



## SPRING 2013 NEWSLETTER

### Funeral Consumers Alliance of Houston \*

[formerly named Houston Area Memorial Society]

\*An affiliate of the national Funeral Consumers Alliance ([www.funerals.org](http://www.funerals.org))

Website: [www.funeralshouston.org](http://www.funeralshouston.org) (currently unavailable)

Tel #s: 713-526-4267

713-464-8877

Evening: 713-301-8566

### YOU'RE INVITED TO THE 2013 ANNUAL MEETING SUNDAY, MARCH 17, 2013

MEET & GREET: 1:30 pm  
MEETING: 2:00 pm  
LOCATION: UNITARIAN FELLOWSHIP OF HOUSTON  
1504 WIRT ROAD, HOUSTON 77055

SPEAKER: Margie Jenkins, author of *You Only Die Once*

In her highly praised book, *You Only Die Once*, Margie Jenkins makes a stimulating and compelling case to readers that preparing for life's ending is the groundwork for living a more bodacious and rewarding life. Skillfully using stories and personal experiences, Margie motivates you to recognize the benefits and importance of being informed about end-of-life decisions that you can make now. She plans to give a copy of her book to each person attending. "*My Personal Planner*" follows the chapters in the book, offering forms to fill out that create a simple roadmap to guide you through the planning process. This will be for sale.

Dear Members:

We recently sent an announcement via email to the members on our email list. Many emails were returned undeliverable! *Please advise if you have a new email address* to [ehillmann43@gmail.com](mailto:ehillmann43@gmail.com).

Thank you!

## REQUIREMENTS FOR INDIGENT BURIAL SERVICES IN HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS

The FCAH board requested specific information from the Bereavement Department of Harris County Community Services regarding the requirements for indigent burial services in Harris County, TX. Please read the responses we received below:

- **To be considered for this program, the decedent MUST have died in Harris County. If you die outside of Harris County, you are ineligible (even if you are a Harris County citizen).**
- **Income eligibility varies since our program is somewhat unique (the income that is considered is that of the decedent only). Our Case Managers seek to assist any next of kin who may inquire about funeral assistance, and if possible, refer them to various funeral agencies that have provided us with their low cost price list.**
- **Harris County has adopted a cremation first policy for all decedents who do not have immediate next of kin who can opt out of the cremation and request a burial as an alternative disposition.**
- **If Harris County assists in either a cremation or burial, the Case Manager will deal with the next of kin and provide the necessary information regarding disposition.**
- **All next of kin are welcome to attend the funeral services; those services, however, are limited to approximately 15 minutes in length (no matter the number of next of kin present). We currently provide up to 9 family services, and approximately 5-9 non-family services, each Friday.**
- **Each decedent at the cemetery will have a marked headstone as soon as possible, or within the budget cycles.**

The Bereavement Department staff has two Administrative Assistants (Phone #s 713-696-1935 and 713-696-1952) who are available for calls Monday-Friday from 8 am-5 pm. Our after-hour calls are handled by the Harris County Operator during interim hours (Phone # 713-755-5000).

Jarrett Williams, Harris County Community Services  
Office of Social Services, Bereavement Dept. Manager  
9418 Jensen Drive, Houston, TX 77093

**LIST OF COOPERATING FUNERAL HOMES**  
**Prices change—always call for up-to-date information**  
**SAVE FOR FUTURE REFERENCE**

<b>ALDINE FUNERAL CHAPEL</b> 9504 Airline Dr, Houston 77037-2308	<b>281-591-6055</b>
Direct cremation	\$ 807
Direct burial, 20-gauge steel casket	\$ 1598
Graveside service, 20-gauge steel casket	\$ 2147
Distance charges: Galveston, Ft. Bend, Liberty, Wallace, Brazoria Counties	\$ 158
Languages spoken: English only; Spanish info on website. Services: Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Buddhist, Islamic.	

<b>CARNES FUNERAL HOME</b> <a href="http://www.carnesfuneralhome.com">www.carnesfuneralhome.com</a> 3100 Gulf Freeway (near Exit 16) Texas City, TX 77591	<b>409-986-9900</b> <b>888-822-7637</b>
Direct cremation Check website or phone for other prices.	\$ 675

<b>CLAIRE BROTHERS FUNERAL HOME</b> 7901 Hillcroft St, Houston 77081-7205	<b>713-271-7250</b>
Direct cremation (call for other counties other than Harris County)	\$ 705
Direct burial, 20-gauge steel casket	\$ 1290
Direct burial with graveside service	\$ 1695
Complete funeral (20-ga steel casket, chapel service, embalming, cosmetology)	\$ 2495
Distance charge: \$2.00/mi for distance beyond 50 miles (county exceptions) Languages spoken: English, Spanish, Cebuano, Filipino, French, Italian. Services: Protestant, Catholic, & others.	

<b>DEER PARK FUNERAL DIRECTORS</b> <a href="http://www.deerparkfuneraldirectors.com">www.deerparkfuneraldirectors.com</a>	<b>281-476-4693</b>
Direct cremation (± Price for FCAH members)	±\$ 650
Immediate burial, 20-gauge steel casket	\$ 1495
Graveside service, 20-gauge steel casket, no embalming	\$ 1920
<b>GREEN BURIAL:</b> Basic services of funeral director & staff, refrigeration, dressing & casketing the deceased, coordination & direction of graveside service, transfer of remains to funeral home, Green Burial casket*, transfer to Green Cemetery, one grave space in Green Cemetery marker section (for upright marker section, add \$175), & Register Book. Green Cemetery is in Tranquility Oaks Cemetery in Spring.  (Green Burial products are made from sustainably biodegradable materials, are metal-free, and are suitable for burial in all cemeteries, including both traditional and conservation cemeteries.)	<b>\$ 5595</b>
*Natural Burial Trundle & Shroud (instead of Green Burial casket)	<b>\$ 4545</b>
For those who have interest in Whole Body Donation (no charge to family), please give us a call for more information.	

<b>FOREST LAWN FUNERAL HOME &amp; CEMETERY</b> 8706 Almeda-Genoa Rd, Houston 77075	713-991-9000
Cremation, including memorial service	\$ 995
Direct burial, including graveside service	\$ 2538
Funeral complete with burial plot, graveside service, 20-gauge steel casket, no embalming, no viewing	\$ 4718
Distance charge, body pickup: \$2.25/mi beyond 50 miles. Languages spoken: English, Spanish, Vietnamese. Services: Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic, Greek Orthodox.	

<b>DISTINCTIVE LIFE CREMATION + FUNERAL SERVICES</b> <a href="http://www.distinctivelife.com">www.distinctivelife.com</a>	713-933-0356
<b>HOUSTON JEWISH FUNERALS</b> <a href="http://www.houstonjewishfunerals.com">www.houstonjewishfunerals.com</a> 6605 S. Rice Ave, Bellaire 77401 Direct cremation (‡ Price for FCAH members)	713-666-0257    ‡\$ 1295

Prices include original death certificate; certified copies \$4.00 each if ordered together. Cemetery costs are not included. Cremation prices include crematory charges, container, & one (1) death certificate.

<b>CEMETERY: HOUSTON MEMORIAL GARDENS</b> 16000 Cullen Blvd, Pearland 77581 Plot, open / close grave, grave liner	281-485-2221  \$ 1950
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<b>ORGAN DONATION</b> (call or refer to website) <a href="http://www.LivingBank.org">www.LivingBank.org</a> <a href="http://www.LifeGift.org">www.LifeGift.org</a>	713-528-2971 800-633-6562
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<b>BODY DONATION TO MEDICAL SCHOOL</b> Baylor College of Medicine ( <a href="http://www.bcm.edu">www.bcm.edu</a> ) Univ. of TX Health Sciences Center ( <a href="http://www.uth.tmc.edu/nba/willed_body">www.uth.tmc.edu/nba/willed body</a> ) <i>Cremation free; charges for death certificate.</i>	713-798-3858 713-500-5603
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Donations have some limitations, such as cancer, HIV / AIDs, tuberculosis, or hepatitis B/C.

<b>LIFELEGACY.ORG</b> DONATION FOR HARVESTING OF BODY PARTS FOR RESEARCH, ETC. Preferably make arrangements before death, but they can accept bodies up to 5 days after death if body has been refrigerated. Free cremation and 1 <sup>st</sup> death certificate. May accept bodies with active cancer, heart disease, pulmonary disease, and Alzheimer's, as these are useful in studying these medical conditions. Check to confirm.  Body parts are sold for medical research to medical schools, etc. Some cremated remains can be returned to survivors. If arrangements to LifeLegacy have not yet been made, body can be sent to Claire Brothers Funeral Home, since they work with LifeLegacy in preparing bodies for shipment.	888-774-4438
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## **DEATH AND DATA: A NEW DIMENSION**

**Have you thought about it? What happens to all of your online materials and accounts when you die? Do you want your emails to be read by a next-of-kin after your death? Do you want your online identify deleted or memorialized on social media? There are a number of questions that need to be asked or resolved by family members, attorneys, or estate planners in the years ahead.**

**Paper records and albums are disappearing like the typewriter, and digital records are replacing the file drawers and shoe boxes of the past. Families of the deceased have to look online to find account records and writings and photographs. Bank statements, life insurance policies, and other records of assets or debts are increasingly available only online, and access to them is tightly restricted. Without passwords, balances can sit unclaimed in PayPal accounts indefinitely. Automatic payment systems may continue to debit the decedent's account long after he or she dies. Online investment platforms may continue to execute prearranged trades. The consequences of losing access to a decedent's online information are considerable. Unfortunately, most people do not leave behind an accurate record of current user names and passwords to permit access to their online accounts after they die. There is no uniform body of state or federal laws that govern access to the deceased's digital accounts.**

**Google, for example, has a burdensome and restrictive death policy, requiring a two-step process: the individual seeking access to a decedent's account must first send information to Google such as name, email address, copy of a government-issued ID, and the death certificate; Google then determines if it is willing to move forward with the request and may still require a court order to authorize the request. Yahoo has a similarly restrictive policy; Microsoft is less restrictive with accounts such as @hotmail.com and @msn.com. Facebook allows profiles to become memorialized forever but eliminates some of the functionality of the account. Twitter and LinkedIn accounts have their own deceased user policies. Upon receipt of a death certificate, iTunes may terminate an account and delete all content within the account.**

**If you want family members to have access to your email after your death, provision in a will granting access could make it easier. On the other hand, if you don't want such information released, you should have a clause in your will that indicates your intention. If you want to avoid inevitable hassles for them, you might consider providing passwords for your key accounts to a trusted friend or family member.**

**In short, now that we're in the Internet age, we need to sift through—and confront the data we leave behind—to determine what should be protected, what should be shared, what can be ignored, and what should be destroyed.**

A RECIPE FOR:

## FUNERAL POTATOES

Published: January 24, 2012  
The New York Times



3 baking potatoes (about 2 pounds)

Canola oil

1-1/2 cups sour cream

1/4 cup finely chopped chives, plus extra for garnish

3 cloves garlic, pressed or minced

Time: 2-1/2 hours,  
plus overnight refrigeration

2 tablespoons grated onion (about 1/2 an onion)

1-1/2 teaspoons kosher salt

Yield: 6 servings.

1/4 teaspoon black pepper

1-1/4 cups grated sharp Cheddar cheese, about 4 ounces

1-1/4 cups grated Gruyère cheese, or more Cheddar, about 4 ounces

1. Heat oven to 375 degrees. Rub potatoes lightly with oil, place on a baking sheet and bake 60 to 80 minutes, until just tender all the way through. Let cool and refrigerate overnight or up to 3 days. (Refrigeration gives the potatoes the right texture.)
2. Heat oven to 350 degrees. In a large bowl, combine sour cream, chives, garlic, onion, salt and pepper. Using a box grater, coarsely grate potatoes with skins on. (Most of the skin will peel off; discard it.) Add grated potatoes to sour cream mixture, and gently toss to combine. Add 1 cup Cheddar and 1 cup Gruyère and mix gently. Transfer to an 8-by-8-inch square baking dish. Sprinkle remaining cheese on top.
3. Bake until hot, bubbly and lightly browned around the edges, 30 to 40 minutes. Let cool 10 minutes before serving, sprinkled with chives.

### Houston National Cemetery

10410 Veterans Memorial Drive, Houston, TX 77038

Tel. 281-447-8686

Fax 281-447-0580

Website: <http://www.cem.va.gov/cems/nchp/houston.asp>

The cemetery has a very informative website with information on general veterans' services such as benefits and services, health and well-being, and burials and memorials, including a nationwide gravesite locator.

Our national organization in Vermont has additional information on Veterans burials. Go to [www.funerals.org](http://www.funerals.org), click on the left on Free FCA Publications, scroll down to FAQ Pamphlets, and then to Veterans Burial Benefits.



...from “Poppy’s Funerals”—a London-based company providing a simple, affordable way to take creative control of a funeral:

## Planning a Funeral? Why Information is Power

One thing we all have in common: we’re going to die. We won’t all get married, have children, or see Niagara Falls. But every single one of us will die. Yet the vast majority of us only think about death when we have to.

And what’s the first thing we do when it happens? We head to the high street and walk into the first funeral director’s we can find. We follow their instructions. We take their advice without question. Most of us leave it at that. We don’t seek a second opinion. We don’t read books on the subject or scour the Internet.

Now let’s compare that with death’s great friend, birth—the only other experience we all have in common. When we find out a birth is on the cards, we get planning. We buy piles of books and milk the Internet for every last drop of information. We listen to the doctors and then we research the alternatives. We are voracious in our desire to be prepared, informed and educated. We ask ourselves every type of question and quickly become self-taught experts.

So why do we prepare ourselves for birth and death so differently? Largely because birth is good news and death is not. We’re terrified of death and it remains in many ways a taboo subject in our culture. Even the most rational amongst us still believe that to discuss death is to invite it into our lives.

This is madness. It leaves the people we love with none of the tools they need to help them through. They probably haven’t planned a funeral before and have no idea whether you wanted to be buried or cremated. More often than not, they follow the guidance of somebody who knew nothing of you or your family. If you want to avoid a ‘one size fits all’ funeral, do some research and talk to your family. If you didn’t get a chance to talk to the person who has died about what they wanted, make sure you take time to think about it in the days after their death.

Embalming is a good example. There are reasons to embalm a body, but it shouldn’t happen unless you actively want it to. When a funeral director offers ‘hygienic treatment’, do you know what he’s asking? Don’t agree to something if you don’t know the implications.

Obviously all this research, talking and planning doesn’t mean we can completely control what happens when we die, just like it won’t when we go into labour. But gathering information gives you the maximum amount of control. When the doctor or funeral director suggests something, you know what it means.

Like anything in life, if you don’t know what’s possible, it’s unlikely you’ll have the experience you want. Being armed with information is the only way to protect your rights and get the experience you want and need. Get educated. Be empowered.

On December 20<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. Senate passed the *Dignified Burial and Veterans and Benefits Improvement Act of 2012* under the leadership of Senator Patty Murray. It was signed into law by President Obama on Jan. 10<sup>th</sup>, 2013. This bill will authorize the VA to provide a “Dignified” casket or urn for the Burial of Veterans who have no known next-of-kin. In the past, the law authorized burial in a VA Cemetery of veterans who had no known survivors, but did not authorize the VA to provide a casket or urn. Typically the funeral home portion of a Veterans’ funeral (including the container) is paid for by the family. This bill was introduced last year after publicity about a veteran who was buried in a cardboard box because he had no survivors to pay for his funeral home costs.



**SPRING 2013 NEWSLETTER**

**FUNERAL CONSUMERS ALLIANCE OF HOUSTON**

Member of the Federation of Nonprofit Funeral Information Societies

1504 Wirt Road, Houston, TX 77055

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**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

The Funeral Consumers Alliance of Houston is a nonprofit, nonsectarian, 501(c)(3) organization of volunteers solely dedicated to protecting the public's right to choose meaningful, dignified, and affordable funerals.

**Thank You for Your Tax-Deductible Contribution**

(Contributions can be deductible as charitable donations for tax purposes.)

MY GIFT OF \$ \_\_\_\_\_ IS ENCLOSED.

Current Member

Membership Application

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_ City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone / Cell \_\_\_\_\_

**Send your contribution to: FCAH, 1504 Wirt Rd, Houston, TX 77055**