



Compassion & Choices Arizona

Compassion in Dying - End of Life Choices

Previous Issues at: www.choicesarizona.org

Spring 2010

Compassion & Choices Arizona (formerly known as Hemlock Society or End of Life Choices)

P. O. Box 12126, Tucson, AZ 85732 * Toll Free 1-877-535-3600 * Email: info@choicesarizona.org * Web: www.choicesarizona.org

STATE CONFERENCE “BEST SO FAR”

If you missed the Compassion & Choices Arizona Statewide Conference in November, you missed one of the best, most informative meetings those of us in Arizona have ever had the opportunity to participate in!

Speakers included **Robb Miller**, Executive Director, Compassion & Choices of Washington, who told us *How Washington State Legalized Death with Dignity*. **Lee Ann Black**, Director of Professional and Consumer Education, Hospice of the Valley talked about *The Value of Hospice Care*.

Roland Halpern, Director of Community Relations, Compassion & Choices, gave us the latest information available from national. And our Keynote Speaker, **Reverend Doctor John C. Dorhauer**, Conference Minister, Southwest Conference, United Church of Christ discussed *How Separation of Church and State Issues Affects End of Life Choices*.

DeVida Johnson, Development Assistant, Death with Dignity National Center (DDNC), who provided an outstanding overview of their mission and how they select states to be supported under a ballot initiatives by gathering and studying the demographics of each state. We also learned



Roland Halpern and Robb Miller



John C. Dorhauer

how they interface with our National organization.

DDNC is currently evaluating the demographics of six states that they feel have a good chance of gaining a physician aid in dying bill via the ballot initiative process. The states most likely at this time to gain DDNC's financial support are in the northeast. A few of the demographics that favor a win are:

- Mostly Registered Democratic
- Highly educated population
- Most citizens refer to themselves as “unchurched”

According to Robb Miller, “The opposition is zealous, noisy and well funded.”

It cost \$5 million to get the law passed in Washington State by ballot initiative, and the thinking is that it passed only because so many liberal-minded people came out to vote for President Obama.

Compassion & Choices agrees that a ballot initiative is the surest way of gaining an Oregon-type physician aid in dying bill passed; however, it is also the most costly route. For those states whose demographics do not support a ballot initiative, the legislative route would be the best approach.

All the speakers were excellent and those gathered had the chance to learn the finer points among the challenges to getting the laws changed.

TO CONTACT YOUR LOCAL CHAPTER OR STATE LEADERSHIP

This is Your State Organization - please let us know how you want to help! Questions or comments welcome.

CHAPTER CONTACTS

Cochise County — Billie Stockl
(520) 803-9285
Email: bstockl@cox.net

Green Valley — Bill Haley
(520) 399-2130
Email: karebil@live.com

Northwest Valley (Carefree, El Mirage, Glendale, Morristown, Peoria, Sun City, Sun City West, Surprise, Wickenburg, Goodyear, and Youngtown) — Irene Weitzman
(623) 214-6552
Email: ireneweitz@aol.com

Metro Phoenix Area — Volunteer Needed

Prescott — Margot Champagne
(928) 776-3025
Email: mjcesq100@aol.com

Sedona — Deborah Darby
(928) 634-3237
Email: peacefulpassing@msn.com

Sun Lakes — Bob Wallace
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Tucson — Cherie Esser
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Questions? Comments? Call us!
1-877-535-3600

STATE LEADERSHIP

COMPASSION & CHOICES ARIZONA BOARD

President: Billie Stockl, Sierra Vista

Vice President: Volunteer Needed!

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Compassion & Choices Arizona Medical Advisory Group

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Newsletter Editor: Deborah Darby
Please send information to
peacefulpassing@msn.com

NEED A SPEAKER?

If you would like to have a member of the Compassion & Choices Arizona Board come and speak at one of your public meetings, please contact us at 1-877-535-3600. Billie Stockl will answer your call. She's one of the board members (among other members) who have agreed to be available to any chapter that calls. Speakers are also available to speak at retirement facilities or schools and will address any interested group!

Greetings from the President of the Board of Directors for Compassion & Choices Arizona!

By **Billie Stockl**



I have been a member of Compassion & Choices Arizona through many changes. When I joined in July 2003, we were called "The Hemlock Society". The Hemlock Society was created in 1980 and became a well known organization. I remember one of the first meetings I attended; the big topic was that our National organization wanted to change our name. How dare they! Why change it; everyone identifies with the name 'Hemlock' and knows the mission of our organization. It was late 2003 when our name evolved to End-of-Life Choices. Then again, on 30 October 2005, we underwent another name change. With the merge of **Compassion** in Dying and End-of-Life **Choices**, we became Compassion & Choices. Many who witnessed these name changes felt our organization would just fade away. Well, I'm here to tell you that won't happen. The responsibility to ensure that our name, Compassion & Choices, becomes as well known and identifiable as 'Hemlock' lies with each and every one of us.

When speaking with or emailing friends, relatives or members of other groups, you have the opportunity to inform and educate those indi-

viduals about the history of the Hemlock Society and our current name Compassion & Choices. (See Page 5 for more history). Our name may have changed over the years, but our mission has never changed.

Your Board of Directors appreciates your comments and recommendations – keep them coming. Contact Billie at bstockl@cox.net or at the toll-free phone: **1-877-535-3600**.

Suicide Tourist

In case you missed it, there was an amazing piece on the PBS Frontline series called *Suicide Tourist*. You can view the entire show at www.pbs.org/frontline/suicidetourist. It details the last adventure in the life of a gentleman who has ALS that is progressing very quickly. He and his wife choose to take a trip to Switzerland where physician assisted death is not only legal for its own citizens, but is legal for those from other countries. This is highly recommended viewing. You see the gentleman say his goodbyes, drink the medication and then nod off peacefully. Very moving. Very much what Compassion & Choices wants for citizens of this country.

Rest in Peace...*in Style*

FOR SALE: SINGLE CRYPT IN *MAUSOLEUM OF PEACE*

A single crypt, located in the *Mausoleum of Peace* at the East Lawn Palms Cemetery, 5801 E. Grant Road, Tucson, AZ, was donated to Compassion & Choices Arizona.

This sale includes a single crypt, Level 3, (\$6095), opening and closing of the Mausoleum space (\$995), a plaque monobar with the individuals name and dates inscribed (\$595), a vase to be permanently mounted under the monobar (\$95), and installation of monobar and vase (\$150).

Today's value is \$7,930; we would like to offer this to you for a total cost of \$4,500. We will pay the \$200 title transfer. Itemized costs were provided by Nathan Friend, General Manager, East Lawn Palms Cemetery. More information about the cemetery can be found at www.eastlawnpalmscemetary.com, or by calling (520) 886-5561. This sale does not include funeral home expenses. **For purchasing information, please contact Billie Stockl, Compassion & Choices Arizona, bstockl@cox.net, or call 1-877-535-3600.**

Chapter News

Several Compassion & Choices Arizona Chapters have been busy in the recent past, hosting meetings and bringing people together to discuss end of life choices.

Northwest Valley Event & Membership Drive

Thanks to Irene Weitzman for this report. She's a stalwart supporter who takes a personal interest in her Chapter's membership, including reminding them to pay their dues! You gotta love that kind of devotion to the cause! Thank you Irene!

On March 2, 2010, Compassion & Choices of the Northwest Valley held an event that had the biggest attendance ever. Approximately 100-120 people attended to hear attorney Robert F. Jelke speak about "the laws of dying".

The cookies were gobbled up and more chairs and tables had to be added to the room. Events of the Compassion & Choices world were presented before the talk and volunteers were also requested. Irene asked for a treasurer, VP and President as she is entering her 7th year of service as prez. At least two new members signed up. Irene had previously called those whose renewal was in arrears and told them to bring their checks to the meeting *and five renewed their membership at the event!* **The next chapter meeting of the Northwest Valley will be on Monday, November 8, 2010 at the Foundation Center in Sun City West.**

Sedona Chapter hosts event "Are You Ready for the Most Important Day of Your Life?"

More than 50 people gathered to take part in an all-day forum in Sedona on preparing for the end of life. Mary Beals-Luedtka from the Area Agency on Aging, discussed Aging in Northern Arizona; Joyce Murphy, a minister and counselor by training and experience and a member of Compassion and

Mary Beals-Luedtka



Choices since it was known as The Hemlock Society addressed spiritual connections at the time of death. Other presenters were Robin Merrill, Esq., who discussed estate planning and probate; Scott Palmer from Westcott Funeral Services had the audience laughing on many occasions as

Joyce Murphy



he discussed funeral and cremation services, including the intriguing new water resolution service; and Deborah Darby, who shared information about Compassion & Choices and the work we do, specifically about changing the law. Amy Daniel and Lyndsey Adams from Hospice Compassus detailed the benefits of enrolling in a Hospice or Palliative Care program toward the end of life.

Deborah Darby



In the photo on the right, Natalia Molina McKendry, Joyce Murphy and Deborah Darby (left to right) perform a short dramatic presentation illustrating how to talk to family, friends, your physician, and others



about your wishes (and what may happen if you don't!) This play, based on the Compassion & Choices video "How to be a Very, Very Good Advocate," allowed the individual who is dying to "speak" and communicate wishes via her advocate, despite being in a coma toward the end.



Highlights of the First 30 Years of the Right to Die Movement



- 1980** The Hemlock Society, an end-of-life care organization for those suffering with incurable illnesses, is formed. It later evolves into End-of-Life Choices (EOLC). Subsequently, in 2005 EOLC merges with Compassion in Dying to form Compassion & Choices.
- 1987** Oregon Senator Frank Roberts sponsors legislation championing choice at the end of life.
- 1990** The U.S. Supreme Court decides the *Cruzan vs. Director, Missouri Department of Health*, ruling that Missouri was permitted to require clear and convincing evidence of the wishes of a patient regarding provision of artificial nutrition and hydration. This affirmed the right of Americans to refuse unwanted medical treatment, and their right to appoint a health care proxy to speak for them when they could not.
- 1991** Ballot measure I-119 to allow mentally competent, terminally ill patients physician assistance in dying is voted on in Washington State. Initiative 119 fails by narrow margin. Derek Humphry, founder of the Hemlock Society, publishes the first edition of *Final Exit: The Practicalities of Self-Deliverance for the Terminally Ill*.
- 1994** Oregon voters approve Measure 16, the Oregon Death with Dignity Act, a ballot initiative that permits terminally ill patients, under proper safeguards, to obtain a physician's prescription to end life in a humane and dignified manner. The law passes with 51 percent of the vote. Co-author and chief petitioner is Barbara Coombs Lee, President of Compassion in Dying and subsequently Compassion & Choices.
- 1997** Oregon Death with Dignity Act begins implementation. Compassion In Dying's client "Helen" becomes the first person to take lethal medication under Oregon's law.
- 2003** The Hemlock Society evolves to become End-of-Life Choices.
- 2004** The Department of Justice appeals *Oregon v. Ashcroft* to the United States Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. The Ninth Circuit Court affirms the lower court, leaving the Oregon Death with Dignity Act intact.
- 2005** Compassion in Dying and End-of-Life Choices unify to become Compassion & Choices. The new organization maintains headquarters in both Denver and Portland, and is the largest organization in the United States advocating for patients' rights at the end of life.
- 2008** Washington Initiative 1000, modeled after Oregon's Death with Dignity Act, qualifies for November 2008 ballot. On November 4, 2008, Washington voters overwhelmingly approved I-1000 59% to 41%. Washington is the second state to Legalize Aid in Dying!
- 2009** On January 1, the Terminal Patients' Right to Know End-of-Life Options Act, AB 2747 (Berg-Levine) went into effect in California.

Much more information available at: www.compassionandchoices.org/learn/timeline

Doctors in Connecticut join Compassion & Choices to support the Right to Die

During the first court hearing in a lawsuit challenging Connecticut's ban on assisted suicide, the state sought to persuade a judge that the legislature, not a courthouse, is the proper venue to decide whether doctors should be prosecuted for helping patients end their lives.

The state is seeking to dismiss the lawsuit, brought by Gary Blick and Ronald Levine, two Fairfield County doctors who are challenging the definition - or lack thereof - of "suicide" in state statute.

Backed by the national advocacy group Compassion & Choices, the doctors argue that "aid in dying" is a legitimate medical treatment when a mentally competent patient has exhausted all other avenues for getting well and for alleviating pain.

More information: tinyurl.com/blickcase

Challenges to the New Washington State Law

A total of 36 individuals took advantage of Washington State's new right to die law in its first year. Compassion & Choices of Washington, which has provided assistance to the majority of those who successfully obtained lethal medication through the law says as many as half of the qualified patients the group tried to help came to the organization too late.

"They didn't realize that it's a process," said Gretchen DeRoche, the group's volunteer coordinator. "The sad thing is, if people wait too long, they don't have any options."

Interviews with advocates and survivors of patients who tried unsuccessfully to use the law point to a number of common difficulties, mostly related to educating the public and finding willing physicians.

Under the law, a dying patient needs to find two doctors, one to write the prescription and the other to consult. For many doctors, any conversation about death is difficult - even more so when it's "Death with Dignity."

More information: tinyurl.com/walaw

Montana Supreme Court Rules For Physician Assisted Death

The Montana Supreme Court said that nothing in state law prevents patients from seeking physician-assisted suicide, making Montana the third state that will allow the procedure.

Patients and doctors had been waiting for the state's high court to step in after a lower court decided a year ago that constitutional rights to privacy and dignity protect the right to die. The Montana Supreme Court opinion will now give doctors in the state the freedom to prescribe the necessary drugs to mentally competent, terminally ill patients without fear of being prosecuted, advocates said.

The Supreme Court, pointing to the Legislature's own policy-making, ruled that assisted suicide is an acceptable defense to any homicide charges against the doctor.

The Court decided not to determine whether the Montana Constitution guarantees the right, leaving open the possibility that the Montana Legislature could overturn the decision.

Want to know more? Type this address into your browser: tinyurl.com/montanacourt



Deb Darby

EDITOR'S CORNER

We always welcome your comments and questions at peacefulpassing@msn.com.

State Conference Rocked! Wish all of you could have been at the State Conference last November! It was amazing to learn first-hand how Compassion & Choices National plans to lead the fight to change laws in various states.

I incorporated that info into my presentation when the Sedona Chapter held their annual event about planning for the end of life. That event was very well attended and even fun! Wish you could have been there, too!

I want to give KUDOs to my wonderful board of directors, without whom the event would never happen: I'm proud to be the Chapter Leader and grateful to my Vice President, Susan Barrington, my treasurer, Joyce Murphy and our brand new secretary Natalia Molina McKendry. This intrepid little group supports our cause with great gusto and though we're a small chapter, we're noisy and we have a great time.

I would also like to thank Maria Dancing Heart Hoagland for allowing us to use her words to name our event. She has a new book coming out soon called: *The Most Important Day of Your Life: Are you Ready?* And we called our event: Are You Ready for the Most Important Day of Your Life? I encourage you to learn more about Maria Dancing Heart at her website: www.changewithcourage.com.

It looks like we'll be doing three newsletters a year now, so please be sure to keep us up to date on what you're doing, thinking, feeling, so we can make sure everybody in the state knows the latest and greatest news!

*We want to feature **YOUR CHAPTER** in the next newsletter! Send us your news, board roster, anything you'd like to share!*

Cremation or Water Resolution?

Alkaline Hydrolysis is New Technology for body disposal

For those of us who wish to avoid burial after death, most choose cremation. An individual can choose cremation for him or herself (**but be sure you've made arrangements or put it in writing so that your wishes are honored**), can donate the entire body to science (after which the remains are cremated and returned to the family), or can donate parts of the body (eyes, skin, kidneys, etc.) after which the body is returned to the family for burial or cremation.

And now there's a new technology that reduces the body to material approximately the same size and consistency of "cremains", but it's much more earth friendly and approaches the no carbon footprint "green" services many people prefer these days.

Water resolution (Alkaline Hydrolysis) emits no greenhouse gases, causes no environmental issues, is as safe as human digestion, uses less energy than conventional cremation and the wastewater can be recycled as fertilizer.

We learned about this process from Steve Palmer at Westcott Funeral Services. Although he doesn't yet offer this service, I'm sure he'd be happy to tell you more if you contact him on his website under "general info" at www.westcottfuneralhome.com.



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Compassion & Choices Arizona supports options for those who are terminally ill and mentally competent to determine their own life's end, including freedom from unnecessary pain and suffering during the last part of life.

Please make sure we have the information about your Chapter events at least six weeks in advance to assure that your event gets good coverage on the website, in the newsletter and with the screaming yellow cards that we will prepare and mail to your constituency!

Send info to: info@choicesarizona.org

Northwest Valley will be on Monday, November 8, 2010 at the Foundation Center in Sun City West. Mark your calendar and watch for more information in the August newsletter.

The Cochise County Chapter of Compassion & Choices Arizona will meet May 29, 2010 in the Mona Bishop Room of the Sierra Vista Library at 2:30 PM. Speaker not yet booked.

Please send information about your upcoming Chapter Meetings to Deborah Darby, newsletter editor, at peacefulpassing@msn.com.