the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Idaho in 2000.) John was a tireless activist for many good causes, and was featured in a Feb. 10, 2008 "Remembrance" in the *Idaho Statesman*. In addition to IMA/FCAI, he was involved in the NAACP, The Snake River Alliance, the Boise Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, the International Association for Religious Freedom, and was a founding member of the ACLU of Idaho.

At his memorial service at BUUF, the family shared his tie collection with gathered friends, inviting us to take one and enjoy it in his memory. On what would have been his 88th birthday, April 13, the church invited members and friends to wear the gifts in his honor.

We renew our own commitment to service in John's memory, and send our condolences to his family.

JOAN'S MEMORIAL

Joan Boliek had been an active part of a diverse community around Ghost Ranch, New Mexico. Word of her memorial service reached out, informally, for miles in every direction. Understanding this, those who were first to arrive at Ghost Ranch went immediately to work, sweeping the terrace and setting up folding chairs.

After family members spoke, they handed out pens and 5x8 cards. While music played, everyone had a chance to write a remembrance of Joan. These were collected and hung on ribbons for all to read. "Many cards were written as personal letters to Joan," said one friend who was there. "Some were accompanied by or were drawings. About half were unsigned." In a gathering where sheer numbers did not allow most to speak, all were able to share a personal goodbye.

COMPASSION & CHOICES

"We dream of a time when all Americans can live and die as free people, in dignity and according to their own values." — Barbara Coombs Lee

Paul Rolig, President of the Idaho Humanists, sent a link to a relatively new organization, Compassion & Choices. Founded in 2005, their stated purpose is to support individuals prepared to make their own end of life decisions. They find sympathetic medical doctors and other health practitioners, have information available and a helpline for those who need individual counseling.

They also vigorously support legislation that matches their mission. President Barbara Coombs Lee was recently interviewed about the role of her organization in support of Oregon's aid-in-dying legislation. She "emphasized the

FCA National Conference

This year's conference will have the largest program of speakers in the Alliance's history, and will be hosted by the oldest and largest supporting member, People's Memorial Association. PMA made history last year by opening the largest nonprofit, member-owned funeral service cooperative in the country.

Seattle University

June 26 - 28, 2008

Seattle, Washington

Featured speakers include author and former *L.A. Times* environmental reporter Mark Harris, with "Natural Burial: It's Not Just for Hippies Anymore," describing how can you bring truly traditional, economical, and environmentally friendly funerals to your community. Harris' recent book, *Grave Matters*, is a readable, practical guide on clearing the clutter and consumption out of funerals so we can tread lightly on the land, even in death.

Valerie Bayham of the Institute for Justice will talk about their experience dismantling the funeral industry's monopoly on casket sales in Tennessee and Oklahoma, in "Caskets, Cartels, and Consumer Choice."

The registration deadline is May 20. Inexpensive dormitory accommodations will be available. This is a great chance for a trip to the Emerald City, and to learn more about the organization, and to get involved in consumer advocacy. Visit the (newly revised!) FCA national website, www.funerals.org for more information, or call FCA at (800) 765-0107.



support aid in dying has garnered among key medical organizations" and is supportive of Initiative 1000, a citizen initiative in the state of Washington that would allow "terminally ill, mentally competent adult Washington residents to have the option to request, receive and self-administer life-ending medication to achieve a peaceful death."

This is one aspect of the group's efforts. They also have a downloadable form that can be used to request a hospital visit by an unmarried partner.

They encourage formation of local groups; the first in Idaho is in Coeur d'Alene. Investigate for yourself or subscribe to their free electronic newsletter via

www.compassionandchoices.org.