

FCA REPORT

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FCA-GKC



Long path from son's death Leads to casket-building project

By Jim Fitzpatrick

For 47-year-old Kris Munsch, it's been a long journey – alternately difficult and inspirational -- from successful businessman to high school teacher who oversees a project that involves students producing caskets for infants.

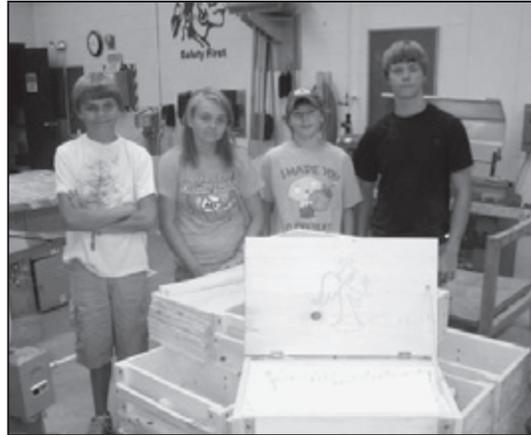
Munsch's story is a testament to the power of the death of a loved one.

Five years ago, Munsch was living in Hays, Kan., with his wife Gena and her son Jacob. He was a successful entrepreneur, the owner of two liquor stores, a Laundromat and a home inspection business. Two days before Christmas in 2005, however, his life turned upside down, when his 16-year-old son Blake (by a previous marriage) was killed in a car crash.

Immediately, life began to reorder itself for Munsch and his wife. Although business had been good, Munsch completely lost interest in being an entrepreneur. He sold his businesses, and he and Gena moved to Manhattan, Kan., where they stayed for a year.

Although nothing really came together for Munsch in Manhattan, he developed a new plan: He would become a teacher. Fortuitously, he had obtained his teaching degree in 2002, after his father had asked him what he would do if he ever went bankrupt. (He has since earned a master's degree in school administration.) With his new direction set, he and Gena decided to move to the Kansas City area, where Jacob's father lived.

Munsch landed a job as a woods teacher in the Bonner Springs School District. In 2009, Munsch and a Bonner Springs English teacher, Jeff Fouquet, collaborated on a book, "The Birdhouse Project," in which Munsch



Bonner Springs High School students (from left) Thomas Hook, Sammy Weller, Troy Hall and Ethan Hook were among those who built infant burial cradles during the summer in Kris Munsch's shop class.

detailed the step-by-step process of coping with his grief and trying to find new meaning in life.

During the 2009-2010 school year, Munsch began channeling his grief into a new project. He came up with the idea of having his wood-shop students make caskets for children. Munsch ran the idea by the superintendent of the Bonner Springs School District, and the superintendent gave him an enthusiastic "yes."

So, this summer, 10 students who volunteered for the "Soft Pine Project" took part in the project, which yielded 22 burial cradles. Each of the caskets has hearts carved on the ends and an angel carved inside and outside the lids. Another part of the project – perhaps the most difficult for the students – is including in the casket a note to the families of the deceased children, whoever they may turn out to be.

The school has donated one casket to Liberty Hospital and plans to give

Teacher Keynotes Annual Meeting October 31

Bonner Springs High School shop teacher Kris Munsch will be the keynote speaker at the annual meeting of the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Greater Kansas City October 31.

Munsch and a couple of his students will display one of the small, soft-pine burial cradles the class built for families facing the deaths of babies. The cradles have simple liners, pads, pillows and hand-quilted blankets. They also contain hand-written notes from the students.



Kris Munsch

"It's a huge eye-opener for the kids," Munsch says. "They know it happens but teenagers don't have the ability to see things that aren't in front of them. Those who come into the shop and see them, it makes them step back. It leaves them speechless."

The annual meeting begins at 2:30 p.m. Sunday, October 31, at All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church, 4501 Walnut. The location is two blocks north of the Country Club Plaza and one block east of Main Street.

After so many calls, she knows most answers

By Bev McGill, FCA-GKC President

I've returned the calls to the Funeral Consumer Alliance voice mail for a number of years. As you would expect, there is a great variety of calls. Some calls provide me with information, some calls are inspiring, and the information I give in some calls seems appropriate to share. The following is such a call.

Questions about where to buy grave markers have been the reason for several calls lately. You can buy a grave marker from an independent source or from the cemetery. However, a cemetery may charge a higher fee to set the marker if you do not buy the marker from them. FCA has tried for years to get a bill passed in congress that would prohibit such practices. While funeral homes are regulated by the Federal Trade Commission there is no agency regulating cemeteries. A bill recently introduced by congressman Bobby Rush would put cemeteries under FTC regulations. You will find more information on this issue on the FCA National web site, www.funerals.org.

I also had a call asking for information on building your own casket. You'll find that information on our local web site, www.funeralskc.org.

Another call was from a person asking if the family would be allowed to transport their family member to another state for burial. In most states that would be permissible, but there are certain forms you would need. Contact The Missouri Board of Embalmers and Funeral Directors at, 573 751 0813, or The Kansas Board of Mortuary Science at 785 296 3980 for further information.

Now I'd like to focus on the rewarding part of returning our calls.

One call furnished me with information about Memorial Park Cemetery, a paupers cemetery, located on Hillcrest Road in Kansas City, MO.

As I visited with a woman who called requesting information on Missouri laws, I found she had a background in home funerals. She was the speaker at our 2009 Annual Meeting.

I also receive calls praising funeral homes that have provided an outstanding service. We take that into consideration when recommending a funeral home.



Bev McGill
FCA-GKC President

On a day when nothing seemed to be going right, I returned a call to a woman with such a beautiful, positive message it brightened my whole day.

There is one aspect of returning calls that I have no aptitude for. That is asking for a donation to our FCA chapter when I receive a call from someone expressing gratitude for our help. I don't want to make anyone think we give our advice expecting payment. But still if we do not receive donations we will no longer be around to provide information, and advocate for those making final arrangements. All suggestions are welcome!

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Building caskets touches kids

Continued from Page 1

others to the University of Kansas Hospital and possibly other hospitals. When the caskets run low, Munsch intends to recruit other students to replenish the supply.

This semester, Munsch has gone in a slightly different direction – recruiting student volunteers to build full-size caskets. The idea would be to sell the caskets, with part of the proceeds going to the project and the other part going into participating students' school expense accounts. The prospect of extra income, Munsch believes, will be a strong incentive for prospective volunteers.

Grief is still very much a part of Munsch's life, and he expects it to continue that way as long as he lives. But he draws immense satisfaction out of working with his students and helping them develop a good work ethic and an appreciation for the importance of collaboration.

"Teaching," he said, "is such an opportunity to affect kids for life."

The Funeral Consumers Alliance of Greater Kansas City has been pleased to help promote Munsch's Soft Pine Project. Munsch came to the attention of our group last April at the Association for Death Education and Counseling Conference at the Hyatt Regency Crown Center hotel. The FCA

and "The Birdhouse Project" had side-by-side booths in the hotel's exhibition hall, and Bev McGill, FCA president, struck up a conversation with Munsch and befriended him.

He later came to an FCA board meeting and greatly impressed board members with his passion for the Soft Pine Project and his compassion for parents who have experienced the loss of a child.

In the spring, board members called Munsch to the attention of Dawn Bormann, a reporter for The Kansas City Star. Subsequently, Bormann wrote a story that appeared on the front page of the June 21 paper. You can see that story by going to the kansascity.com web site and entering Munsch's name in the search box. (Do the search under "archives" in the drop-down menu.)

At FCA, we wish Munsch and his students the best, and we thank him for his commitment to his cause.

If you would like to contribute to the Soft Pine Project, please contact Munsch at Bonner Springs High School, (913) 422-5121, or make a check payable to the Soft Pine Project and mail it to the high school, attention Kris Munsch, 100 N. McDaniel, Bonner Springs, KS 66012.

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First, a deathly frame of mind helps at home funeral workshop

By Jim Fitzpatrick

For 20 minutes, I was a dead man. It was the morning of Saturday, April 10. I hadn't been shot or hit by a car, and I hadn't drowned. I chose to be "dead" because I knew I would be "resurrected" in fairly short order.

The occasion was a home funeral demonstration conducted by a woman named Donna Belk of Austin, Tex. Donna is an end-of-life consultant who has helped families with home funerals and has been giving home funeral demonstrations the last several years.

I'll get to my experience as a corpse in a minute, but first a little background.

Donna was in town for the national Association for Death Education and Counseling Conference at the Hyatt Regency Crown Center Hotel. Donna had offered to put on a home funeral demonstration for the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Greater Kansas City, of which I am a board member.

The demonstration took place at the Beggar's Table church and gallery, 2009 Baltimore. Those in attendance, mostly FCA board members, were treated to a very moving and intimate experience.

"I think of it as a home birth," Donna told our group, "except it's a lot easier because you can't hurt the person."

Her demonstration is entitled "Returning to Simple Traditions" because more than 100 years ago it was common for families to take care of deceased family members. People



Donna Belk (right) instructs FCA members on how to conduct a home funeral with Jim Fitzpatrick volunteering as the corpse.

conducted home funerals and buried their loved ones in family plots. For a variety of reasons, that changed, and now nearly everyone relies on the services of licensed funeral directors to care for the dead...at considerable cost.



Jim Fitzpatrick

The average cost of a conventional funeral, utilizing the services of a funeral home, is about \$8,000, Belk said, compared to \$600 for the average home funeral. Nevertheless, Donna recommended against a home funeral if the family's sole interest is to save money. If that's the goal, she said, "donate the body to medical science or go for cremation."

For purposes of the demonstration at the Beggar's Table, a fellow board

member volunteered me to be the deceased so I could write this story. I wouldn't have minded being the corpse, anyway, because I seldom turn down an opportunity to lie down and relax. As soft music played in the background, I took my place on a padded, narrow table that was covered with a sheet. Another sheet covered me, with my hands folded on my chest, on top of the sheet.

With my eyes closed, I lay very still – Donna had told me not to talk – and I tried to get myself in a deathly frame of mind, that is, keeping it empty. Donna asked three people to stand on either side of the table. She explained that if I really was dead, she would gently press on my abdomen to eliminate any waste. Then, she demonstrated how the people flanking me could change the sheet by turning me first to one side, rolling the sheet up so it was tight against me, and then turning me to the other side – over the rolled-up sheet, before putting down a new sheet in similar fashion.

Home funeral CDs available

If you would like to obtain a CD that Donna Belk has produced of a home funeral demonstration, call Jim Fitzpatrick at (816) 361-1303.) The cost is \$15, and the proceeds go to the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Greater Kansas City. For more about Donna and home funerals, visit her website, donnabelk.com.

Continued... on Page 5

Highlights and lowlights of FCA advocacy

By Steve Nicely

Advocating on behalf of consumers in the funeral business has its highlights and lowlights. Here are some of both I have experienced recently:



Steve Nicely

Two highs and a low

A dying friend wanted a natural burial with no embalming in a wooden casket placed in direct contact with the earth, meaning no concrete grave liner. She got two out of three, which are highlights.

The low light was when I called the head of the country church's cemetery board to ask about skipping the grave liner. I was told grave liners were required and there could be no exceptions. This isn't word-for-word, but it's what I heard him say: "We don't disrespect the body by just throwing in the ground. There's settling and there's rodents. Maybe they do nutty things like that in California with their homosexuals and stuff, but we don't do it anywhere around here."

When I informed him that Lawrence had a natural burial section in one of its cemeteries, he shot back, "Well, do you want to take her there?"

Ten highs and rag weeds

After a year with just a few plots sold, people are discovering the natural burial section of Lawrence's city-owned Oak Hill Cemetery on the west side of town. They've sold 10 plots and had three natural burials and two cremation burials, most within the last several months. It's interesting that only one apparently was purchased by a Lawrence resident. The rest were from Parkville, MO, Stilwell, KS, Wichita, Topeka, Olathe, Kansas City, MO,

and rural Douglas County. The plots go for \$700 and go up to \$750 next year.

The city has cleaned up the brush pile near the entrance of the section, making it more appealing. "There's no maintenance at all," said cemetery sexton Mitch Young, of the forested natural burial section. "We just have to cut the underbrush once a year. One person planted a white oak right on top of the grave."

When I drove by it in late August, I thought I saw some rag weeds growing under the arching canopy. Natural burial involves exposing the body to the earth when its biodegradable container decomposes. The earth's microbes transform the body into rich compost that nourishes the plant life above. When I think of those plants, I think of trees and wildflowers and prairie grass. But rag weeds? Well, they're natural, aren't they?

A low goes high

Jim Fitzpatrick's story about functioning as a cadaver during our home funeral workshop didn't mention our disappointing turnout. We publicized it with flyers on bulletin boards and emailed it to family and friends. We waited for the people to arrive. And waited. And waited. Our board member Sally King, in whose church it was held, stood on the steps looking up and down the street. When a passing car slowed, she asked the male occupants if they were looking for the home funeral workshop. Nope. Apparently they were just looking at Sally.

Besides our board, only two outsiders were there. Donna Belk, the presenter from Austin, TX, said she was not surprised and launched the workshop. She said most haven't wrapped their minds around the way funerals were conducted centuries ago when families cared for their dead at home. We learned how to do it. We agreed it was an enlightening experience. Jim's story tells the rest.

A high goes low

It's so strange that as I was writing



Sally King waiting and waiting on the church steps

this column I received the following email from our FCA-GKC board president Bev McGill:

"We're in a state of shock. My oldest daughter, Trish, who was at the home funeral workshop, died unexpectedly yesterday morning of heart arrhythmia. We're all together at her house now. The Memorial Service will be at 2:00 PM Thursday."

Patricia Lynn Jackson, the oldest of Bev and Ron McGill's 11 children, turned 60 in August. Trish drove down from her Coon Rapids, Iowa, home for the workshop. Bev was so happy to have her presence knowing Trish would lead her siblings in Bev's home funeral arrangements when the time came. Trish was impressed with the workshop and quite willing to do it. Instead, it's the other way around with Bev helping with Trish's arrangements. Such real-life paradoxes are incomprehensible. They leave us shocked and dumbfounded.

A high named Jack

My wife's cousin, Jack Amann, died much like Trish did unexpectedly at age 62 two weeks earlier. He was a Minneapolis-St. Paul area funeral director who "had a love

Continued... on Page 5

When life's paradoxes are dumbfounding

Continued from Page 4

for people who were grieving and had special needs," his daughter Andi said in a *Star-Tribune* quote. "It was not something he shied away from."

The article continued: Throughout his life, Amann worked hard to teach family and friends that death was a part of life and shouldn't be feared. He often spoke to high school students and took them on field trips to funeral homes.

What a fine testimony. Knowing Jack, I know he deserves it.

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Trish (left) and Bev McGill at the home funeral workshop .



Trish witnesses Jim's "resurrection."

Playing dead at home funeral workshop

Continued from Page 3

Next would come the washing and perhaps anointing of the body. Although she did not wash or anoint me, she demonstrated how attendants could cool a body by placing packs of dry ice under each

shoulder blade and each hip. A body can be effectively cooled that way for two to three days, she said.

Then, it was on to the service itself. Donna put her hands on my forehead and solicited a blessing for "the brow

that was sometimes furrowed with worry and concern." Moving along, she invoked blessings on my eyes, lips and heart. At such a funeral, Donna said, people in the room might deliver eulogies; they might sing; they might pray. They could do whatever they wanted to do, either spontaneously or along the lines of what family members may have planned.

To move the body, she said, the people flanking the body would first bundle the sheets next to the body -- to distribute the weight and keep the body from looking like it was in a gunny sack -- and then lift at the same time. When they moved, they would proceed with a sideways shuffle of the feet to insure steady footing and smooth carriage.

As I was lifted and moved, eyes remaining closed, I heard the taxed breathing of some of my carriers. Too bad I didn't weigh 160, I thought, instead of 185. After carrying me a short distance, however, my "handlers" moved me safely back onto the table, and I heard a few exhalations of relief.

Then, it was over, and I heard a voice summoning me back to the here and now. I opened my eyes, shook off my reverie and gladly rejoined the land of the living.

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The paperwork of death

Death certificates and birth certificates bracket our lives at both ends. Funeral homes generally fill out and file death certificates, but what happens when someone dies and the family cares for the body at home without the services of a funeral home?

State agencies in charge of vital statistics are suspicious when a stranger calls asking for a blank death certificate form for a departed loved one. The officials must be assured of the absence of fraud and that the form is signed by a physician.

Here is what to do and who to contact in Kansas and Missouri:

First, call the police or local sheriff's department to report the death right away. Law officers will check the possibility of foul play and delaying this duty invites suspicion.

In Kansas:

Contact Sharon Marshall in the Office of Vital Statists in the Department of Health and Environment at 785-296-1428 or email her at smarshal@kdheks.gov. She will send or fax a worksheet to be filled out and returned to her. Her office will complete an original death certificate and send it directly to the doctor for signing. "We just want to make sure everything is legal and there's no suspicion," Marshall said.

In Missouri:

Contact state registrar Ivra Cross in the Department of Health and Senior Services Bureau of Vital Records at 573-526-0348 or email her at ivra.cross@dhs.mo.gov. The bureau encourages notifying the police before transporting a body. Contact the bureau for details about death certificates. The agency will ask for basic facts including the name, date and place of death, and contact information of the professional who certifies the manner and cause of death.

Who pays for funerals when they die broke?

by Steve Nicely

Someone calls our FCA-GKC phone number (816-561-6322) at least once a week seeking money to help pay for the funeral expenses of a loved one. We have to tell them we are an all-volunteer organization with limited resources. But we do offer advice on where to go for the best prices and refer them to our website (funeralskc.org) where our latest metro-wide survey of funeral prices is posted.

Too often our advice is too late because families have already made funeral arrangements costing thousands of dollars. Death forces rapid decisions when advanced planning did not occur. FCA-GKC President Bev McGill takes most of those calls and is frustrated by them. Plan ahead, we advise, but don't pre-pay. Spell out what you want and set the money aside. The recent insolvency of Mount Washington Forever Funeral Home is the latest example of the hazards of pre paying for funerals. The pre-need contracts people made for funerals at that facility apparently are worthless.

Actually there are places where help can be found, but not nearly as many as in the past. County governments have programs for disposing of the bodies of the impoverished. Six counties in the metro area pay for death care services for about 130 indigents a year, as detailed below. Sometimes churches will help hardship cases. Some hospice organizations have memorial funds and the Salvation Army has been known to step up. It would be a disservice not to acknowledge that some funeral homes discount their prices in hardship cases.

Still, the economy has taken its toll on charities that once helped. Donations are down. And the \$550 that the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services once provided for funerals of welfare recipients has been eliminated.

"Nothing is out there any more," said Thad Rogers of Kansas City Funeral Directors, one of two funeral homes with the lowest prices in town. "All sorts of income has dried up – except for private donations." Some families beg on street corners, he



said. Others place slotted containers for donations in retail shops and restaurants.

"The Hispanic community pulls together to help each other," said Rogers who provides

containers for them to use. "They will give the last \$5 in their pockets."

Kathy and Ron Marts of Marts Memorial Services vie with Rogers for the lowest prices. They handle 8 or 10 indigent funerals a month for county governments. Kathy Marts said ethnic churches are more likely to take up a collection for a funeral than others. "One passed the basket at a funeral service. It was the first time I've ever seen it."

State laws in Missouri and Kansas pin the responsibility for disposing of the remains of indigents on county governments. Of six counties checked in the metro area – Jackson, Clay and Platte in Missouri and Leavenworth, Wyandotte and Johnson in Kansas – each carries out its charge differently.

Jackson County

The county pays for an estimated 70 indigent cremations and burials a year. Ordinarily an application for burial or cremation assistance is made to the county counselor's office by a relative, hospital or funeral home to determine if the deceased is



Thad Rogers

eligible. If the body is unclaimed and no family member can be found, the medical examiner sends the body to a funeral director for cremation. The county contracts with Marts Memorial Services in Kansas City for cremations at the rate of \$525. When burial is required in rare cases, services are provided by Slider Funeral Home in Kansas City, KS, for \$1,135.

The county spent nearly \$45,000 in each of the past two years and will likely surpass that amount this year, said the county's public information officer, Dan Ferguson.

Platte County

Pays \$500 toward the cremation of indigents, but only has three or four cases a year, said Toni Clemens, chief deputy public administrator. There is no investigation of finances. "We don't deal directly with the family," she said. "Usually a hospital will call saying they have an indigent."

Clay County

Pays \$650 each for about 20 indigent funerals a year for state welfare recipients, said Andria Pilgrim who handles applications in the public administrator's office. "There are some gray areas," she said. "We try to help people who absolutely have nothing."

Families pick the funeral home. If there's no one to make that decision, "we try to spread it around," she said.

Johnson County

Pays \$550 to cremate the remains of indigents when they are unclaimed, said undersheriff Kevin Cavanaugh. That is the amount the state previously paid for the funerals of welfare recipients but no longer does so. If the body is claimed by a family, the county generally pays nothing. It is the family's responsibility, he said.

The county takes care of an estimated about 25 indigent cases a year, spending \$15,000 to \$20,000. When the coroner requires it, indigents are buried instead of cremated, but most are cremated.

Continued... on Page 7

The intimacies of preparing her body

By Kate Steger, MA, MPH

When someone as close to you as your mother dies, you don't need a doctor to check her pulse or look at his watch and proclaim her dead. You know right away that what's left behind is not the person you knew and loved. That's what makes it so devastating. You're left with nothing but a shell, an empty husk no longer containing the kernel of life that, a moment before, was so familiar and dear to you. The shock is bewildering even if the death was expected and long-overdue.

That was the case with both of my grandmothers, who died of old age, and of my mother, who died recently after a five-year illness. My grandmothers both died in the dark hours of early morning, and by dawn, the "men in black" (as I call undertakers) arrived with their practiced sympathy, zipped them into body bags pajamas and all, and whisked them away while my family stood by too stunned to stop them. It felt like the Gestapo had taken Granny away for questioning and that was the end of her! We were never going to see her again!

Actually, we got better at handling the choices that come after a death. The undertakers did give us our grandmothers back, in the first case embalmed, but after seeing the house-of-horrors result, we asserted different preferences the next time around. The second grandmother was returned to us cold, but soft and natural. We filled her coffin with rose petals and cards from her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She looked like a sleeping, white-haired angel.

However, when it came to my mother's death in her home on a beautiful summer day, my sister and I had no intention of turning over to strangers the intimacies of preparing her body for burial. Instinctively, it seemed the height of disrespect to send her off without ceremony and to let others wash and dress her without tenderness and love.

We began with a prayer in gratitude for all the care she had shown us as infants and for the opportunity to return the favor to her who was in the infancy

of her new life. My brother washed her face and hair with the utmost tenderness making sure, he said with a wink, to wash behind the ears, as she had taught him. When he was finished, my sister and I washed the rest of her body which seemed to soften and relax with our touch.



Kate Steger, whose family lives in Leavenworth, now lives in the Washington D.C. area and works for the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting.

It was a strange thing to notice that the ugliness of death fell off of her as we worked and a peaceful almost humorous expression appeared on her face. In her closet, we found a lovely royal purple dress and jacket, still in the store wrappings, that she had apparently intended for this purpose. After we did her hair and make-up, she looked lovely and really seemed to have a whimsical little smile on her face about all the fuss we'd made over her.

We were able to keep the body

with us all day, crying and laughing as we needed to, and saying our final goodbyes with much affection. We set a place for her at the dinner table and afterward sat quietly by her side one last time. Just as the sun was setting and we began to light candles, the attendants from the funeral home arrived. They let us move her gently to the gurney and escort her to the van where we sang a song before sending her body on its way.

Not all of my siblings were able to be present for her death that day and certainly her many friends were also unable to see her body one last time because state laws forbid public viewing of an unembalmed body. To me, this is truly regrettable. As a public health professional, I can appreciate concerns for the safe handling of corpses, but these concerns are really warranted only in cases of highly infectious diseases. Even in cases of mass burials, the mental health concerns for families often take precedence over rapid

interment. The need to let go of the body of a deceased love one is obvious and painfully apparent. But healing occurs and joy returns more quickly when abrupt departure is avoided and the threads of death can be woven seamlessly into the fabric of life.

FCA editor's note: Although some funeral homes may prohibit the viewing of unembalmed bodies, there is no state law to that effect in either Kansas or Missouri.

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When they die broke?

Continued from Page 6

Wyandotte County

Wyandotte County Coroner Dr. Alan Hancock said the county handled about a half dozen indigent deaths this year through August. If a body is abandoned and a check reveals that no funds or property are available, the county steps in and has the remains cremated, he said.

Leavenworth County

Pays for fewer than a half dozen indigent funerals a year said Janice Dickson, deputy county clerk. It does not currently require cremation. The cost varies depending upon the funeral home used. Normally it is a funeral home that notifies the county when it has an indigent situation, she said.

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Home funeral Conference October 8-10

Advocates for families' rights to conduct undertaker-free funerals are gathering in Boulder, Colorado October 8-10, 2010 for the second annual conference of the National Home Funeral Alliance. For full program details, go to homefuneralalliance.org.

Consumer choice in funerals starts with the right to choose **not to be a consumer** at all, but to organize and perform a funeral privately with family and friends. This is the conference to attend for anyone interested in the cutting edge of consumer advocacy in funeral matters!

This year's theme is *Building Bridges to Bring Death Care Back Home*, and the speakers' roster is chock full of leaders from the home funeral movement as well as national consumer advocates (including FCA's Executive Director, Josh Slocum):

- Karen Van Vuuren, founder of Natural Transitions
- Beth Knox, founder of Crossings
- Char Barrett of A Sacred Moment
- Joe Sehee, executive director of the Green Burial Council
- Jerrigrace Lyons, founder of Final Passages
- Josefina Speyer, co-founder of the UK's Natural Death Centre
- Josh Slocum, executive director of Funeral Consumers Alliance

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