



Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Finger Lakes

Spring 2020 Newsletter

www.fingerlakesfunerals.org • info@fingerlakesfunerals.org

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POSTPONED ~ Spring Annual Meeting at Kendal in Ithaca

Invited speaker will present at our 2021 Annual Meeting

As you will appreciate, in compliance with government directives related to the coronavirus, it was with a heavy heart that we had to make the decision to cancel our major Annual Meeting which is normally open to the public. We had expected Dr Gregory Eastwood to make a presentation. He is the University Professor of the State University of New York and Professor of Bioethics and Humanities and Professor of Medicine at Upstate Medical University. His most recent book *Finishing Our Story. Preparing for the End of Life*, was published in 2019 by the Oxford University Press. It's available at <Amazon.com>. He has also been on our local WCNY station talking about end-of-life issues.

Happily, we can look forward to hearing Dr Eastwood next year, when he will be our featured speaker at our spring Annual Meeting. You'll be able to find details on our website nearer the time! And there will be notice in our Spring 2021 newsletter. Also to be found on our website, there is MUCH helpful information – for instance fliers on numerous end-of-life questions, including an extensive survey of funeral services and charges available at local funeral homes. Our dedicated board volunteers carry out these surveys every two years. Check out our website at: <fingerlakesfunerals.org>.

Diana Nathanielsz, board president

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Donations gratefully received

Thomas Bonn *in memory of* Ellen Bonn

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in memory of Marion DaGrossa

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Mary Wright

Donations received 8/9/19 – 2/18/20

***Sincere thanks to all our donors – we couldn't
do it without you!***

Talking About Death Won't Kill You by Angela Mennitto

In November, we participated in the Talking About Death Won't Kill You event for the third year. It's an information fair for death and dying-related topics. Staff from local organizations came together to help people explore:

- advance directives: health care proxies & living wills
- accessing palliative & hospice care
- wills & trusts
- organ donation
- funeral planning & green burial

The event was well attended and people circulated among the tables asking great questions and gathering lots of information.

This year, the organizers had hoped to bring a version of the event to other towns in Tompkins County. Unfortunately, they've had to postpone the first event that was scheduled for late April in Brooktondale.

As soon as it is safe to schedule public events again, we'll bring the event to Brooktondale and perhaps Newfield and Groton.

This leads us to our next article...or public service announcement, if you like.

The Importance of Having Your Advance Directives in Place in a Time of COVID-19

Americans are not good at talking about death. It's why we participate in events like Talking About Death Won't Kill You, which help normalize conversations about death and dying and allow people to develop the practical know-how needed to plan well for the end of life.

An advance directive tells your doctor what kind of care you want if you are unable to make medical decisions. Advance directives can include living wills and health care proxies.

- A Living Will lets you state your wishes for end-of-life medical care in case you become unable to communicate your decisions.
- A Health Care Proxy (also known as a durable power of attorney for health care) is a legal document that lets you name another person (a proxy or agent) to express your wishes and make health care decisions for you if you cannot speak for yourself.

It's important to clarify your wishes ahead of time rather than waiting for a medical crisis. It isn't appropriate to discuss a loved one's wishes for the first time when they are in an I.C.U. bed.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlights the importance of having our advance directives prepared...in advance. Reports from emergency rooms and intensive care units are saying that doctors really do not have the time to discuss end of life options and choices right now.

Now is a good time to think about your wishes for end of life care, document them, and have a conversation with your health care proxy. Encourage other family members to do the same. This could be something positive to come from staying at home.

Do you need a little help considering what to include as you document your wishes?

The Five Wishes Living Will can be a useful resource. Find it at <fivewishes.org>.

Do you have a loved one who hasn't documented their wishes yet and you don't know how to get the conversation started?

The Conversation Project has great information on how to get the ball rolling <theconversationproject.org>.

Do you have a Health Care Proxy named?

Anyone over the age of 18 should have one. The form does not require a notary or attorney, only the signature of two adult witnesses who have not been named as your proxy or alternate proxy. It is important to choose someone who knows you well, understands what is important to you, and is willing to speak on your behalf and act on your wishes. They need to be able to advocate for you in a health care setting. Download a copy of the NYS Health Care Proxy form here: <health.ny.gov/publications/1430.pdf>.

By creating your advance directives before you are faced with an illness or injury, you can spare your loved ones the stress of making decisions about your care if you are unable to do so. Make sure you share your documents with your loved ones, your doctor and your local hospital.

Beyond your advance directives which speak to your medical care, consider taking this opportunity to gather in one place beneficiary designations, life insurance policies, a list of your passwords, key contacts, medical professionals, financial advisors, and your wishes for your final arrangements, so that someone who needs to access that information can find it easily.

Stay safe, wash your hands often, laugh if you can, and keep calm.

FAQs COVID-19 and Funerals

Center for Disease Control & Prevention

Please note: Some text is abbreviated. Full text can be found at:
<www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#funerals>

Am I at risk if I go to a funeral or visitation service for someone who died of COVID-19?

There is currently no known risk associated with being in the same room at a funeral or visitation service with the body of someone who died of COVID-19.

What do funeral home workers need to know about handling decedents who had COVID-19?

A funeral or visitation service can be held for a person who has died of COVID-19. Funeral home workers should follow their routine infection prevention and control precautions when handling a decedent who died of COVID-19. Embalming can be conducted. Decedents with COVID-19 can be buried or cremated, but check for any additional state and local requirements that may dictate the handling and disposition of the remains of individuals who have died of certain infectious diseases. Details about specific safety precautions can be found on the website noted above.

Am I at risk if I touch someone who died of COVID-19 after they have passed away?

COVID-19 is a new disease and **we are still learning how it spreads**. The virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to mainly spread from close contact (i.e., within about 6 feet) with a person who is currently sick with COVID-19. The virus likely spreads primarily through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes, similar to how influenza and other respiratory infections spread. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. This type of spread is not a concern after death.

People should consider not touching the body of someone who has died of COVID-19. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

What should I do if my family member died from COVID-19 while overseas?

When a US citizen dies outside the United States, the deceased person's next of kin or legal representative should notify US consular officials at the Department of State. Consular personnel are available 24 hours a day,

7 days a week, to provide assistance to US citizens for overseas emergencies. If a family member, domestic partner, or legal representative is in a different country from the deceased person, he or she should call the Department of State's Office of Overseas Citizens Services in Washington, DC, from 8 am to 5 pm Eastern time, Monday through Friday, at 888-407-4747 (toll-free) or 202-501-4444. For emergency assistance after working hours or on weekends and holidays, call the Department of State switchboard at 202-647-4000 and ask to speak with the Overseas Citizens Services duty officer. In addition, the US Embassy closest to or in the country where the US citizen died can provide assistance.

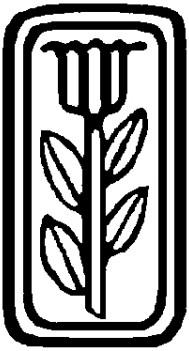
My family member died from COVID-19 while overseas. What are the requirements for returning the body to the United States?

CDC requirements for importing human remains depend upon if the body has been embalmed, cremated, or if the person died from a quarantinable communicable disease... the remains must meet the standards for importation found in 42 Code of Federal Regulations Part 71.55 and may be cleared, released, and authorized for entry into the United States only under the following conditions:

- The remains are cremated; OR
- The remains are properly embalmed and placed in a hermetically sealed casket; OR
- The remains are accompanied by a permit issued by the CDC Director. The CDC permit (if applicable) must accompany the human remains at all times during shipment.
 - Permits for the importation of the remains of a person known or suspected to have died from a quarantinable communicable disease may be obtained through the CDC Division of Global Migration and Quarantine by calling the CDC Emergency Operations Center at 770-488-7100 or emailing dgmqpolicyoffice@cdc.gov.

Please see CDC's Guidance for Importation of Human Remains into the United States for Interment or Subsequent Cremation

<www.cdc.gov/importation/human-remains.html>



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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. **Check out our website: fingerlakesfunerals.org AND “LIKE” us on Facebook**

The Board of Directors, 2019-2020

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Ways FCAFL helps the public

Those with questions about funeral planning can talk to an FCAFL volunteer by phone (607-273-8316) or by email info@fingerlakesfunerals.org

FCAFL presentations

Volunteers from FCAFL give presentations at Lifelong in Ithaca and at other venues in the area.

Presentations include information on funeral planning facts with backup fliers on the numerous topics involved for planning ahead.