



# CREATIVE CHOICES

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<b>2017 Issue 1</b>	

*The Newsletter of the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Central Texas*

## You are Invited to our 2017 Annual Meeting

**Saturday, February 25, 2017, 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.**

- Location:** Hyde Park Christian Church, Austin, TX  
610 East 45<sup>th</sup> Street (between Red River and Duval Street)
- Keynote Topic:** **Final Gifts:** Even if you haven't considered eye, tissue, or organ donation, you're likely to be fascinated by what you will learn about these options. You will learn about the donation process as well as the strict regulations for organ, tissue and whole body procurement programs. If you suspect that factors such as advanced age or disease disqualify you from being a potential donor, prepare to be surprised.
- Keynote Speaker:** S. Lemuel Bradshaw, heart transplant recipient and full-time advocate for United Tissue Resources and Donate Life Texas (bio on page 6)
- Making Its Annual Debut:** Our 2017 Funeral Home Price Survey

## 2017 Funeral Home Price Survey Available February 25



### New Survey Categories

- **Basic Funeral Service.** When our volunteers collected price lists, they asked funeral directors if families were opting for elaborate funerals with limousines for the family and pallbearers and an array of printed materials. We were told a growing number of families do not request limousines and, quite often, they are designing and printing their own programs and purchasing register books from other sources.  
To reflect this shift towards simpler funeral arrangements, we are replacing the 13-item Full Funeral Service with a 9-item Basic Funeral Service. The nine items are listed in the survey narrative. As before, we are **not** including the cost of a casket because there's no way to know what a family will spend on this item, especially if they choose to purchase the casket from another source.  
*If you choose to compare full funeral service prices in our 2016 survey with prices shown in the 2017 survey, keep in mind that funerals are not getting less expensive. We are just redefining what we are measuring. If you decide that you want to include a variety of funeral home vehicles in a funeral, be sure to ask the funeral provider what they charge. Typically, the costs are exorbitant.*
- **Concrete Grave Liner.** Larger, commercial cemeteries require grave liners or vaults to ease grounds maintenance. Every funeral home in our survey offers a concrete grave liner that fulfills this purpose. Their Outer Burial Container price lists also include vaults, at a higher cost. The 2017 survey lists each funeral home's charge for a standard size grave liner so that you can compare what the funeral home charges to what the cemetery you select charges for this item. Even though cemeteries are required to add sales tax, their bottom line prices are often less than the tax-free price at the funeral home.

(continued on page 7)

## President's Message



Hello Dear FCACTX Members!

I want to personally invite you to our Annual Meeting on February 25. We will have two welcome tables this year to register you quickly. If you attended our meeting last year, you will remember the delicious refreshments. We will have a repeat! I am especially pleased that our Keynote Speaker will be our own Lemuel Bradshaw, who gives a dynamic presentation.

We are off with a bang this year with our new Directors, Tricia Burrall, Barbara Wand James, and Wendell Williams. Happily, Jesse South agreed to serve another year, and Nancy Walker returned to the board to serve as our secretary. Leaving the board this past year were Lemuel Bradshaw, Jo Kirkel and Julia Houston Rector. We sincerely thank them for their service. I also thank our standing Directors -- Sabiha Bandali, Cate Smith and Gene Schneider -- for their many contributions and renewed enthusiasm for continuing our mission. I am grateful to Nancy Walker for her support and guidance.

Our 2017 board jumped into high gear at a January 8 orientation session where we helped our new board members delve into the intricacies of our annual funeral home price survey. They were duly impressed by all the time and work that goes into producing this complex document.

At our first board meeting, January 14, we had a full agenda including election of officers, preparations for production of the annual funeral home price survey, and planning our February 25 Annual Meeting. New board members brought fresh insights, offered suggestions, and readily accepted assignments.

Interns from Google for Nonprofits met with us to lay the groundwork for the free technology training they will provide over the next few months. This will streamline our processes and enable us to communicate and collaborate on projects in new ways. I was energized by this meeting and look forward to working together to accomplish our mission of educating consumers about end-of-life options.

Sarah Reves, [president@fcactx.org](mailto:president@fcactx.org)

## Executive Director's Message



Dear friends of FCACTX,

As our board president kicks off what promises to be a highly productive and forward-looking year, I know she and our other board members are truly thankful for each and every one of you who actively contributed to our success in 2016. Heartiest thanks go to our hard-working board and our always reliable office volunteers.

We are deeply grateful to our 288 members who donated to FCACTX this year. Special mention goes to the same couple who sent us seven donations last year. This year, this couple made it a point to send us a donation every single month and added one more at the end of the year! What makes this level of ongoing support even more remarkable and appreciated is the fact that they don't live in our five-county service area. When I asked them why they send us monthly donations, they told me they simply value the work we do.

In 2016, we welcomed 43 new members and said goodbye to 93 members who died or moved out of our service area. Our Active Membership list has also been reduced by moving to our Inactive List members who did not respond to repeated requests that they contact us if they wish to continue receiving newsletters. Of course, these members, who have been out of touch with us for six or more years, are sincerely welcome to reactivate their memberships at any time with just a note, an email or a call.

Because our print newsletter expenditures are now going to be reduced, we will be able to invest more of your 2017 donations in projects that will serve you and our community well.

In summing up the year, I must say how happy I am that the End-of-Life Options ("Ducks in a Row") class we offer through the Lifetime Learning Institute continues to be a huge success. Much of the credit goes to our volunteer presenters: attorney Greg Johnson, hospice social worker Sabiha Bandali, home funeral guide Sandy Booth, green burial expert Ellen Macdonald, and, of course, this year's annual meeting keynote speaker, Lemuel Bradshaw, who always gets the highest marks possible for his presentations. We are also grateful to Jesse South, who never fails to provide media equipment for us.

Nancy Walker, [execdir@fcactx.org](mailto:execdir@fcactx.org)

### Website Correction Notice

In the President's Message of our fall 2016 **Creative Choices** newsletter, the link for HelpGuide was inadvertently changed to HelpGuide.com. The correct site address is HelpGuide.org. On page 5 of the newsletter, the HelpGuide link under Living Arrangements /Senior Housing is <http://www.helpguide.org/home-pages/senior-housing.htm>. The electronic version of the newsletter posted online is now correct. Please accept our apologies.

## Our New Board Members Introduce Themselves



### Tricia Burrall

I am interested in joining the FCACTX board because I believe that FCACTX provides a unique service to the entire community by disseminating information which every person needs when making decisions about their final arrangements. Before taking FCACTX's End-of-Life Options course, I had not considered and was quite unaware of the range of choices to be made. If people defer making these choices, their families will need the kinds of information FCACTX provides. I am willing to assist in any capacity, with a particular interest in broadening the dissemination of information to more people.

I am a retired attorney, a senior status member of the bar in Texas, California and Pennsylvania. I have represented several nonprofit entities in legal matters and am cognizant of the legal duties and responsibilities of board members. (I practiced primarily commercial litigation, strategy and litigation avoidance advice in the areas of antitrust and unfair competition, trade regulation, contracts, real property, environment and trusts).

My committee experience has been primarily the result of having four daughters in public school over many years: music docent committee; art docent committee; PTA fundraising drive co-chair; music, drama, tennis, and cross-country parent support groups; foreign exchange residence co-chair, etc.

Currently, I am teaching piano to young and old and mentoring for Austin Travis County Integral Care. My favorite pastimes are spending time with friends and my extended family, sailing, enjoying music of many varieties, and nurturing my Texas native plant garden.

I look forward to working with the interested and interesting FCACTX people I have met thus far and hope to further extend the good that you do.



### Barbara Wand James

I grew up in rural northwest Illinois. I earned a Master's degree in Counselor Education from the University of Wisconsin-Platteville and went on to serve as a school counselor, an organization development specialist, and the director of a statewide program focused on upholding the rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness to a free and appropriate public education. These positions required organizational, writing, managerial, communication, and public speaking skills.

I am a member of many organizations and advocacy groups. I have served as secretary, treasurer, vice president, president, and immediate past president of the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth; treasurer of the Texas Homeless Network Board of Directors; and secretary of the Austin Area Urban League Guild.

I have always been an advocate for social and economic justice in its varied forms. Having dealt with several funeral homes over the years, I have begun to understand that, like most people, my family and I were unprepared to make the wisest decisions at times of great sorrow and distress. I would like to use my personal experiences and those of friends and relatives who also have expressed regret at how they dealt with making final arrangements for loved ones, to help others avoid costly mistakes and unnecessary stress at a most difficult time.



### Wendell Williams

A native Texan, I moved to Los Angeles in 1959. I received my musical training from Cal-State University at Los Angeles and the Dick Grove School of Music. I then worked with many local groups in the Los Angeles area and subsequently became a contract musician, which provided a variety of musical opportunities. I performed with many notable artists, including Bobby Caldwell, Harold Land, Jr., Joe Williams, Dionne Warwick, Jimmy Scott, legendary jazz tenor saxophonist Theodore (Teddy) Edwards and many others. My musical experiences included big band orchestras (pit orchestras) and various stage groups of various compositions. As a musician, I had the opportunity to travel extensively to other countries including France, Germany, The Netherlands, and Japan.

After retiring from music in 2004 and relocating from Los Angeles to Austin in 2006, I now devote much of my time to my wife, my daughter and other family members, researching my ancestry, and documenting my life.

Last October a friend told me about FCACTX's End-of-Life Options class. My wife and I took this class and found it to be very enlightening in filling in the subtle omissions in our own preparation for end-of-life issues and options. Since completing the class, I have shared what I learned with our friends and acquaintances.

I am looking forward to being an active member of the FCACTX board.

The Board of FCA of Central Texas recognizes that our mission *would not be possible*  
**without the dedication and generosity of our members.**

A heart-felt thanks to all of you!

### **We welcome our new members.**

Jess Paul Ambiee  
Dawna & Richard Armstrong  
Patricia Burrall and Family  
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Pamela Vonmende  
Norman K. & Barbara A. Wagner  
Linda & David Wilde  
Tracy & Wendell Williams

**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, collecting price lists for our annual funeral home price survey, and more –

Frances Allen  
Sabiha Bandali  
Sandy Booth  
S. Lemuel Bradshaw  
June Hankins  
Lamar Hankins  
Clint Henderson  
Barbara Wand James

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Gene Schneider  
Jo Schneider  
Cate Smith  
Jesse South  
Nancy Walker

### **Special thanks to members whose donations were wonderfully generous.**

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Kathleen & Jim Wicoff

### **Every donation keeps us moving forward! Thank you for your support.**

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## Introducing S. Lemuel Bradshaw Annual Meeting Keynote Speaker

When you hear Lemuel Bradshaw talk about final gifts, you will immediately understand why he receives rave reviews every time he talks to our end-of-life options classes about getting their ducks in a row.

No one knows about final gifts better than Lemuel. Only because of a family of heroes was he able to survive and thrive after a virus had irreparably damaged his heart when he was only 28. Thanks to this family, 17 years ago Lemuel received a life-saving heart transplant that made it possible for him to attend The University of Texas, get married, raise a family, play with his grandkids, and become a full-time advocate on behalf of United Tissue Resources and Donate Life Texas.



## Pick-Up Stories

Nancy Walker, Executive Director

At my ever-advancing age, my pick-up stories no longer offer the slightest opportunity for spicy reading. However, they can definitely serve as cautionary tales. Here are a few from this year's road trips to collect price lists for our annual funeral home price survey.

Funeral directors at two of the three funeral homes in Georgetown told me that families who select direct cremation must supply their own urn or purchase a "temporary urn container" (\$35 at one funeral home, \$59 at the other). Having always thought that direct cremation charges include a plastic box from the crematory, I contacted my knowledgeable mentor, Lamar Hankins, about this charge for a temporary container or urn.

Here is what he told me:

It is the responsibility of the crematory, not the funeral home, to provide the cremated remains in a temporary container. No funeral home should be charging anything but the crematory fee. Any container provided by the family will not meet the clear requirements of the law (see section c below), so that is not a solution.

From the Health and Safety Code at <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/HS/htm/HS.716.htm>:

**Sec. 716.155. TEMPORARY CONTAINER OR URN. (a) A crematory establishment shall place the cremated remains with proper identification in a temporary container or urn unless otherwise instructed in writing by the authorizing agent.**

**b) . . .**

**c) A crematory establishment shall place a label on a temporary container that:**

**(1) discloses the temporary container is not intended for the permanent storage of cremated remains in a niche, crypt, cremation interment container, or interment space;**

**(2) includes the deceased person's name; and**

**(3) includes the name of the crematory establishment.**

Temporary containers for cremated remains continued to draw my attention as I collected more price lists. When I requested a General Price List at the Neptune Society in Austin, the receptionist handed me a General Price List for **pre-need** cremation services. Recalling my visit to them last year, I then asked for the price list they use for **at-need** arrangements when someone has just died. On the at-need price list, I saw a statement I have not seen on any other price list: "We do not mail temporary containers." Elsewhere on the price list, they indicate they will mail a Keepsake Urn. However the Keepsake Urn was not listed on the At-Need Price List.

What might we learn from cautionary tales like these?  
Shop early! Shop often! And don't be shy about asking questions.

## 2017 Funeral Home Price Survey (continued from page 1)

### Where to get the new funeral home price survey:

- At our Annual Meeting on February 25
- Online February 27 under the **Funeral Cost Comparisons** tab at <http://fcactx.org/>
- At our office on or after February 27 (Make an appointment to come by the office, call, or email us to send it to you.)

**Plaudits!** A big round of thanks to volunteers who, in January, obtained price lists from the 54 funeral establishments physically located in our five-county service area.






### Counting Our Days

No one needs to perform complex calculations to prove that the mortality rate on our planet is holding steady at 100%. For people who like to look into the fine points, the websites below provide interesting details:

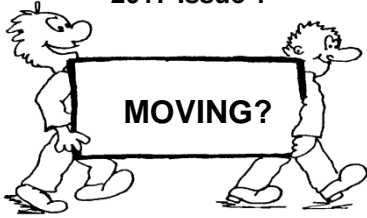
- Census figures for our country and the world: [www.census.gov/popclock/](http://www.census.gov/popclock/)
- A dynamic clock that calculates the number of people who are dying in the world every second: [www.medindia.net/patients/calculators/world-death-clock.asp](http://www.medindia.net/patients/calculators/world-death-clock.asp)
- Lists showing how many people worldwide are dying from specific non-communicable diseases, infectious diseases, and injuries: [www.worldlifeexpectancy.com/live-world-death-totals](http://www.worldlifeexpectancy.com/live-world-death-totals)

*Carpe Diem!*

 <p>Email address, email and phone number changes, editorial items, testimonials, letters, and inquiries to <a href="mailto:office@fcactx.org">office@fcactx.org</a></p> <p>~ OR ~</p>  <p>Mail to <b>FCA of Central Texas</b> 3710 Cedar Street, Mailbox 13 Austin, TX 78705-1449</p> <p>Visit us online at <a href="http://www.fcactx.org">www.fcactx.org</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* To join or donate to FCACTX</li> <li>* To download advance-planning forms, newsletters, surveys, and other items of interest</li> </ul>  <p>Follow us on <a href="https://www.facebook.com/fcactx">Facebook</a> at <a href="http://tinyurl.com/qbupvud">http://tinyurl.com/qbupvud</a> to read a variety of interesting articles. (Please LIKE us, too!)</p>	<p>2017 Board of Directors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• President: Sarah Reves</li> <li>• Vice President: Gene Schneider</li> <li>• Treasurer: Barbara Wand James</li> <li>• Secretary: Nancy Walker</li> <li>• Directors: Sabiha Bandali, Tricia Burrall, Cate Smith, Jesse South, Wendell Williams</li> </ul> <p>President Emeritus: Lamar Hankins</p> <p>President Emeritus: Leon Lebowitz</p> <p>Executive Director: Nancy Walker</p> <p>Office Volunteers: Frances Allen, Clint Henderson, Nancy Walker</p> <p>Newsletter: Nancy Walker, Editor; Lamar Hankins, June Chase Hankins, Jo Schneider</p> <p>Notary Services: Clint Henderson</p> <p>Web Administrator: Judy Mataya</p>
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**Our mission is to help people make educated, practical choices that will meet their needs at the end of life.**

2017 Issue 1



Email [office@fcactx.org](mailto:office@fcactx.org), call 512-480-0555, or complete and mail this form to our office.

**Please update my contact info:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name(s)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Street or P. O. Box

\_\_\_\_\_  
City, State, Zip

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

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Email address

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**FCA of Central Texas**  
3710 Cedar Street, Mailbox 13  
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AUSTIN, TEXAS



## **YOUR CREATIVE CHOICES NEWSLETTER FROM FCA OF CENTRAL TEXAS**

### **OPEN RIGHT AWAY FOR NEWS ABOUT**

- **OUR 2017 ANNUAL MEETING**
- **OUR 2017 FUNERAL HOME PRICE SURVEY**
- **AND MORE!**

*Time-Sensitive*