

Funeral Consumers Alliance of Central Ohio
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FCACO News

Serving the Central Ohio Community since 1953

From the President's Desk by Rita Haider

Eye-Opening Insights from the FCA Conference

I recently attended the Funeral Consumers Alliance 2025 Biennial Conference, and the revelations from the presentation on "Confronting Funeral Poverty in Our Communities" were truly striking.

The Shocking Reality

Did you know that funerals rank as the **third largest expense** most families will face—after buying a home and a car? This staggering cost has led to a heartbreaking trend: families abandoning remains they simply cannot afford to bury.

Voices That Made an Impact

Pamela Prickett, co-author of *The Unclaimed: Abandonment and Hope in the City of Angels*, delivered a powerful keynote speech on this crisis. Meanwhile, **Miranda Panther** shared moving Native American burial customs, including the sacred tradition of hand-digging graves as a final gift to the deceased.

We also heard from **Nasser Khadjenorri** about the world's largest cemetery in Iraq (check his fascinating videos at nasserk.com) and **Isabel Knight** from the National Home Funeral Alliance, who demonstrated how ice and a minivan can make home funerals surprisingly affordable.

Key Takeaways for You

- ❖ **Never pre-pay for funeral services**—pre-plan, yes, but don't pay in advance
- ❖ Skip final expense insurance
- ❖ Consider joining a cemetery board in your community
- ❖ Explore alternative options like casket-making clubs
- ❖ Professor **Victoria Haneman** from the University of Georgia was emphatic: "No one should pre-pay." Her research on funeral poverty is available on her website and worth reading.

How FCACO Helps You

As an all-volunteer organization, we're working hard to keep you informed about the funeral industry. To better serve you, we're requesting email addresses and birth years so we can share urgent updates beyond our Facebook page.

If you find our advocacy valuable, please consider donating or joining one of our committees. Every dollar helps us continue fighting for transparent, affordable funeral options.

Questions? Reach me at RitaSHaider@funeralsohio.org

FCACO Mission Statement

- To promote end-of-life planning and preparation
- To outline practical steps to take before death
- To inform and instruct the public concerning the funeral industry
- To offer reasonably priced options for dealing with remains at death
- To monitor the funeral industry on local and statewide levels
- To maintain public awareness through action, education, and publications

Funeral Advice You Can Trust

Founded in 1953, FCACO is a 501(c)3 organization run entirely by volunteers who have no connection to the funeral industry or any religious group. Our service area for members includes Columbus and surrounding counties, serving Springfield, Urbana, Yellow Springs, and Dayton.

FCACO is an affiliate of the national organization: Funeral Consumers Alliance, which is actively involved in improving regulation of the funeral industry through the Federal Trade Commission.

2025-2026 Board Officers

President: Rita Haider
Past President: Cathy Elkins
Treasurer: Jack Holdford
Recording Secretary: Su Ann Farnlacher
Membership Secretaries: Cathy Elkins and Dennis Rankin

Fall 2025



Got Your Ducks in a Row?

Visit www.funeralsohio.org:

1. Survivors Checklist
2. Ohio Disposition Form (to designate a person to arrange the disposition of your remains)
3. What To Do When Death Occurs
4. A Letter to My Family (lists the location of key documents and legal authorizations)
5. Summary of area General Price Lists (GPL)

The national website: www.funerals.org

(Go to: *Resources*, then to *FAQ pamphlets*)

Here are just a few of them:

1. Green Burial
2. Should You Prepay Your Funeral?
3. Death Away From Home
4. Embalming Explained
5. Cremation Explained

Share your email address to receive timely updates and exclusive opportunities—help us keep you in the loop on important news!

★ FCACO Needs YOU to Verify Your Info— Please check and confirm the following:

- Name
- Email
- Address
- Cell Phone
- Birth Year

Return information via

Email: info@funeralsohio.org

OR

Mail (Enclosed Envelope):
Funeral Consumers Alliance
of Central Ohio
P. O. Box 14835
Columbus, OH 43214-0835

Resources for Your Planning Folder

Body Donation

Ohio State University (614) 292-4832; Wright State University (937) 775-3066; Cleveland Clinic; NEOUMED; Case Western Reserve; University of Toledo; University of Cincinnati; and Ohio University Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine. Each program has specific requirements—contact them directly to learn more.

Organ Donation

LOOP (Lifeline of Ohio Organ Procurement) (877) 223-6667
<https://lifelineofohio.org/>

Advanced Directives forms: Franklin County Probate Court:
<https://probate.franklincountyohio.gov/>

Funeral Consumers Alliance: <https://funerals.org>

Funeral Consumers Alliance of Central Ohio www.funeralsohio.org

For FCACO members who choose to use our contracted providers that offer us discounted services:

Columbus Area: Cook & Son-Pallay (614) 444-7861

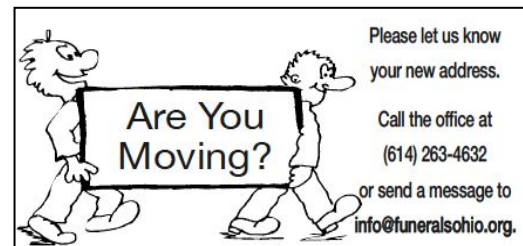
Dayton/Springfield area: Conroy Funeral Home: (937) 324 4973

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<https://www.facebook.com/funeralconsumersallianceofcentralohio>

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WEBSITE



FCACO at Work in Our Community

by Cathy Elkins

Recently, I received a call on our FCACO phone from a 92-year-old woman who is the caregiver for her 63-year-old son. He has a new kidney, but is diabetic; he also fell and fractured his femur, and has had quadruple bypass surgery. Because other family members are limited in their ability to assist, most of his care rests with his mother. Various community resources have provided intermittent help; in addition, we sent a resource guide from The Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging, with paperclips on relevant pages. Although the caller has already planned her funeral arrangements, her son has not. In response to his need, the FCACO president and membership chair agreed to provide him a courtesy membership.

FCACO's next book discussion will be *From Here to Eternity: Traveling the World to Find the Good Death* by mortician Caitlin Doughty.

Join us as we explore Caitlin Doughty's fascinating journey across six continents, where she investigates how different cultures honor their dead—from open-air cremations in rural India to bone-cleaning rituals in Indonesia. This eye-opening travelogue challenges Western death practices and invites us to reconsider what a "good death" truly means. For more information contact Joan Matyskella at joanmaty@funeralsohio.org

Welcome to Our 2025-26 Board of Directors

Margaret Sproul	Through May 2026
Joan Matyskella	Through May 2027
Ellen Rapkin	Through May 2027
Mandie Maxwell	Through May 2027
Nikki Smith	Through May 2028
Susan O'Donnell	Through May 2028
Cyndi Dorwart	Through May 2028
Mae Fechner	Through May 2028
Lisa Taylor Rine	Through May 2028

Thank you to our Wonderful Donors!

**You make it possible
for us to serve you and the public.**



What Is a Death Doula?

by Nikki Smith

You've probably heard of birth doulas, non-medical professionals who provide emotional, physical, and educational support to women before, during, and after the birthing process. But what is a *death* doula? A death doula has the same kind of presence, just at the other bookend of life. We walk with people who are nearing the end of their journey, and with the loved ones who stand beside them.

A death doula isn't a medical professional. We don't replace doctors, nurses, or hospice teams. Instead, we offer emotional, spiritual, and practical support. That might look like sitting quietly with someone who's scared, helping a family navigate tough conversations, creating rituals for saying goodbye, or simply making sure the dying person feels seen and heard in their final days. Sometimes it's as simple as making tea and providing a compassionate non-judgmental presence.

End-of-life planning can be overwhelming. There are logistics to manage, feelings to untangle, and a deep, human need for connection. A doula's role is to ease that weight. We normalize the process, help people plan ahead, and provide comfort so that death feels less like a medical event and more like what it truly is: a profoundly natural transition.

In short, a death doula helps people die with dignity, families grieve with support, and everyone involved find a little more peace in the process.

News from the Ohio Board of Embalmers and Funeral Directors

by Cathy Elkins

By Ohio law, the Board of Embalmers and Funeral Directors collects a small fee from funeral homes when they sell pre-need contracts. These funds are used to reimburse families that can provide proof their loved one had paid but are refused services because of lost paperwork or other misuse of funds. The Board has recently had to reimburse funds to several families because one local funeral home was purchased by another and did not include the prepaid funeral contracts as part of the transaction as required. When funeral homes do not honor their commitments, this reimbursement to families is an important service provided by the Board.

Another service funded through Ohio law is reimbursement to municipalities for the burial or cremation of their indigent dead. Although the Ohio Legislature used to reimburse up to a million dollars a year throughout the state, the demand for funds did not reach that level. The current amount is \$250,000 a year, with most of this money going to small cities and villages that do not have designated resources of their own. Since this new funding is so low, the Board decided, after much discussion, that they will provide funds on a first-come, first-served basis.