



CREATIVE CHOICES

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The newsletter of the Austin Memorial and Burial Information Society (AMBIS), a nonprofit, nonsectarian, educational and consumer association working since 1964 to encourage informed planning about end-of-life issues. AMBIS is a member of the Funeral Consumers Alliance.

Whole-body, tissue, organ, and body parts donation

The donation of bodies and body parts has received increasing attention in the past few years, both in the mass media and among those concerned with end-of-life issues.

There are four kinds of human procurement organizations, each with its own interests, rules, and procedures. Enclosed with this newsletter is a chart concerning two kinds of donor organizations.

1. The oldest human-donor procurement organizations in Texas are schools and academic programs that need human bodies for teaching purposes, as well as research. Generally, these institutions use the whole body for teaching and research. Their procurement practices are regulated by the Texas State Anatomical Board.

2. A second kind of procurement organization seeks transplantable tissue and bones, including skin (which is technically a human organ, but is classified as tissue for this purpose). Many of these groups are licensed by the US Food and Drug Administration, which regulates the donation and procurement of human cells, tissues, and cellular and tissue-based products. Many of these organizations are accredited by the American Association of Blood Banks and the American Association of Tissue Banks, as well as other related associations.

3. A third type of procurement organization seeks organs for immediate transplant. The actions of these organ procurement

organizations (OPOs) are regulated through the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS), which governs organ transplants nationwide under a federal contract pursuant to the National Organ Transplant Act (NOTA) of 1984.

4. The newest human procurement organizations seek bodies in order to harvest, process, and share needed body parts and non-transplantable organs with research programs, pharmaceutical companies and device manufacturers, educational programs, and manufacturers of therapeutic and cosmetic products. Some of these body parts procurement organizations (BPPOs) are non-profit, while others are for-profit. For the most part, the operations and activities of BPPOs are not regulated by law because the body parts they use are not transplanted into human beings.

Little reliable, independent information about BPPOs is available. Many work in multiple states with no government oversight. Most do not charge donor families for taking and arranging the disposition (normally by cremation) of human bodies. Some provide limited benefits to donor families, such as a free urn for cremated remains or a small cash honorarium.

Because of the absence of regulation of BPPOs, AMBIS does not recommend any such programs, but makes available some information about them for use by families interested in this option. The insert includes a series of questions that interested families should ask before deciding whether to participate in any BPPO's program. **Ω**

AMBIS fund-raising time—please be as generous as you can

This is the annual fund-raising issue of Creative Choices. Because of your past generosity AMBIS has been able to help both members and the community at large. The number of AMBIS volunteers has increased along with outreach efforts. More churches, hospice programs, civic groups, service clubs, and individuals have received the information AMBIS provides, and many more are waiting for our educational programs, brochures, and advance planning forms.

Please give what you can today, while it is still on your mind, before we all get involved with the holiday season and forget to send in that donation, which is vital to the success of AMBIS. And don't forget that AMBIS is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, charitable organization, which means that your contribution is tax deductible. In addition, it will be used to help others in our community by maintaining an office to which all have access, and from which we can produce and distribute the educational materials that so many have found useful in planning for the future and dealing effectively with the deathcare industry. To simplify the donation process, a donation envelope is enclosed.

From the President –

WHEN TO CALL 9-1-1: If someone who's been ailing dies at home under your care, or the care of hospice, and is "expected" to die, this is not a police emergency. Call the hospice nurse, the last attending physician, or call the funeral home if you're planning to use one. The last thing the ambulance crews, the police, the fire department, and the 9-1-1 dispatchers want to do is waste your time, their time, and your money or taxpayer dollars to come to your home when a loved one has died an expected death. These calls are costly, and furthermore these professionals are stretched thin, and they need to be available for real emergencies when seconds count. Non-emergency police numbers can be found on the first or second page of most phone directories. If in doubt about what to do, contact non-emergency law enforcement personnel to report any expected death when the deceased has been under the care of a physician. They can provide further instructions.

Ethical Wills - the frosting on the planning cake. You may want to think about adding an ethical will to your Survivorship Plan. People use ethical wills to convey their thoughts, cultural values, and hopes for the next generations. Ethical wills are also used to ask forgiveness, state regrets, and provide a conveyance of wisdom. It's a legacy that lives past the distribution of your "worldly belongings." People also use them to describe their rationale in their legal and financial decisions to help alleviate questions in the minds of their survivors. Sometimes, the use of an ethical will can even prevent dissension among the heirs when they are experiencing turbulence throughout the estate settlement process. It gives them the "why" they are looking for. This will be the theme of one speaker at our 2011 Annual Meeting.

Our annual meeting will be Sunday, February 20, 2 p.m., again at Gethsemane Lutheran Church, 200 W. Anderson Lane, thanks to their donated space for us.

**Rodger Ericson,
President, AMBIS Governing Council**

~ New Project: Ask Our Members ~

To introduce prospective members to AMBIS, we're compiling fan mail, stories, and testimonials from members because no one else's words are better than yours.

A few Good Words or many, we'd love to hear from YOU by snail mail or e-mail.

Thank you!

An AMBIS Book Review

By Donna Terpack, AMBIS Librarian

Cromer, Michelle, *Exit Strategy: Thinking Outside the Box*, New York, NY: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin, 2006, ISBN: 1-58542-505-2 US\$12.95

Exit Strategy: Thinking Outside the Box, by Michelle Cromer, is an entertaining and informative look at alternatives to traditional funeral services.

Ms. Cromer traveled the country to meet business people, artisans, and families to research deathcare options. She spoke with business owners about events and experiences that inspired them to begin their death care ventures and to families about plans they've made for themselves or loved ones. Most of these alternatives make use of cremated remains (packing ashes into golf clubs, or incorporating ashes into jewelry or clay sculptures), and some are taken from history (mummification, or jewelry made from the hair of a deceased loved one).

Exit Strategy is fun and full of valuable information, including contact information for the businesses highlighted in the book. It is a useful guide to help you think outside the box to craft your own meaningful arrangements.

AMBIS BRIEFS

Nominating Committee Formed

Amy Praskac is chairing the Nominating Committee for the 2011 Council. Each year, three of the nine Council seats come open. Council members serve three-year terms. Please contact Amy at <amy@ontherecordorganizing.com> or 371-3624 if you would like to serve on the Council or nominate someone. New Council members will be elected by those members present at the Annual Meeting on February 20, 2011.

AMBIS Is Growing (January to September 2010)

We now have more than 3,000 AMBIS member households. New members are most likely to be referred by an AMBIS member (43 percent), so keep getting the word out! Hospices and hospitals also are frequent referrers (10 percent). Other referral sources include: presentations/workshops (6 percent), media mention (6 percent), transfer in from another funeral consumer alliance (5 percent), AMBIS Web site (4 percent), or other (7 percent). Nineteen percent of new members do not list a referral source. We lose member households due to a move (46 percent), the death of the last member in the household (39 percent), or when we receive a request to be removed from the mailing list or transferred to another funeral consumer alliance (15 percent).

New AMBIS Library books

- *Famous Last Words, Fond Farewells, Deathbed Diatribes, and Exclamations Upon Expiration* by Ray Robinson
- *Good Mourning: Getting Through Your Grief* by Allan Hugh Cole Jr.
- *The Art of Death Midwifery: An Introduction and Beginner's Guide* by Joellyn St. Pierre, D.Div.

www.fcaambis.org

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Recognizing AMBIS volunteers and what they do

Beverly Allen

Handles phone messages/calls during non-office hours

Frances Allen

Office volunteer

Tom Arbuckle

Council Member (term 2013); presentations

Jill Arechiga

Council Member (term 2012); presentations; Hospice Social Worker

Arnold Ashburn

Computer/copier expertise

Chauncey Ashburn

Office Volunteer; delivers & processes mail

Maxine Barkan

Office volunteer

Gary Barnhart

Presentations; outreach records project

Donna Belk

AMBIS Web administrator; Funeral Celebrant; home funerals/green burials expertise

Kathy Boas

Fairs

Sandy Booth

Home funerals/green burials expertise

Helen Burnette

Council Secretary (term 2011); office volunteer

Alana Carpenter-Moore

Back-up office volunteer

Kristi Curry

Council Member (term 2013); presentations

Rita DeBellis

On-call volunteer; Hospice Social Worker

Rodger Ericson

Council President (term 2011); presentations

Frances Gibich

Office volunteer; notary; presentations

Christi Graf

On-call office volunteer

Mary Graf

Office volunteer; filing

June C. Hankins

Newsletter editorial assistance; Professor of English

Lamar Hankins

Presentations; newsletter editor; Attorney

Carole Hawkins

Schedules office volunteers; assembles Advance Directive packets; new member files & labels; AMBIS badges; business cards

George Hawkins

Office volunteer; membership database; computer/copier expertise

Virginia Kniesner

Office volunteer; assists at presentations and events

Gary Lichtenstein

Funeral home liaison; presentations; Advance Directives workshops

Ellen Macdonald

Presentations; Natural/Green cemeteries

Jim Moss

Presentations (North Shore Area)

Ed Nichols

Council Member (term 2011); presentations; conducts Obituary-Writing Workshops

Leo Osterhaus

Council Vice President (term 2012)

Amy Praskac

Council Treasurer (term 2012); PayPal liaison; presentations

Kelly (Carolee) Ramsey

Office volunteer

Jo Schneider

"Go -To" person for answers

Donna Terpack

AMBIS Librarian; volunteer list; notary

Barbara Tuttle

Fairs

Tom Twiss

Presentations (Round Rock, Pflugerville, Georgetown)

Nancy G. Walker

Council Member (term 2013); office volunteer; research & training; presentations; interfaith minister

Daesene Willmann

Volunteer Coordinator; presentations; RSVP time sheets

John Yeaman

Presentations

Quarterly Outreach Report

- Aug 18: AMBIS Treasurer Amy Praskac spoke to "Adult Children of Aging Parents" group at Northwest Hills United Methodist Church
- August 30: Nancy Walker & Daesene Willmann conducted an Advance Directives workshop for the Shambhala Meditation Center (Buddhist)
- Sept 11: AMBIS President Rodger Ericson and attorney Kelley Dwyer conducted "Preparing for End of Life" event at Peace Lutheran Church
- Sept 17: Tom Twiss & Daesene Willmann staffed a Sun City Vendors Fair table paid for by Ellen Brumder of Our Lady of the Rosary Cemetery
- Sept 22: Jill Arechiga and Nancy Walker spoke to Stephen Ministers at Bethany United Methodist Church
- Oct 1: AMBIS kicked off a 7-part "Confronting End of Life Issues" course for Lifetime Learning Institute
- Oct 2: Jill Arechiga moderated a public education event, "Alternatives to Traditional Body Disposition," on organ, tissue, eye, and whole-body donation

Please Help Us Keep Our Mailing List Current

To help us keep our mailing costs down, be sure to let AMBIS know if your address changes. If you move out of the area, we can help you transfer your membership. Send changes by email, call the AMBIS office at 512-480-0555, or send this form with the old address to AMBIS.

My new or corrected address is:

Name

Street or P. O. Box

City, State, Zip

Phone

Email address

**Austin Memorial & Burial
Information Society
A Funeral Consumers Alliance
P. O. Box 4382
Austin, Texas 78765**

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Fall 2010

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To mail an address correction, please clip and mail to AMBIS at P.O.Box 4382, Austin, TX 78765, or take to AMBIS office in the Austin Groups for the Elderly Bldg. at 3710 Cedar St. (at 38th Street), Room 112. Email an address change to <mail@ambis.info>.

Funeral Homes Offering a 15% Discount to AMBIS Members

All Faiths Funeral Service

Austin: 8507 North IH 35 (512-339-8878)
Austin: 4360 South Congress Ave. (512-326-8878)
Smithville: 110 American Legion Rd. (512-237-3836)

Beck Funeral Home

Austin: 15709 Ranch Road 620 (512-244-3772)
Cedar Park: 1700 E Whitestone Blvd. (512-259-1610)
Pflugerville: 4765 Priem Ln. (512-251-3500)

Elgin Funeral Home

Elgin: 712 North Avenue C (512-281-5697)

Harrell Funeral Home

Austin: 4435 Frontier Trl. (512-443-1366)
Kyle: 1750 Kirby (512-268-8200)

King-Tears Funeral Home

Austin: 1300 E 12th St. (512-476-9128)

Wrench Funeral Home & Cremations

Leander: 1200 S Bagdad Rd. (512-260-8800)

When you contact one of these funeral homes, tell them you are an AMBIS member. For proof of membership, show them the letter you received when you became a member or have them call the AMBIS office at 512-480-0555.

CREATIVE CHOICES

CREATIVE CHOICES is published quarterly by the Austin Memorial and Burial Information Society, a nonprofit, nonsectarian consumer and educational organization formed in 1964 to protect a consumer's right to choose a meaningful, dignified, and affordable funeral.

The ideas expressed in CREATIVE CHOICES are those of the authors and editor and not necessarily those of AMBIS. Address changes, editorial items, letters, and inquiries about the benefits of membership should be sent to:

AMBIS, P.O. Box 4382, Austin, Texas 78765
Office: AGE Bldg., 3710 Cedar Street, Rm. 112, Austin
Telephone inquiries may be made to 512-480-0555
E-mail: mail@ambis.info or AMBIS@grandecom.net

GOVERNING COUNCIL:

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Nancy Walker, Director (480-0251, Austin)

Leon Lebowitz, Director Emeritus (452-8601, Austin)
Daesene Willmann, Volunteers Coord. (459-6703, Austin)

Editor, Lamar W. Hankins (512-396-0317, San Marcos)
Editorial assistance provided by Dr. June Chase Hankins