



Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Finger Lakes

Spring 2024 Newsletter

www.fingerlakesfunerals.org • info@fingerlakesfunerals.org

P.O. Box 134, Ithaca, NY 14851-0134 • (607) 229-5286

Public Presentation and Annual Meeting of the Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Finger Lakes

2 PM, Sunday, April 28, 2024
Auditorium, Kendal at Ithaca, Open to all

Presentation: Improve Your Death Literacy
Speaker: Angela Mennitto



Angela Mennitto is a death midwife who works to organize community education events to promote death literacy—the practical know-how needed to plan well for the end of life—and to help normalize conversations about death and dying. She has been hosting a Death Café in Ithaca since 2013. She is passionate about any activity that helps normalize conversations about death and dying in our culture, anything that helps us “bring death out of silence.”

Angela will talk about a variety of areas where planning now can help you, and your loved ones, at the end of your life. She'll talk about everything from advance care directives to aesthetic/environmental choices at the end of life to the importance of recording your digital details, and planning for pets. Finally, she will also talk about how planning funeral arrangements can save money, ensure you have what you want, and save your family from stressful decisions at a difficult time.

Annual Business Meeting

A short business meeting will follow the presentation. Please do stay, your attendance is important to achieve the quorum required to conduct business. Our main item of business is to nominate new members to the board for a 3-year term. April and Christina have both been serving with us since last year, so their term will be from 2023-2026. Sarah Mirabile will be joining us after this year's annual meeting, so her term would be from 2024-2027.

Board Nominee Bios

The following are the Board Nominees. The Board positions are a 3-year term.

April Michael

April grew up outside of Chicago and received her bachelor's from DePaul University and her master's from Loyola University Chicago. She has lived in the Ithaca area for about 15 years and has two young daughters. Over the past four years she worked as a chaplain, and now she works for her diocesan newspaper, the *Catholic Courier*. She has long been passionate about end-of-life topics and helping educate others on the same. She also serves the National Funeral Consumers Alliance by running their Instagram page @funeralconsumersalliance. Follow them for all things end-of-life and funeral planning!

Christina Dravis

Christina was born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area and moved to New York in 2012. She worked in 9-1-1 for 30 years, primarily as a Fire Dispatcher in California, and ended her career as Manager of the Tompkins County 9-1-1 Center in 2019. She moved to the Town of Dryden

(Board Nominees continued on Page 2)

Board Nominee Bios -- Continued

in 2017 and was elected to the Dryden Town Board in 2023 after being appointed to fill a vacancy earlier in the year. In addition to working full-time at Trader Joe's in Ithaca, Christina is a volunteer firefighter with the Varna Volunteer Fire Company.

Sarah Mirabile

Sarah studied to receive her BS degree in Psychology with a focus on Life Span Development in the rural northeast of Pennsylvania before interning and bridging her move to Ithaca, NY, in 2015. After graduation, she was a Montessori teaching assistant for several years- working in infant, toddler, and primary classrooms. She then worked at an Autism Center but was starting to feel that a change in career was needed. She shifted gears and found a local nonprofit that spoke to her values of community and making a positive change to the environment. She began working at Finger Lakes ReUse, where she has worked her way up to becoming the store's manager in three years at their Mega Center location. It is there that she and her team are dedicated to reducing landfill impacts. Sarah is also an active Rotary member, serving on the International Services Committee and a part of the Youth Exchange Program. In her free time, Sarah enjoys learning about various philosophies, religions, and spirituality. She has joined FCAFL to help normalize conversations about end-of-life issues and to ensure accurate information is being shared in her community.

Continuing members of the Board are Joel Rabinowitz, Donna Scott, Angela Mennitto, Bronwyn Mohlke, Carol Hardy, and Deb Harper. Barry Adams is an advisor.

Join Us this Summer for Drawing in the Meadow, Reflecting on Impermanence

“Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?”
— Mary Oliver

Led by art instructor Camille Doucet and death midwife Angela Mennitto, participants are invited to observe and sketch outside in the beautiful meadows at Greensprings Natural Cemetery Preserve. We will offer 'prompts' to inspire written reflections between drawing sessions. No need to know how to draw or write to participate.



We will meet every other Saturday from 2:30-5:00 pm beginning June 22 (all dates: June 22, July 6 and 20, August 3 and 17) at Greensprings, 293 Irish Hill Road, Newfield, NY. The cost is a self-determined sliding scale from \$70-130.

Learn more, and register, here:

<https://www.naturalburial.org/arts>.

NON SEQUITUR Wiley Miller



FTC Sends Warning Letters to Funeral Businesses Following Undercover Investigation

by Deb Harper

Throughout 2023, investigators from the FTC and the Bureau of Consumer Protection Division of Marketing Practices made undercover phone calls to more than 250 funeral businesses across the country to get price information required by the Funeral Rule (1984). Investigators found 38 funeral businesses violated the rule by refusing to answer questions about pricing or by providing inconsistent pricing for identical services. One funeral business misrepresented the local health code by telling the caller that embalming was required (it was not). One funeral business promised to send the General Price list but instead sent a list of prices that did not meet Funeral Law requirements.

Warning letters restate the requirements of the Funeral Rule and ask the businesses to take prompt remedial action. Failure to comply can result in penalties of up to \$51,744 per violation. The National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA) provides a virtual remedial program where violators who pay for and complete a virtual remedial program can avoid fines and public disclosure of their names. In addition, funeral businesses pay 0.8% of their average annual sales in lieu of a civil penalty to the federal or state governments.

Funeral consumer advocates say it is inappropriate for the industry to police itself, and

critics of the Funeral Rule claim it does little to protect consumers as only a handful of the country's more than 20,000 funeral businesses have been inspected for compliance.

For more information and links to documents:
<https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2024/01/ftc-sends-warning-letters-funeral-homes-after-first-undercover-phone-sweep>

<https://www.wsj.com/business/how-the-funeral-industry-got-the-ftc-to-hide-bad-actors-b0028ac3>

How to file a complaint

If you are dissatisfied with your funeral or cemetery experience, try to work out your concerns with the funeral business or cemetery involved. Document your concerns including the contact person you've been dealing with. Complaints generally involve unexpected or unreasonable costs; unethical or unprofessional conduct; negligence and breach of contract. For more information on why and how to file a complaint, go to:

<https://funerals.org/your-rights/filing-a-complaint/>

Most Recent Price Survey of Tompkins County (2023)
<https://www.fingerlakesfunerals.org/price-survey>

Donations gratefully received

- Thomas L. Bonn *in memory of* Ellen M. Bonn
- Elizabeth Earle *in memory of* Clifford Earle
- Paul & Lois Ecklund *in memory of* Lois King
- Carl Ginet & Sally McConnell-Ginet *in memory of* Sydney Shoemaker
- Timothy & Elizabeth Mount *in memory of* June & Jane Cheney
- Joel Rabinowitz *in honor of* Donna L. Scott
- Barbara M. Shew *in memory of* Randy Shew
- Yohko Tsuji *in honor of* Barry Adams

Carol & David Burnett
 Basil & Helen Cooil
 Roger K. Cowdery
 Janet G. Desch
 Erica Evans
 Kristina & George Finley
 Lawrence I. Heller
 L. James Holman
 & Dorothy Buerk
 Jean W. Jagendorf
 Gary G. Judson
 Carol K. Kammen
 Judith G. Koch

Hilary A. Lambert
 Daniel P. Loucks
 Lois Lounsbury
 Angela Mennitto
 Karen Miltner
 Lloyd E. Powell
 Nancy & Andrew Ramage
 Bruce H. Rich
 Richard Rosenbaum
 & Jane Marsh Dieckmann
 Ann S. Rosenthal
 Edith Jo Savage
 Don & Alice Shardlow

Sincere thanks to all our donors. We couldn't do it without you!

Donations received 10/23/23 – 3/04/24



**Funeral Consumers Alliance
of the Finger Lakes**
PO Box 134
Ithaca, NY 14851-0134

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-Profit Org
US Postage
PAID
Permit #780
Ithaca, NY

Spring Newsletter 2024 - FCA of the Finger Lakes - Page 4

The Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Finger Lakes, Inc., founded in 1958 as the Ithaca Memorial Society, is a non-profit, tax-exempt, public-service organization that promotes advance planning of funeral arrangements and consumer education and protection with respect to funeral-related issues. Membership is free and open to all. Volunteers provide all services and programs. A Board of Directors is elected by the members. The FCAFL is supported entirely by donations and is a member of the national Funeral Consumers Alliance, Inc., which has more than 80 affiliates. This Newsletter is published twice a year and is freely available. **Check out our website: fingerlakesfunerals.org AND “LIKE” us on Facebook**

The Board of Directors

President
Joel Rabinowitz, *Treasurer*
Donna Scott, *Corresponding Secretary*
Angela Mennitto,
Acting Recording Secretary
Bronwyn Mohlke,
Mailing List Manager
Deborah Harper, *Newsletter Shepherd*

Christina Dravis
Carol Hardy
Maureen Kelly
April Michael
Barry Adams, *Advisor*

Ways FCAFL helps the public

Those with questions about funeral planning can talk to an FCAFL volunteer by phone (607-229-5286) or by email info@fingerlakesfunerals.org or go to: fingerlakesfunerals.org

FCAFL presentations

Volunteers can give Zoom presentations to groups of 10 or more people, or meet in person with groups. Presentations include information on funeral planning and price comparisons.