



Compassion & Choices Arizona

Compassion in Dying - End of Life Choices

Previous Issues at: www.choicesarizona.org

Fall 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

A PHYSICIAN SPEAKS OUT

Scott D. Mendelson, M.D., Ph.D.

IN OUR SOCIETY there continues to be a controversy about the right of an individual to end their own life when living becomes emotionally and physically unbearable for them. This may be the case when a medical problem leads a person to lose everything they feel necessary to continue a dignified, meaningful life.

It is not uncommon for people in the end stages of catastrophically disabling neurological illnesses to desire a controlled and painless end to their existence. For others, it is never ending, intractable, excruciating pain that makes existence unbearable. For too long we have forced human beings to suffer under the primitive religious notion that it is "God's" decision and not our own to end life.

On what basis do we force an individual to continue to suffer an excruciatingly painful existence in which there is no longer any hope, comfort, or meaning? For some people not even those extreme measures bring relief from pain. No matter what is done, some human beings continue to suffer unrelenting, unbearable pain. They should not be forced to endure it

Some argue that to allow people the right to end their life when and as they choose is the first step down a road to nihilism and wholesale suicide. However, experience shows that this is not the case. Where physician assisted

death is legal, such as in my own home state of Oregon, those who have successfully pursued access to medications to end their life most often choose to go on living. The sense of control and choice they experience gives them the courage and peace of mind to see it out a little longer.

Safeguards are written into the Oregon law. There is also a waiting period to prevent rash or precipitous actions. Common sense dictates that we rule out conditions that are likely to be reversed by treatment.

The current law in Oregon is based on the confirmation of a terminal illness, and not necessarily for intractable pain or loss of meaningful existence. I believe the law would be more humane by allowing for individual variation and personal choice. Oregon's law is a good one and, for most states, allowing an individual with unmitigated suffering in the context of an terminal illness to seek a physician's help to end their life would be a major step forward.

"It is time that our society grows up and grants the right to die."

Those of us who do not believe in a sugar-coated God that makes all things right in the end, the notion that one should be forced to persist in a painful, unbearable existence, without respite or hope of remedy is cruel, barbaric, and pathological.

Used by permission. Scott D. Mendelson, M.D., Ph.D. is the author of the recent book *Beyond Alzheimer's: How to Avoid the Modern Epidemic of Dementia*, and works as a Consult Liaison Psychiatrist at the Roseburg VA Medical Center in Roseburg, Oregon.

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
(480) 802-4327
Email: joyrobwall@wbhsi.net

Tucson — Cherie Esser
(520) 825-2219
Email: jcbesser825@yahoo.com

**Questions?
Comments?
Call us!
1-877-535-3600**

STATE LEADERSHIP

COMPASSION & CHOICES ARIZONA BOARD

Condolences to the family and friends of our long-time State Board Treasurer Stanley Steinberg. Stanley died on June 7, 2010. We appreciated his service and will miss his staunch support.

President: Billie Stockl, Sierra Vista

Vice President: Margot Champagne, Prescott

Secretary: Irene Weitzman, Sun City West

Treasurer: Freda Anderson, Scottsdale

Members: Bob Wallace, Sun Lakes

David Brandt-Erichsen, Tucson

Compassion & Choices Arizona Medical Advisory Group

Dr. Robert H. Furman

Dr. Harvey Turner

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



Our next Compassion & Choices Arizona Annual Board of Directors meeting will be held on September 11, 2010 at the Grace Inn located at 10831 South 51st Street (I-10 & Elliott) in Ahwatukee, running from 9:30 AM to 3 PM. If any members would like to attend, please contact me at the toll free number listed below. We need to have a head-count to ensure space is available to accommodate everyone. This is a lunch meeting; pay as you go.

We will have a heavy agenda at this meeting. Two major items being discussed and voted upon will include whether or not to have a Rally at the Capitol, when/if we wish to ask Senator Linda Lopez to sponsor our 'patients right to know' bill in 2011, and whether or not to also have a rally/demonstration outside of a Scottsdale mall in order to make more people aware of who we are and what we do. Many folks remember the name "Hemlock Society," but not everyone knows we are now known as Compassion & Choices Arizona. Only current board members are permitted to vote.

The Board of Directors is also looking for individuals to re-establish, with our help, new chapters in Phoenix, Scottsdale, Tucson, Prescott, Sun Lakes and Yuma. If anyone is interested, please contact me by phone or send an email to me at the address listed below. As a Chapter Leader, you are asked to participate as a member on the State Board of Directors, and to hold 2-4 local meetings annually. We will provide additional assistance as requested.

In closing, I would like to mention the passing of a very dear friend and long-time member of our organization, Stanley Steinberg. Stanley was the Treasurer of our non-profit organization since it was called the Hemlock Society. He served honestly and proudly for more than 17 years, and we will miss him dearly.

Your Board of Directors appreciates your comments and recommendations – please keep them coming.

You can contact Billie at bstockl@cox.net or at the toll-free phone: 1-877-535-3600.

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 individual's 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 but 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. For more information about the cemetery, you can go to their website at: www.eastlawnpalmcemetary.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

Cochise County Chapter Announces Next Two Meetings

- (1) **The Cochise County Chapter** of Compassion & Choices Arizona (C&C AZ) will meet at 12:30 PM Saturday, August 21, in the Mona Bishop Room of the Sierra Vista Public Library, 2600 E. Tacoma Street. There will be no guest speaker; we will have an open discussion, question and answer meeting. The meeting is free and open to the public. For more info call Billie toll free at 1-877-535-3600, or local Sierra Vista phone number 520-803-9285; visit www.choicesarizona.org.
- (2) **The Cochise County Chapter** of Compassion & Choices Arizona (C&C AZ) will meet at 3:30 PM Saturday, November 13, in the Mona Bishop Room of the Sierra Vista Public Library, 2600 E. Tacoma Street. Guest Speaker TBA. The meeting is free and open to the public. For more info call Billie toll free at 1-877-535-3600, or local Sierra Vista phone number 520-803-9285; visit www.choicesarizona.org.

Northwest Valley Event will be “Double Feature”

The Northwest Valley Chapter of Compassion & Choices AZ will meet Monday, November 8, 2010 at the Sun City West Foundation Center at 14465 R.H. Johnson Blvd, Sun City West. Our double feature program will take place in the Coyote-Quail room. It will begin at 1:30 PM to meet, greet and eat followed by our speaker at 1:45.

Patricia E. Martin, a licensed acupuncturist, will begin the first talk in our series on “The Roads to Wellness” and will talk about, “The Road to Wellness through Acupuncture.”

After a brief intermission, we will present the documentary “The Suicide Tourist” (website: pbs.org/frontline/suicidetourist) about a man from Chicago, with a painful terminal illness, who travels to Switzerland accompanied by his wife, to seek access to Dignitas (website: dignitas.ch) to help him die peacefully. Light refreshments will be available at 1:30. Contact Irene 623-214-6552 or ireneweitz@aol.com for more information or to register for this exciting meeting.

Sedona Chapter: Next Meeting in Spring 2011

The Sedona Chapter is in the planning phase for its next event. Sometime in the spring, we will hold our next “**Are you Ready for the Most Important Day of Your Life?**” event bringing together speakers and advocates on topics ranging from pre-Hospice care to Advanced Directives to choosing the best funeral/cremation services.

This event is always well attended and informative. Please keep an eye on the Compassion & Choices website at choicesarizona.org and watch for more information in the next newsletter.

“Bridging the Gap” Pre-Hospice Training Available in Flagstaff

The dictionary definition for 'gap' is *a break or opening; an empty space or interval*. For persons with serious illness, chronic pain, or terminal diagnosis, the gaps are numerous and pervasive. An obvious gap in our western world is a tendency to hold the inevitability of physical death at arm's length. As the baby boomer population is aging, it is imperative that we give up our fears and taboos around death. Now is the time to embrace the courage, presence and compassion it takes to support our loved ones at end of life. If we want this for ourselves, a good beginning point is to practice offering this to others.

Bridging the Gap is a pre-hospice training that is required for volunteers serving Further Shore Tender Loving Care (TLC) clients and **is useful for those planning to be present or supportive** for their parents, siblings, partner, or other loved ones during health and life transitions. During this program participants will learn about a holistic approach to end of life concerns. Program content includes: orientation to hospice and palliative care philosophy; understanding the team approach to wellness at any stage of living or dying; coping methods for grief; active listening and compassionate speaking of needs and feelings; how to talk to medical professionals about your wishes at end of life; understanding the rights of the dying, the importance of a "life review" and the way forgiveness paves a path to peace at end of life.

Trainings are held from 6:30 to 9:00 PM and 8:30 AM to 6:00 PM (the following day). These are offered on specific weekends, April through November, and can also be arranged by appointment. The training is held in Flagstaff, Arizona at *Wayne's House*, a private retreat facility lo-

cated with easy access to National Forest land. Your facilitators are Aleia O'Reilly, a nationally certified hospice volunteer, and founder/director of Further Shore, Inc. and Susanne One Love, BSN, RN, Certified Hospice and Palliative Nurse. Cost is \$100 with scholarships available on request. Further Shore, Inc. is a nonprofit whose mission is to provide education and resources for living well and dying with dignity. Visit furthershore.org or call 928-525-2910 for more information.

MOVIE REVIEW

“DEPARTURES”

By Maria Dancing Heart
Hoagland



If you're interested in finding the deeper joy of living through exploring the topics of death, grief, and the fleeting nature of life, *Departures* (2008) is a brilliant Japanese film you will not want to miss. In this moving and heart-warming film (that won an Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film) about the unique pre-burial custom of preparing the body for cremation in Japan, a cellist musician loses his job in the orchestra and has to find a new way to earn a living. Back in his hometown he unexpectedly lands a most unlikely job, that of an encoffiner, one who cares for the bodies of the deceased just before they are sent to be cremated. The film is a beautiful love story—between the main young couple depicted, between the hero/musician Daigo Kobayashi and the people and families he works with as well as cares for, and between the characters and their community.

Watch as Daigo's life improves by coming to terms with death and its aftermath.

Rev. Maria "Dancing Heart" Hoaglund, author of *The Last Adventure of Life*, is a transformational healer, and end-of-life and grief coach. To read more about other topics on death and grief, go to examiner.com/x-2858-Transitions to see Maria's columns online.

HOW GOOD IS CARE AT THE END OF LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES?

CHANCES ARE YOU AGREE that too many Americans suffer needlessly in their dying, too few have adequate choice and most never learn of their options. But the question of how well the U.S. matches up with countries around the world in these categories has never been answered. Until now.



The Economist Intelligence Unit provided the answer when it released its report on *The Quality of Death – Ranking end-of-life care across the world* (available from tinyurl.com/qualityofdeath). The comprehensive study evaluated the quality of dying, based on information obtained from the ministry of health and palliative care advocacy organizations in 40 countries. Britain took first place in overall ranking, with the United States tying Canada for 9th place.

The report confirms there is much to be done in our own country and around the world to improve the end-of-life experience. The U.S. needs better public policy, better pain management education and a safe environment for doctors to provide adequate painkillers.

The U.S. ranked relatively low in the category of public awareness of end-of-life care, reflecting ignorance among Americans of hospice services and end-of-life care in general. The lack of awareness stems in part from avoidance of the topic. “In the U.S.,” the report states, “discussion of end-of-life care often inflames religious sentiment that holds the sanctity of life paramount. The issue is complicated by the perception that Hospice care is often associated with giving up.”

Compassion & Choices tackles this issue head on via person-to-person education and/or end-of-life consultation programs that enable Americans to

consider options, make decisions and communicate with their loved ones and their doctors. These are the most important actions people can take toward achieving a peaceful death.

On a public level Compassion & Choices promotes policies that empower people with information and opportunities for informed decision-making at the end of life.

Compassion & Choices’ legal team undertakes impact litigation to hold health care providers accountable for failure to provide adequate pain and symptom management and defends physicians who are targeted for “over treatment” of pain. Legislation we sponsor makes pain care education mandatory for physicians and requires that patients be informed of hospice and palliative care options.

The objective assessment provided by the Economist Intelligence Unit provides a useful tool for future efforts to improve end-of-life care.

The U.K., for example, addressed palliative care at a national level when the Department of Health published the End-Of-Life Care Strategy for England in 2008. The existence of a government-led national palliative care strategy is a core component in that nation’s ranking on the availability of end-of-life care. In short, as the report states, high-level policy recognition and support is crucial in making hospice, palliative care and other end-of-life services available.

Americans are accustomed to being Number One, achieving the most, having the best. Until we have the will to address end-of-life issues at the highest level, we cannot expect to rank high against other countries in the aspect of life that is most universal, its end.

EDITOR'S CORNER

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



Deb Darby

CAN YOU HELP? Compassion & Choices AZ needs new leaders for several chapters. We will help you get the Chapters back up and running in Phoenix, Scottsdale, Tucson, Prescott, Sun Lakes and Yuma. Can you help? Can you be a leader? Call Billie at 1-877-535-3600.

As the Chapter Leader for Sedona, I can attest to the rewards (and challenges!) of leadership. But every time I get in a room full of like-minded people and hear their concerns, their questions and, most of all, their stories of friends and loved ones who have managed to have a “good death,” I am humbled and energized.

Perhaps I’m more blessed than most, but everyone I know who has died in my adult years has chosen to enter Hospice (often with my encouragement) and to have the best possible end-of-life experience. Perhaps my non-anxious attitude helps, and, again, I’m blessed, but in my experience, Death with Dignity is simply about deciding to let go (ditch modern healthcare and its tortuous methodologies) and surrender to the process, via Hospice.

To me, facing death courageously is not about fighting it off...it’s about accepting that we are all going to die and finding peace with it. The earlier in the process that we can come to that peace, the better. For example, I’m not even ill and I’m completely willing to forego heroic measures already! My Advanced Directive basically says, “I’ll be in Hospice. Leave me alone otherwise.”

Well-meaning people say, “You don’t know how you’ll feel until you’re the patient...” but I’m a Hospice volunteer and an Advocate for the Right to Die. I know exactly how I’ll feel because I’ve chosen to feel this way. I’m MUCH more terrified of the horrors of modern healthcare (except for Hospice) than of death! I hope we all find a way to be comfortable with the end of life!

Americans United for Separation of Church and State Starts Chapter in Arizona

Americans United for Separation of Church and State (friends of Compassion & Choices) has established a chapter in Arizona.

Calling itself the Greater Phoenix Chapter, it's very first meeting this past April 24th brought out 128 people. At the July 18 meeting, the speaker was Dr. Irwin Weiner, Rabbi, the Spiritual leader of the Sun Lakes Jewish Congregation, Sun Lakes, AZ; Deputy National Chaplain, Jewish War Veterans; Member of Interfaith Council of Sun Lakes; Teacher, Lecturer; Columnist for the Jewish Post and Opinion. According to Compassion & Choices Arizona board VP Margot Champagne, there was “...very lively discussion.”



To find out about future meetings and activities, please go online and look at the website: www.AU-GP.org.



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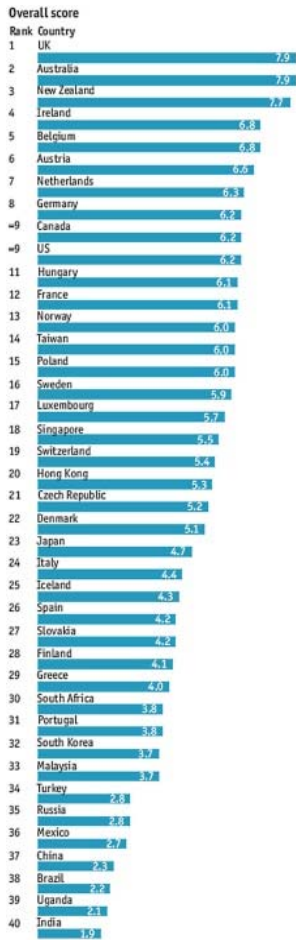
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Compassion & Choices Arizona supports options for those who are terminally ill and mentally competent to determine their own life's end, including freedom from unnecessary pain and suffering during the last part of life.

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

What does this graph show? See page 6 for the story on end-of-life care around the world.



Source: Economist Intelligence Unit.

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