

# The Advocate

FUNERAL CONSUMERS ALLIANCE OF THE PIEDMONT

February, 2012

## **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO COLLECT GENERAL PRICE LISTS FROM AREA FUNERAL HOMES**

**Training Session to be Held  
February 26 at 3 p.m.  
New Garden Friends Meetinghouse**

The Funeral Consumer's Alliance of the Piedmont is currently working on the 2012 Survey of Funeral Homes/Crematories in the Piedmont region of North Carolina. Volunteers are needed to work on this project. We need volunteers to collect General Price Lists from establishments which are located in eleven Northern Piedmont counties. Each volunteer will be assigned approximately 8-10 funeral homes to contact and collect the GPL's from them. Each volunteer will be expected to phone and/or visit the establishment to collect the GPL. We hope to receive all the GPLs no later than March 18.

**There will be a training session for the volunteers on Sunday, February 26, 3-4 p.m at New Garden Friends Meeting, 801 New Garden Road, Greensboro.**

If you are willing to volunteer for this very important project and can attend the training, please let us know by email to Carol Cothorn at [ccoithorn@triad.rr.com](mailto:ccoithorn@triad.rr.com) or send a note to Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Piedmont, PO Box 14215, Greensboro, NC 27415-4215.

## **Showcase Custom Caskets A Local Resource**

Showcase Custom Caskets is a local builder of handmade wood caskets. The owner is Michael Mills. A few years ago, while working as a self employed commercial cabinet maker, Mills saw a wooden casket and was intrigued by the design possibilities and craftsmanship. He considered building caskets, but not being able to sew and knowing nothing about the industry standards for sizes of caskets or how to even go about selling them, he put the idea off.

In late 2004, Mill's Grandmother passed away and the family chose a very elegant wood casket with a walnut finish. After admiring the sleek lines and artistry that went into its construction, Mills discovered that the family had spent over \$6000.00 for that casket. He knew he could have built it for far less. He immediately set off onto what would eventually become an eight year venture to learn everything he could about the casket industry.

In January 2010, Mills told his wife that he felt led by the Lord to change directions and start making caskets that would be available wholesale to the individual. While his wife was supportive, some among his family and friends were not as supportive. However, in exploring the idea, he discovered that his Great

Grandfather had been the town casket maker in the early 1900's. Mills spent most of 2010 working on designs and prototypes.

Early in 2011, Showcase Custom Caskets was ready to open. In order to keep prices low, Mills performs all operations in house. He purchases wood direct from the lumber mill in rough cut stock and does his own planning and milling. His crew hand turns the columns and handles on a lathe. They had to make several jigs and even some of their machinery in order to produce some of the steps in the manufacturing process. They mix their own dyes for staining and finishing the wood. Typically their caskets contain about 150 individual parts.

Their attention to detail makes each one of their caskets a piece of art. Mills says his company is like a ministry because they can offer their custom built caskets at a low price.



**Showcase Custom Caskets 5842 Old  
Randleman Rd. Greensboro NC 27406  
phone: 336-686-2009  
email: scicaskets@yahoo.com**

## **Upon My Father's Death**

*by  
Mark R. Sills*

Recently my 94 year-old father died. He had been in a Charlotte nursing home. Dad was very playful. He already had purchased a vault for his cinerary urn in the columbarium at his church. However, when he was transferred to the nursing care center from the hospital, the admitting nurse asked for the name of a funeral service for her intake records. She insisted that having the name of a funeral service was required. The nursing care center needed to know whom to call should their patient die. My dad was relatively alert at the time of admission, and being a retired clergyman he was aware of the many funeral homes that served the Charlotte area. He gave the name of a respected funeral service, knowing that the information could be changed later.

When it became evident that dad was dying, I asked the head nurse how the care center handled death. She explained that the attending physician would certify the death and the center would then call the funeral home listed on the intake form. She told me the name of the funeral service listed on dad's form.

The next day, I called the funeral home to make sure my dad had not established any kind of pre-paid funeral plan with that service. As I suspected, he had not. I asked about the cost of a simple cremation. I explained that our family would organize a memorial service and all we needed was for the body to be taken from the nursing home and the ashes returned to us in a simple urn.

Evidently, to this funeral service, there is no such thing as a simple cremation. The representative detailed a list of things they would have to do, and quoted a minimal cost of \$3,900. The tone was clearly one of distaste, as though my request violated his standards of decency!

I next contacted the Cremation Society of Charlotte. The manager greeted me with warmth. He said his service could handle the body from the time of death. The fee, including a very dignified urn and 10 certified copies of the death certificate would be only \$1,050.

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That afternoon, I had the nursing staff make the necessary changes on dad's intake form. A few days later, dad died peacefully in his sleep. His body was cremated and, just prior to a wonderful memorial service at Myers Park United Methodist Church, the urn was placed by dad's children and step-children into the vault of the columbarium.

Dad's life was beautifully celebrated with no help from a "funeral professional." Moreover, the money saved will be very helpful to my step-mother who is in hospice care at the same nursing center.



### **Recent Changes to Effectiveness of Powers of Attorney for Health Care**

In the past, if a NC Health Care Power of Attorney allowed a health care agent the power to dispose of a body (burial, cremation, *etc.*), that power was not necessarily effective unless the decedent had been declared incapable of communicating his/her wishes. That obstacle disappeared on 1 January 2012. The text below gives the language of changes in the NC statutes.

#### **SL2011-0344 (Session Law)**

SECTION 10. G.S. 32A-20(a) reads as rewritten: "(a) A health care power of attorney shall become effective when and if the physician or physicians or, in the case of mental health treatment, physician or eligible psychologist as defined in G.S. 122C-3(13d), designated by the principal determine in writing that the principal lacks sufficient understanding or capacity to make or communicate decisions relating to the health care of the principal, and shall continue in effect during the incapacity of the principal. The determination shall be made by the principal's attending physician or eligible psychologist if the physician or physicians or eligible psychologist designated by the principal is unavailable or is otherwise unable or unwilling to make this determination or if the principal failed to designate a physician or physicians or eligible psychologist to make this determination. A health care power of attorney may include a provision

that, if the principal does not designate a physician for reasons based on his religious or moral beliefs as specified in the health care power of attorney, a person designated by the principal in the health care power of attorney may certify in writing, acknowledged before a notary public, that the principal lacks sufficient understanding or capacity to make or communicate decisions relating to his health care. The person so designated must be a competent person 18 years of age or older, not engaged in providing health care to the principal for remuneration, and must be a person other than the health care agent. For purposes of exercising authority described in G.S. 32A-19(b), however, a health care power of attorney shall be effective following the death of the principal without regard to the principal's understanding or capacity when the principal was living. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent a principal from revoking a health care power of attorney."



### **The Letter of Last Instruction**

It is very important to make plans concerning your final wishes, whether through discussions with family and friends, membership in a memorial society, or arrangement with a funeral director. It is a sign of responsibility and care to provide loved ones with a clear understanding of your desires. Your instructions should include information about the kind of funeral or memorial service you would want, and how you wish for your loved ones to dispose of your body. It is best to put your wishes in writing. Note that a "Letter of Last Instruction" is not a will and is not a formal legal document. However, it does provide clarity for those who will have to make significant decisions at a point of emotional turmoil.

As your loved one prepares a letter of last instructions, he or she should consider including information such as:

- Instructions about the funeral, memorial service, and preferred disposition of the body.
- Location of your will.
- Contact information for those who should be informed of the death.

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- Location of all important personal documents legal and insurance documents.
- Information about any safe deposit boxes and location of keys.
- Information about bank accounts, investments, insurance policies, pensions, and related matters.

## The Advocate

FUNERAL CONSUMERS ALLIANCE OF THE PIEDMONT

### Funeral Consumer's Alliance of the Piedmont

*The Advocate* is the periodic newsletter of the Funeral Consumer's Alliance of the Piedmont.

At Funeral Consumer's Alliance of the Piedmont, we work together for after-death arrangements that embrace our need, preferences, and rights. In addressing this aim, we use advance planning, information gathering, education and advocacy. We welcome Piedmont Triad funeral consumers without regard to their religion, race, age, gender, sexual orientation, or income level.

**FCAP**

**PO Box 14214**

**Greensboro, NC 27415-4214**

### FCA of the Piedmont 2012 Board of Directors

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- A brief biographical statement that can be used to prepare an obituary for publication.

Please note that this is why the letter should **not** be placed in a safety deposit box or any other place where it may not be found until after other funeral arrangements have been made. Ideally it should be given to the person or persons who will likely be making after-death arrangements for you. It is generally best to provide the letter to more than one responsible person.



### FCA of the Piedmont and the National FCA

by

*Carol Cothorn, Recording Clerk*

The Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Piedmont (FCAP) is an affiliate of a national organization, the Funeral Consumers Alliance. It is a 501 (c)(3) organization so your donations are tax deductible. If you would like to support the work of the **national** board and get on their mailing list for their super newsletter which comes out quarterly, here's how.

You may send a contribution in any amount to Funeral Consumers Alliance, 33 Patchen Road, South Burlington, VT 05403. Their phone number is [802 865 8300](tel:8028658300). They also have a website and you can contribute with a credit card by going to the website, [www.funerals.org](http://www.funerals.org). Their website is full of helpful advice pertinent to all of the states as well as a list of affiliates so if you live in NC and need info about another state, you can find help.

After consulting with other affiliates in North Carolina, our FCAP board decided that we would **not** share our members' contact information directly with the National FCA, but instead would leave it up to each family or individual to sign up for this themselves if they so choose. We do encourage individuals to become supporters of the national organization.