



# ONE FOOT IN...

FUNERAL CONSUMERS ALLIANCE OF HUMBOLDT  
AN ALLIANCE FOR END OF LIFE PLANNING

SPRING 2016

## 2016 ANNUAL MEETING FCAH will host Charles Garfield, PhD



The spring FCAH Annual Meeting is rapidly approaching and this year's gathering promises to be as inspiring and as soulful as 2015's! The Funeral Consumers Alliance of Humboldt is very pleased to be hosting Dr. Charles Garfield on *Saturday April 9, 2016 from 1:00pm to 4:30pm*, where he will present *Death, Aging, and the Soul Aroused: Embracing Life's Final Mystery*. An author, educator and end of life thought leader, Dr. Garfield has been recognized internationally as the founder of Shanti, a widely acclaimed volunteer organization, and

the Shanti National Training Institute (SNTI).

Shanti has been at the forefront of a growing national movement to enhance the quality of life for persons living with life-threatening or chronic illnesses by providing volunteer-based emotional and practical support. His ten books and numerous articles include *Sometimes My Heart Goes Numb: Love and Caregiving in a Time of AIDS* and *Stress and Survival: The Emotional Realities of Life Threatening Illness*.

Dr. Charles Garfield serves as Clinical Professor of Psychology in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of California School of Medicine at San Francisco (UCSF). A Fellow of the American Psychological Association, he is currently a Visiting Scholar at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. As a computer analyst and leader of a team of engineers, scientists and support staff on the Apollo 11 project, our first lunar landing, Dr. Garfield was part of a group of empowered people who went far beyond their previous results to legendary achievement. It was his work on the first moon landing project that led to his discovery of the dynamics of peak performance and into the frontiers of exceptional end of life care.

**The FCAH Annual Meeting will be held at the new Eureka Campus of Hospice of Humboldt located at 3327 Timber Fall Court, Eureka, CA 95503.**

*This event is free for FCAH members and \$25.00 for nonmembers.*

Call 707-822-8599 or email [info@fcahumboldt.org](mailto:info@fcahumboldt.org) for further information.

**PLEASE JOIN US!**

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### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE	2
BEING MORTAL IN FORTUNA	3
GOOD GRIEF	4
TREASURER'S REPORT	6
FCAH MEMBER NOW AN ANCESTOR	7
PARTNERS IN CARING	8
WITH DEEP GRATITUDE	9

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



*“Everybody is a story. When I was a child, people sat around kitchen tables and told their stories. We don't do that so much anymore. Sitting around the table telling stories is not just a way of passing time. It is the way the wisdom gets passed along. The stuff that helps us to live a life worth remembering.”*

— Rachel Naomi Remen, MD

As my first year of tenure in leading the Board of Directors for the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Humboldt draws to a close, I find my attention centered on the transformative power of story. We are all familiar with stories of love, heartbreak, inspiration, tragedy, suffering, intimacy, betrayal, resilience and healing. Then there are the stories of adventure and unbelievable heroism. Stories, when told well and from the heart, can help us to find our authentic voice, empowering us through their perceived wisdom to find clarity and courage—reminding us that the archetypal structure of story is essential to being human and our humanity. Story can tell us who we are, where we are located as a person and a society, as well as illuminate what no longer serves us.

Together, our FCAH community began the celebration of our 50<sup>th</sup> year with the deep wisdom of a story chronicling a daughter's journey in caring for her parents at the end of life. In this narrative, Katy Butler shared the heartbreak, intimacy and suffering of attempting to navigate a culture privileging the over medicalization of our aging and dying. Yes, *“everybody is a story”* and this heroic journey between parents and their child illuminated how we too might encounter and then find our own way through the the labyrinth of technology meeting the organic process that is death. How then is this story transformative? Every story told must have a listener and more importantly this listener must be a witness, and to be a witness is to be a *generous* listener.

Dr. Rachel Naomi Remen describes being a being a generous listener in this way: “Most of us do not recognize the power of our attention and few of us can listen generously. As we listen we become busy considering things that concern us: Do we agree with what is being said or not? Do we believe it? We listen competitively: What does this say about the person who is speaking and what does it say about me? Is this person more educated than I am? Smarter? More fortunate? More competent? And of course if we are health professionals, we listen to diagnose and to fix.”

It is my experience that even if we are not health professionals, our competitive listening drives us to fix rather witness. Perhaps if we can practice our generous listening in community, we may witness each other's stories in a fresh way, with heart and dignity. In so doing, we may find that we are not only transformed by each other's stories but are working together—in community—to transform the greater story about how we live, age and die. This year's FCAH Annual Meeting will host another master storyteller, Dr. Charles Garfield, whose own journey is transcendent and inspiring. Please join us and bring some friends!

*“Storytelling awakens us to that which is real. Honest. . . . It transcends the individual. . . . Those things that are most personal are most general, and are, in turn, most trusted. Stories bind. . . . They are basic to who we are. It maintains a stability within that community, providing common knowledge as to how things are, how things should be -- knowledge based on experience. These stories become the conscience of the group. They belong to everyone.”*

– Terry Tempest Williams, *Pieces of White Shell*

Gina Belton

President, Funeral Consumers Alliance of Humboldt

## “Being Mortal” in Fortuna

By Karen Ayers

Mark your calendar for Sunday afternoon, April 3rd. That’s the next community screening of the *Frontline* documentary “Being Mortal,” featuring Atul Gawande, M.D.

In this documentary *Frontline* follows renowned writer and surgeon Dr. Atul Gawande as he explores the relationships physicians have with patients who are nearing the end of life. The film also investigates the practice of caring for those who are seriously ill and shows how physicians – including Dr. Gawande himself – are often untrained and uncomfortable talking with their patients about the last chapter of life when a cure is no longer feasible.

The Humboldt Advance Care Planning Coalition is sponsoring this screening. This coalition’s purpose is to bring education, training and the dialogue of advance care planning to the people of Humboldt County. Advance care planning encourages all of us to think about what matters most to us in our lives, what we can live with and what our limits are. Most importantly it has us talk to those we love about those things that matter, our choices and preferences, so that if we found ourselves unable to speak for ourselves, our loved ones would know our choices and feel comfortable making them.

The screening on April 3rd will be from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm. There is no cost. It will be held at the Multi-Generational Center in Fortuna (2280 Newburg Road). Registration is not required, but it is preferred and can be completed at <http://beingmortal-fortuna.eventbrite.com> or by sending a message to this email address: [humACPcoalition@gmail.com](mailto:humACPcoalition@gmail.com). Childcare, snacks and door prizes will be provided.



“I’M NOT AFRAID OF DYING  
I JUST DON’T WANT WOODY ALLEN  
TO BE THERE WHEN IT HAPPENS...”

“On the plus side, death is one of those things that can be done easily lying down”  
– Woody Allen, *Without Feathers*

## Good Grief

By Carl Magruder

Director of Spiritual Support Services  
Resolution Care

The fastest growing category of religious identity in the United States is “spiritual but not religious.” My guess is that on the whole, this movement probably represents progress towards spiritual health and maturity. However, it leaves us without traditional rituals at the time of death. Too often the families I work with have no idea how to do an appropriate memorial for their loved one, where to hold it, or who to have facilitate it. This is often exacerbated by our grief-averse culture wanting memorials to be light and fun, “not a downer,” but a “celebration of life.”

Good ritual uses the language of the unconscious, the right brain, and the somatic wisdom of the body. It helps us to transform our consciousness in ways that logic, argument, and the passage of time cannot necessarily do. It behooves us to fully, consciously experience our grief. Mourning is especially helped by ritual, which hopefully brings elements of meaning, sorrow, gratitude, the big picture and human connectedness to our loss.

The making of a ritual from scratch can be profoundly healing for those closest to the deceased, and I love this creative process. I find that invoking the sacred, and incorporating music and poetry, help to create an affective experience that touches hearts. There will be mirth and celebration, but when we are not afraid to go into the place of deep grief, these also come from the depths, and do not merely stay on the surface.

It is also good not to do a one-time ritual, but to have ongoing observations, as the traditional rituals did. Our grief process changes over time, and periodic rituals keep us mindful of our process, so that we can engage fully with this universal experience, and by so doing discover more of our own compassion, gratitude, wisdom and acceptance. Grief, after all, is a sacred teacher.



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"Of course I think about death. I'd like to die young at a very old age."

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memory of: \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I would be willing to consider serving on the Board.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I can volunteer for a few hours. My interests are:  
Public Speaking \_\_\_\_\_, Writing \_\_\_\_\_, Computers \_\_\_\_\_,  
Financial \_\_\_\_\_, Legal Advice \_\_\_\_\_, Other \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_ No, I can't volunteer right now, but I have some good  
ideas. Please contact me to discuss them.

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Phone:

\_\_\_\_\_

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**Funeral Consumers Alliance of Humboldt**

P.O. Box 856

Arcata, CA 95518

707-822-8599

[info@fcahumboldt.org](mailto:info@fcahumboldt.org)

**HAS YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION CHANGED?**

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I have moved from our service area. Please cancel my membership.

Transfer my membership to the FCA affiliate in my new locale.

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[info@fcahumboldt.org](mailto:info@fcahumboldt.org)

*Privacy: We never rent, sell or share your information with organizations outside of the Funeral Consumers Alliance.*

**TREASURER'S REPORT**

**Year 2015 Highlights**

Active Members 1002

Inactive Members\* 489

**Total Members** 1491

**Income from Donations and New memberships\*\***

New Memberships (37) \$860

Donations (thank you) \$6250

**Total** \$7110

*\*Members that have not provided change of address information.*

*\*\* All donations and membership fees are now tax-deductible.*

You may view a financial *Profit & Loss Sheet for FY 2015* on our website at [www.fcahumboldt.org](http://www.fcahumboldt.org). If you don't have access to a computer, you may call our Treasurer, Nancy Ortiz, at 707-822-5378 and she will mail a copy to you.

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*A nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization.*

*All donations are tax-deductible.*

## An FCAH Elder Is Now an Ancestor

By Karen Roemke, MA

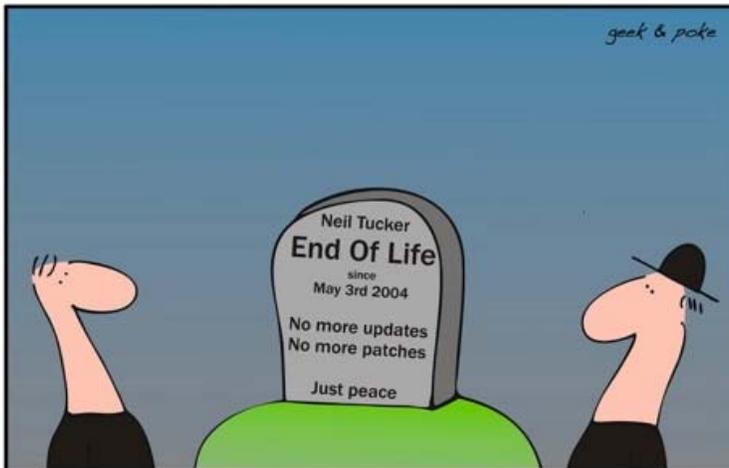
A TRIBUTE TO WILMA JOHNSTON, 1925-2015

The Funeral Consumers Alliance of Humboldt is 50 years old. It is, and always has been, led by a small but dedicated group, has never had any paid staff, and yet maintains a 24/7 on-call presence. It is my opinion that the survival and success of this impressive group can be attributed to one amazing woman, Wilma Johnston. She would not approve of this tribute, since she was not one to sing her own praises, but for once, I will have the last word.

In the 1960s and 1970s many groups were formed to promote social change, and Humboldt County benefitted from this time of activism. What was then called the Humboldt Funeral Society (HFS) grew out of the awareness that the funeral industry entered into a person's life at a time of grief and sadness and vulnerability. HFS offered information, support and advocacy. The group successfully negotiated low cost contracts with our local funeral homes for simple services and staffed a phone line for people who needed answers and guidance in the midst of challenging times.

Wilma was that voice on the phone for many years. She gained a depth of knowledge that earned her the recognition in our community as a voice of authority. She became a valued resource for me as I worked with families in need of this information. But she also recognized that her fellow HFS leaders were aging and that the group was at risk of folding for lack of new energy. Many groups closed their doors when they couldn't continue to grow, but Wilma saw the writing on the wall and would not accept defeat. So she began her search for the next generation. I called Wilma one day to get her advice for a family and before I knew it I was at a meeting and voted onto the Board. At that same meeting two other new members also joined. They had called Wilma to discuss an article about the group in the local news and she invited them over "just to talk". She was persuasive, she was relentless, and she was successful in her pursuit of new ideas and youthful vigor.

It was a crucial turning point for the organization, and its survival owes thanks to the efforts of Wilma Johnston. I was proud to serve on the Board and continue to support the efforts of what we now call the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Humboldt. Wilma and I developed a deep friendship over the years and my admiration for her never stopped growing. The energy and determination that she brought to her life was matched by the grace and courage and honesty she exhibited as she died. There are many accomplishments she achieved throughout her 90 years, and FCA of Humboldt is one of them.



DEAD GEEKS



## Partners in Caring

By Karen Ayers, FNP, and Karen Roemke, MA

### The Humboldt Advance Care Planning Coalition sponsored **Partners in Caring: An End of Life Seminar with Faith Leaders**

The Humboldt Advance Care Planning Coalition (HACPC) was recently awarded a grant from the Coalition for Compassionate Care of California (CCCC) to present a seminar to our local faith communities. Seriously ill and dying individuals and their families often turn to their faith community for support during illness and grief. On February 26<sup>th</sup>, this half-day seminar focused on challenges and lessons learned in supporting and providing spiritual care around the end of life. It also explored methods for engaging individuals and congregations in thinking and planning ahead about end-of-life choices and decisions.

The intended audience was clergy, chaplains, Stephen ministers, Eucharistic ministers, health ministers, parish nurses and others who minister to those who are at the end of life.

The curriculum included:

- Lessons from hospice and palliative care professionals on facilitating communication and being present during these spiritually rich times

- How to partner with hospice and palliative care services to support those facing the end of life

- The importance of Advance Directives and how to help care planning conversations begin ahead of a crisis

- Lessons learned from a panel of local faith leaders on engaging one's congregation

This event was free to participants and hosted by Hospice of Humboldt at their new Eureka Campus. Please look for other community education events facilitated by the Humboldt Advanced Care Planning Coalition.



## With Deep Gratitude

By

**Gina Belton, FCAH President**

*“Cultivate the habit of being grateful for every good thing that comes to you, and to give thanks continuously. And because all things have contributed to your advancement, you should include all things in your gratitude.”*

~~ Ralph Waldo Emerson~~

To "count your blessings" is a common phrase we often hear and yet, how often do we actually do so? To count our blessings is one sure way to develop a constant mind-set of gratitude and in this way, we may turn a mundane life into a miraculous one. How often do you pause to feel grateful? This heartfelt note is our opportunity at FCAH to pause and offer gratitude for the support from our community without which the 2015 Annual Meeting could never have happened.

Community must be nurtured. It must be cared for, and hosted—I take this privilege of hosting our community of Funeral Consumers Alliance of Humboldt members and those in the greater Humboldt community who support our work very seriously. It is my view that we are partners in the care of those navigating the universal experience of death. When we are able to meet this challenging moment in our lives in community, as community, somehow our burden feels lighter.

Some of these partners contributed in small ways and others in very generous ways. Each and every contribution is deeply appreciated by myself and your Board of Directors.

We would like to take this time to offer up our gratitude to our community business partners who participated in our “FCAH Past Presidents Campaign” to raise funds for the 2015 Annual Meeting when we hosted author and journalist, Katy Butler:

A big thank you goes out to Jan Rowen who led this fundraising campaign and actively solicited and collected their donations. Generous financial contributions were made by:

Ayres Family Cremation

Gale & Nielsen, Law Offices and Estate Planning

Hospice of Humboldt, Inc.

SAFE Planners, Inc., Senior Advocates, Fiduciaries and Educators

Humboldt Cremation and Funeral Services

Sanders Funeral Home

Special thanks to Northtown Books in Arcata and owner, Dante, for ordering, organizing and managing the books sales of Katy Butler’s *Knocking on Heaven’s Door, the Path to a Better Way of Death*.

And, as always, we are most grateful for the many contributions from our loyal FCAH members. We wouldn’t be here without your continued support.

## Thank You

*“Real generosity towards the future lies in giving all to the present.”*

~Albert Camus~

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## Funeral Consumers Alliance of Humboldt Annual Meeting

**Saturday April 9th 2016**

**1:00pm - 4:30pm**

**Eureka Campus of  
Hospice of Humboldt**

**3327 Timber Fall Court**

**Eureka, CA 95503**

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Please join us for the Annual Meeting,  
socializing, information gathering and  
refreshments.

~

Free to Members • \$25 for Nonmembers  
(or join FCAH for the same price)

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For more information:

[fcahumboldt.org](http://fcahumboldt.org) • [info@fcahumboldt.org](mailto:info@fcahumboldt.org) • 822-8599

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