



# Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Finger Lakes

## Spring 2016 Newsletter

www.fingerlakesfunerals.org • info@fingerlakesfunerals.org

P.O. Box 134, Ithaca, NY 14851-0134 • (607) 273-8316

## Aid in Dying in New York: Your Right to Choose

Public presentation by  
**Laurie Leonard, LMSW**  
Associate Director of  
*End of Life Choices New York*

Sponsored by  
*Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Finger Lakes*

**Sunday, April 24, 2016**

2:00 pm Auditorium, Kendal at Ithaca  
2230 North Triphammer Road, Ithaca

*Follow the signs for public parking areas  
And see directions this page*



**Laurie Leonard, MBA** (Harvard Business School) and MSW (Fordham University), is a licensed social worker specializing in end-of-life issues, with extensive experience dealing with both hospice and hospital services. She has a private practice in bereavement counseling

and is the Associate Director of *End of Life Choices New York*. In 2001, New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani presented Laurie with a New York Volunteer Service award.

Advances in medicine have increased our life spans. While this has been for the most part a welcome development, many people resist being kept alive by medical treatments based on modern technology even if they are suffering and have a poor quality of life. On the other hand, in some

cases our remarkable medical advances may be said to prolong dying rather than to extend living.

Ms. Leonard will discuss the process by which a mentally competent, terminally ill patient may obtain a prescription which he or she can self-administer to end suffering. This aid-in-dying procedure is currently legal in five states but not in New York. The latest efforts to legalize this procedure in New York will be discussed. Some things you will learn from this presentation:

- Why dying is very different today from what it was a hundred years ago.
- How legalization of aid-in-dying can reduce suffering and increase the number of peaceful deaths.
- The current status of proposed legislation to legalize aid-in-dying in New York.
- The current status of a lawsuit that has been filed in an attempt to legalize aid-in-dying in New York.
- The experiences of five states in which aid-in-dying is legal.
- Legal alternatives to aid-in-dying that can improve your chances of having a peaceful death.

Laurie Leonard is a compelling speaker. Previous audience members have called her “an excellent communicator who held a group with sensitivity and compassion”; “clear and

### Directions to Kendal at Ithaca Auditorium

- It is recommended that visitors to the Auditorium use the (old and familiar) South entrance after leaving North Triphammer Road. The parking lot is close to the Auditorium.
- For the South entrance, turn LEFT at the stop sign for the circular road. Follow the curved road to Visitor Parking (see sign on right). Enter through the doorway under the portico. Find auditorium on your left.

illuminating"; and "informative and well prepared." To learn more, visit [www.endoflifechoicesny.org](http://www.endoflifechoicesny.org). •

## PLEASE STAY FOR A BRIEF BUSINESS SESSION TO FOLLOW MS. LEONARD'S PRESENTATION

The single item of business requiring a quorum is the election of directors and officers.

### Election of officers and directors

President: Donna Scott

Vice President: Barry Adams

Corresponding Secretary: Diana Nathanielsz

Recording Secretary: Pat Pryor

Treasurer: Carol Hardy

*Continuing members of the board:*

Martin Hatch

Angela Mennitto

Eddie Spaulding

*Continuing Advisors:*

David Bandler

Carolyn Eberhard

Joel Rabinowitz

**Many thanks** to retiring members of the Board Roy Colle, Cathy Darrow (who served as secretary for several years), and Ralph Jones. We thank each of them for their valuable ideas and hard work over the years. •

### Nominations to board membership

Deena Freed

Bronwyn Mohlke

Peggy Haine (see short biographies below)

Nominations from the floor will be invited.

### Nominees for the FCA Board of Directors

**Deena Freed** first got into the 'death thing' by taking a course called Music for Healing and Transition. As a classical guitarist, she became the first music volunteer at Hospicare in Ithaca. Later, she joined the Board of Trustees at Greensprings Natural Cemetery Preserve and served for nearly five years. During that time, she was Volunteer Coordinator, Vice President, and President and was an active team member.

At EcoVillage, she is a member of the steering committee of CHAT (Community Health and Aging

Team) that works to promote planning and conscious choices for elders. She was influential in setting up a special EcoVillage section at Green-springs (humorously called the EcoVillage 4<sup>th</sup> Neighborhood) and she wrote an article for the FCAFL Newsletter about the EcoVillage/Greensprings connection. She's been on many committees during her time at EcoVillage, including serving (about 20 years) on the Process-Steering Committee, and holding various offices in the community. She is very interested in improving end-of-life care and the grace that might be ours as we approach the end of our lives.

**Peggy Haine** - When at Cornell Peggy worked for various professors, administered grants and contracts, directed the Summer College Program, and, most fun, wrote propaganda for a great university, under the aegis of the Office of Communication Strategies. Retiring in 2004 she then devoted herself to real estate sales, attended the Mendenhall School of Auctioneering and, with a close friend, started a charity auction business. In addition, she received a certificate in food and wine writing from the Culinary Institute of America and has written on food and wine for local publications. She also crafts bios and obituaries for friends and clients.

Along the way she enjoyed life as a musician and bandleader, best known for her work with the Lowdown Alligator Jass. In the City of Ithaca she served as alderman representing the 4<sup>th</sup> Ward, member of the Board of Zoning Appeals, and secretary to the Planning Department.

Recently retired, she occupies herself with writing, cooking, learning to play the ukulele, participating with the Trumansburg Rotary Club, and volunteering at the History Center and Trumansburg's Gemm Shop. She resides with her husband and their dog on a farmette outside of Trumansburg, where they raise traditional cider apples and are enjoying the local cider boom. •

**Bronwyn Mohlke** is a member of the Ithaca Quaker Meeting. She is one of the regional coordinators for the Quaker ARCH program (Aging Resources Consultation and Help) which supports Friends in later life. One of the sessions she led was on burial options in and near Ithaca. She was grateful for the resources provided by FCAFL. She would like to help people consider memorial/funeral arrangements in advance of a loved one's death, so that they are not in the position of making lots of decisions while grief stricken. She is one of the facilitators of Ithaca's Death Café. Bronwyn was born in Ithaca, moved away in childhood, but returned as an adult and has lived here for more than twenty years. She works at one of the Cornell libraries. •

## A Generous Bequest to FCAFL

We are very pleased to announce that Jean Warholic, who died in July 2014, left a generous bequest of \$12,000 to the Alliance. Jean served the Ithaca Memorial Society and the FCAFL in many ways from 1992 to 2006. The Fall 2014 Newsletter contained an article about Jean's extraordinary service, which you can view at [www.fingerlakesfunerals.org](http://www.fingerlakesfunerals.org). We are most grateful for Jean's generosity. Among other important FCA projects, the board will be making a special donation to the National FCA in her name. •

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## Ithaca's Death Café

*By Angela Mennitto, FCAFL Board Member*

"At a Death Café gathering, people (often strangers) come together to eat cake, drink tea, and discuss death. The objective of Death Café is 'to increase awareness of death with a view to helping people make the most of their (finite) lives'."

The first Ithaca Death Café was over two years ago and it's still going strong. Each café has had a mix of new and returning participants with 15 to 30 people sitting in small groups, each with a facilitator. And, of course, we eat cake and drink tea.

We start from the perspective that death belongs to everyone and we are meeting simply as people who are going to die. Those who work around death and dying are asked to leave their professional identities at the door.

With no agenda beyond "bringing death out of silence" the conversations wander through the landscape of our experiences of death and dying, our fears and beliefs, and our preparations for our own deaths—be they practical, philosophical, or spiritual.

One table explores the idea of green burial, while another is deep in debate about physician-assisted dying and a third is telling ghost stories. On another occasion one table talks about how their exposure to death as children (or lack thereof) colored their current attitudes, while another table is discussing the merits of having a gravestone for others to visit versus incorporating their ashes in a fireworks display.

The Death Café serves as a container to hold what needs to be spoken or felt about death by the

people in the room on that day, making each Café unique. There's curiosity, nervousness, laughter, sadness, and the occasional sugar rush! Feedback from participants notes how useful it is to have the space to speak on a taboo topic, to hear others' views and to be heard, and the value of meeting kindred spirits and feeling part of a community.

The Ithaca Death Café is hosted quarterly. The next Café will be in late spring. If you'd like to be informed of future dates, drop an email to [deathcafeithaca@gmail.com](mailto:deathcafeithaca@gmail.com). We also post the events on the Death Café website ([deathcafe.com](http://deathcafe.com)). •

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## Websites of Interest

### **Aging with Dignity – Five Wishes:**

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

Five Wishes is a very popular living will because it is written in everyday language and helps start and structure important conversations about care in times of serious illness.

### **The Conversation Project:**

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

Dedicated to helping people talk about their wishes for end-of-life care.

### **Death Café: [www.deathcafe.com](http://www.deathcafe.com)**

At a Death Café people drink tea, eat cake and discuss death. The aim is to increase awareness of death to help people make the most of their (finite) lives.

### **Death Over Dinner: [www.deathoverdinner.org](http://www.deathoverdinner.org)**

Learn more about another way to get the conversation going.

### **Compassion & Choices:**

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

Compassion & Choices works to improve care and expand choices at the end of life. They work to change attitudes, practices and policies so that everyone can access the information and options they need to have more control and comfort at the end of life. •

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**PO Box 134**

**Ithaca, NY 14851-0134**

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**The Funeral Consumers Alliance of the  
Finger Lakes, Inc.**, founded in 1958 as the Ithaca

Memorial Society, is a non-profit, tax-exempt, public-service organization that promotes advance planning of funeral arrangements and consumer education and protection with respect to funeral-related issues.

Membership is free and open to all. Volunteers provide all services and programs. A Board of Directors is elected by the members. The FCAFL is supported entirely by donations and is a member of the national Funeral Consumers Alliance, Inc., which has more than 80 affiliates. This Newsletter is published twice a year and is freely available.

**The Board of Directors, 2015-2016**

Donna Scott, president; Carol Hardy, treasurer; Pat Pryor, secretary; Diana Nathanielsz, corresponding secretary; Barry Adams; Royal D Colle; Cathy Darrow; Martin Hatch; Ralph Jones; Angela L Mennitto; Edie Spaulding. Advisors: David Bandler; Carolyn Eberhard; Joel Rabinowitz.

**Donations received In Memoriam**

Barry Adams

*in memory of* Molly Adams

Anatol & Carolyn Eberhard

*in memory of* Donna Bergmark

Dianne L Geohring

*in memory of* Rhoda McKeen

Ann McAdams

*in memory of* Alan and Lee McAdams

Janet Shay

*in memory of* Jan & Mike Shay

John & Dorothy Sholeen

*in memory of* Margaret Feldman

***FCA of the Finger Lakes Spring Newsletter***  
*Newsletter Editor: Diana Nathanielsz for FCAFL*