



In Touch

Bay Area Funeral Consumers Association

www.ba-fca.org

463 College Avenue
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Palo Alto, CA 94306
(650) 321-2109

Spring 2019 Issue

Annual Meeting Speakers & Topics

Please join us for our

ANNUAL MEETING

Sunday, April 14, 2019

1 - 4 pm

Mitchell Park Library Midtown Room
3700 Middlefield Rd, Palo Alto

The first speaker(s) in our program join us from Avenidas Village and will briefly explain the partnership arranged between BAFCA and Avenidas Village.

Then our featured speaker, Elijah Keyes of Gilfix & LaPoll Associates, LLP, (www.gilfix.com) will offer a talk entitled "Post Death Magic to Protect an Estate and Beneficiaries." Keyes is a Palo Alto attorney practicing Estate Planning, Elder Law, Special Needs Planning, Probate, Trust Administration, and Tax Planning. He has devoted his career to helping families plan for the future and find peace in their decisions. Keyes also serves on the Board of Trustees of the Silicon Valley Bar Association, a group of more than 300 estate planning professionals.



Elijah Keyes

Keyes will share real life examples where "last minute" and post-death planning has saved families money and aggravation. They will include tax avoidance, protecting the family home from a Medi-Cal reimbursement claim, and

protecting special needs and other children who face challenging circumstances. A favored mantra: "it's never too late to plan." Mr. Keyes will welcome questions after his talk.

A short business meeting will precede the program and will include a review of the previous year and a presentation of the budget for the coming year. There will be a table of useful brochures available for you to choose from. Light refreshments will be served.

VOLUNTEERS are needed before the event to help set up chairs. If you can help, please arrive around 12:30 pm. We will also need help putting the chairs away after the event. Many thanks to those who can help!

Drug Nanobots?

Science fiction comes true sometimes, to wit, tiny autonomous bots that function as intelligent drug delivery vehicles targeting cancer. The bots are made of DNA programmed to fold into itself like origami, creating a container that can carry drugs. When injected into mouse models with human breast cancer tumors, the nanorobots homed in on tumor-associated blood vessels where they delivered clotting factors, causing blood clots in the tumor's vessels and cutting off their blood supply, leading to cell death. Remarkably, the bots did not cause clotting in other parts of the body, just the cancerous cells they had been programmed to target. The scientists were also able to demonstrate the bots did not cause clotting in the healthy tissues of Bama miniature pigs, calming fears over what might happen in larger animals. This represents a huge breakthrough in cancer research. The current methods of either using chemotherapy to destroy every cell just to get at the cancer cell are barbaric in comparison.

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Do you shop at Mollie Stone's?

Mollie Stone's and others will make a contribution to BAFCA every time you use the Mollie Stone's escrip Community Card. See www.ba-fca.org/MollieStoneInstr.html for details. Every little bit helps!

MEMBERS: Update your Info

Do you have a new address? A new phone number? Have you given us your next-of-kin information? Your date of birth? Have you decided or changed your mind about the mortuary you want to use? WE NEED TO KNOW! And we especially need a good email address for you. Send an email to office@ba-fca.org with your updated info. Or go online to www.ba-fca.org/MemUpdateForm.html. Or call us during office hours or send the info via US Mail. We accept all forms of communication!

As I get older and remember all the people I've lost along the way, I think to myself that maybe a career as a tour guide wasn't for me.

Dementia Directive

The incidence of dementia is on the increase. There are a couple of understandable reasons for this. One is that better treatments for age-related problems like heart attacks and cancer are allowing us to live longer than before—into our 80s and 90s in many cases. The second reason is demographic. The baby boom that lasted from 1945 to about 1965 has meant that there is an outsized bulge of population now in their late 60s and early 70s, which is about the time that dementia starts showing up. Longer life and more very old people add up to more dementia to deal with.

With most diseases, even slowly-progressing ones like heart disease, patients are usually able to make their own care decisions right up to the end, or close to it. But with even early stage dementia, decision-making ability is compromised. Most advance medical directives do not address how to deal with medical care when dementia is involved. This leaves the agent directing the care in the dark about non-dementia-related health care decisions. Patients with dementia often cannot understand what is happening to them. They become agitated by medical tests and treatments that they might have chosen to undergo if dementia were not involved. Their agent is left to weigh the patient's distress against the value of the treatment and quality of life.

Enter Dr. Barak Gaster, a University of Washington professor of medicine and primary care physician. In

2019 BAFCA Budget

| | 2018 Actual | 2019 Proposed |
|--|----------------|------------------|
| INCOME | | |
| Donations | 11,714 | 12,000 |
| Memberships | 4,535 | 5,000 |
| Book sales, Amazon Smile, Escrip, Interest | 317 | 300 |
| TOTAL INCOME | 16,566 | 17,300 |
| EXPENSE | | |
| Outreach (newsletters, appeal, annual mtg) | 8,703 | 7,050 |
| Facilities, Equipment, Insurance, Supplies | 5,302 | 3,650 |
| Phone, Internet, Website | 2,023 | 1,725 |
| Employee Exp (wages, workers comp, taxes) | 7,038 | 8,820 |
| Postage (office-related) | 244 | 220 |
| State & National FCA Dues | 731 | 475 |
| Miscellaneous Fees, Travel, Registration | 206 | 100 |
| TOTAL EXPENSE | 24,247 | 22,040 |

A savings account is available to draw on for the deficit.

his practice, he realized that one of the hardest issues facing primary care doctors, and society in general, is the number of people living with dementia and how to care for them. He realized that an advance directive specific to dementia and including the stage of dementia—mild, moderate, or severe—is needed in order to guide the agent's decision-making. The result is a website (dementia-directive.org) that provides instructions, resources, FAQs, and most helpfully, a downloadable dementia directive form. Dr. Gaster's advice is to fill out the form BEFORE you have dementia (like immediately) and get copies to your doctor and to the agent you have named in your directive. And discuss it with family and friends. Maybe you will never have dementia. But it is best to be prepared.

Tributes

With thanks to these donors

Each year our organization receives gifts made to honor respected individuals or in memory of loved ones who are missed. Below are the financial tributes we have acknowledged since the last newsletter:

In Memory of:

- Al Meckler** by Deborah Meckler
- David & Margaret Botsford** by Peter Botsford
- David and Margot Botsford** by Peter Botsford
- Edwin Bridges** by Margie Bridges
- Gene Duncan** by Adrienne Duncan
- Marcelle & Tom Aiken** by Janet Elliott
- Trudy Duncan** by Arnold Duncan

The Future....

Those of you with sharp eyes and a head for numbers may notice that the budget numbers above don't look so good. BAFCA is an organization that has been around, variously named, for 67 years. We would like to keep going. We feel that the information we publish and the services we provide are a public benefit. We need people willing to help. **We need volunteers and Board members.** We need fresh ideas about how to operate. If you or anyone you know has fresh ideas and is willing to help, please email us at office@ba-fca.org or call Margie Bridges at 650-321-6584.

IN TOUCH is issued twice a year from the offices of Bay Area Funeral Consumers Association, 463 College Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94306

Composting Corpses

There are only two parts to death care: (1) dealing with the body, (2) everything else.

Part one is highly regulated—state laws as well as health and safety regulations fully specify what can or must be done with human remains, and what may not be done. Part two is largely culturally specified and can vary widely, from doing nothing at all to spending tens of thousands of dollars for elaborate and complex funerals.

Zeroing in on part one, we now have, in California, five legal ways to deal with human remains: whole body earth burial, cremation, whole body burial at sea, whole body donation, and (now legal and soon to be available) alkaline hydrolysis (aka “water cremation,” “aquamation” etc.) We have a lot of choices to think about.

But Washington State has just gotten one step closer to adding yet another option for the disposition of human remains: composting.

It all started some years ago when an architectural grad student, Katrina Spade, began to think about the difficulties of green burial in urban environments. The idea of green burial was appealing to her—burying people in beautiful open spaces using only biodegradable materials—but she realized that transporting bodies far out of the city to get to those open spaces used a lot of non-renewable fuels, which rather undermined the eco-benefits of the activity.

It was perhaps a small leap to get to the idea of composting. After all, woodchip composting of large roadkill such as deer was already widely done and known to work well. But inside cities, space constraints and issues of smell complicated matters. And how could one make the process sufficiently sensitive and dignified for grieving families?

As an architectural student, Spade conceived of an airy building with a tall central composting core, where families could ceremonially carry their loved ones up a spiral ramp and place them into the compost medium. She started the Urban Death Project and raised money for proof-of-concept. That project evolved into Recompose, the company Spade has formed to provide urban human composting. The methodology has changed, in that now individual bodies are composted in their own (reusable) container of wood chips and water. A one-horsepower motor rotates the container every few weeks. So far, this method has been used on six donated bodies, and has been found to completely decompose the bodies, bones and all, in about six months. The rows and stacks of containers resemble cells in a beehive. The building is still airy and serene.

Families can retrieve a part of all of the resulting soil to take home as memento, or as garden soil.



Recompose is hoping to open to the public in Seattle in 2023, pending regulatory approval, which is looking promising. Earlier this year, Spade and her team went before the Washington State Senate Labor and Commerce Committee to make their case for legalization of human remains composting. The committee unanimously approved the effort and the bill will go to the full Senate for a vote. If the method is approved in Washington State, we can begin the effort to add another environmentally responsible death care option in California. More information at www.recompose.life.

End of Life Options Act Safe...for now

In November 2018, the Fourth District Court of Appeals for the state of California ruled that opponents in *Ahn v. Hestrin* did not have legal standing to file their lawsuit opposing medical aid in dying. This means that the California End of Life Options Act will remain in place for the foreseeable future.

But this case is far from over. In the majority opinion, the court gave opponents a roadmap for exactly what they would need to do to amend their lawsuit to achieve standing in the lower court. They may choose to do that or may choose to appeal this ruling to the California Supreme Court. Either way, there will be significant work required to keep this vital law in place.

Compassion and Choices (<https://compassionandchoices.org>), a non-profit organization working to improve patient rights, will continue to monitor the situation and advocate for the right to medical aid in dying.

A diplomat is a man who always remembers a woman's birthday but never her age.



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SAVE THE DATE!

Sunday, April 14 1-4pm

We will hold our

Annual Meeting

Mitchell Park Library

Palo Alto

Price List Noncompliance

A survey of Orange County funeral homes reveals that 13 of the 65 homes appear to violate a 2013 California law requiring all funeral homes with websites to post their "General Price List" on their websites. Most of the funeral homes that do not post prices are affiliated with Dignity Memorial, the nation's largest chain of funeral homes. None of the several hundred Dignity Memorial funeral homes researched by Funeral Consumers Alliance and Consumer Federation of America nationwide post prices online. Not posting prices makes it hard for families to find affordable death care when needed.

Before I Go, You Should Know—This \$15 booklet contains useful forms (powers of attorney, advance directives, etc) and lots more! Order by emailing office@ba-fca.org or calling 650-321-2109.

News You Can Use

New Collection at Stanford

Stanford Libraries' Department of Special Collections has accepted the donation of the archive of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, M.D. (1926-2004), hospice and palliative care pioneer, psychiatrist, and author of almost two dozen books, including *On Death & Dying* (1969), which developed the groundbreaking Five Stages of Grief theory. The decision to receive The Elisabeth Kübler-Ross Archive acted upon widespread interest in her life's work across Stanford University and took into account her immensely beneficial influence on society and medicine. See info on Kübler-Ross at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kubler-Ross_model

Mission Hospice offers Death Cafés. Upcoming:

April 17th, 6:30 – 8:30pm, Seniors at Home, 200 Channing Ave, Palo Alto. Parking behind building and on the street after 6pm. Enter from behind the building. www.eventbrite.com/e/

[death-cafe-palo-alto-with-seniors-at-home-tickets-51046558631](http://www.eventbrite.com/e/death-cafe-palo-alto-with-seniors-at-home-tickets-51046558631)

May 9th, 6:30 – 8:30pm, Bay Area Cancer Connections (BACC), 2335 El Camino Real, Palo Alto. Parking is behind the building in a covered garage, and on the street after 6pm. Info here: www.eventbrite.com/e/death-cafe-palo-alto-with-bacc-tickets-51046102266

May 14th, 6:30 – 8:30pm, Seniors at Home, 2001 Winward Way, San Mateo/Foster City border. Plenty of parking in the lot in front of the building. When you come in, please press the button next to the elevator button so the receptionist can let you up to the second floor! www.eventbrite.com/e/death-cafe-san-mateo-with-seniors-at-home-tickets-51047033050

Statistics

California has the second lowest death rate of any state in the US at 619 deaths per 100,000 population per year. Only Hawaii has a lower rate at 585

per 100k. The highest death rate is in West Virginia at 957 per 100k, followed by Mississippi (951), Kentucky (930), Alabama (918), and Oklahoma (902). Ref: www.worldlifeexpectancy.com/usa/california-all-races-death-rate. The cremation rate in California is about 63%. So at about 40 million population and approximately 250k deaths/year in California, that's 157,500 cremations. The natural gas used for each cremation would heat a 1500 square foot house for two weeks. So, doing the math, California could heat over 6000 homes for a year on the gas we use for cremations. With climate change in mind, we could maybe find a more carbon-neutral body disposition method. See page 3 for a suggestion.

Pet Care Directive. In California, pets cannot inherit money, but you can provide for them through directives. There is no official template for such a directive, but many suggestions. Google "pet care directive" for information.