



CREATIVE CHOICES

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Winter 2015

The Newsletter of the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Central Texas

You are Invited to our 2015 Annual Meeting

When: Saturday, February 21, 2015
2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Where: Meeting Hall, Hyde Park Christian Church
610 East 45th Street, Austin, TX

Keynote Topic: Palliative Care

Doctors specializing in *palliative medicine* provide *palliative care* for people who are seriously ill. *Palliative care* relieves suffering and improves quality of life for people of any age and at any stage in a serious illness, whether that illness is curable, chronic, or life-threatening.

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Bob Friedman (Read his bio on page 6.)

- * Fellow American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine
- * Chief Medical Officer at Hospice Austin
- * President, Central Texas Palliative Care Associates

Making its Annual Debut: Our 2015 Funeral Home Price Survey

Directions to the Meeting:

Hyde Park Christian Church is centrally located on East 45th Street, between Red River and Duval Streets. The entrance to the meeting hall is on the right side of the building.

BRING SOMEONE NEAR AND DEAR TO YOU!

2015 Funeral Home Price Survey Available February 21

A big round of thanks to volunteers who obtained General Price Lists (GPLs) and Casket Price Lists (CPLs) from 49 funeral providers in our five-county service area. All price lists were collected in January. Because prices may change at any time, be sure to compare the effective dates shown in column 2 to the effective dates on any price lists you obtain during the year.

The **Non-Declinable Fees** (NDFs) in the last column of the survey are for **comparison purposes only**. Please **do not add** the NDF to prices shown in other columns. The full NDF is included in the cost of a hypothetical full service funeral. The NDF is prorated by most funeral homes in their charges for Direct Cremation and Immediate Burials.

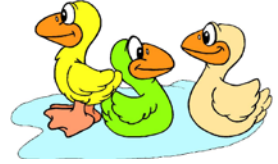
Similarly, the **Refrigeration** charges shown in the survey are primarily for comparison purposes and should not be automatically added to prices shown in other columns. Although refrigeration is an option for any type of funeral service, it is typically associated with **Direct Cremations** and **Immediate Burials**. **Be sure to ask funeral directors how many days of refrigeration are included in their prices for these two kinds of funeral services, especially if they have the body in their care on weekends and holidays.**

Where to get the new funeral home price survey:

- At our Annual Meeting
- Online February 23 under the **Price Shop Funerals** tab at <http://fcactx.org/>
- At our office on or after February 23 (Come by the office or call or email us to send it to you.)

Getting Your Ducks in a Row: Exploring End-of-Life Options

Our 8-session course offered through Lifetime Learning Institute



- When:** Tuesdays, 1 to 3 p.m., February 17 through April 7, 2015
- Where:** Christ Lutheran Church, 300 E. Monroe St. (near S. Congress Ave.)
- Cost:** \$20 for 8 weekly sessions + \$10 at first session for handouts

Course presenters include knowledgeable FCACTX volunteers and subject matter experts from organizations that educate the public about end-of-life options. Ample time will be allotted for questions and discussion.

Register today! Class is limited to 20 participants.

Download registration form at www.lliaustin.org; or call LLI at 512-206-4232.

Need more info? Call Nancy Walker, course facilitator, at 512-480-0251.

A Warm Welcome for New Board Member, Gene Schneider



Gene Schneider retired with his wife Kathy to Austin in August, 2008, to be close to their middle son, daughter-in-law and three grandsons. Married for almost 49 years, they have two more adult sons in Los Angeles and Seattle, respectively, and three more grandsons--all in Seattle. Gene earned five college degrees from four universities in Missouri and Kansas, and spent his entire professional career as a teacher in Missouri, Tanzania (East Africa), Minnesota, and Kansas, and as a community college administrator in Kansas, Colorado and Arkansas.

Prior to arriving in Austin, Gene served in several community organizations including board vice president for an NPR public radio station in Garden City, Kansas, and board member of the Finney County (Garden City) United Way and the Garden City Area Chamber of Commerce. He subsequently served as a board member of the Sterling, Colorado, Chamber of Commerce, president of the Sterling Rotary Club, and a four-year term as a Sterling City Council member. In Bentonville, Arkansas, he served on various Bentonville Rotary Club committees, and actively supported the international student organization at Northwest Arkansas Community College.

Gene joined North Austin AARP Chapter 2700 five years ago, and after one year as chapter vice-president he is now completing his fourth year as chapter president. This largest Austin chapter has more than 365 members drawn from a broad swath of Northwest Austin and beyond. As president, he organizes and conducts monthly chapter meetings and chairs the chapter's board of directors which convenes five times annually to guide and supervise the chapter's program development, membership, finance, community service, legislative, travel, and other committees.

Additionally, Gene currently chairs AARP's Austin Area Community Team of officers from the five area chapters. TEAM members meet monthly to communicate and coordinate activities and initiatives of interest to chapter members and to consult with Texas AARP staff members. From 2011 to 2013, Gene also served on the University of Texas' Osher Lifelong Learning Institute's NOVA group advisory board.

Board Appoints First Executive Director

Our Board has created the position of Executive Director. With the assistance of other volunteers, our new E.D. will compile and produce our funeral home and cemetery price surveys, publish our newsletter three times a year, recruit members and volunteers, and work with the Board to expand our educational outreach and funding activities. The E.D. will also chair our Speakers Bureau and oversee office operations. The Board appointed Nancy Walker to fill this position on a volunteer basis. With the financial support of our membership, we look forward to hiring a fulltime E.D. within the next year or two.

2015! With thanks to AMBIS for 50 years of dedicated work to educate and protect funeral consumers, we celebrate our first year as the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Central Texas!

President's Message

A very smart man I know once told me, "There are two things we must overcome: ignorance and apathy."

Our mission statement addresses both, helping people become educated and informed and helping people make decisions about end-of-life needs. My focus this year will be on education and outreach to our members at large, our wonderful volunteers, and the FCACTX board, as well, of course, as recruiting new members.

Our mission statement encourages all of us to become more educated so we can help others make informed choices. I encourage you to visit the FCACTX office to meet our volunteers and browse our reference library. In the last few weeks, I have read two books. I hope you, too, will take advantage of this resource and also share articles with me.

Our strategic plan gives us a framework for activities that will help us achieve our mission. We have already created a 2015 budget that supports this plan. More work is needed. Work is easier and certainly more fun when shared. So, please make a choice to learn how you can help.

I welcome the opportunity to meet you at our annual meeting to discuss ways in which you can actively support our efforts. I am also committed to learning how I can best serve you and our organization.

Penny Whiting, Board President
president@fcontextx.org



Executive Director's Message

With a bright and busy year already underway for FCACTX, I am looking forward to working with our new President, our other Board members and our office volunteers, all of whom are wholeheartedly committed to our mission.

It is my hope that adding an Executive Director to the FCACTX team will help all of us better define, organize, and carry out tasks that will help people make educated, practical choices that will meet their needs at the end of life.

I share Penny's commitment to a strategic plan that provides a practical framework for expanding our services to members, to the community at large, and to organizations that offer end-of-life services, such as hospice care and bereavement support. The plan also addresses publicity and funding as well as member and volunteer recruitment.

If **you** have ever given your time and effort to an organization that depends entirely on volunteers, you **know** that significant progress requires many steady shoulders at the wheel. This is especially true with organizations such as ours, which do not rely on paid employees to do the bulk of the work. In short, we need you!

As long as the mortality rate on the planet holds steady at 100 percent, literally everyone needs helpful information about end-of-life issues. Our Speakers Bureau is ready to talk to your group!

Nancy Walker, Executive Director
execdir@fcontextx.org



Streamlining Membership Dues

Effective March 1, 2015, dues for all new memberships will be \$35.00. New members will receive a welcome packet that includes one set of advance directive documents, one Final Arrangement Plan, our current funeral and cemetery price surveys, our most recent newsletter, and a variety of materials and articles on end-of-life topics.

In accordance with our philosophy and our mission, no one will be denied membership for inability to pay the full amount.

All the volunteers at FCA of Central Texas recognize that our mission *would not be possible* without the dedication and generosity of our donors, large and small.
A heart-felt thanks from all of us to all of you!

We welcome our new members --

Deborah and Frank Ayala	Charles Griggs	Eric Neuhaus
Knoel Babin	Pam Hallmark	Linda Lee and Howard Norris
Marilyn and Greg Beets	Debbie Sue Harris	Jorjanna Price
Richard Berkley	Robert and Mollie Hicks	Melissa Prinz
Stuart and Shirley Boleman	Georgia Hodde	June and John Prior
Elizabeth Bradford	Kathie Holliman	Lisa Quay
Susan A. Brooks	Joy and Clyde Holt	Susan Rau and Max Kurland
Stephanie L. Chapman	Jenelle Hunter and Ingrid Garner	Robert and Wanda Rutt
John and Nancy Collins	Greg Johnson and Ellen Richards	Relia Mae Scheib
John and Cathy Conniff	George and Jacquelyn Ackley Kitzmiller	Eugene and Anna Schneider
Timmie and Bob Critendon	Susan Klickman	Margie Schwend
Ernie Fortenberry and Sylvia Guyton	Teri and Tim Lint	Paul Severin
Lillian Frederiksen	Susan Luft	Beverly and John Stueber
Mercy Fudell	Samuel McCulloch	Janet Sue and Don R. Thompson, Jr.
Horace Grace	Shirley McGee	Peter Van Overen and Ginger Hansel
Cathleen and Chris Grant	Jean Nation	Sarah Wambold
	Norma and Billy Neeley	

Volunteers, thank you for donating your time, your skills and your talents –

serving on our Board, staffing our office, answering after-hours calls, planning events, making presentations, participating in our strategic planning activities, collecting general price lists, and more –

Frances Allen	Rodger Ericson	Betsy LeClair	Leo Osterhaus
Chauncey Ashburn	June Hankins	Mark Lee	Amy Praskac
Sabiha Bandali	Lamar Hankins	Gary Lichtenstein	Bryan Russmann
Maxine Barkan	Don Harris	Jake Lorfing	Jo Schneider
Gloria Bennett	Clint Henderson	Ellen Macdonald	Jesse South
Sandy Booth	Greg Johnson	Hilary Martinez	Tom Twiss
S. Lemuel Bradshaw	Virginia Kniesner	Mindy Mayer	Nancy Walker
Rita DeBellis	Karen Larson	Jean Nation	Penny Whiting
Sandy Duncan			

Special thanks to members whose donations were wonderfully generous –

Frances Allen	Gone for Good	James R. Moss
Tom Arbuckle	Lucy and Jerry Goodrich	Paul and Patricia Ochs
Chauncey and Arnold Ashburn	Bonita Griffith and David Chasis	Sandra Pedrazas
Sabiha and Abbas Bandali	Lamar and June Hankins	Charlotte and Robert Petersen
David and Ruth Beer	Doris Harrel	Sue and Warden Rimel
Bill and Gloria Bennett	Carole A. Hawkins	Bryan Russmann and Mindy Mayer
Neva and Bill Biggs	Jerry and Helen Hopson	Dianne Schultz
Joye and Charles E. Blankenship	George Huntington and Jennifer Carloye	Jesse and Sidney South
Lemuel and Odessa Bradshaw	Lola and Coleman A. Jennings	Norma and James Spivey
Edward and Delores Burke	Dorothy and Nicholas Juried	Martin D. and Myra Tenney, III
Judy D. Coker	Mario Labardini	Tom Twiss
Eleanor M. and Ralph C. Erchinger	Carey Legett, III	Nancy Walker
Norbert and Geanie Firnhaber	Lifetime Learning Institute	Penny and Mark Whiting
Linda Kay Fletcher	Jake Lorfing	John Yeaman
	William W. and Lorraine M. Marten	

Every donation keeps us moving forward!

Thank you for your support –

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Ronald Wyllys and
Martha Richardson

Introducing Dr. Bob Friedman, our Annual Meeting Keynote Speaker



- Fellow, American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine
- Chief Medical Officer at Hospice Austin
- President, Central Texas Palliative Care Associates

Dr. Bob Friedman has 17 years experience in end-of-life care as a hospice and palliative care physician and 29 years as a family practitioner, serving urban and rural communities. As Chief Medical Officer of Hospice Austin and President of Central Texas Palliative Care Associates, he continues to provide comprehensive end-of-life care while promoting best practices for the delivery of hospice and palliative care. As a member of the Hospice Austin administrative team, he is involved in clinical administration, providing guidance and direction. He is responsible for supervising and collaborating with the physicians and nurse practitioners of Central Texas Palliative Care Associates.

Bob is board certified in Family Practice and in Hospice & Palliative Medicine. He is also a Fellow with the American Academy of Family Practice and with the American Academy of Hospice & Palliative Medicine. He provides palliative care consultation in the hospital and clinic setting, is presently Medical Director of Hospice Austin's Christopher House, and provides home hospice care.

As an educator, Bob has devoted the last 17 years to providing educational programs about hospice and palliative medicine, including symptom management (physical, psychosocial, emotional and spiritual) and counseling in the end-of-life setting. His audiences have included hospice and palliative care physicians, nurse practitioners, hospice nurses, other hospice discipline members, community physicians, community nurses and the general public.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT ...

Replies our volunteers heard when they requested General Price List:

- * Funeral Director, writing the name of his funeral home on the front page of the price list for a funeral home not in our 5-county service area: Here, take this one. It's for another funeral home but the prices are the same.
- * Receptionist: Oh, I can't give you that. Only a funeral director can give you that. I don't give out prices. And I never give them over the phone!

BELIEVE IT!



Consumer Reports suggests what to look for when selecting a hospice:

- Not-for-profit status and 20 or more years of experience.
- Hospice-certified nurses and doctors on staff and available 24 hours per day.
- Palliative-care consultants who can begin care if you're not yet ready for hospice.
- An inpatient unit, where patients can go if symptoms can't be managed at home.
- Ability to provide care in nursing homes and assisted living residences.
- Medicare approval, so that Medicare will cover services, including equipment and home health aides as needed, plus counseling and grief support for the patient and the family.

Full article at www.consumerreports.org/cro/magazine/2014/12/how-to-find-a-good-hospice-program/index.htm

Ways our Community is Actively Overcoming the Big Taboo

Thanks to FCACTX members Brooks Kasson and Jo Jensen, **Austin's Death Café** has been a decisive success for well over a year. The group meets at Café Express, 3418 North Lamar, on the first Wednesday of every month at 6:30 p.m. Each event is unique unto itself because participants decide on the spot what they want to discuss. The next meeting is scheduled for March 4.

The success of Death Cafés in Austin and elsewhere is just one indication that a growing number of people are eager and willing to normalize discussions of death and dying.

Here in our own community, we have a **Before I die** wall at 206 Elizabeth Street in South Austin. The "Before I Die" global art project invites people to share their hopes and dreams on public walls.

This project, which began in New Orleans, has spread across the globe to create more than 500 walls in over 25 countries. See stories and photos at <http://beforeidie.cc/site/about/>. Or check out the **Before I Die** book from the FCACTX library.

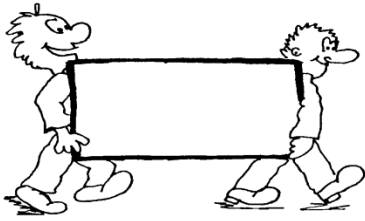
At a high-spirited **Day of the Dead Fair** last fall, FCACTX volunteers invited more than 100 people to record their before-I-die hopes and dreams on a flip chart. Fifty-five people, most of them between 18 and 35 years old, responded by sharing – in a delightful variety of colors – their hopes and dreams, which we now want to share with you.

Before I die, I want to ...

- ✓ have grandchildren
- ✓ explore the Solitario in West Texas
- ✓ have a big, fun family
- ✓ play more music
- ✓ know what it's like to be filthy stinking rich!
- ✓ Amen!
- ✓ me too!
- ✓ share my life with someone special
- ✓ have more fun!
- ✓ travel to New Zealand
- ✓ live life like there's no tomorrow
- ✓ accept my death with the proof of a long life
- ✓ make lots of people happy!
- ✓ lead my life like it's a fun parade
- ✓ burn brighter than ever
- ✓ dance Tango with my lover
- ✓ write books and have them published!
- ✓ go to the beach, and make people happy!
- ✓ go to all 50 states
- ✓ invent something useful for humanity
- ✓ ride in a hot air balloon
- ✓ go to lots of concerts and perform in them
- ✓ travel to many different places
- ✓ go skydiving
- ✓ drive
- ✓ visit Africa
- ✓ travel for the rest of my life
- ✓ open a karaoke bar
- ✓ start a theme park
- ✓ Alaska!
- ✓ raise a baby
- ✓ be a man
- ✓ travel the world
- ✓ see the Aurora Lights
- ✓ be brave, honest and real with Meredith!
- ✓ be brave, honest and real and tickle Emily for the rest of our lives
- ✓ New Zealand
- ✓ punch a bear in the mouth!
- ✓ learn how to dance Tejano!
- ✓ back pack through Europe
- ✓ be a grandmother
- ✓ grow my own food
- ✓ meet (musician) Zach Condon and make a living writing
- ✓ feel immortal
- ✓ create a pottery and permaculture paradise
- ✓ feel fulfilled
- ✓ love and raise a few great human beings
- ✓ help an endangered species
- ✓ help someone achieve their wildest dreams
- ✓ live by doing what I love
- ✓ hug as many homeless people as I can
- ✓ impact the world with love, dance, music
- ✓ impact the world with love and empower people to become their highest being
- ✓ tell them all I love them, then kiss Mike Bishop.
- ✓ live overseas



The **Before I die** wall at 206 Elizabeth Street
(a quick and easy walk-from our upcoming LLI class)



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**Mission Statement: Our mission is to help people make educated, practical choices
 that will meet their needs at the end of life.**



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 Bradshaw, Jake Lorfing, Gene Schneider

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