

# The M essenger



A Publication of the Funeral Consumers Information Society of Greater Detroit

---

Founded in 1961

Winter 2006

## The State of Our FICS

By Al Ugelow

With the untimely death of our recent president, Dick Miller, which came just about a year or so after another significant loss, that of Norm Naylor, the forward movement of our association has slowed somewhat, even under the current capable leadership of Carter Stevenson who unhesitatingly stepped into the President's role.

However by May's annual meeting we will need to see some significant changes in the make-up of the Executive Board if our organization is to continue at a meaningful level. We will need to elect a new President and Vice-president and replace the Treasurer's position. Our leaders in those positions will be leaving office at the end of this organization year in May. Moreover, one Board member resigned last year and four will have completed their terms this year. There is a need as well for representatives to our Board from area churches, appropriate other organizations and socially concerned individual citizens. It is urgent that our membership be aware of this state of affairs

now so there are no lapses in the benefits so many receive and have received at times of grief such as impartial advice, information and referral services.

At other times we seek to publish a lively newsletter, and keep our organization before the public as time allows, and invite interesting and informative speakers to our annual meeting. With an active board we would like to conduct workshops and other

educational activities. If you have an interest in this service and can donate a small amount of monthly time to meeting and planning of such activities we urge you to contact our office coordinator, Tom Madsen, at 313-886-0998, or Al Ugelow at 248-689-8544 or our current president, Carter Stevenson at 313-863-6891. Volunteers for other activities are also always needed, for mailings, service at public events, and so on.

## The Good Dues Time

### *Dues Envelope Enclosed*

A non-profit society exists because of the attitude of its members. Your society is backed by the giving of a small (264) number of you. We receive no grants or subsidies. We lost money last year (\$1,603.12) but we would have been in bigger trouble if it hadn't been for the generosity of those of you who chose to donate (\$3,488.00) beyond the suggested dues. We hope you will be willing again this year, so an envelope is enclosed to pay your 2006 dues (\$20/person) and contribute beyond. Many thanks in advance.

*Russell Peebles*  
Acting Treasurer



**FUNERAL CONSUMERS  
INFORMATION SOCIETY**

P.O. BOX 24054  
Detroit, Michigan 48224  
313-886-0998

[FCIS@juno.com](mailto:FCIS@juno.com)  
[www.detroitfunerals.org](http://www.detroitfunerals.org)

Funeral Consumers Alliance  
[www.funerals.org](http://www.funerals.org)

**Officers**

**President**

Carter Stevenson 313-863-6891  
[stevenc@ci.detroit.mi.us](mailto:stevenc@ci.detroit.mi.us)

**Treasurer Pro-tem**

Russell Peebles 586-498-9850  
[peecarus@concentric.net](mailto:peecarus@concentric.net)

**Secretary**

Thomas Madsen 313-824-6368  
[tomandwinn@earthlink.net](mailto:tomandwinn@earthlink.net)

**Directors**

Mary Beth Naylor 248-552-1937  
[norbetsy@juno.com](mailto:norbetsy@juno.com)

Al Ugelow 248-689-8544  
[ugelow@mich.com](mailto:ugelow@mich.com)

Larry Zimmerman 313-331-1614  
[larryzimmerman@wayne.edu](mailto:larryzimmerman@wayne.edu)

**Representatives**

Ray Bazmore  
Central United Methodist Church  
Detroit, MI

Al Ugelow  
Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church  
Troy, MI

Carter Stevenson  
First Unitarian Universalist Church  
Detroit, MI

**Newsletter Editor**

Aletha E. Craig 248-524-9338  
[aarvcraig@mac.com](mailto:aarvcraig@mac.com)

## President's Remarks

By Carter Stevenson

There is still a lot of work to be done" was the way Dick Miller ended a card to me seven years ago. I agreed then and now. In a conversation last week with another someone who loved Dick Miller, she expressed the void that is left by his death. My immediate response was that it is not so much a void as it is a call for us who remain to step up and do some of the work that needs to be done. I am sure that all who read this Newsletter agree without reservation that the public needs to have better information about fair and reasonable practices when a loved one dies and preparation information for our own deaths.

The Funeral Consumer Information Society Survey of area Funeral homes needs volunteers to follow-up our mailing concerning prices. The organization needs volunteers to attend community fairs and pass out information on what we do. The organization needs help in answering calls and providing information to people who need our help when death has come to family or friends and options and alternatives are requested and needed.

Training is available, if you are available, please call or write or e-mail the FCIS office. We need you.

## In Remembrance of Dick Miller

Like others I was concerned at the news that Dick was seriously ill and deeply saddened when he died on December 22. I had not known him very long, but it was an honor to work alongside him last year at senior expos and community health fairs. Later we worked together on the survey project for funeral costs. I found him to be dedicated, knowledgeable, well organized, ever cheerful, and so appreciative of help.

At his memorial service on January 28 I learned that I surely am not alone in recognizing these qualities. I feel his loss, as I'm sure do others and I hear a call to help continue his efforts.

~ Al Ugelow

Where to start? Over the decade I have shared in various labors of work and fellowship at Central United Methodist Church, with Dick. It was his gentle persistence that led to my being Central's representative at FCIS. Dick started the Bag Lunch program at the church — which provides basic nutrients in sandwiches, fruit and snack — to upwards of several hundred homeless persons twice a week. He certainly was diligent in doing what he could for those he could where he could.

~ Raymond Bazmore

## Public Presence

By Al Ugelow

Efforts will continue this year to bring greater awareness of the Funeral Consumers Information Society to the public, beginning with this year's Senior Expo at the Troy Community Center on Tuesday, March 21. If you can help with hosting our table and passing out our literature, please let me know at 248-689-8544.

Later this Spring we expect to be at one or more Project Health Awareness fairs in the metropolitan area. These will be announced when we receive this year's schedule. Again volunteer hosts would be appreciated so let me know if you can help.

In a related vein our latest survey on funeral home costs for direct burial and cremation was launched last December. A mailing of 250 such surveys has taken place. Replies have been somewhat slower than hoped so a follow-up effort will be underway as winter winds down. We hope to have a report on this effort later this spring.

## Treasurer's Report

### Funeral Consumers Information Society of Greater Detroit Oct-Dec and Year to Date (100%) 2005

	Oct-Dec 2004	Jan-Dec 2004	POB 2004	2004 Budget
<b>Receipts:</b>				
New members	\$20.00	\$120.00	7%	\$1,716
2005 renewals	150.00	5,160.00	90%	5,710
Donations	80.00	3,488.00	114%	3,065
Investments	50.81	150.98	302%	50
Miscellaneous	15.00	65.00	130%	50
2004 renewals	-0-	-0-	0%	100
2006 renewals	60.00	60.00	60%	100
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$375.81</b>	<b>\$9,043.98</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>\$10,791</b>
<b>Disbursements:</b>				
Annual meeting	\$-0-	\$585.07	98%	\$600
Bank charges	-0-	17.38	170%	10
Employee faxes	63.35	263.72	100%	264
FCA dues	249.60	1,027.16	72%	1,430
Office coordinator	934.67	3,442.34	100%	3,445
Mailing	164.00	671.50	87%	769
Postage	185.50	1,255.33	87%	1,450
Print & duplicate	308.00	1,332.72	113%	1,177
Rent	224.00	812.00	112%	728
Supplies & equipment	326.07	504.67	316%	160
Telephone, ATT	155.29	572.41	89%	642
Miscellaneous	-0-	20.00	40%	50
Consultants	75.00	90.00	90%	100
Travel mileage	-0-	52.80	66%	80
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$2,685.48</b>	<b>\$10,647.10</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>\$10,791</b>
<b>Assets:</b>				
	Balance 12/31/04	Receipts	Disburse.	Balance 12/31/05
Charter One, checking	\$1,266.85	\$7,188.00	\$8,454.85	\$-0-
Comerica, checking	-0-	5,799.70	5,286.95	512.75
Dreyfus, 100 U.S.	9,101.31	150.98	1,000.00	8,252.29
Petty cash	100.00	-0-	-0-	100.00
Key deposit	25.00	-0-	-0-	25.00
Transfer, Drey-Charter	-0-	(1,000.00)	(1,000.00)	-0-
Transfer, Charter-Comer.	-0-	(3,094.70)	(3,094.70)	-0-
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$10,493.16</b>	<b>\$9,043.98</b>	<b>\$10,647.10</b>	<b>\$8,890.04</b>

Submitted by: Russell Peebles  
Acting Treasurer, FCIS

## The Lighter Side



“So sad. His last words were, ‘I can’t live on what you’re paying me.’”

## Broader Horizons

**Jefferson City, Mo., January 4, 2006** — Consumer advocates successfully pushed back an attempt by the Missouri State Board of Embalmers and Funeral Directors to prohibit families, next-of-kin, and other non-funeral directors from exercising their rights to bury their own dead freely, without interference from commercial funeral homes, and without having to hire an undertaker. After a [joint letter from Funeral Consumers Alliance National, and the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Greater Kansas City](#), as well as outstanding advocacy from the [Institute for Justice](#) (a libertarian watchdog law firm in Washington that stands up for individual rights), the Board amended some proposed regulations that would have done just that.

We're still waiting for the Board to clear off some current regulations that still claim only commercial funeral directors can care for the dead, but we expect they'll be struck soon.

**Frankfort, Kentucky, January 15, 2006** — Faced with stiff competition from innovative, lower-cost funeral services that offer low prices by economizing on overhead, entrenched "traditional" Kentucky funeral homes are trying to abuse the law to protect their pocketbooks. House Bill 232, which looks to have been written by the state funeral directors' Board (made up of four funeral directors and one "public" representative, whose wife works part-time at a funeral home!) and the Funeral Directors Association of Kentucky, would:

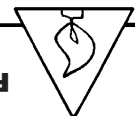
- Take away Kentucky citizens' rights to care for their own dead by giving the state funeral board control over every aspect of funerals.
- Take away the right of religious congregations to care for their members in a traditional way without the interference of the commercial funeral industry.
- Outlaw innovative, lower-cost funeral establishments.
- Give established, high-overhead funeral homes a virtual monopoly on the funeral business
- Insulate funeral homes from competition, thereby keeping prices high and consumers captive.

You can read more about each of these stories by going to the Funeral Consumers Alliance website at [www.funerals.org](http://www.funerals.org).

www.funerals.org  
Funeral Consumers Alliance (FCA)  
Affiliated With

www.detroitfunerals.org  
313-886-0998  
Detroit, Michigan 48224  
P.O. BOX 24054

**FUNERAL CONSUMERS  
INFORMATION SOCIETY**



Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit #3165  
Detroit, MI