



# CREATIVE CHOICES

In this issue:	
• Statesman Obituary Charges .....	1
• Members Support AMBIS Outreach.....	1
• Newsletter Moving Forward .....	1
• FCA's Nationwide Work .....	2
• AMBIS ~ LLI Collaboration.....	2
• 2013 Annual Meeting .....	2
• New Council Member.....	3
• President's Message .....	3
• Book Review .....	3
Fall 2012	

The newsletter of the Austin Memorial and Burial Information Society (AMBIS)

## Austin American-Statesman Obituary Charge Doubles per Column Inch

If you routinely read the print version of the obituary pages in the *Austin-American Statesman*, you have probably noticed that the obituaries are now in a two-column format. The cost for each 'double-wide' column has doubled, too, going from \$42.57 to \$85.14 per column inch. For an additional \$15.00, you can have the obituary displayed online, but this option is available only to customers who pay for the print obituary.

At \$85.14 per column inch, it is more important than ever to know that, earlier this year, the Texas Funeral Service Commission unanimously approved the following regulation:

**203.7 (b) (8) Logos.** If a funeral provider's graphically illustrated logo or a bold listing is to be included in an obituary, **the funeral provider shall list separately the additional cost, if any, related to the inclusion of such logo in the cash advance portion of the statement of goods and services.**

This regulation is in place, thanks to the persistent efforts of consumer watchdog Jim Bates of the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Texas. Jim championed this regulation because consumers should not have to pay for the column space taken up by text and/or logos that advertise a funeral home.

The *Statesman* will publish a free death notice providing basic information about the deceased and the time, date, and location of a visitation, funeral service, and burial.



As you consider your options, remember that AMBIS will display on our website – at no cost – member obituaries of any length, with or without a picture.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Scattering Ashes in Texas State Parks

Recently several AMBIS members asked if it's legal to scatter cremated remains in Texas State Parks. Yes, it is ... **provided that the ashes are scattered in undeveloped areas.**

## Members Support AMBIS Outreach

Our annual fundraising appeal in the summer newsletter brought in donations from 250 AMBIS members. From late August through mid-November, your gifts arrived in a steady stream.

Thanks to your generosity in 2012 and reduced newsletter costs in 2013, we will be able to promote AMBIS in ways we could not previously afford. **We are so grateful for your support!**

\*\*\*\*\*

## Members Favor Reduction of Newsletter Expenses

In response to our "newsletter reality check," 167 AMBIS members recently switched to our electronic newsletter to reduce postage and printing costs. Thanks to these and other members who were already receiving our e-newsletter, we anticipate a significant reduction in newsletter expenditures in 2013.

Your suggestions to help us economize lined up well with policies approved by the AMBIS Council:

- **Anyone** who requests print newsletters will receive them. Donations are appreciated but **not** required.
- Members who make financial or in-kind donations, volunteer in a way recognized by the Council, and/or actively support AMBIS in other identifiable ways will automatically receive print or electronic newsletters.
- **Out-of-state subscribers must contact us** if they wish to continue receiving **print** newsletters.
- When e-newsletters bounce, we will switch members back to print newsletters to ensure continued delivery.
- When **undeliverable newsletters** are returned with no forwarding address, future issues will not be mailed until we have a valid mailing address.
- Beginning in 2013, we will produce newsletters every four months, rather than every three months.
- **All** members, including e-subscribers, will receive print newsletters **once** a year.
- We'll be adding more resources to our website and posting frequently on our Facebook page. (Keep in mind that you do **not** have to join Facebook to read our page.)

## The FCA: Supporting Consumers from Sea to Shining Sea

Rodger Ericson, FCA Vice President, AMBIS-FCA Liaison

What's new? In October, CNBC invited Josh Slocum, FCA's Executive Director, to help make a documentary on the "Business of Death," to be aired next year on TV. Like last May's **60 Minutes** feature on the urgent need for more cemetery regulation, this program will reach millions with our mission.

In the November issue of **Money** magazine, Josh was featured in "*The High Cost of Saying Good-bye.*" The article is online at <<http://money.cnn.com/2012/11/01/pf/funeral-costs.money/index.html>>. This article is yet another example of the reach, hard work, and dedication of our national FCA. More examples – including our battle for consumer rights in Pennsylvania and New York – are online at <[www.funerals.org](http://www.funerals.org)>.

These true stories are a testament to our commitment to advocate relentlessly for funeral consumers all across our country. These stories also bring home the fact that AMBIS cannot do what national FCA does, and the national organization cannot do what we do locally. That is why I actively support and donate to both organizations. I see National taking on funeral industry giants and seeking to hold them accountable in ways I can't. But advocacy is not free. The support of concerned advocates like us is needed to empower our "we stand as one" partnership to defend and promote the rights of all funeral consumers.

### Celebrating a Successful Collaboration

Imagine a class with optional homework, no disciplinary problems, no exams, and no lack of eager learners. Imagine a course that provides information about advance directives, family-directed funerals, veterans benefits, hospice care, and a whole lot more. Imagine getting all this information for only \$20 (plus \$10 for a hefty packet of helpful handouts).

Thanks to **Lifetime Learning Institute**, these imaginings were a reality for anyone who attended our 8-session **End-of-Life Options** courses in the fall of 2010, 2011, or 2012.

We are delighted that our course has also been added to LLI's list of spring classes, which will begin in February. The specific dates and location will be announced in our winter newsletter and on our website as soon as we know them.

**February 16, 2013**  
**Save the Date!**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16 
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28		

### AMBIS ANNUAL MEETING

**When:** 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.  
**Saturday, February 16, 2013**

**Where:** St. James Episcopal Church  
1941 Webberville Road, Austin

### "Creating the Conversation"

Yes, you've made your end-of-life plans. You've decided what kinds of end-of-life care you want and don't want. You've made up your mind what you want done with your body after you die. You're ready to have "the conversation" with your physician(s) and your loved ones ... and then you hit a wall! ... "*Oh, please! Not now, Mom!*" ... "*Aunt Tiny, we already know you don't want any heroic measures if things are really bad. There's nothing more we need to discuss about it. We'll do the right thing if the situation arises.*"

If you are looking for ways to ease into "the conversation," be sure to attend our annual meeting on Saturday, February 16. AMBIS Council member Jake Lorfing, who knows how to get the conversation going in both families and larger groups, will provide practical guidance and useful tools to allow you, your healthcare professionals, and your loved ones to talk about your final wishes in ways that often end up being a very special gift for everyone at the table.

## In the Spotlight: Alana Carpenter-Moore



Please join the AMBIS Governing Council in welcoming Alana Carpenter-Moore to the Council.

A longtime AMBIS member, Alana worked in the AMBIS office for several years and continues to be a knowledgeable member of our Library Committee. In addition to her work for AMBIS, Alana is a volunteer with Hospice Austin. She is also actively involved with the Crossings Care Circle and the Austin Meet-Up group that educates people about family-led funerals and natural burial.

Alana is filling the seat of John Yeaman, who was unable to complete the last year of his term on the Council. We wish to thank John for his service, his wisdom, and his dedication to AMBIS.

---

## President's Message

Dear Friends of AMBIS,

In this season of Thanksgiving, I want to say how grateful I am for all our volunteers. Their work on our behalf continues to make AMBIS one of the most vibrant funeral consumer alliances in the country.

I am thankful for members who not only support us financially but also support our outreach efforts. When you give a gift membership to a person or family you care about, you are giving a gift that continues to give year after year. When you encourage your book club, neighborhood association, or senior center to schedule an AMBIS presentation, you are doing them and us a great service.

I am thankful for the ongoing support and guidance we receive from the national Funeral Consumers Alliance. This year, as in years past, FCA's Executive Director and his staff have amazed us with their depth and breadth of knowledge and know-how. Like AMBIS, FCA is a 501(c)(3), so I hope you will consider sending them a tax-deductible,

'keep-on-keeping-on' donation before the end of the year.\*

I am profoundly grateful for the opportunities I have been given to serve you and AMBIS in a variety of ways. (If I had ever had a job as satisfying as this work, I never would have retired!) As long as the mortality rate on the planet holds steady at 100%, I will do my best to help you benefit from all AMBIS has to offer.

Finally, as soon as you have your 2013 calendar in hand, I hope you will reserve the afternoon of Saturday, February 16, for a very special AMBIS annual meeting. Outgoing or shy, talkative or more on the quiet side, you can count on this one to be a real conversation starter!

Warmest regards, Nancy Walker  
512-480-0251; <president@fcaambis.org>

\* **FCA's mailing address:**  
**33 Patchen Rd., South Burlington, VT 05403-5705**



## Check It Out!

### ***Close to the Bone: Life-Threatening Illness as a Soul Journey***

Jean Bolen takes a poignant look into the experience of life threatening illness. This thorough examination of the emotional and spiritual implications of end-of-life conditions is tempered with myth and metaphor. Carefully chosen and presented, the book's stories illuminate the soul's journey through terminal illness. The book intimately addresses subjects of relationships, loss of control, and life purpose. A background in psychology and grief counseling gives the author's story a depth and sensitivity not often found in modern medicine.

The author's purpose in writing this was to "... help and heal, to make you less afraid, to encourage you to trust your inner wisdom and be fiercely true to what you know in your bones ... ." Her book gives patients, their families, and healthcare practitioners a rich guide to finding their answers, their strengths, and meaning during the end of life. Her purpose was realized in this intense, yet comforting must read.

Reviewer: AMBIS member Diana Mari Selvig, RN, BSN

**Borrowing books and videos from the AMBIS library is quick and easy. Call 512-480-0555 for details.**



Email <office@fcaambis.org>, call 512-480-0555, or clip and mail this form to our office.

**My new or corrected contact info:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

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

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email address

Help me transfer my membership to an FCA affiliate outside the AMBIS service area.

**AMBIS**  
3710 Cedar Street, Mailbox 13  
Austin, TX 78705-1449

Non-Profit  
Organization  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT NO. 236  
AUSTIN, TEXAS

RETURN SERVICE  
REQUESTED

Postmaster, please return newsletter  
with address legible for remailing

Fall 2012

**AMBIS Mission Statement**

AMBIS, a member of the national Funeral Consumers Alliance, is a nonprofit, nonsectarian, educational consumer organization that encourages and assists Central Texans in making informed, practical end-of-life decisions.



Send address, email and phone number changes, editorial items, testimonials, letters, and inquiries to: <office@fcaambis.org>

~ OR ~



Mail to:  
**AMBIS**  
3710 Cedar Street, Mailbox 13  
Austin, TX 78705-1449

Visit us online at <www.fcaambis.org> ...



- \* To join or donate to AMBIS
- \* To download advance-planning forms, newsletters, surveys and other items of interest



**Like us on Facebook!**

**AMBIS Governing Council:**

- **President:** Nancy G. Walker
- **Vice-President:** Rita DeBells
- **Treasurer:** Don Harris
- **Secretary:** Karen Larson
- **Directors:** Alana Carpenter-Moore, Monika Cavazos, Rodger Ericson, Ovelio Fernandez, Jake Lorfing

**President Emeritus:** Leon Lebowitz

**Office Volunteers:** Frances Allen, Maxine Barkan, Frances Gibich, Clint Henderson, Virginia Kniesner, Nancy Walker, Daesene Willmann

**Facebook Page:** Marilee Parsons

**Newsletter:** Nancy Walker, Editor, Lamar Hankins, June Hankins, Jo Schneider

*Creative Choices* is published by the Austin Memorial and Burial Information Society, an affiliate of the national Funeral Consumers Alliance. The ideas expressed in *Creative Choices* are those of the authors and editor and not necessarily those of AMBIS.