



FUNERAL CONSUMERS ALLIANCE OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS

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www.FuneralConsumersWMass.org

NEWSLETTER

FALL 2024



LEE WEBSTER

Author & Advocate
of Funeral Reform

You Can Do This: Family-Led Funerals

Do you want to reclaim the privilege of home deathcare? Come learn about home funerals, when to partner with professionals, and how to create affordable, meaningful experiences to honor your loved ones.

October 20, 2024 2-4pm

Annual Meeting and Program of the
Funeral Consumers Alliance of Western MA
at the Unitarian Society of Northampton and Florence
220 Main Street, Northampton, MA



**This program is FREE! Email fcawmass@gmail.com
to register for in-person or Zoom.**

We are delighted to announce Lee Webster – funeral reform educator, home funeral guide, green burial advocate, and author – as featured speaker for our Annual Meeting and Program, Sunday, October 20.

Lee Webster has been researching, writing, and educating about end-of-life issues and the rights of families for over 20 years. She has been a hospice volunteer and has supported many families and individuals in designing and carrying out care for their own dead in the home.

In this talk, she will outline some of the obstacles, possibilities, and rewards of the home funeral experience. There will be time for questions.

To help us plan, please register in advance, for either Zoom or in-person. The downstairs meeting room at 220 Main Street, Northampton, is accessible via a side door entrance, with elevator. There will be DOOR PRIZES and REFRESHMENTS! Feel free to invite friends and family to register.

See page 2 for more about this event.

Speaker Bio: Lee Webster has served in leadership positions with the National Home Funeral Alliance and the Green Burial Council, and helped found the National End-of-Life Doula Alliance and the Conservation Burial Alliance while also directing New Hampshire Funeral Resources, Education & Advocacy (<https://www.nhfuneral.org/>).

Lee is a writer, researcher, long-time hospice volunteer, and death care educator. She has designed educational content for Redesigning the End. She is the author of several home funeral and green burial books, including *Changing Landscapes: Exploring the growth of ethical, compassionate and environmentally sustainable green funeral service* and *The After-Death Care Educator Handbook*.

Talk Description: Once the norm, many people now feel uncertain about their right to care for their own dead. The ancient ways of conducting body care and funeral preparation have been largely forgotten due to the outsourcing of death care to professionals. However, caring for your deceased at home and in your own way is meaningful, affordable, and legal. Although navigating the requirements of the funeral industry and state law can be challenging, home funerals are once again gaining in popularity and respect.

What can we do to reclaim this privilege, reduce costs, and find solace in doing for ourselves? What rights do we have and how can we help others know more about their choices? How can we partner with funeral professionals while staying in charge of the things that help ground us during a loss?

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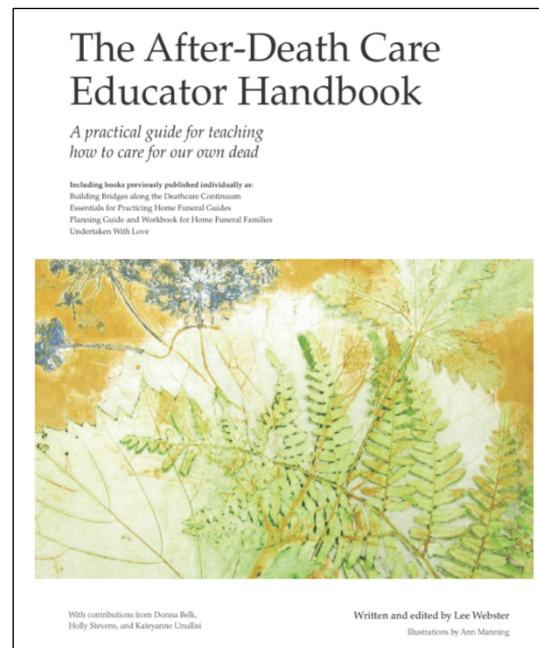
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Editors this issue: Thomas LaValley and Sandy Ward

The FCA of Western Massachusetts is a non-sectarian, all-volunteer, non-profit corporation dedicated to protecting a consumer's right to choose a meaningful, dignified and affordable funeral or memorial service.



Timeline of our Annual Meeting on October 20:

2:00pm Welcome! Refreshments hosted by Eileen and David Pratt. Get ticket for door prizes.

2:10pm Annual Membership Meeting with brief reports, election of board members, and a vote about a bylaws revision. Drawing for a few door prizes.

2:30pm Program with guest speaker Lee Webster

3:30pm Q & A with Lee Webster. Refreshments and more door prizes.

4:00pm Adjourn

For more information about the election of board members, see page 3.

For the proposed bylaws revision, see the INSERT in this newsletter, or see this webpage:

<https://funeralconsumerswmass.org/bylaws/>

Election for Board of Trustees

We have openings on our Board of Trustees and will hold an election during our Annual Meeting on Sunday, October 20, 2024.

We will be able to vote for up to four members. As of press time, we have two candidates running.

The Nominating Committee will ask, as usual, for any additional nominations “from the floor.” That invitation will include members viewing the meeting via Zoom.

Perhaps YOU would like to join us? We welcome people with perspectives from different cultures and experiences. Our bylaws “*encourage the election of interested persons who have not served before.*” We maintain a pattern of staggered terms so that only a few of our trustee positions come up for re-election each fall. Incumbents may run again, but we also desire and need newcomers.

In this election cycle, the terms of three well-known trustees (Cecile Richard, Kate Mason, and Sandy Ward) are expiring. Cecile is running for re-election for another 3-year term. Kate has decided to step down, and we thank her for her many years of service. She was Secretary for many of those years, picking up FCAWM mail from the Greenfield Post Office and fulfilling requests for information brochures. We are pleased that she will continue as our liaison to that post office, collecting mail and delivering it to our treasurer and membership chair.

Sandy Ward is also running for re-election, but prefers a 1-year term, filling a known vacancy for the coming year. That leaves two regular 3-year terms OPEN for newcomers.

Thus, the slate for election to the BOARD of TRUSTEES currently looks like this:

- Cecile Richard
- Sandy Ward
- [open]
- [open]

We also will vote for OFFICERS (1-year terms):

President: Jim Couchon

Vice-President: Sandy Ward

Treasurer: Joan Pillsbury

Secretary: Alex Tinari

Volunteers for **short-term projects** are also needed. For more information, see

<https://funeralconsumerswmass.org/volunteer-opportunities/>

“Living in the Shadow of Death”

On Saturday, October 19, 2024, at 2:00 pm, our colleagues in the **Funeral Consumer Alliance of Eastern Massachusetts** will hold their annual meeting.

TylaAnn Burger, RN, CHPN, will share her expertise on hospice and serious illness care. She recently retired as Director of Clinical Services for a large hospice and palliative care program in central and eastern Massachusetts. She coordinated care for patients coping with end-stage disease, a pandemic, and major challenges in delivering healthcare. She was the founding director of Friends Hospice in inner-city Philadelphia, serving many non-English speaking, unhoused, mentally ill and disabled people.

All members and guests welcome!

Bring your questions and concerns. Refreshments served on site.

Please register in advance at www.fcaemass.org to receive updates or the Zoom link.



Location: Friends Meeting at Cambridge, 5 Longfellow Park, Cambridge, MA

Expanded after-death care options? Not yet

By Sandy Ward

The Massachusetts legislature has not yet legalized alkaline hydrolysis (water cremation) or natural organic reduction (N.O.R. or human composting). Bills filed in January 2023, at the beginning of this two-year session, did gain approval from the Public Health Committee, and from the Public Health Finance Committee, but months passed without other action.

On June 25, 2024, the office of bill sponsor Representative Natalie Higgins wrote, “Thank you for your continued support and advocacy for H.2193, our legislation aimed at expanding after-death care options in Massachusetts to include natural organic reduction and alkaline hydrolysis. We are excited to let you know that we have filed Amendment 113, Expanding After-Death Care Options in the Commonwealth to H.4789, An Act relative to strengthening Massachusetts’ economic leadership. We are hopeful that this bill will be the

opportunity for Massachusetts to become the 12th state to legalize natural organic reduction, as well as the 29th state to legalize alkaline hydrolysis.”

Unfortunately, that Amendment 113 strategy failed. A different path was taken by the Public Health committee, which on July 1st sent H.2193 (and many other pending bills) to study order H.4739, with instructions to report with recommendations, if any, by Dec. 31, 2024.

So we are still waiting....

Note: Three neighboring states (New York, Vermont, and Maine) have already legalized human composting. We await word of the arrival of any N.O.R. providers nearby.

For Alkaline Hydrolysis, consult CANA’s excellent overview page with a MAP of which states already have active providers:

<https://www.cremationassociation.org/alkalinehydrolysis.html>



WHAT IS ALKALINE HYDROLYSIS?

Alkaline Hydrolysis, also known as water cremation or aquamation, is an alternative to traditional cremation. This process uses water, heat, and alkaline chemicals to break down the body, resulting in a reduced environmental impact compared to conventional methods.

It involves placing the body in a specially designed chamber filled with a mixture of water and potassium hydroxide. The process typically takes 6 to 12 hours and results in the decomposition of organic materials, leaving behind only bones, which are then prepared as “cremated remains,” similar to, but whiter than, the remains from flame cremation.

Alkaline Hydrolysis is often promoted as a greener alternative to traditional cremation, as it uses significantly less energy and produces no harmful emissions. (Flame cremation contributes to air pollution.)

Outreach and Educational Presentations by FCAWM



Cecile Richard speaking Sept. 23 in East Longmeadow.



Sandy Ward speaking Sept. 23 at the East Longmeadow COA

Sharing information with the public is an important part of our mission. Our volunteers enjoy providing helpful information to audiences in senior centers, libraries, or other community settings. We participate in information fairs as well as give talks. **Please contact us if you would like to invite us to a group or an event.** Here are examples of recent outreach:

- **Sept. 12:** Adams COA Community Fair, 3 Hoosac St, Adams. Alex Tinari.
- **Sept. 19:** “What To Know Before You Go” talk by Sandy Ward, co-hosted by the Huntington Public Library and the Huntington COA, Stanton Hall, 26 Russell Rd, Huntington.
- **Sept. 23:** “What To Know Before You Go” program with Sandy Ward and Cecile Richard. Pleasant View Senior Center, 328 N. Main St., East Longmeadow.

Upcoming events, free and open to the public:

- **Sept. 27:** Williamstown COA Wellness Fair. Alex Tinari and Sandy Ward will be there to greet you and answer questions. The Harper Center, 118 Church Street, Williamstown, 11am-2pm.
- **Oct. 7:** “Green Burial” by Joan Pillsbury. Pleasant View Senior Center, 328 North Main St., East Longmeadow, 10:30am-noon.
- **Oct. 8:** Amherst COA Health Fair, Bangs Community Center, 70 Boltwood Walk, Amherst, 4:00-6:00pm.
- **Oct. 10:** Holyoke COA Health & Wellness Fair, 291 Pine St., Holyoke. 9am-1pm
- **Dec. 5:** “Options for Final Arrangements” South County Senior Center, 22 Amherst Road, Sunderland. 10:30-11:30am.

Building Bridges in the Deathcare Landscape

2024 Deathcare Superconference

September 27-29, 2024, Seattle, WA + virtual

Funeral Consumers Alliance | National End-of-Life Doula Alliance
National Home Funeral Alliance | People's Memorial Association

“The goal of this event is for alternative deathcare and funeral care providers to share resources and have high-level conversations about what we want the future of deathcare to look like, from death doulas to hospice to home funerals to green burials and alternative disposition options to protecting consumer funerary rights.

“Professionals within deathcare and adjacent fields will congregate to listen and discuss topics relevant to alternative dispositions, consumer protections, professional regulations, environmental impact, and more.”

FCAWM member Carol Coan will be attending this Superconference in person, and we look forward to hearing her report of the three-day event. FCAWM board members Sandy Ward and Alex Tinari, and Patti Muldoon, President of FCAEM, will be observing remotely from their homes in Massachusetts for the main day (Saturday, September 28, 1:00pm to 8:40pm ET) of panel presentations and group discussions. These are the Saturday panels available via Zoom:

1. Legal Issues
2. Affordability
3. Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion
4. Models of Care

Each panel has four speakers. Heather Massey, of Falmouth, Massachusetts, will be speaking in panel 2, Affordability. “How might we improve affordability in each of our communities?” is a question posed for group discussion following panel 2.

For more about this Superconference, visit <https://www.homefuneralalliance.org/conference.html>

Speaking of affordability...

What Happens When You Cannot Afford to Die?

That was the title on an invitation sent to us by the national Funeral Consumers Alliance, promoting a webinar (5/22/24) about the **Indigent Burial Program** in Louisville, Kentucky. We watched the webinar and learned how they offer burial and cremation services for community members who lack resources or family. Their program is compassionate and remarkably effective. Inspirational! For more information, see <https://funerals.org/dignity-in-death-webinar/> or ask Sandy Ward.

Donations welcome!

Please make checks payable to FCAWM and send to P. O. Box 994, Greenfield, MA 01302-0994.
Or donate ONLINE by credit card or e-check: funeralconsumerswma.org/donate/

Contributions are tax-deductible. We are a 501(c)(3) organization.

___ YES! I want to renew support for the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Western Massachusetts and its mission of promoting and protecting a consumer's right to choose meaningful, dignified, and affordable final arrangements: funeral or memorial services, care of the body and disposition of human remains (including burial, cremation or donation). I'm enclosing my voluntary contribution of

___ \$15 ___ \$30 ___ \$50 ___ \$100 or \$ _____

___ I'm NEW. Please enroll me and send the "Before I Go, You Should Know" planner and membership package. (Suggested new member donation is \$30.) I am enclosing \$ _____

___ Please send me ___ copies of the "Before I Go, You Should Know" planner. I enclose a donation of \$ _____ to reimburse FCAWM for the expenses of acquiring and mailing the 30-page, spiral-bound planner. (Suggested minimum \$15 per copy.)

___ I have time and interest in helping FCAWM. Please contact me about volunteer opportunities.

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____ Prefer to receive newsletters via email? Yes No

✂-----cut here-----

Your donations are important

It is through your donations that we are able to carry on our mission to make educational information available and to advocate for consumer death care rights, and provide electronic access. Services and expenses include:

- Providing the Funeral Home Price Comparison Table.
- Maintenance of the FCAWM website.
- Providing information pamphlets to consumers and affiliates.

- Providing information about affordable options for funerals, green funerals, burial, cremation and water cremation.
- Maintaining a telephone line for consumer inquiries.
- Room rental charges for annual meeting.
- Dues paid to FCA National.
- Publishing this newsletter twice a year

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THIS ISSUE INCLUDES THESE ARTICLES, AND MORE:

Join us October 20 for “You Can Do It: Family-Led Funerals”

See pages 1 and 2 about our Annual Meeting & Program with guest speaker Lee Webster.

We have
openings
on our
Board of
Trustees.
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The Massachusetts
legislature has not yet
legalized alkaline hydrolysis
(water cremation) or natural
organic reduction (human
composting). Page 4

Come VOTE
on proposed
Bylaw update.

See Insert
and Page 2

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