

The Beat Goes On

When Bill Daem's wife bent down to kiss her mother good-bye she was startled by the pumping of her mother's heart. "She's gone," the nurse assured her, "That's just her pace-maker still working."

On the way home Bill and Evelyn talked about it. What a waste that this expensive, life-saving contraption was going to be buried with the body. (A pacemaker costs from \$4,000 to \$30,000. After surgery, the total bill will be \$35,000 to \$80,000.) Bill stewed about it for another year or so and then decided to do something about it.

In 1994, Bill Daem, with the support of his wife, started **Heart Too Heart**, a pacemaker recovery organization in Billings, Montana. The money for phone calls, stationery and mailings come from the pocket of this fire-fighter and some goodwill support from individuals and groups. Cooperation from morticians has been encouraging, with over 3,300 pacemakers sent in over the last four years. Some are still new but missing the leads; some were implanted for just ten minutes before death took over. All pacemakers are tested, and only those still operating at 80% efficiency or better will be re-used. The others are returned to the makers for disposal.

Bill feels strongly that no money should change hands in the effort to recycle the pacemakers. Recycled pacemakers are not bought, sold, or traded. Instead, they are passed along to doctors who are willing to

donate the surgery and medical care for the poor in other countries who receive a Heart Too Heart pacemaker.

Pacemakers or defibrillators may not be recycled and reused in the U.S. But medical devices may be *hand-carried* by one U.S. doctor to another in a foreign country. Bill is now working through doctors on medical missions and through various church ministries to get pacemakers to Asia, the Caribbean, Africa, Europe, and South America.

Non-implanted devices such as the telemetry transmitters (for monitoring and resetting pacemakers) *are* permitted to be re-used in the U.S. But until the Food and Drug Administration approves the reuse of medical devices, the poor in this country will not be able to receive the pacemakers that go with them.

If you—or someone you know—wears a pacemaker, be sure to let relatives know that it can be recycled. If you are going to carry a "Recycle" wallet card (see below), ask for a release form when you write to the FCA office. Or write directly to Heart Too Heart, 220 34th St. W., Billings, MT 59102.

By the way, Bill Daem writes a personal "thank you" to the next-of-kin after each donation.

Hear Now

Hearing aids can be recycled, too. Yet such a tiny device is likely to get forgotten in the distraction of funeral arrangements. Low-income individuals pay a \$30 processing fee to receive one of these through the **Hear Now** program. Send the hearing aid in a padded envelope to: Hear Now, 9745 E. Hamden Ave., Suite 300, Denver, CO 80231. Include a return address if you would like a donation receipt for income tax purposes. For more information call 800-648-HEAR.

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Lions to the Rescue

In most communities, the local Lions Club will recycle eye-glasses. If there is no Lions Club in your area or if you would like to donate glasses for distribution in other countries, mail them to Operation Eyesight Universal, 4 Parkdale Crescent NW, Calgary, Alberta T2N 3T8, Canada.

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For Diabetics

Even if you are covered by medical insurance, getting your company to fork over \$4,000 for an insulin pump is almost impossible. Even if you succeeded in getting one, your diabetes specialist probably knows someone who didn't. Recycling an insulin pump locally—through the doctor who prescribed it—is probably the best way to pass a pump along.

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Medical Equipment

A wheelchair, commode, walker, or other medical equipment will be appreciated by others struggling with large medical bills. Check with your visiting nurse's association to see who in your area is handling such donations.

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Another Card?

FCA has devised a red wallet card to carry if you have medical devices that should be recycled after death. Contact information (i.e., the addresses printed above) is on the back for each of the various options. Ask and ye shall receive. Send an SASE to: FCA, 33 Patchen Road S. Burlington, VT 05403

Smoothing the Way Series

Common Funeral Myths
Cremation Explained
Death Away from Home
Did You Forget?
Earth Burial: A Tradition in Simplicity
Eco-friendly Death and Funeral Choices
How to Help Grieving People
Light, Like the Sun—an essay on cremation
No One Wants to Talk about Death
Organ & Body Donation: A Gift to Science
Prepaying Your Funeral: Benefits & Dangers
Recycle Your Medical Devices
Simple & Cheap, My Father Said—daughter of Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black
Ten Tips for Saving Funeral Dollars
Twelve Reasons People Spend "Too Much"
Veterans Funeral & Burial Benefits
Viewing & Visitation: The Difference
What Shall We Do with the Ashes?
What You Should Know about Embalming

In addition to the above listed pamphlets, FCA has an excellent end-of-life planning kit, "Before I Go, You Should Know." The 20-page booklet has charming Edward Gorey sketches. It comes in a freezer pouch with door magnet, a checklist of items to store there, along with the state-specific *Living Will* and *Durable Power of Attorney*. Cost is \$10, which includes postage. To order with Visa or Mastercard, call 800-765-0107. Or mail a check to our address.

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Recycle Your Medical Devices



Funeral Consumers Alliance
33 Patchen Road
South Burlington, VT 05403
802-865-8300
800-765-0107

www.funerals.org