

# FCA REPORT

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FCA-GKC



## Highland Cemetery transfer complete Natural burial continues to be option

By Steve Nicely, FCA-GKC Board Member



On July 29, management of the Highland Cemetery in Prairie Village was transferred to the newly formed Highland Cemetery Association of Prairie Village. On hand to formalize the event: Second-from-left, Asher Langworthy, former cemetery association president; and new association board members Marianne Noll, Lyle Van Vleet, Steve Nicely, and Frank Cockrell.

In our spring newsletter this year, we reported the discovery of a 145-year-old cemetery in Prairie Village that allows natural burial, something the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Greater Kansas City had fruitlessly sought for several years in the Kansas City area. Natural burial—in biodegradable caskets or shrouds without embalming and without concrete grave liners—was the rule when the one-acre **Highland Cemetery** opened after the Civil War. The practice still is allowed today.

The small cemetery is at the west end of the 5000 block of West 65th Street, between Nall and Roe

avenues. It is surrounded by the Countryside East neighborhood.

Management of the cemetery was transferred during the past summer, from Asher C. Langworthy Jr. to an independent board of directors for a new organization, the **Highland Cemetery Association of Prairie Village**, which qualifies as tax exempt under Section 50(c)(13) of the U.S. Internal Revenue code. The new board members are Marianne Noll, president; Lyle Van Vleet, vice president; Frank Cockrell, treasurer; and me as secretary. Lyle, Frank, and I are board members of FCA-GKC.

*See Highland Cemetery, page 6*

## Funeral, burial practices of faiths, cultures are focus of annual meeting

By Sally King, FCA-GKC Board Member

Have you ever wondered about the funeral and burial practices of other religions and cultures? What do they value, encourage, and discourage? Is it true that African Americans avoid cremation and that Jews and Muslims shun embalming? What is unique about the end-of-life customs of Latinos, Buddhists, and Native Americans? And how do they differ from standard American practices today?

A panel of experts will satisfy our curiosity about questions such as these on Nov. 13 at the annual meeting of the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Greater Kansas City. The gathering will be at the Kauffman Conference Center, 4801 Rockhill Road, Kansas City, Mo.

The meeting begins at 1:30 p.m. with brief presentations by each speaker. Breakout sessions will provide detailed information on the topics. And we'll offer an opportunity to answer questions before things wrap up at 4:00 p.m.

Open to the public and free of charge, the meeting will be of particular interest to social workers, clergy, and nurses. Attendance qualifies social workers and nurses for two continuing education units, or CEUs.

Please reserve a space by leaving a message at 816-561-6322 or emailing [fca.gkc@gmail.com](mailto:fca.gkc@gmail.com). Visit [www.funeralskc.org](http://www.funeralskc.org) for a flier that can be e-mailed to others. ✕

*See Annual Meeting, back page*

## The big picture

By Nancy Jobe, FCA-GKC President



Can you believe we are in the last quarter of 2015? The Funeral Consumers Alliance board and volunteers have been very busy this year.

As an organization, we were happy to help with the transition of management of the Highland Cemetery in Prairie Village (see page 1). Thanks to Steve Nicely for bringing the project to the attention of the FCA board. And for the time they put forth on the project, thanks to Frank Cockrell, Steve, Marci Michnick, Lyle Van Vleet, and Lynn Anderson. Their tenacity to sort through paper work and analyze the viability of transferring the cemetery's management to a new organization was a daunting task with a tremendous outcome. Special thanks to attorney Audrey Snyder for the excellent legal advice and counsel she has provided to the project.

Frank Cockrell, Lyle Van Vleet, and Jim Fitzpatrick have spent hours refining our funeral price survey to offer user-friendly handouts for consumers. It is an important mission of the Funeral Consumers Alliance to educate residents about their options for budget-friendly burial expenses.

Board members Sally King, Marci, and Mike Shalinsky have planned an exciting agenda for the Funeral Consumers Alliance-GKC Annual Meeting Nov. 13 at the Kauffman Center (see pages 1 and 8). I'm looking forward to learning about end-of-life practices within several religions and ethnic cultures. The annual meeting is sure to be an educational opportunity for consumers and professionals.

### With gratitude and sadness

**Pam Thomas**, board secretary, records and files the FCA board minutes and is an invaluable asset to the organization. Please join me in thanking her for giving more than

20 years of volunteerism to the FCA—and for continuing to do it with enthusiasm!

But with sadness, the Funeral Consumers Alliance must accept the resignation of Board Treasurer **Jim Fitzpatrick** from the board at the end of this year. Jim has been with the board for several years and has been a major leader in orchestrating our last two price surveys. As chairman of the price survey committee, he has ensured that thousands of details came together to produce an accurate compilation of information to help all of us make informed decisions. He has also been the keeper of our finances and has skillfully performed all the duties of treasurer. Another of his key roles has been managing our website. Jim has always been willing to assist with projects to help the overall objectives of FCA.



So you can see that we'll greatly miss Jim's talents. I'm sure the new projects he will be tackling in other arenas will rejoice at finding the loyal and dedicated volunteer who has graced the FCA these past years.

**Frank Cockrell**, retired chief financial officer of Black & Veatch engineering, takes over as FCA treasurer. Thank you, Frank!

As you can see, the nine volunteer members of FCA-GKC's board have been busy staying on top of funeral changes, alternative burial choices, pricing, and education for consumers. If you might like to help with our mission, we would love to meet with you. For more information on volunteering, visit our website, [www.funeralskc.org](http://www.funeralskc.org).

As an all-volunteer organization, the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Greater Kansas City cannot function without your support and encouragement. All volunteers, donations, and suggestions are welcome. ☺

## FCA-GKC wins grants from two funders

By Jim Fitzpatrick, FCA-GKC Treasurer

As most of you know, the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Greater Kansas City relies on contributions from individuals for the bulk of its financing. Occasionally, however, we get grants, and they sure do help!

We have been fortunate this year to win two grants: one for \$1,000 from the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth and another for \$1,500 from Crossroads Hospice Charitable Foundation.

:: **The Sisters of Charity grant** is from a fund maintained by the religious order for assisting agencies in the community that effect systemic change on behalf of the poor and disadvantaged. The FCA's grant application to the sisters stated in part:

"The time of death is a vulnerable period for families. It is not uncommon for them to make funeral arrangements they cannot afford because they are distraught, don't plan ahead, and are unaware of the wide spread of prices between providers. Our goal is to inform them of their options and urge them to make arrangements before the time of need. The most common and saddest calls we receive on our telephone message line are for assistance paying funeral bills. The poor are especially vulnerable. ... When these calls arrive, it usually is too late. The average cost for a standard funeral in our area is \$6,623 plus cemetery costs; \$10,000 is a fair estimate of average total costs."

Being a small, nonprofit organization, we do not have the means to help people financially, but we can at least give them advice and try to steer them toward some of the more economical options.

:: **The Crossroads Hospice Charitable Foundation grant** came early this year. The foundation, based in Tulsa, Okla., is active in seven states and has offices in Independence and Lenexa. The foundation offers education, free resources, and support regarding end-of-life care.

Funds from both grants are being used to help pay for printing costs. The Sisters of Charity grant goes toward printing and mailing of our newsletter and a

# Miscarriage, stillbirth & infant death: Financial & emotional support available

By Marci Michnick, FCA-GKC Vice President

Miscarriage, stillbirth, and infant death can be devastating losses. Making arrangements for final disposition of those small remains adds to the emotional burden of families already fraught with grief. It can also pose financial challenges.

Social worker Marni Scott, of Saint Luke's Hospital, along with an anonymous staff member from another Kansas City hospital (we'll call her Jane Doe), told us about the emotional and financial assistance available to families dealing with these losses. We also learned that several funeral providers and cemeteries in our area offer discounted services in cases of miscarriage, stillbirth, and infant death.

At Saint Luke's, the death of a fetus of 14 weeks or less gestation is typically considered a miscarriage, Scott said, although the on-duty nurse manager makes the final determination. According to Scott, when a fetus is formed to the point that it is recognizable as a human, it is most often considered a fetal death by the hospital, rather than a miscarriage. The fetal remains from a miscarriage are handled as medical waste by the hospital, while fetal deaths receive the attention and care of normal deaths.

According to the Kansas Division of Vital Statistics, "fetal death" refers to the spontaneous intrauterine death of a fetus at any time during pregnancy. Fetal deaths occurring at more than 20 weeks of gestation are often called stillbirths. Most states report fetal deaths of 20 weeks of gestation or more and 350 grams birth weight. Kansas amended its law in 2014 to define stillbirth by 20 weeks of gestational age, and no longer considers the weight of the fetus.

Both Scott and Doe report that some families face difficulty in coming up with needed funds for a burial or cremation. Saint Luke's has a fund available to provide financial assistance for families who meet the federal poverty guidelines. The program provides funds for cremation but not burial.



An infant's grave at Resurrection Cemetery, one of the area's Catholic cemeteries that have a designated infant burial area.

## Affordable options

As a social worker, Scott helps families find affordable options for infant and stillborn final disposition. For residents of Johnson County, the Penwell-Gabel Funeral Home in Olathe offers a no-cost cremation or burial for children 5 years and younger. According to funeral director Mike Benedick, Penwell-Gabel served about 40 families in 2014 with this program. Most families opted for cremation rather than burial. The family-owned funeral home offers this program as a community service, Benedick said.

The Cremation Society of Kansas and Missouri offers a stillborn or infant cremation for \$295. Amos Family Funeral Home in Shawnee offers an infant cremation or graveside memorial for \$200.

Some families opt for burial. Catholic Cemeteries of Northeast Kansas has four cemeteries with designated infant sections. An infant burial plot is offered to families at no charge, but there is a fee of \$300 for opening and closing the grave.

Other funeral providers and cemeteries in the area no doubt provide similar discounted services. The same applies to other hospitals. We could not survey all of them for this story.

In lieu of having a funeral home pick up the stillborn or infant remains from the hospital, some families choose to transfer the remains on their



A circle of infant and child graves at Mount Muncie Cemetery in Leavenworth.

own to the chosen funeral home. Scott pointed to various reasons for this choice. Some families live many miles from the hospital, and if using a funeral home from their hometown it could be cost-prohibitive to have a funeral home travel that far. Other families simply want the extra time to spend with their stillborn or deceased infant. The hospital provides a letter for the family to carry during the transport process.

Both hospitals offer additional services to help families with their loss and facilitate closure.

Professional photography is offered for deceased infants or those that will be taken off of life support. Hand molds of the babies can also be made. Some families wish to spend time holding their baby following death, sometimes even after the remains have been stored in the refrigerated hospital morgue.

Both hospitals provide ongoing emotional comfort to families through a grief-and-loss-support nurse and through information about grief-and-loss community support groups. One hospital holds an annual memorial service for all children who died at the hospital during the year. A commemorative quilt is made honoring each child. These quilts are framed and line the walls of the hospital. ☘

# Heart Land Prairie Cemetery dream coming to life

By Lynn Anderson, FCA-GKC Board Member

In our spring newsletter, we told you about a natural burial site envisioned on the Kansas prairie.

The Land Institute, based in Salina, donated 13.5 acres of land just northeast of Salina for the burial ground, known as Heart Land Prairie Cemetery. A nonprofit called Heart Land Green Burial, Inc., was founded to operate the cemetery. The Ottawa County Zoning Board issued a special-use permit and the county commission approved it.

Sarah Crews, who is spearheading the project, said that much progress has been made since spring.

"We just finished our fundraising campaign, and have received the minimum we need to establish a permanent maintenance fund, as the state requires," Crews said.

While the organizers were raising money, they also were filing all the legal papers required to be formalized as a burial ground. A surveyor completed a land plat, which has been filed with the county.

What remains is to fill out all registration materials the state requires. When that is complete later this fall, Heart Land will legally be a cemetery—though not immediately ready to receive burials.

Many steps remain in this complex process: obtaining general liability insurance, acquiring equipment and tools for mowing and grave digging, contracting with a backhoe operator, and making decisions about grave markers and other details.

We'll provide more information in our spring newsletter, but in the meantime, readers may contact Crews (see right). ❧

## Burial guidelines

- Only unembalmed bodies in biodegradable containers or simple shrouds will be accepted.
- Vaults and above-ground monuments are not permitted.
- A 10-foot by 7-foot burial plot will cost \$1,250 plus an opening-and-closing fee of \$400.
- A 2.5-square-foot plot for cremated remains will cost \$200 plus a \$100 opening-and-closing fee.
- Families may open and close a grave themselves, by hand, in which case the fee is negotiable. "It is hard work to dig a grave," Crews noted. "So if someone chooses to do so, it would be necessary to communicate with us and prepare the grave *before* the burial."
- For now, plots will be sold only at the time of need, with no pre-sales.
- Cremated remains may be scattered for no charge in a wooded area beside the burial ground.

## Supporting the cemetery

- Volunteer for trail building and other projects.
- Spread the word about the cemetery through your organization's newsletter.
- Contribute financially to the maintenance endowment and for design and landscaping.
- To provide any form of support, contact Sarah Crews: E-mail [heartlandhomefunerals@gmail.com](mailto:heartlandhomefunerals@gmail.com) or phone 785-404-3214.

## Grants, from page 2


four-page handout containing the detailed prices of 95 funeral providers in our area. The Crossroads Hospice grant finances the printing and distribution of informational "rack" cards listing the five lowest-cost funeral options for cremation and immediate burial. FCA is distributing the cards and handouts to 26 HUD-subsidized housing projects for the elderly, hospices, and other places where having this information is especially needed.

We at FCA of Greater Kansas City extend deep gratitude to the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth and Crossroads Hospice Charitable Foundation.

Now, here's a list of individual contributors this year. We couldn't keep our mission going without you:

Deborah Altus, Lawrence; Don Baken, Liberty; M. Baker, Overland Park; John and Dixie Baum, Lenexa; Gary Beemer, Grain Valley; Gary and Carol Bloomer, Liberty; Thomas Brannon, Liberty; Charlene Charette, Lake Quivira; E. and B.H. Cummings, Fairway; Don and Addie Dietrich, Kansas City; Mary and Henry Droll, Kansas City; Clarence Edmondson, Kansas City; Margie Eucalyptus, Kansas City; Lou and Mary Funacchario, Overland Park; James Grebe, Roeland Park; Richard Griggs, Lee's Summit; Bonnie Johnson, North Kansas City; Kevin Kenefick, Kansas City; Linwood United Church, Kansas City; Dorothy Mauer, Independence; Sandra Meyers, Kansas City; Dennis Nelson, Atlanta, Ga.; Billie Platt, Shawnee Mission; Don Puett, Overland Park; Jess Rowland, Kansas City; Thomas Stalzer, Grandview;

Irene Starr, Mission; Martha Vannorsdel, Lewisville, Texas; Lyle and Marian Van Vleet, Shawnee; Jane and Thomas Wilkes, Kansas City; Doris Yonker, Kansas City.



**Funeral Consumers Alliance**  
of Greater Kansas City

**Lowest-cost funerals in town**  
The Funeral Consumers Alliance of Greater Kansas City's latest survey of prices charged by 95 funeral providers in our area is available free to cost-conscious consumers. The two least expensive methods available—direct cremation and immediate burial—are explained below followed by a listing of the five lowest-cost providers in each category. FCA-GKC, a nonprofit consumer organization, does not endorse or recommend individual funeral homes.

**Direct Cremation**  
The least expensive method of body disposition is direct cremation which averaged \$1,809 in our survey from a range of \$600 to \$2,980. It involves transporting and care of the body, preparing the death certificate, cremation and return of the ashes. It does not include embalming, a visitation or a service. The survey's five lowest-cost providers are:

Cashatt Family Funerals	\$600
Reflections Memorial Service	\$625
MidStatesCremation.com	\$695
Kansas City Funeral Directors	\$750
Cremation Center of Kansas City	\$895

**Immediate Burial**  
The least expensive method leading to the burial of a body is immediate burial, which averaged \$3,506 from a range of \$1,447 to \$5,642. Cemetery costs are extra. An immediate burial skips embalming, a visitation and a service. The five lowest-cost providers are:

Eley & Sons Funeral Chapel	\$1,670
Skradski Funeral Chapel	\$1,900
Duane E. Harvey Funeral Directors	\$1,945
Mrs. J.W. Jones Memorial Chapel	\$1,945
Cashatt Family Funerals	\$1,995

Multiple copies of the FCA rack card are available for your organization or facility, thanks to the Crossroads Hospice Charitable Foundation. To obtain a supply, call 816-561-6322 or e-mail [fca.gkc@gmail.com](mailto:fca.gkc@gmail.com).



# Green burial, Highland, and me

By Steve Nicely, FCA-GKC Board Member

On Friday afternoon, Sept. 25, I rode my bike to the Highland Cemetery in Prairie Village to check out the work of the Boy Scouts from Troop 117 who were preparing the grounds for the arrival of a professional surveyor the next day. About a dozen scouts and family members were operating lawn mowers, weed eaters, saws, and other tools under the direction of 15-year-old Jackson Harwood, who took on the project for his Eagle Scout badge.

As soon as I greeted Jackson, he asked, "Do you want to help?"

"What do you want me to do?" I replied.

"Rake grass clippings."

Next thing I knew, I had a rake in my hands. That's the mark of a *leader*, one of the qualifications for becoming an Eagle Scout.

During my decade of Funeral Consumers Alliance board membership, I never dreamed I would one day become involved in the operation of a cemetery (story on cover). The FCA's role has been that of a consumer advocacy organization, not part of the industry. But that's what happened this past summer when our new independent board assumed management of Highland.

Frustration was the cause. Numerous articles in this newsletter had addressed the topic of natural burial and the need for some—any—of the metro area's 50 public cemeteries to offer it. None did.

Why not?

"Ain't no money in it," said one industry insider. "No demand for it," said cemetery operators. So when we discovered Highland, which has no restrictions against natural burial, and learned that its manager was ready to retire, we acted quickly.

Previously I had favored cremation as an after-death choice because I thought it was a responsible conservation of land and I liked the idea of my vaporized body becoming airborne

in the atmosphere. I wrote about my conversion in a 2007 FCA newsletter account of a conversation with my wife:

"That's it. I don't want to be cremated."

"Why not?"

"Listen to this," I said, reading from a BBC News article about cremation, the choice of two-thirds of Britons:

The ovens in crematoria operate at temperatures up to 1,100C and burn for 75 minutes. They consume around 285 kilowatt-hours of gas and 15kwh of electricity. That's pretty much the same amount of energy as an average person would use at home in a month.

And CO<sub>2</sub> isn't the only pollution issue. A sixth of all UK mercury emissions are from the teeth fillings that go up in smoke along with the corpses of our loved ones. Mercury contaminates the air, the water, the soil, and thereby all of us. Exposure to mercury has been linked to all sorts of unpleasant illnesses...

I have contributed countless tons of atmospheric pollution during my 78 years, most of it in blissful ignorance of the consequences. I don't like the idea of adding a big slug of it after death in a final act of consumption. What kind of legacy is that?

"So what do you want done now?" she asked.

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## When you can't afford a funeral

A meaningful, heartfelt memorial doesn't need to cost more than your family can afford. Whether you spend \$600 or \$10,000, you'll love and miss the deceased just as much. It's the coming together of family and friends to laugh, cry, and love each other that makes a funeral meaningful, not the amount of money it costs.

And this is crucial: **there is no charity or government organization that will pay off any debt you've accrued if you arrange a funeral that's beyond your means.** It's your family's responsibility to spend within



Steve Nicely, left, with Jackson Harwood. As a future Eagle Scout and project leader, Jackson didn't hesitate to order his troops into action at the Highland Cemetery.

"Natural burial, also called green burial. It's the way all of our ancestors handled it until a few generations ago. No embalming. No casket. Just wrap me up in a blanket or something, dig a hole, slide me in and cover me up. It's the same way we have buried all of our pets. A tree or a bush and a prayer would be nice. Something of me can live again in the branches."

"Oh, sure," she said. "Where are you going to find a cemetery for that?"

Honey, we finally found one. ✕

its budget. Funeral homes are not required to let you pay in installments; many these days are asking for payment up front. While this might seem frustrating, it's a responsible business practice and it prevents many grieving people from falling into a financial trap when they're not thinking clearly. Sweating the monthly bills six months after the death because the funeral payments are high does not, I assure you, help lift the burden of grief.

Visit [www.funerals.org](http://www.funerals.org) for the complete story by Josh Slocum, FCA Executive Director.

## Highland Cemetery from page 1

A fifth board position remains to be filled.

Asher Langworthy, 81, recently retired as president of Langworthy Companies, Inc., a major Johnson County residential real estate developer starting in 1937. Asher also was ready to retire from his 30-year role as cemetery manager. His wife, former Kansas Sen. Audrey Langworthy, served as the cemetery's secretary.

Although the boards of FCA-GKC and the cemetery share three members, the new cemetery board operates separately and independently from FCA-GKC. And although the option of natural burial is a priority for FCA-GKC, future burials in Highland are not restricted to that method of burial. Like FCA-GKC, cemetery association board membership is completely voluntary. No board members receive pay for their work.

The new board has been busy ascending a steep learning curve. Bylaws have been adopted. BHC Rhodes Surveyors was retained to set accurate markers for the cemetery, including about 150 remaining grave sites that are available for sale.

Wil Anderson, survey services manager for BHC Rhodes, worked



Preparing for a survey of remaining grave plots at Highland Cemetery, from left: prospective Eagle Scout Jackson Harwood; Wil Anderson, of BHC Rhodes; and Mike Ewalt, survey crew leader.

with 15-year-old Jackson Harwood to prepare the cemetery and set markers. This work is Jackson's Eagle Scout project. His father, David D. Harwood, is scout master of troop 117 in Leawood. Jackson directed the work of about 20 scouts and family members from the troop.

Audrey Snyder, an attorney at Baker Soltz & Blum in Overland Park, serves as the cemetery board's legal counsel without charge.

Lynn Anderson, former editor of *The Best Times*, Johnson County's magazine for seniors and an FCA-GKC board member, researched and wrote a story about Highland Cemetery's rich history. Her history quotes a previous article written in 2005 by Linda Lewis:

"In the 1850s, this land was part of the Shawnee Nation reservation. When the Shawnees were later removed to Oklahoma, pioneer brothers John and Thomas Nall and their families squatted out 200 acres and became prosperous farmers. Half of this cemetery was owned by John Nall, the other by an Indian named John A. White, who was a friend of Nall's."

Twenty-nine Nall family members are buried in Highland, also known as Nall Cemetery.

Highland board president Marianne Noll and her husband, Prairie Village City Councilman

Steve Noll, created a website for the cemetery. Visit [www.highlandcemetery.com](http://www.highlandcemetery.com) for future developments

The Nolls' son, Evan, is buried in the cemetery.

The board recently approved the sale of individual grave sites in designated areas for the first time in memory. Previously, families could only buy lots of multiple grave sites. The price of an individual grave is \$800, well below the approximate \$1,200 average reported by 11 Johnson County cemeteries in the FCA's 2010 survey of cemetery prices. Lots with space for six and seven graves are available for \$4,000 and \$4,800.

Fundraising will be an important part of the future of Highland Cemetery, according to Marianne.

"We hope to be able to improve the cemetery and repair some of the early headstones," she said. "We'll pursue grants and other funding opportunities, and use volunteers to accomplish our goals. Donations to preserve and maintain the cemetery are tax deductible."

Donations and inquiries may be sent to the cemetery in care of Marianne Noll at 4500 W. 71<sup>st</sup> St. Terrace, Prairie Village, KS 66208. . ✕

### Preplan, but don't prepay

Funeral homes like to see families arriving ahead of time to plan funerals, and the FCA does, too. But the funeral home will try to sell a prepaid plan, and we advise against it. Preplan, we say, but don't prepay.

Prepaid contracts can be restrictive and can make you vulnerable. What if you move? What if you change your mind? What if the funeral home is sold or goes out of business? What if you can't make the payments? What if someone raids your account? All those things have happened in our community.

We suggest opening a bank or credit union "pay-on-death" savings account with a trusted friend or relative who knows your wishes. . ✕

# Creative ways to lower funeral costs (with a tip about Costco & caskets)

By Nancy Jobe, FCA-GKC President

Did you know that Costco sold caskets?

Stacey Singer, a big Costco fan, found it interesting and humorous. Naturally, upon his death, his family looked into purchasing a casket from Costco. To the family's surprise, it was easy to order and saved considerable money.

Stacey's wife, Maureen Singer, and daughter, Tiffany Bowen, began the arduous task of planning the funeral after Stacey died of pancreatic cancer. Unfortunately, Stacey was not one to discuss or plan for his death, so it was up to Maureen and the family to figure out how to streamline the cost—a trait learned from Stacey, who was always researching the best deal.

They took the time they needed to examine their options. To begin, a trip to a funeral home gave them an idea of costs. All funeral homes have a basic service fee, which essentially covers overhead. The family was shown caskets; the cheapest one had a price tag of \$2,800, even though the funeral home's website listed one at \$600. And then the add-ons: embalming, transportation, use of a funeral director at the church, police escort, etc. The total cost would be well over \$8,000.

Armed with this knowledge, they did as Stacey would most definitely have done: they ordered a casket from Costco. Costco offered for \$950 the same casket the funeral home offered for \$3,200. The Costco price included standard shipping to the funeral home. All funeral homes are required to receive (without additional cost) a third-party casket. Another item

checked off the list.

Now on to cemetery plot shopping. Once again Tiffany searched online. She visited [www.gravesolutions.com](http://www.gravesolutions.com) to find gravesites being sold by owners who no longer have a need for them. After spending the day checking out cemeteries, the family was not satisfied with the appearance or location of available grave sites.

The last stop was to meet with an individual, potential, seller of a grave site at a cemetery. There seemed to have been a misunderstanding between seller and cemetery that nullified the deal. A reminder to consumers: Always meet at the cemetery and transfer papers before any money changes hands.

Maureen and family were pleased with the look of the cemetery and asked the cemetery staff whether they had any deals. Most cemeteries have unused graves that were sold back to them when the owners had no use for them. And of course the cemetery staff was not going to offer a deal unless *asked*. Sure enough, a six-space plot had three spaces sold back. And the additional savings came when the family was able to use the back of an existing headstone in the grave site they purchased, saving them the cost of buying a headstone.

With all the pieces in place, they could now plan a beautiful memorial and say goodbye to their beloved husband and father. Stacey would have been proud of the family's research and tenacity to find the best deal. . ✕



Maureen Singer and her family adapted an existing grave stone and purchased a casket from Costco to save on funeral expenses and focus on a loving memorial for her husband, Stacey Singer.

## Planning a funeral that focuses on what matters to you

- You don't have to buy a package from the funeral home. Chances are good that a package will not give you a discount from the total of all items you actually want. Review the packages in print. Ask for an itemized list of prices.
- What does the basic service include? Get it in writing.
- Check out online casket companies or Costco. Funeral homes must receive third-party caskets and cannot charge you extra to handle them.
- What can you do yourself? Design and print memorial programs, order your own flowers, place the obituary, create a memorial video and memory table.
- You don't always have to embalm. Embalming is usually a \$600 to \$800 charge.
- Ask for deals at the cemetery or visit [www.gravesolutions.com](http://www.gravesolutions.com) to buy a plot from an individual.
- Realize that the cost of a funeral is not related to your love for the deceased. Don't buy out of grief.

## FCA-GCK Board of directors

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## **Annual Meeting: Friday, Nov. 13, Kauffman Conference Center Faith and cultural diversity in funeral & burial practices**

### **Hispanic Beliefs and Customs**

#### **Michael Arciga**

Michael has been a chaplain with Cross-roads Hospice for 10 years. He attended the University of Dallas and Holy Trinity Seminary in Irving, Texas, where he earned a bachelor's degree in European history. He earned a master of divinity degree from the University of St. Mary of the Lake-Mundelein Seminary in Mundelein, Ill. Michael was an ordained Roman Catholic priest from 1992 to 1995. He holds a master's in social work from the University of Kansas.



### **Buddhist Beliefs and Customs**

#### **Pete Machik Potts**

Pete is a certified meditation teacher and ordained Buddhist minister in the Tibetan Nyingma lineage. She is a member of a thriving sangha at Temple Buddhist Center on the Plaza, and a board member for the Inner Peace Buddhist Center. Pete has completed a rotation in clinical pastoral education, psychotherapy, and chaplaincy training at the University of Kansas Medical Center. She is also a bereavement counselor and educator for SIDS Resources, Inc.



### **African American Beliefs and Customs**

#### **Gloria Anderson**

Gloria is a licensed master's degree social work educator, author, and international motivational speaker. She teaches courses in grief and loss, cultural diversity, child welfare, and social work health care. Gloria lectures on health care decision making, spirituality, cultural sensitivity, living a purposeful life, and women's issues. She is a certified behavioral consultant through the Institute for Motivational Living in New Castle, Penn.; a certified



FastTrac facilitator through Kansas City's Kauffman Foundation; and a licensed minister through Word of Life in Bedford, Va. A member of the National Council of Black Studies and the National Association of Multicultural Education, Gloria is working on a doctorate.

### **Jewish Beliefs and Customs**

#### **Rabbi David Glickman**

David has officiated at more than 100 funerals. As rabbi at Overland Park's Congregation Beth Shalom, David is continually amazed at the wisdom of Judaism's "this world" approach to death and burial, which gives honor to the deceased and comfort to the mourner. The ancient rituals of cleansing, the simplicity in materials, and the immediacy of burial all reinforce the Torah's continual mandate to sanctify life, he said. David holds a bachelor's degree in Jewish studies from the University of Michigan, studied at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and was ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary.



### **Muslim Beliefs and Customs**

Panelist to be announced.

## **FCA-GKC Annual Meeting**

**Friday, November 13**

**1:30-4:00 p.m.**

**4810 Rockhill Road, Kansas City**

*The Kauffman Conference Center is south of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art and north of UMKC.*



**Fall 2015**