



2016 NHFA Committee Reports

September, 2016

Message from the President

Lee Webster, President

One thing is certain every year on the board of the NHFA—it will be different from any other year. This past year was one of buoyancy. Our successful conference in California opened the door to a lightness of being and a growing sense of doing right in service to home funeral families. Board work isn't sexy — it's dealing with things that often feel completely unrelated to the vocation we have devoted ourselves to, but that must be done to keep the doors open. This year was filled with hope and optimism about the direction we are steering the organization and the movement.

One major indicator of our success was our growth in membership, always a welcome sign. But it goes beyond that. When we see our members' workshops and personal stories and insights shared on our Facebook page, we can see the benefits of the work we are doing in action. As we lay the foundation, our members take wing and fly into their communities, spreading the word about home funerals in their own marvelous, rich and personal ways, changing old perceptions that have the ability to truly transform lives. This is grassroots at its best.

We also grew in recognition from the media. This may seem like a small thing, but being contacted first about home funerals for a story or a sound bite is a major milestone in our evolution and our public exposure. What it ultimately means is that we are able to reach more people who are hungry for this information. We have worked hard to reach this place where we are viewed as the leading authority on home funerals.

As you read these committee reports, pause to reflect on the many ways the work is being done to fulfill our mission. Deep gratitude to all of our volunteers: NHFA members, committee members, board members, conference volunteers, and so many more who are helping behind the scenes to keep this organization vibrant, putting their best selves forward in sharing fair, meaningful, and accessible ways of caring for our own after death.

Message from the Treasurer

Donna Belk, interim Treasurer

I am happy to report that the general health of the organization financially is that it is in the black with money enough saved up to seed the 2017 conference.

We receive the bulk of our money through the generosity of our members—donations made directly to NHFA, book sales, and attendance at the bi-annual conferences. Through the books that NHFA publishes, we earn enough to pay our monthly expenses without having to dip into our conference seed money. The NHFA is very much a member-supported organization without having to charge membership fees. Many of you may not know that at the very beginning of NHFA we did charge membership fees!

Our annual budget is in the \$8,000 range, incurring monthly expenses to cover our member database, accounting system, videoconferencing service, post office box, website host, and other administrative costs. We also pay annually for insurance, domain name renewals, attorney, taxes, licenses, accountant and bookkeeper, and printing costs. In conference years, the costs may be as high as \$30K in advance of the revenue, so it is critical that we raise enough money each year to cover expenses and protect seed money for conferences.

Many thanks to those who have helped fill the coffers of the NHFA this past year. Your money is going toward realizing our mission of making home funerals known and the necessary information about them available. Muchas gracias!

Advocacy Committee

Terry Skovronek and Sarah Crews, Co-Chairs

The first thing the committee did this year was change the name to better align with our activities. While we do advocate for legislative change, our work resides more in the realm of advocacy of all things home funeral, including finding ways to persuade the public, inform private institutions of their roles and responsibilities toward home funeral families, alert authorities and others, along with apprising policymakers of the benefits of home funerals.

In conjunction with the FCA and GBC, the NHFA subscribed to LegiScan. As Advocacy co-chair with a penchant for bill tracking, Terry agreed to be the monitor for all three entities. Committee members agreed to check-in with the free LegiScan package available in their state or region. As a result, we monitored legislative activity in all 50 states; identified 55 relevant pieces of state legislation and 1 piece of federal legislation.

The Advocacy Committee led the effort and ultimately succeeded in blocking anti home funeral legislation in VA. Our work, which included activating NHFA members in VA to write letters, sign petitions, call legislators and actually show up at the state house to speak if needed, resulted in “Dead Body Bill” being re-written to reflect that families’ rights would not be

compromised or restricted.

We also participated in clearly communicating the issue in Alabama to concerned members and the role of the NHFA in advocating in that state. Ground work is being laid with the Institute for Justice for help and documentation in launching a constitutional challenge regarding citizen's rights to home funerals.

Other projects include:

- Working closely with Lee Webster in developing documents, now available on our website, regarding connecting to and working with hospice and hospitals in supporting home funerals and developing policies that favor families caring for their own at death.
- Researching on how EDRS is coming to every state and ensuring access to filing by family members. We are looking for an eager volunteer who would like to tackle this important issue.
- Making contact with and receiving a personal reply from former president Jimmy Carter wherein he explicitly states he believes every family should have the option of a home funeral!
- Leading a highly successful Monthly Teleconference on Legislative/Advocacy issues in May.

Communications Committee

Kateyanne Unullisi, Chair

2015-2016 has been a highly successful year devoted to bringing our members and the public compelling, accurate information about our home funeral mission. From our newly designed monthly conferences that saw record attendance to our exponentially growing Facebook following to our wildly successful biennial conference in California, we have supported our board members and chairs in getting their messages out in style and on time. We are grateful for the team effort that makes our communications so effective.

In addition to publicity, the core Communications team worked with other committee chairs and volunteers to create original materials to put out into the membership and into the mainstream. At the core of it all is our website, which has received an extraordinary redesign and reorganization from Kateyanne Unullisi and Monica Ruck that streamlines information and empowers readers on every page.

Here are some highlights from the projects we have been working on:

- **Social Networking** — Facebook/Twitter: three to four relevant posts per week, including conversation development and response. Created Instagram and Pinterest sites.
- **Videos** — National Geographic filming with Donna Belk and Sandy Booth; added to our YouTube channel
- **Books** — Revamped, consolidated and published *Undertaken With Love*; wrote and

published *Building Bridges Along the Death Care Continuum: Advocating for home funeral in hospices, hospitals, and care facilities*; enhanced and published *Restoring Families' Right to Choose* with *What to Do When Rights Are Challenged*

- **Presentations** — Developed hospice and hospital in-service training presentations
- **Conference calls** — Hosted monthly member teleconferences
- **Newsletters** — Published monthly member newsletters
- **Directories** — Managed and added to directories; refined language for inclusion on pages
- **Informational cards** — Made our rack cards available on our website in Products, in English and in Spanish
- **Website revamp** — Phase 2 of the website design and content management begun
- **Interviews** — answered multiple media requests for interviews about home funerals
- **Promoting NHFA events** — developed promotional materials for November *Day of the Dead* conference week; supported Fundraising in promoting annual appeal

Current projects include:

- Ongoing website renovations
- Amazon affiliate book list development
- Photoshoot and organization of NHFA user photo gallery tagged and including photographer

Events Committee

Anne Murphy, Chair

After morphing from a committee that worked exclusively on conferences, we opened up our vision to include other events throughout the year that would expand our reach and encourage member participation. Events is an area that overlaps with several other committees—communications in promoting our events, fundraising to bring a support focus to our public activities. We are pleased to announce that together with Communications, we have produced 12 teleconference calls, bringing home funeral experts and stories to hundreds of our members. We have also created the first NHFA online conference week that includes 4 evenings of conference calls and online giving, envisioned and created with Fundraising and enormous support from Communications and many volunteers.

And we have continued with our original mission to hold a biennial conference by securing the Pearlstone Center in Maryland, about an hour from three major airports (<http://pearlstonecenter.org>) for the 2017 NHFA Conference that will center on advocacy in its many forms. We welcome any and all who wish to make our next event the best ever!

Fundraising Committee

Sara Williams, Chair

The fundraising committee was active at our annual conference in Los Gatos and raised over \$1000 at our silent auction!

The annual holiday appeal "ask" letter was mailed out in December 2015. We netted approximately \$500 from this campaign (using end of February 2016 as cutoff point). All NHFA members are continually encouraged to sign up for "AmazonSmiles.com" which means every time they make a purchase on Amazon.com, we get a portion of those sales.

We held the first meeting of the fundraising committee in February 2016. There was excitement over an NHFA-branded "to go" home funeral kit (as well as other "swag"), but this idea was put on hold pending location of a fulfillment center and the myriad details of procuring and shipping items. We will revisit this in the coming year. We are eager to hear what items our members would be interested in having developed and made available. Swag!

Plans are under way to replace the annual snail mail campaign with an annual appeal during the first week in November to coincide with this year's first teleconference marathon organized by the Events Committee, marrying fundraising with friend-raising efforts.

Membership Committee

Zalene Corey, Chair

I'm happy to report that our membership grew 374 members from around the country...Last year at this time there were 835 members and there are, as of this writing, 1209. That's at least 1 new member each day!

On the plus side, there is now a member from Anchorage, AK! It would appear that each state is represented! On the down side, the goal of inviting and having 10 new members from the more remote states was not met this year. We can do better!

This past year, I have presented member profiles at monthly Board meetings so that the new members and their reasons for joining were recognized and connected to the mission of the board. This was met with enthusiasm and spurred an initiative to track member interests to help us locate volunteers and future board members.

The information gleaned from membership is captured on our membership software Little Green Light which we have become increasingly proficient in over the year as we have updated our database and notified new members of their acceptance,

Our many volunteers have helped expand our use of the database. Sara Williams has reviewed and re-written the member sign-up info to ensure consistency. Follow-up from the CA 2015

conference led to Kathleen Miller's interest in maintaining our directory pages on the website. And Peg Lorenz gave the regional outreach initiative a kick start by using the database to organize and notify members. Gratitude to you all, and welcome to anyone willing to pitch in!