Spring/Summer

2026

Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Virginia Blue Ridge

The Grief Gallery

In March, FCAVBR Board Member **Amanda Stowers** attended the Annual Conference of the Association for Death Education and Counseling (ADEC) in Baltimore, Maryland. The conference featured attendees and speakers who specialize in Thanatology around the world. She was able to hear experts speak about the history of autonomous black burial grounds, the importance of home death and funerary practices; as well as learn from leading experts in Thanatology like Phyllis Kominsky, Tim Polakowski of Monarch Grief Center, and Andy McNiel of The Compassionate Friends.

Especially inspiring was the presentation on **The Grief Gallery** from its founder Charlene Lam. Following the death of her mother, Charlene found herself struggling to part with her mother's belongings that she didn't have space or use for but felt a strong emotional connection to. She used her background as an Art Curator to display her mother's items in an art gallery setting. This inspired her to expand the idea to serve and help others; The Grief Gallery was begun. She has now presented worldwide, giving hundreds of people the opportunity to tell the story of their deceased loved ones through their treasured belongings.

For more information on The Grief Gallery, visit https://www.thegriefgallery.com/

The many digital links in our newsletter are easily accessible if you receive the newsletter by email. If you wish to switch to email or to receive both versions, please use fcavbr@gmail.com to let us know.

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P.O. Box 10082

Blacksburg, VA 24062

PHONE:
540-953-5589

E-MAIL:
fcavbr@gmail.com

Website
www.fcavbr.org

Want to be more involved in helping the Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Virginia Blue Ridge (FCAVBR) meet our goal to provide objective, accurate information about end-of-life choices? Consider joining the board. New board members are voted on during the annual meeting in the fall. We would love to have you, your ideas, and your enthusiasm join us in serving the community. For more information or any questions you have about joining the board contact us, fcavbr@gmail.com.

For more information on the Mission, Vision, & Values of the Funeral Consumers Alliance visit https://www.funerals.org/mission-vision-values/.

How Virginia's Funeral Board Works for You

At FCAVBR, we want families to feel informed and confident when planning a funeral. One of the strongest protections Virginians have is the Virginia Board of Funeral Directors and Embalmers, which oversees funeral homes, crematories, and licensed professionals across the state.

The Board sets the standards that providers must follow, helping ensure safe, ethical, and respectful care. These rules protect families from misleading practices, unsafe conditions, and financial harm.

A core part of the Board's work is investigating consumer complaints. When issues arise—such as unfair treatment, overcharging, or other concerns—the Board can review the case and take disciplinary action when necessary.

The Board also promotes transparency. Virginians can look up a provider's license status, disciplinary history, and public meeting records. These tools help families compare options and make informed choices.

As your local FCA affiliate, we value the Board's role in protecting the rights and interests of Virginia families. Understanding its work helps us navigate funeral planning with greater clarity and peace of mind.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Blue Ridge Green Burial Meet & Greet

Meet members and learn about the search for a green cemetery site.

Sunday July 12, 2026 9am to 12pm Floyd Farmer's Market 203 S. Locust St Floyd, VA

https://www.blueridgegreenburial.org/

Upcoming Board Meetings June 17 July 15 August 19

Open to the public at Luther Memorial Lutheran Church 700 Prices Fork Road Blacksburg, VA 12pm, noon, to 1pm on the third Wednesday of each month.

Do we need the Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Virginia Blue Ridge?

At our last meeting, the FCAVBR Board members considered the effectiveness of our significance and our mission, helping people make informed decisions about end-of-life and funeral arrangements that are dignified, meaningful and affordable. The following is a summary of that discussion.

The 2026 funeral home price survey will be posted on the FCAVBR website by mid-June. This year, the emphasis is Direct Cremation and Immediate Burial. Although this information is available in many ways, including by artificial intelligence (AI), our members count on a trustworthy, easily accessible source.

The FCAVBR is alert to changes in death care, such as home burials and other alternatives to the tradition of embalming, caskets, and vaults. Our organization shares these on our website, in newsletters and at health fairs.

The national FCA and alliances have been urging the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to require funeral homes to post their prices online. Currently, the FTC "Funeral Rule" requires funeral homes to provide prices to consumers when they visit or call but does not require them to post prices online. This rule has not yet been revised. A Virginia 2024 proposed bill requiring online posting did not succeed. FCAVBR's monitoring of legislation means members can be informed of the need to lobby for better consumer representation.

After many years of presentations and urging, led by our Isabel Berney, our former administrator, Blacksburg's Westview Cemetery now includes a section for green burial. As Mindy Quigley, in her book Public Anchovy #1, said," Isabel Berney...could convince the Great Wall of China to scooch ten feet to the right."

Many organizations now present the kind of programming we also have available. Some of these are: The Virginia Tech Lifelong Learning Institute, the Palliative Care Project, the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Blacksburg, and Warm Hearth. Whereas FCAVBR used to be the only local sponsors of Death Café, various groups now provide these. It is our honor to publicize these meetings, all of which encourage people to gather for drinks and snacks and share their experiences and feelings about death. Our next Death Café' will be at the Pulaski Library on August 19 at 5pm. As Isabel Berney said, "Talking about sex won't get you pregnant, and talking about death won't make you dead."

Until more organizations take on the work, which FCAVBR has always done, we will continue to share information and give our support and publicity to groups which promote our mission. We will count on our members to provide feedback on our usefulness. ``````````

[Contributors: Bill Baker, Linda Plaut, Amanda Stowers]

Kroger Community Awards

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.** Kroger donates to FCAVBR based on a percentage of your spending. 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.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Death Cafe

A Death Cafe is a group directed discussion of death with no agenda, objectives or themes. A Death Cafe offers the opportunity to talk about topics related to death, dying, life & living. There is mutual respect for all participants but no agenda.
Death Café is not counseling, bereavement, or grief support.

Wednesday, August 19, 2026 5pm Pulaski County Library 60 3rd St NW Pulaski, VA

Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Virginia Blue Ridge
P O Box 10082
Blacksburg VA 24062-0082
Change Service Requested

Nonprofit Org.