



FUNERAL CONSUMERS ALLIANCE OF WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

P.O.BOX 81011, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15217 412.241.0705

info@funeralconsumerswpa.org

SPRING 2026

PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

For the past year, the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Western PA has focused on expanding our reach via our new web page and other technological advances. Last summer, we launched our website with information about planning and paying for funerals, frequently asked questions, resources, and a list of where to file complaints. You can also find announcements about upcoming webinars, legislative information and past newsletters there.

Another focus was our acceptance into Google for Non-Profits. This means we can use Gmail for free, instead of paying a monthly fee, and store all our documents under a FCAWP Google Drive, instead of using board members' personal accounts. We will also be moving from a commercial cell phone carrier to Google Voice saving \$10/mo. The most exciting change is we can send out email alerts in one batch rather than batches of 50 or 100 addresses. This will make it much easier to update you regarding upcoming programs and news. We have close to four-hundred-member email addresses, but for over 700 other members, we are missing email addresses. If you have not received any emails from us in the past year, please contact us at info@funeralconsumerswpa.org, and provide your email.

We have also been tracking the legislation enabling Alkaline Hydrolysis or water-based cremation. The legislation passed in the Pennsylvania House but was not passed out of committee in the Senate. SB551 and HB722 have been re-introduced. We have requested several senators to co-sponsor the Senate bill. You can help by contacting your congressmen to push for this. Check our web page to find links and updates.

We are currently working on the updated price list with the funeral homes grouped by region. It will show which rates are discounted, green burial options, and whether the funeral home is family owned vs. corporate owned. Two funeral homes, Robinson and Kutch, have decided to drop due to having so few members selecting them. Two funeral homes, Giunta-Bertucci and Devlin, did not respond to numerous and different types of requests (email, letter, phone and in-person visit) and, as a result, have been dropped from our list. This impacted 69 members. Letters have been sent to these members asking if they wish to choose another funeral home or stay with them. We will be sending the updated list to you in our fall newsletter.

We are excited to invite you to our Annual Board Meeting on **Saturday, October 24, from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM**. This year, we're expanding our community reach! To ensure every member can participate, we are offering a **Zoom attendance option** alongside our in-person gathering. Details on the agenda and how to join will be in the fall newsletter. We look forward to seeing a great turnout this year!

I also want to acknowledge and thank all of you who have donated to FCAWP. We have no other funding source other than membership fees, which are a one-time occurrence. Because of your generosity, we have finished a second year in the black! We have included a list of donors on Page 4 of the newsletter. Thank you again for all the contributions.

—Stephen Christian-Michaels

DIGITAL ASSETS

Do you store photos online? Have a Facebook or Instagram account? Use online banking, credit cards, shopping services, Email? According to Death with Dignity, “The average person under 70 has 160 online accounts.” These are all part of your digital legacy, a recent issue that has surfaced in end-of-life planning. Without inventorying them and identifying a person or persons to manage your digital legacy, important information can be lost and stuck in limbo while your loved ones try to find your accounts and passwords. A very time-consuming process.

The good news is that by planning, you can help your loved ones through this process. There are many resources available to help you identify your digital assets and decide what to do with them. We have created a Digital Assets page on our website, listing resources.

The starting point is to conduct a digital assets inventory including the following:

- Email (personal and work)
- Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Dating Apps, Pinterest)
- Books and Articles (Kindle, Audible)
- Health Accounts (electronic records, Insurance, gym memberships)
- Rewards & Points (credit card, loyalty, travel rewards)
- Retail (Amazon, Target)
- Virtual Currency (Bitcoin, Dash, Ethereum)
- Gaming Accounts (Xbox, PlayStation)
- Gambling (Fan Duel, Draft Kings)
- Video Services (Netflix, YouTube, Hulu)
- Music Services (Apple, Spotify, Pandora)
- Storage & File Sharing (Dropbox, iCloud, Google Drive)
- Photo Sharing (Shutterfly, Flickr)
- Blogs & Online Businesses (Hosting Services, Linked-in, Substack)
- Banking & Investments (PayPal, Venmo, Checking/Savings)
- Recurring Payments (Utilities, Services)
- Travel (Uber, Lyft, TripAdvisor, Kayak, Airlines)
- Devices (phones, computers, tablets, camera)

Create a file which lists the Company/Service, URL, Username, Password, 2 Step Verification. This should be stored in a secure manner/location. This can be done online or on paper. Whichever you choose, make sure there is a backup copy.

Identify who your digital asset executor will be. Accounts involving the purchase of products or services should include instructions for closing or discontinuing the accounts after paying any outstanding balances.

Digital assets with monetary value (e.g., bank accounts, PayPal accounts, digital wallets, cryptocurrencies, loyalty programs, or credit card points) should be included in your will and estate plan. Many of your online accounts that will remain active after your death are also linked to your personal identity and may require specific instructions for access and termination. Some accounts such as social media will allow you to identify that legacy person in your account. This will give them access to your account. You will have to check each account individually as you decide what you want done. Here are examples of how to do this:

- Google: go to Inactive Accounts Manager Page and you can select a trusted contact who will have access to your account or have your account deleted.
- Facebook: under your account ownership, select memorialization. Here you can appoint a legacy contact or delete your account.
- Apple: under settings, sign-in & security, click Legacy Contact and follow the directions.

This can be a time-consuming process, so give yourself plenty of time to accomplish it. It is as important as writing your will.

Don't get caught dead without it!

PLAN AHEAD

You have probably heard this before, but it won't hurt to hear it again. Discuss funeral arrangements well in advance. I recently discovered *The Conversation Project*, which was presented in a past newsletter but well worth another visit.

The Conversation Project began in 2010 when Ellen Goodman and a group of colleagues and concerned professionals gathered to share stories of "good deaths" and "bad deaths." Its goal is to help everyone talk about their wishes for their care through the end of life, so those wishes can be understood and respected. Their website promotes the concepts of advanced planning for death and humane, sensitive treatment of those who face imminent death. It allows users to communicate about the kind of care we want and don't want for ourselves. Talking about what matters the most through the end of our lives isn't easy—but it's something most of us deeply value.

- 92% of Americans say it's important to talk about their wishes for end-of-life care—but only 32% have had that conversation.
- 95% say they'd be willing to talk, and more than half say they'd feel a sense of relief in doing so.
- Six months after losing a loved one, depression rates were lower for those who had that conversation. (The Conversation Project)

On their website, The Conversation Project offers free tools, guidance, and resources to begin talking with those who matter most about your wishes and their wishes. They provide videos, guides and stories to take you step by step through the process. We have a link to them on our website under resources.

FCAWP can help by telling you about your rights and options. Visit our website to access the many resources there, www.funeralconsumerswpa.org.

It's time to share the way we want to live through the end of our lives. And it's time to communicate about the kind of care we want and don't want for ourselves.

--Andrea Christian-Michaels

(Adapted from The Conversation Project website and past FCAWP newsletter.)

CONTRIBUTIONS August 2025 – March 2026

We want to thank those who made charitable contributions. To continue providing these services to the region, we are completely dependent on the contributions from you. Thank you!

Howard Aiken
Walter Albert
James Allen
Jean Atkins
Kenneth Babin
Robert Babin
Michael and Viola Bikerman
John and Janine Brobst
Wolfgang Choyke
Stephen Christian-Michaels
Andrea Christian-Michaels
Diane Cochrane
Larry Comden
Margaret Domer
Tim and Susan Dreier
Richard W. Eastman
Joseph Fellman
Donna Hallen and Joe Bryan
Louise and Joseph Jencik
Susan Hellegers Jones
William Kelly
Sandra L. Kish
Margaret Laske
Edward & Eileen Mialki
Jan-Paul Malocsay
David March
Joan Maser and Lisa Dennis
Daniel McCue

Patricia McGuirk
Richard and Betsy Monheim
John and Annette Morrocco
Sara Morton
Mildred Myers
Marjorie Niedbale
Nancy and William Paul
Janet Quigg
Lynn Richards
Laura Ristau
Robert and Christina Schreyer
Thomas & Debbie Stackrow
Terra Treasure
Hazel J, Yobp
Anonymous (7)

In Memoriam

Margaret "Peg" Albert
Agnes Babin
Mr. and Mrs. Robert B. Geyer
Mr. and Mrs. John Hryciuk
Artje Ingalls
Barbara Jones
Paul/Gold Family
Ruth Kish
Rich Saloga

DO YOU LIKE PUBLIC SPEAKING?

Our greatest need is to have a speakers' group who can provide presentations to community groups, libraries, older adult day programs, retirement communities. The presentations we currently have are *Preparing for Your End* and *The 12 Myths of the Funeral Industry (what they don't want you to know)*. These presentations are in a PowerPoint format with talking points, so no preparation is needed. If you would like to make some presentations for FCAWP please contact Steve Christian-Michaels at 412-965-3016 or stephen@funeralconsumerswpa.org.

Join Us for Our Annual Board Meeting—Now with Virtual Access!

We are excited to invite you to our Annual Board Meeting on

Saturday, October 24, from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM.

To ensure every member can participate, we are offering a **Zoom attendance option** alongside our in-person gathering. Whether you join us in the room or from the comfort of your home, your voice and presence are vital to our success. Further information on how to access the meeting will be in our August Newsletter. The presentation will give the history of our present-day funeral practices along with myths of the funeral business.

CAN YOU VOLUNTEER SOME TIME?

Do you have some time available? At times the Board could use some help making phone calls, writing an article for the newsletter, delivering brochures to community centers, advocating for membership, sorting files and keeping up with legal matters. It is not a full-time commitment but occasional work. Want to make more of a commitment? Join the Board! We meet four times a year. Members may take on special projects between meetings. If you're interested in helping the organization, please contact Stephen Christian-Michaels at stephen@funeralconsuerswpa.org.