



CREATIVE CHOICES

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2019 Issue 1

The Newsletter of the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Central Texas

You are invited to our 2019 Annual Meeting

Saturday, February 23, 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

- Location:** Hyde Park Christian Church, Austin, TX
610 East 45th Street (between Red River and Duval Street)
- Keynote Speaker:** FCACTX President Emeritus, Lamar Hankins (see page 3)
- Keynote Topic:** Advance planning for dementia (see page 3)
- Making its Annual Debut:** FCACTX’s 2019 Funeral Home Price Survey

2019 FUNERAL HOME SURVEY UNDERWAY

As this newsletter goes to press, we are preparing our 2019 Funeral Home Price Survey. It will include every funeral provider with an establishment physically located in our 5-county service area.

The survey will be available February 23.

HOW TO GET ONE OR MORE COPIES OF THE NEW SURVEY

- Pick one (or more!) up at the annual meeting
 - Download the survey from our web site at www.fcactx.org
 - Ask us to send it to you as an email attachment
 - Ask us to mail it to you
- } Email us at office@fcactx.org
or leave us a message
at 512-480-0555.

Be sure to share our survey with people you care about. And don’t forget to mention that we have knowledgeable speakers available to talk to any group or organization in our service area. **Let’s spread the word!**

FCACTX 2018 Membership Data

Total membership.....	1,430
New members / Transfers-In	44
Members we’re aware of who died or moved away.....	52

Great thanks to Clint Henderson for matching obituaries in the *Statesman* to our member list.

The FCA of Central Texas Board of Directors recognizes that our mission *would not be possible without our dedicated volunteers.*

Heart-felt thanks for donating your time, your skills and your talents – serving on our Board, staffing our office, answering after-hours calls, planning events, hosting our Death Matters meetups, making presentations, delivering and setting up media equipment at our LLI classes, collecting price lists for our annual funeral home price survey, and more –

Frances Allen
 Sabiha Bandali
 Sandy Booth
 S. Lemuel Bradshaw
 Emily Cross
 June Chase Hankins
 Lamar Hankins

Clint Henderson
 Gail Karwoski
 Judy Mataya
 Jesse South
 Nancy Walker
 Barbara Wand James
 Gary Wheat



Sincerest thanks to 240 members whose donations supported our work in 2018.

Another hearty round of thanks to 14 members who donated more than once and to Chuck and Sue Howe, who sent us a donation every month (even though they don't live in our five-county service area)

Request:	Call or email us	Visit our Web site
To join or donate to FCA of Central Texas	X	X
To download price surveys and/or advance directive forms	X	X
To access our newsletters with clickable links		X
To update your phone number, email, or mailing address	X	
To arrange a presentation on one or more end-of-life topics	X	
To explore volunteer opportunities	X	

STAY IN TOUCH!

Phone: 512-480-0555
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 Austin, TX 78705-1449

Annual Meeting Keynote Topic: Advance planning for dementia

About 500,000 new cases of Alzheimer's disease will be diagnosed this year. There are few people over 60 years of age who are not personally acquainted with at least one person with dementia, Alzheimer's being the most prevalent form. We will explore ways to avoid the severe stages of dementia for those who wish to do so.

Annual Meeting Keynote Speaker: Lamar Hankins



This year is the 42nd year that our Keynote Speaker, Lamar Hankins, has been an attorney. He is now officially retired, which gives him more time to contribute to and edit **The Good Death Society Blog** on behalf of the Final Exit Network. The materials Lamar has posted on the blog relate closely to the topic he'll be discussing at our 2019 annual meeting.

Before retiring, Lamar worked in private practice, spent over five years as the City Attorney for San Marcos, Texas, and worked for 3-1/2 years as Managing Attorney for a legal services program in east Texas

Before going to law school he worked for a social services program in central Texas for seven years.

As a volunteer, Lamar has provided legal services for numerous non-profits and served on the boards of the national Funeral Consumers Alliance and the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Central Texas (formerly AMBIS).

At our 2013 annual meeting, we honored Lamar for his long-term contributions by conferring upon him the title of President Emeritus.



Funeral Home Updates

Affinity Green Cremation in Plugerville is offering cremation services.

[Angel Funeral Home](#), formerly owned by Bryan DeLeon, is now under common ownership with **Harrell Funeral Homes**. Texas Funeral Service Commission (TFSC) records indicate Angel's **inspection site** is located at 8708 South Congress Avenue, Ste. B-270; however the address provided to the public on Angel's website is 4435 Frontier Trail, where Harrell Funeral Home is located. (Google maps locate Angel at 4455 Frontier Trail.)

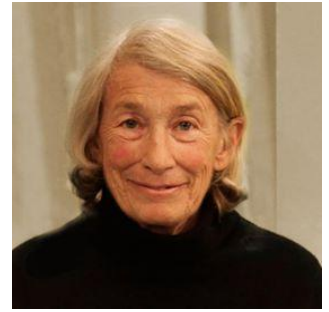
[Heart of Texas Cremation & Burial](#) is now operated by Jose Martinez.

A Simple Tradition Funeral Services, under common ownership with two Mission funeral homes in Austin and Los Angeles funeral home in San Marcos, is once again offering cremation and simple burial arrangements. They are located at 1611 E. Cesar Chavez, next door to Mission Funeral Home.

Solace Eco-Friendly Funeral Services in Austin is closed.



In loving memory of longtime AMBIS / FCACTX volunteer, **Frances Allen**, and in tribute to the life and works of **Mary Oliver** . . .



When Death Comes

When death comes
like the hungry bear in autumn;
when death comes and takes all the bright coins from his purse

to buy me, and snaps the purse shut;
when death comes
like the measles-pox

when death comes
like an iceberg between the shoulder blades,

I want to step through the door full of curiosity, wondering:
what is it going to be like, that cottage of darkness?

And therefore I look upon everything
as a brotherhood and a sisterhood,
and I look upon time as no more than an idea,
and I consider eternity as another possibility,

and I think of each life as a flower, as common
as a field daisy, and as singular,

and each name a comfortable music in the mouth,
tending, as all music does, toward silence,

and each body a lion of courage, and something
precious to the earth.

When it's over, I want to say all my life
I was a bride married to amazement.
I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms.

When it's over, I don't want to wonder
if I have made of my life something particular, and real.

I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened,
or full of argument.

I don't want to end up simply having visited this world.

~ Mary Oliver (1935 – 2019)

Who is Weed-Corley-Fish?

Lamar Hankins

When someone looks at the [website](http://www.wcfish.com) <<http://www.wcfish.com>> of Weed-Corley-Fish funeral homes, with four locations in the Austin area, the first thing to be seen is a group of pictures of unnamed people, with the name of the business in something like this form –

Weed-Corley-Fish
FUNERAL HOMES & CREMATION SERVICES

Next is a series of messages, each fading into the other, including this one –

A heritage of caring.
through four generations.

As one moves down the web page, the following message appears –

"Thank you for trusting us for over one hundred years. We are as dedicated as ever to providing you with caring and personal service by listening and paying careful attention to your needs. Please come in for a visit, call, or browse our site to find out how we can help.

Respectfully,"



The problem for the unsuspecting prospective customer is that Weed-Corley-Fish is no longer that caring family that has provided caring service to the Austin-area. In the Spring of 2017, the company was sold to Service Corporation International (SCI), the largest funeral services conglomerate in north America.

If one looks at the website's "About Us" link to "Our History," there is no mention of who actually owns Weed-Corley-Fish. Instead, the following message appears –

"At Weed-Corley-Fish, we've helped families honor their loved ones for over a hundred years. All of our conveniently-located chapels are peaceful, soothing places for your family and friends to gather for remembrance and recollection. And our dedication to your comfort, attention to detail, and honor for local traditions assure you of the most dignified and personalized services as you plan your tribute."

Two videos also continue this deception. On the website's [Our Services](http://www.wcfish.com/our-services/) page <<http://www.wcfish.com/our-services/>>, Laurens Fish, III, representing Weed-Corley-Fish, narrates, saying that "100 years of planning funerals doesn't make the price go up." This statement furthers the deception by implying that the Fish family continues to own and operate the business without revealing that the current owner is SCI. Further, as the video begins, he is identified as "Owner and Director."

In a second video, on the [Funeral Personalization](http://www.wcfish.com/our-services/funeral-personalization/) page <<http://www.wcfish.com/our-services/funeral-personalization/>>, Laurens Fish, III is again identified as "Owner and Funeral Director."

Why the deception? The simple answer is that SCI's business plan is intended to deceive potential customers. It usually buys a funeral business and continues to use the original name so customers don't know with whom they are actually doing business. SCI wants to take advantage of any good will that may exist from the former business and disguise SCI's ownership of the once local business.

But this is not the end of the deception. At its [FAQs link](#), the last question is "**Should I join a Memorial Society?**"

Weed-Corley-Fish advises readers as follows –

(continued on page 6)

"Memorial Society" is the historic name used by the affiliates of the Funeral Consumers Alliance (FCA). Over twenty years ago, FCA changed its name from the Funeral and Memorial Societies of America because board members learned that the memorial society name confused consumers, leading them to believe that the organization was a part of the funeral industry. FCA immediately began encouraging its affiliates to drop the memorial society language from their names, and most – including FCACTX – have done so.

Who is Weed-Corley-Fish (continued from page 5)

"A Memorial Society charges a membership fee for which you receive paperwork for organizing your pre-arrangement and a recommendation on a funeral firm who would provide services at an agreed upon price. There is no need to join a Society because we offer the same pre-arrangement information and alternatives to the traditional funeral and will commit to the cost. We can provide the same service without charging a membership fee."

Missing from this explanation are all the benefits beyond funeral planning documents provided by, for example, FCACTX:

- an annual funeral price survey of all funeral establishments physically located in Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Travis, and Williamson counties
- Lifetime Learning courses that help make consumers well-educated about the industry
- free presentations on end-of-life topics to groups all over the service area
- cemetery price surveys every other year
- three newsletters a year about funeral-related issues and concerns
- copies of state-provided advance directives
- monthly **Death Matters** meetups
- personal consultations about funeral-related concerns

And FCACTX does not recommend funeral providers. It educates consumers so that they will have the necessary information to make their own informed decisions.

To understand the size of the conglomerate a consumer may be dealing with if Weed-Corley-Fish or any other SCI property is chosen for a funeral or cremation, here is how SCI describes itself in its [2017 Annual Report](http://investors.sci-corp.com/phoenix.zhtml?c=108068&p=irol-reportsAnnual) <<http://investors.sci-corp.com/phoenix.zhtml?c=108068&p=irol-reportsAnnual>> –

"We are North America's largest provider of deathcare products and services, with a network of funeral service locations and cemeteries unequaled in geographic scale and reach. At December 31, 2017, we operated 1,488 funeral service locations and 473 cemeteries (including 281 funeral service/cemetery combination locations), which are geographically diversified across 45 states, eight Canadian provinces, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.

"We are well known for our Dignity Memorial® brand, North America's first transcontinental brand of deathcare products and services. Our other brands are Dignity Planning™, National Cremation Society®, Advantage® Funeral and Cremation Services, Funeraria del Angel™, Making Everlasting Memories®, Neptune Society™ and Trident Society™. Our funeral service and cemetery operations consist of funeral service locations, cemeteries, funeral service/cemetery combination locations, crematoria, and related businesses, which enable us to serve a wide array of customer needs. We sell cemetery property and funeral and cemetery merchandise and services at the time of need and on a preneed basis."

SCI's 2017 Annual Report explains its marketing strategy this way –

"We have co-branded our funeral operations under the name Dignity Memorial®. We believe our transcontinental branding strategy gives us a strategic advantage and identity in the industry. While this branding process is intended to emphasize our seamless national network of funeral service locations and cemeteries, the original names associated with acquired operations, and their inherent goodwill and heritage, generally remain the same. For example, Geo. H. Lewis & Sons Funeral Directors is now Geo. H. Lewis & Sons Funeral Directors, a Dignity Memorial® provider."

Central Texas consumers would benefit from looking at the prices charged by SCI funeral homes in our area, which are identified in the 2019 Annual Survey, and compare them to the prices charged for the same or similar services by other funeral service providers in the area. Doing so may save you money and keep you from adding to the \$3,095,000,000 in revenue SCI received in 2017. At the very least, it will help you understand that no matter what Weed-Corley-Fish's website says about family service, the most important objective is to make money for SCI.

What “Do Everything” really means

By [ZDoggMD](#) July 15, 2018

What do you want us to do if your heart stops beating?

What are your end-of-life wishes? Have you even thought about it? Do your loved ones know what you want? What if something happened today, are you ready for the consequences of not making your wishes known? Are you ready for the impact it will have on those who survive you?



Do you really know what happens when you ask us to “do everything?”

Imagine a cold, sterile environment. Your heart has stopped and you are on a hard gurney surrounded by chaos. It is determined you have no pulse, and CPR is started. You manage to survive broken ribs, a breathing tube down your throat, line and shocks and wires and being stripped naked in front of strangers in a cold room. You’re then wheeled up to an ICU bed where you spend countless hours or days in a medically-induced coma. If you awaken, you’re unable to breathe on your own, unable to speak, often unable to move.

You think, “This is not what I [wanted](#).” *But it’s too late.*

Will I survive?

Weeks later, if you are one of the 24% who even survive a [code](#), you make it out of the ICU (this number assumes you don’t already have a chronic illness or other life-limiting condition). You have PTSD and/or post-ICU [psychosis](#). Did you know that 1/3 of patients discharged from the ICU have cognitive impairment similar to a traumatic brain injury or Alzheimer’s Disease? Others face possible PTSD and depression. You have healing rib fractures. You may be dependent on multiple medications. Are you on dialysis too? Would it still have been worth it?

How can I prevent this if this is something I don’t want?

This scenario is entirely preventable by YOU. Tell someone you care about what your values and wishes are. It doesn’t matter how old you are. Have the [conversation](#) NOW.

Maybe you are young and you want everything up until the doctors say they have tried everything. Maybe you are older, have a terminal diagnosis, etc: do you really want to die like this? 20% die in this cold, sterile, painful setting, forced by protocol into torture followed by inevitable death. It always seems too soon until it’s too late...talk about it *now*.

Who can I ask to carry out my wishes?

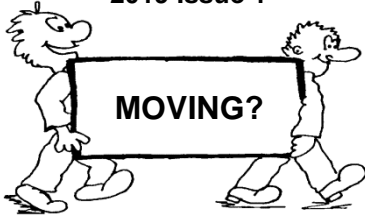
Pick someone who will be able to carry out your wishes under stress without letting their emotions [interfere](#) with carrying out *your* wishes. Use [resources](#) to guide you in finding the right person, talking about your wishes to someone who may not agree with you, and talking with your healthcare team.

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Reprinted on [The Good Death Society Blog](#) by permission of the author, with some reformatting by Lamar Hankins, our annual meeting Keynote Speaker and editor of [The Good Death Society Blog](#).

Dr. Zubin Damania (ZDoggMD) is Founder of Turntable Health, a direct primary care clinic in downtown Las Vegas. He is a UCSF/Stanford trained internal medicine physician. During a decade-long career as a hospitalist at Stanford, he performed stand-up comedy for medical audiences worldwide as a way to address his own professional burnout. He produces [videos](#) and [live shows](#) to educate patients and providers while mercilessly [satirizing](#) what he views as a dysfunctional healthcare system. More about him can be found at his [website](#).

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OPEN RIGHT AWAY FOR NEWS ABOUT

- **OUR 2019 ANNUAL MEETING**
- **OUR 2019 FUNERAL HOME PRICE SURVEY**
- **AND MORE!**

Time-Sensitive

This newsletter with clickable links is on our website.