Annual Report 2020-2021

Our usual activities were again curtailed by the pandemic. The health fairs and programs in which we have participated in the past were all canceled. We provided programs via Zoom and our internet presence continued to generate phone calls and emails with requests for help.

We continue to get referrals from area hospices and from VA2.1.1, a referral for local resources.

Many inquiries were for aid in paying funeral expenses. Sadly, we receive these calls often after a body is already at a funeral home, but if people call before that happens, we can provide ways to save money.

We published our biennial cemetery survey and were encouraged to see that several post their price lists online. A few still have no web presence, which is not helpful to consumers.

Outreach

Held 2 Death Cafés via Zoom drawing participants from Virginia, Florida, and Missouri

Presented programs via Zoom.

- Blacksburg PEO – Funeral Consumers Alliance (FCA)
- Virginia Tech Women's Club – Going out Green
- Blacksburg Rotary Club – Dust to Diamonds
- Radford Rotary Club – Dust to Diamonds
- Christiansburg Library – Going out Green
- Virginia Tech Women's Club – Getting your Ducks in a Row

Interviewed by Newsy and posted on its blog

Shared startup information with Blue Ridge Green Burial
Shared AARP partnership activities with FCA and AARP of New Mexico

Provided information - to our area and beyond, some examples:

Answered requests from our service area as well as from Chesapeake, Rockingham, Virginia Beach, Fluvanna, Norfolk, Farmville, Independence, and Charlottesville.

Out of state inquiries from California, North Carolina, New Mexico, Massachusetts, and Colorado.

Legal advocacy
Monitored the State legislature
Monitored the Board of Funeral Directors and Embalmers and gave citizen comments
Sent comments to the Federal Trade Commission

Membership
Membership was maintained at 350

Annual meeting elects board/officers

The annual meeting was held on September 28 via Zoom. Although meeting this way is difficult for people who don't feel comfortable using this technology, it does allow people who live farther away to join in. **Caitlin Crenshaw,** graduate student at Virginia Tech, spoke about her work this past summer on the history and funeral practices of Native Americans in SW Virginia.

Three board members were elected for the 2024 term. After the general meeting, board members elected officers for the coming year. See the side bar at the right for these details.

Funeral homes are first responders

Doctors, Nurses, and emergency workers are usually thought of as first responders, but funeral homes are first responders too. In this COVID pandemic, many are having a very difficult time. Staff shortages have taken their toll and coming in contact with someone who had COVID or family members infected with COVID adds another dimension making the removal process very difficult.

Mike Hamlar, president of Hamlar-Curtis Funeral Homes, was quoted in *The Roanoke Times,* "People might think funeral homes benefit financially from COVID-19, but that's a misconception. Many families are not holding services or are choosing cremation, which does have an impact on the business' bottom line."

Sammy Oakey says that they are strict with staff and guests about masks and social distancing. Serenity Funeral Home in Roanoke experienced three funerals in one day and in the midst of those came a call to pick up a body. Many funeral homes are short on staff and with this surge in deaths, it makes it very difficult to provide the service they pride themselves in offering to the public. One member of the Funeral Consumers Alliance requested Direct Cremation for her husband, but It was in the middle of the night and Serenity didn't have the staff to transfer the body to the funeral home. Serenity had to engage a removal service at an additional charge of $300. Direct Cremation includes removal of the body so this means an extra expense to the funeral home. If the family had understood this problem for the funeral home, they would have agreed to the delay until staff was available.

Board of Trustees

2024 Term

Linda Plaut

Todd Solberg

Phil Olson

2023 Term

Ben Crawford

Darrel Clowes

Dianne Rencsok

2022 term

Leanne Mitchell

Helen Renqvist

Sandy Schlaudecker

Officers

President: Sandy Schlaudecker

Vice president: Phil Olson

Secretary: Linda Plaut

Treasurer: Dianne Rencsok

Isabel Berney, Administrator (volunteer)

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Affiliated with Funeral Consumers
Alliance www.funerals.org

Kroger Community Awards & Amazon Smile

Thanks to our members who have connected their Kroger Loyalty Cards to us. If you have a Kroger Plus card, consider signing up for **Kroger Community Awards** to give a percentage of your bill as a donation to FCAVBR.
Go online to https://www.kroger.com. If you already have a Kroger account, simply log in. If not, you will be asked to create one. When asked to select the organization to receive your rewards, enter this number:
TK761 or type in our full name.

Amazon also supports us. At your browser, type smile.amazon.com. If you have an Amazon account, sign in and you will see the choice to select a charity. If you type in Funeral Consumers Alliance, several affiliates come up and you can scroll down to select Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Virginia Blue Ridge.