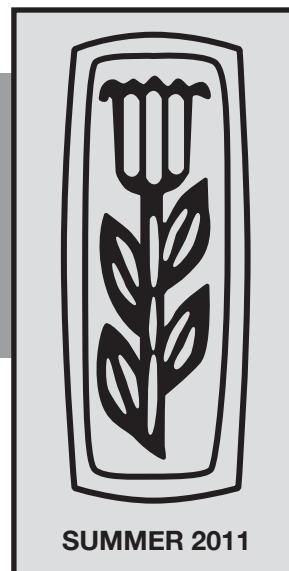


# FCA REPORT

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FCA-GKC



## Mom: Ever the Pre-Planner

By Alyssa Elliott

My family, the Jacksons, has never had a difficult time talking about death. In fact we've been known to tell a joke or two to make light of the taciturn subject. One of us kids would say something like, "If Dad died, the deer population in Iowa would double." My avid-hunter dad, Dean Jackson, would laugh just as heartily as the rest of us. There would be a few more tasteless jokes added to the pile and then, inevitably, Mom would roll the conversation around to the more practical nature of death.

She would say, "I don't want a sad funeral in a church. That doesn't feel like me."

My siblings and I would nod our heads, having heard this before and thinking that there will be a gulf of time between talking about this and the application of it. We were wrong.

My mother, Patricia Lynn Jackson, passed away silently in her sleep on August 30, 2010 at the age of 60. The phrase "It was so unexpected," floated around my parent's home for days after, refusing to settle into belief. The reality of unexpected death is that it is so very unpredictable. Not only is there a chasm of grief swallowing anyone close to the deceased, but those left behind are awash in a sea of decisions that they neither anticipated nor want to approach.

My mother understood this better than anyone I have ever met. Patricia



Patricia Jackson and Alyssa Elliott

"Trish" never left what could be done today for tomorrow. If she could make a plan for a contingency, she did. Years ago, my mom filled out a "Going Away" file. She told my dad and all four of us kids about this file, where to find it and how to use it in the event of her death.

So, in the still-dark hours on the morning of her passing, when my sister, dad and I found ourselves staring at each other with bewildered looks, we knew what needed to be done first. Distraught, but wanting some way to busy his hands, my dad recalled Mom's "Going Away" and retrieved it.

A sticky-note placed on the outside of the pink folder read, "Read all of this before you do anything. Love you all."

Inside the folder was all that we needed to make preparations for laying Trish to rest. First, it contained a booklet Mom had filled out with information such as place of birth, social security number, physicians contact information, insurance policy contact information and all the basic personal information that we would need in the future.

Dealing with the immediate shock of Mom's passing made remembering even simple details about her difficult to recall. This booklet proved very handy

Continued... on Page 8

## Shifting arena in low-cost cremations

By Steve Nicely  
FCA-GKC president

The recent closing of Marts Memorial Services Funeral Home at 14 Westport Road creates a seismic shift in the metropolitan area's low-cost funeral arena. At \$675 for a direct cremation, Marts had the lowest price among 65 funeral homes in the Funeral Consumers Alliance's latest price survey. Marts handled 590 body dispositions in 2010, probably the most of any site in town, according to testimony in Jackson County Circuit Court.

Where will all of that business go? Apparently not too far. Three existing providers and two newcomers in the low-cost field offer direct cremations under \$1,000.

The next lowest prices after Marts in the survey were Kansas City Funeral Directors in Kansas City, KS, at \$750; Cedar Crest Funeral Home in DeSoto at \$795 and Church funeral services in Mission at \$850. That compares with a mean average in the survey for direct cremation among all 65 providers of \$1,956. (Direct cremation includes transporting and care of the body, death certificate, cremation fee and a container for the ashes.)

In addition, two other providers have entered the low-cost cremation and funeral market since the survey

Continued... on Page 3

### Green burial Meeting May 21

The Forest Green group will host a meeting May 21 for those interested in supporting green burial opportunities in the metropolitan area. Details on page 3.

# Tahara's richness inspires admiration, envy

By Steve Nicely,  
FCA-GKC President

Lynn Anderson, editor of *The Best Times*, Johnson County's monthly magazine for seniors, wrote a masterpiece in her April issue about the ancient Jewish burial ritual, Tahara. I will let part of it speak for itself before commenting.

*In a windowless room in the Louis Memorial Chapel, the body of a Jewish woman lies. She has died in the night, and will be buried this afternoon. This morning, three other women will wash, purify, dress, and lay the body in a plain pine coffin. They will recite psalms and ancient Hebrew prayers, and conduct each careful movement with reverence. Then others will watch over the body until it is placed in the ground.*

*This is the same sort of ritual that would have occurred at the woman's birth 86 years earlier, when she was washed, swaddled in clean garments, and placed in a snug bassinet, with much cooing and joy.*

*The similarity is not accidental. Jewish burial ritual is based on a belief in the inherent dignity of every human being, grounded in the fact that s/he is created in the image of God.*

*And it is Jewish belief that although the soul departs from the body upon death, it remains nearby, fully aware of what transpires. This contradicts the common belief that "funerals are for the living." In fact, the departed are very much present at the funeral.*

*All Jews are considered deserving of a burial reflecting the richness and beauty of Jewish tradition and belief. It's these women, and groups of men like them, who ensure that this happens. They are the Chevra Kadisha.*

So there it is. The Chevra Kadisha (pronounced HEVra kaDEEsha), or Sacred Society, is a group on call at all hours to perform the Tahara ritual for the dead – men for a male deceased and women for a female. Washed, purified, dressed, placed in a plain pine coffin, prayed over, never left alone. No embalming. No

cremation. No airtight coffins or anything that impedes the natural disintegration of the body back into the earth from which it came.

The richness and beauty of it inspires my admiration and envy. My tradition turns the body over to a funeral director, sometimes before it is cold, for disposal of one type or another. By the time it is returned to a place of worship for ritual prayer and blessing, it is a far cry from its natural state.

It's not that funeral homes are disrespectful of the bodies in their care. They're not, although some people think embalming in itself is disrespectful. Personally, I don't see anything wrong with a dead body that looks dead. It doesn't have to look like it is still alive, just taking a nap.

These are changing times in the funeral industry. While many funeral directors prefer to keep operating the old way, a growing number seem willing to cooperate with rituals like Tahara. The folks at Lewis Memorial Chapel could teach their fellow funeral directors all about it.

Here is half of the problem: Most of us don't have anything like a Chevra Kadisha to respond when a loved one dies. We are distraught. We can't think straight. We don't know where to turn for something like that.

Let's say we would just prefer to avoid embalming and use a biodegradable coffin. Will the funeral director cooperate with refrigeration and an open-casket visitation a day or two later? There is only one way to find out. Call around. I'm betting a solution can be found. FCA's funeral price survey, posted on [www.funeralskc.org](http://www.funeralskc.org), has the phone numbers and addresses for over 70 funeral homes in this area.

The other half of the problem



Steve Nicely

involves cemeteries, most of which require concrete grave liners with lids that allow the earth to be packed down to support heavy equipment being driven over the grave. That means no natural or green burials at those cemeteries.

Again, the situation is not insurmountable. FCA-GKC is putting together a survey of cemeteries and their services. We are discovering they don't all require grave liners, also known as vaults. If they don't, they are green cemeteries of one degree or another. Those that don't insist on grave liners tend to be smaller than most. Our survey will be completed later this year.

Even some of the larger cemeteries permit modified versions of green burial by placing the casket directly in contact with the earth, then turning the grave liner upside down and lowering it lidless over the casket. The filler dirt can still be packed down. Catholic Cemeteries of Johnson and Wyandotte Counties permit this practice.

One might assume that Jewish cemeteries would embrace green burial practices in light of the natural elements of Tahara rituals, but most don't. With few exceptions, Jewish cemeteries in this area require slightly modified grave liners. The vaults have an opening in the bottom about one-foot square, a portal through which most of the body will eventually leach into the earth.

The Kahilath Israel Blue Hills Cemetery at 1901S. Blue Ridge Blvd. provides burial without vaults for orthodox Jews. The vaultless burials require more maintenance until the unpacked filler dirt settles. "It's not much work for one grave, but it would be for a lot of them," said Rod Site, caretaker.

But natural burial is the rule at Kansas City's Mid America Muslim Cemetery at 105th and James A. Reed Road. "We lay the (wrapped) body on the dirt," said Mustafa Hussein, service manager of the Islamic Center of Greater Kansas City. "There is no vault. The dirt goes over the body. We level it. That's it."

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# Other providers move into low-cost arena

Continued from Page 1

was conducted in 2009: The Cremation Center of Kansas City, part of the Amos Family Funeral Home in Shawnee, offers direct cremations for \$895. And Highland Park Funeral Home in Kansas City, KS, now advertises a “basic cremation” for \$795. That is down from its 2009 direct cremation price of \$1,555 in the survey.

Another new provider, Signature Funerals, recently opened at 8019 State Line in Kansas City. It offers direct cremation for \$1,395, not exactly low-cost, but well below the \$1,956 average in the survey.

Marts closed because it lost its lease and had its license revoked by the Missouri Board of Embalmers and Funeral Directors, the state’s regulatory agency for the industry. Ron Marts appealed the loss to the Jackson County Circuit Court where hearings have been held but not yet resolved.

The license revocation followed complaints that cremation ashes were mixed up or lost, that records were missing, that bodies were stored too long at inadequate cooling temperatures and that money paid by families in advance of need was missing. The court appointed an interim manager whose reports to the court reflected continued problems before the funeral home’s lease expired and closed.

Today a call to Marts Memorial’s telephone gets no answer and no recorded message. That experience distressed a woman who contacted the Funeral Consumers Alliance seeking advice on how to retrieve her mother’s ashes from Marts. We could only sympathize and offer contact information for the Missouri Board of Embalmers.

Still, there is something sad about the loss of the little storefront funeral home that did such a huge volume of dispositions, many involving indigents. Marts had a reputation for letting such debts slide. The Marts Memorial method of doing business apparently was inept, but not malicious.



*Once the busiest funeral home in town, Marts Memorial Services now is a vacant storefront on Westport Road.*

And there is something suspicious about a Board of Embalmers and Funeral Directors composed of appointed, establishment-type funeral directors who might tend to disapprove of such an operation as Marts’. The Funeral Consumers Alliance believes at least half of the Missouri board should be represented by consumers instead of funeral directors.

Regardless, based on the preponderance of evidence to date, the state board’s action to revoke the license appears justified.

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## A green cemetery their goal

*By Bev McGill  
FCA-GKC board member*

Forest Green has a vision of a cemetery that does not exist in the Kansas City area. It is a cemetery where people are buried without embalming, in a shroud or a biodegradable casket. There are no grave liners. You will not find manicured grounds, but rather native wild flowers and trees. A tree will be planted for each burial. If you wish you may add a marker carved in native stone.

Green burial, by preserving land in a natural state, will contribute to the ecological health of the area and create a habitat for birds and small animals. There will be paths for people to walk. Central to the cemetery would be a memorial wall which would have the names of the departed inscribed in it. The cemetery would become a place of peaceful contemplation accessible to many seeking outdoor respite.

A Green Cemetery does not happen without a great deal of planning. Founder, Ray Makalous, and his colleagues, have formed the Forest Green Group to turn the vision into a reality. Their unique project combines the interests of those involved in green burials, land conservation, and burial consumer advocates.

But natural beauty is not the only concern. Green burial is the only ecologically friendly burial. Traditional burial with embalming releases chemicals into the earth. Cremation sends toxins into the air. Green Burial with its natural decomposition feeds the earth. Green burial also does not require the financial commitment that traditional funerals and burials require. It’s how our great grandparents buried their loved ones.

Forest Green is currently focused on site selection and design options. It has been guided by experts in the field, including the Green Burial Council, a national organization that certifies proper green burial practices. After touring several green burial cemeteries elsewhere, and searching out potential locations in this area, Forest Green is ready to reach out to others interested in this movement. The group will host an “open spaces” dialogue Sat. May 21st from 9 to 12 noon at Northpointe, Lakeview Village, 14001 W. 90th Terr., Lenexa. A map is available at [www.lakeviewvillage.org](http://www.lakeviewvillage.org)

Contact Ray Makalous at 816-510-3041 or email him at [rmakalous@gmail.com](mailto:rmakalous@gmail.com) If you are interested in attending the meeting or need directions.

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*Ray Makalous*



# 'Socks and no bra... or I will haunt you'

*By Nancy Petersen  
FCA-GKC board member*

So, what do you talk to your family about? The weather, the kids, work? All of these things are important and help us stay connected to those we love. Sometimes, however we gloss over the things that are very important to talk about. We worry we will bring everyone "down" or that people will think we are morbid or worse yet, hiding an illness from them. Truth is, we should talk about our funerals. We should bring it up in conversation now. We should be light-hearted about it. We should joke about it to take the fear away. We should show our family that we are okay talking about it and even relieved to hear about what our loved

ones want. We really must have this conversation long before we NEED to talk about it. It will bring such relief when the time comes.

I hear some interesting stories from audiences in my talks about FCA issues to civic and professional groups around town. One woman said she was informed by her mother, "Whatever you do, don't play that 'Amazing Grace' at my funeral.



*Nancy Peterson*

I have never liked that song!" The daughter was shocked and said she absolutely would have chosen that song since it "just seems like a song you play at funerals!" This daughter is so grateful to have that information and says she plans to have more conversations about her mother's funeral preferences.

Another audience member told me she was embarrassed to tell a story about her mother's funeral. The daughter lamented to the funeral director that she did not have a flowered dress for her mother to be buried in. The funeral director was happy to oblige and only charged her \$250 for the dress. Another audience member piped up, "You know he bought it at TJ Maxx for \$29.99!" The daughter summed up the experience when she said, "It sure would have been nice to have decided on the right dress for mom before I was in the funeral home."

Now, my family isn't terribly reverent but we are very close and enjoy talking about everything. My mother listens when I tell her about my wonderful experiences talking to various groups and professionals all over the area about funerals and FCA issues. Imagine my surprise when I mentioned a part of my talk to my mother and she said, "Well, you know my requirements, don't you?" I had to admit that I wasn't sure what she meant. I knew she had a plot near her parents and my dad. I knew she was always frugal. I knew she was okay with cremation, but I didn't think she meant any of these. When I asked her to remind me she said, "I don't care what you do with me, just remember socks and no bra or I will haunt you forever!" Good to know mom, good to know!

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*Nancy Petersen is a board member of the national Funeral Consumers Alliance as well as FCA-GKC. She owns Home Helpers, providers of non medical home care, and Direct Link, a personal emergency response system.*

## FCA surveys GKC cemeteries

*By Jim Fitzpatrick  
FCA-GKC board member*

One of the most significant services provided by the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Greater Kansas City is our funeral home survey, which we conduct about every two years.

This spring, for the first time in 14 years, we are casting the net farther and doing a cemetery survey.

A special Cemetery Committee, consisting of several members of the board of directors, has been planning the survey and gathering information for several months.

One of the most difficult challenges has been coming up with a viable and thorough list of cemeteries. From an overarching list, we have been culling the cemeteries that have space available and are generally open to the public. (Some are restricted to residents of townships or membership in a particular church or organization. Most of them will not be included in the survey.)

We have received indications from the major cemetery chains – Catholic Cemeteries of Johnson and Wyandotte Counties, Stewart Enterprises (Newcomer's) and Service Corp. International (McGilly) – that

they will participate. We expect most of the other operators to participate, too. In our survey report, we will note any cemetery operations that choose not to participate.

We will e-mail the survey to the cemetery managers, and we hope the survey results will be ready for inclusion in our next newsletter in the fall.

Following are some of the questions that will be asked:

- What percentages of consumers request burial of ashes, casket burial, mausoleum spaces?
- What are the costs or price ranges of each option?
- Is a vault or grave liner required for burial?
- What is the cost to open and close a grave, a space for ashes and a mausoleum?
- Does the cemetery have a perpetual maintenance or endowment fund?
- Will the cemetery buy back plots?
- Who owns the cemetery?

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# She can't recommend it highly enough

## BOOK REVIEW:

### **FINAL RIGHTS Reclaiming the American Way of Death**

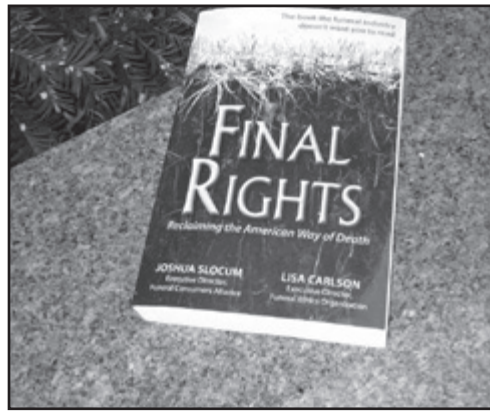
by Nancy Petersen  
FCA-GKC board member

If I have a complaint about a funeral home in Lee's Summit, what do I do? If my husband died of a military service related injury, what services does the government offer? If the funeral home says we have to embalm mom because she had an MRSA skin infection and they claim the Center for Disease Control recommends embalming, is it really true? Suppose I want to spread my mom's ashes at a park in Kansas. Is it legal?

There is now a book which answers all of these questions and more. I cannot recommend it highly enough. I truly believe every family should have a copy. It is a book to have at home, at church, at the doctor's office, at your volunteer organization, even at work. It is important information that everyone should know. If, as I often say, the leading cause of death is birth, doesn't that mean everyone will be touched by death at some point and many will have questions?

Josh Slocum, national executive director of the Funeral Consumers Alliance and author of the first part of the book, breaks open the protective cover on the funeral business and lets the light in. There are facts, insights and examples that wonderfully illustrate what families are facing and what every family ought to know about planning a funeral. The more you talk to your family members, the more you might find that more information is needed to give them the send off they want.

Lisa Carlson, executive director of Funeral Ethics Organization and a past executive director of FCA, is the author of the second part of the book detailing funeral-related laws for every state. She even cites references of laws so families can defend their choices if needed. She also lists consumer concerns in a very readable way, such as the fact that complaints against funeral establishments in Missouri are kept secret. She also notes extra information she found



while researching each state that might be of interest. For instance, in Kansas, district coroners are licensed physicians who are appointed to their

jobs.

This book is available on line for \$19.95 at [www.funerals.org](http://www.funerals.org). Please know the book is great for you and great for FCA. A portion of the proceeds of each book will go to help the Funeral Consumers Alliance keep doing its important work.

Together these two authors have managed to dissect a \$15 billion industry and show consumers what choices and decisions they have when a loved one dies. Control over our lives is what we all strive for and there is no reason we shouldn't remain in control when a loved one dies instead of handing it over to a funeral director.

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## Crematory exhaust to heat pools

A plan in Great Britain to heat a public swimming pool with heat from a crematory struck Roger McKenzie, regional secretary for Unison, Britain's largest public sector union, as repugnant. He condemned the plan as "sick and an insult to local residents."

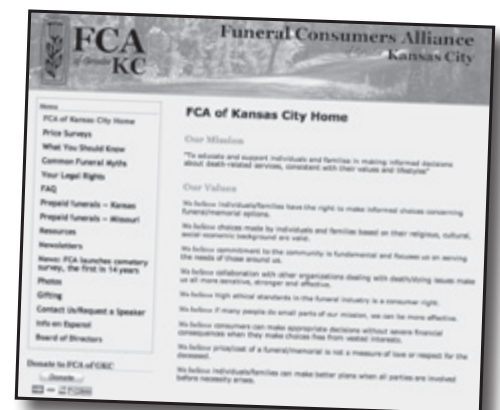
McKenzie's reaction was repugnant to national Funeral Consumer Alliance executive director Joshua Slocum who wrote on his [funerals.org](http://funerals.org) web site:

"What a ridiculous statement. Does he think crematory heat is some special kind of heat that's infected with Cremation Cooties? Personally, I find it ethically insulting and egregious that most crematories waste their enormous amount of heat by letting it go up the chimney instead of reclaiming it for heat or power generation. From an energy-use point of view, it's scandalous."

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## Check the website; Send an email

Who pays for funerals when they die broke? It's the title of an article in the Fall, 2010 issue of FCA Report. All of our newsletters and funeral price surveys are posted on our web site with money-saving tips and updated information on the funeral industry in the Kansas City area. We also have a dedicated e-mail address where you can ask questions of the Board. Here's how:



**Web site:**

[www.funeralskc.org](http://www.funeralskc.org)

**E-mail:**

[fca.gkc@gmail.com](mailto:fca.gkc@gmail.com)

# Social workers fill end-of-life needs

By Lynn Vanderweel and Sally King

As the nation's baby boomers advance into old age, there is a growing demand for hospice and palliative care services in the United States. According to the National Hospice and Palliative Care Association, the number of hospice providers increased from 3,650 to 4,160 in 2005 alone. In addition to providing medical care, hospice and palliative care needs to address the psychological, social, and environmental aspects of patients and their loved ones. While nurses and doctors can provide for patients' medical and biological care, the full spectrum of patients' and their families' needs are not addressed. As a result, social workers have a unique role in the end-of-life process for patients and their families.

Social work is rooted in the "goodness of fit" of people with their environment and with an understanding of the importance of human relationships. Social workers are exceptionally suited for working with families and patients in end-of-life issues. Social workers focus on the whole spectrum of the patient and family -- biological, psychological, social and environmental. Social workers can provide counseling, education, bereavement and grief support to the patient and to the family system, as well as providing advice regarding financial assistance, home care services, respite, transportation services and other practical matters

This multi-faceted approach is exclusive to the social work discipline and is much needed in hospice and palliative care. This expertise carries with it insider knowledge and an ethical duty to educate families on practical and family-focused funeral and burial options that are cost effective and suited to the particular needs of the family. (Sometimes, such information is not freely offered when a bereaved



Lynn Vanderweel and Sally King

family walks in the door of a funeral home.) Social workers can save families thousands of dollars and precious time by offering information

found in the Funeral Consumers Alliance 2009 Funeral Price Survey, found on the FCA-GKC website: <http://www.funeralskc.org>

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Sally King is Vice President of the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Greater Kansas City. She is a licensed clinical social worker and project manager of the Geriatric Education Center at the Landon Center on Aging at the University of Kansas Medical Center. Lynn Vanderweel is a master of social work student at the UMKC School of Social Welfare.

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## Your FTC Funeral Rule rights

An informed consumer is the best weapon against funeral industry abuses. Obtain a brochure on the Federal Trade Commission's Funeral Rule at [www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/products/pro26.htm](http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/products/pro26.htm) or call 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357)

The Funeral Rule gives you the right to:

- 1) Buy only the funeral arrangements you want.
- 2) Get price information on the telephone.
- 3) Get a written, itemized price list when you visit a funeral home.
- 4) See a written casket price list before you see the actual caskets.
- 5) See a written outer burial container price list.
- 6) Receive a written statement after you decide what you want and before you pay.
- 7) Get an explanation of the written statement you receive.
- 8) Use an alternative container instead of a casket for cremation.
- 9) Provide the funeral home with a casket you purchase elsewhere.
- 10) Make funeral arrangements without embalming.

Funeral homes are required by federal law to abide by these rules.

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## When a Trust isn't trustworthy

California's attorney general sued one of the nation's largest funeral trust funds recently, claiming its managers had illegally diverted \$14 million that consumers had saved to pay for cemetery plots, caskets and services.

The lawsuit says administrators of the California Master Trust paid themselves excessive fees and gave at least \$4.6 million in illegal kickbacks to the 300 funeral homes that participate in the trust.

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# A message from our bean counter

By *Jim Fitzpatrick*  
FCA-GKC treasurer

Greetings from the “high finance division” of the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Greater Kansas City.

I recently became treasurer of the organization, succeeding Pam Thomas, who served as treasurer for many years and remains on the board of directors. We thank Pam for her excellent service.

I would like to tell you a little about our finances and ask you to consider helping us out so that we can continue delivering the services that many of you have come to appreciate over the years.

As most of you probably know, we are a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization that depends, almost exclusively, on the tax-free contributions that we receive. We pass on 15 percent of our contributions to the FCA national office in South Burlington, VT. The national office is the life blood of the affiliates around the country and the umbrella under which we operate.

Last year, we had contributions of about \$950, and we passed on \$142 to the national office. Also last year, we were fortunate enough to get a grant of \$4,305, which artificially boosted our reserves. It was a one-time grant, however, and we are back to depending on the individual contributions that sustain us year after year.

Our two largest recurring expenses

are for telephone – about \$50 a month – and printing and mailing the newsletter, which we do about two times a year.

The cost is \$1,000 to \$1,200 for each mailing, or about \$1 per newsletter. One of our biggest services, as many of you know, is our bi-annual survey of Kansas City area funeral home costs. The survey customarily goes out with one of our newsletters, so, fortunately, it doesn’t burden us with any significant additional expense.

We also have miscellaneous expenses, of course, for things like web site assistance, state filing fees, stamps and check printing.

At this writing, we have \$2,315 in the bank, but that doesn’t include the cost of printing and mailing this newsletter. If you look at it strictly from a cash-on-hand standpoint, after paying for this newsletter, we would have enough money in the bank to put out one more newsletter and pay our phone bill for several months.

I’m not suggesting that we’re about to go broke, because we have always managed to keep pushing along, and we know that contributions will come



*Jim Fitzpatrick*

in. My point is that we operate on a very lean budget and have a very thin cushion for extraordinary expenses.

With that, I am asking you to consider making a generous contribution to the Funeral Consumers Alliance of GKC, even if you might have contributed relatively recently. We greatly appreciate your patronage and support, and we believe that you value the services that we provide for the public, in the public interest.

You can now contribute online through our web site, [www.funeralskc.org](http://www.funeralskc.org), as well as by check. (If you plan to contribute by check, please use the envelope that accompanied this newsletter.)

One more thing: With this issue, we will begin recognizing our contributors by name and city of residence. (If you would prefer that your name not appear, just let us know.) Also, if your contribution is in memory of someone, please tell us who, and we will note that.)

So far this year, we have received contributions from John V. Anderson Jr. and his wife, Mary Sanna Anderson, Fairway, KS, and J.H. and C.K. Gooden of Kansas City, MO.

Thanks to the Andersons, the Goodens and the rest of you for your past and, we trust, future support!

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me -- [jim.fitzpatrick06@gmail.com](mailto:jim.fitzpatrick06@gmail.com) or (816) 361-1303.

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## FCA-GKC Board of Directors

**Steve Nicely**, *president*

**Sally King, MSW**, *vice president*

**Linda Johnson**, *secretary*

**Jim Fitzpatrick**, *treasurer*

**Sue Fine**

**Bev McGill**

**Nancy C. Petersen, MSW**

**Pam Thomas, Ph.D**

## Presentations are available

Are you part of an organization that would benefit from an unbiased presentation about important practical aspects of funeral planning? Contact FCA-GKC at 816-561-6322 or email us at [fca.gkc@gmail.com](mailto:fca.gkc@gmail.com). We will line you up with one of our board members for a visit.

### A rumbling announcement

His wife’s graveside service was just barely finished when there was a massive bolt of lightning followed by clap of thunder, accompanied by even more thunder rumbling in the distance. The little old man looked at the pastor and declared, “Well, she’s there.”

# Sticky note: 'Read all... Love you all'

Continued from Page 1

as we had to deal with a coroner who needed certain pieces of information to transport my mom to the hospital morgue. We didn't have to think twice, mom had provided the information they needed.

The file also contained notes and plans that Mom had made for her own funeral. There were sticky-notes and half-sheets of paper that formed a picture of a celebration of life, rather than a mourning ceremony. She stated, several times, that she didn't want an expensive funeral. She wanted to be cremated and wanted half her ashes placed directly in the ground without an urn, so that she could have contact with the earth. She even picked the cemetery where she wanted to be buried. The remainder of her ashes, she asked to be spread at her parent's lake cabin and a favorite hiking spot in Colorado. She wrote down song selections, such as Rod Stewart's "Forever Young" and passages and poems of an uplifting nature she wanted to be read for her at her celebration. She suggested a photo slideshow of her life. It was all very "Mom," we agreed.

Trish's "Going Away" file even included an obituary preparation sheet that gave the details of her life, from where she was born to where she attended college and her work and volunteer history.

Mom had taken every step possible to make sure that we had the answers we needed to take care of her after death. Dealing with the shock of her death, no one in the family was prepared to make the hundreds of decisions that circle after someone beloved dies. And we didn't have to, because she made all the decisions for us.

There were other obstacles, such as convincing the over-priced funeral home that we didn't need most of their services (and especially didn't want them to officiate a funeral for Mom) or talking a clergyman ingrained in tradition into stepping outside the path of the bible. Through those obstacles, we carried Mom's "Going Away" file as a map to the wishes of an incredible woman. It made a difficult path, fraught with over-priced accessories and laden with grief, easier to tread. It was Mom's last gift to us.

The "Celebration of Life" for Patricia

**Funeral Consumers Alliance  
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## We thank you, Hope; We thank All Souls

We board members of the Funeral Consumers Alliance express our profound thanks to Hope Grunt, a sister board member for more years than any of us can remember. Hope, who recently resigned from the board, lived closest to our home base at All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church where members founded FCA-GKC 40 years ago. She picked up the mail, sent responses, deposited contributions and graced FCA with her presence, her support and her wisdom. FCA is still alive and well because of her efforts.

The board also thanks All Souls for its hospitality for so many years. Beginning this month, FCA will be conducting its board meetings at Community Christian Church, 4601 Main Street.

-- Steve Nicely, president



*Hope Grunt*

Lynn Jackson was held on September 2, 2010 at the Coon Rapids-Bayard High School Gymnasium. As the school nurse and an avid community volunteer, her celebration attracted a crowd of more than 800 people. Together we listened to Rod Stewart, shared stories of her younger days, watched a slideshow of smiling photos through the years and said "Goodbye" with a smile. We laid half of her ashes on a hill in the cemetery overlooking

the river and an elementary playground beyond. When the weather is right, children's laughter can be heard under the tree where she lay in the earth. Mom would be proud.

*Alyssa Elliott is the granddaughter of FCA board member Bev McGill. She is a staff member of the Coon Rapids Enterprise newspaper in Coon Rapids, Iowa.*

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