Oct 2024

Informed Final Choices Crestone End of Life Project

Issue #4

VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER

Volunteers play a vital role in the continued success of the Crestone End of Life Project (CEOLP). There are many ways volunteers contribute to the activities needed to make an open-air cremation or natural burial happen. While motivation for volunteering may vary, all agree that what they do is immensely meaningful and sacred. Here is another in our series of interviews with CEOLP volunteers sharing their thoughts on the roles they're involved with and what it means to them.

News From the Board

- CEOLP facilitated two cremations recently for Natalie Marquis on September 22nd and Nick Keffer on October 1st. Both ceremonies were beautiful and different in their own unique ways. We are grateful to the many volunteers who made them possible.
- The guest speaker at our October open meeting was Courtney Johnson, Executive Director for Center for Contemplative Research (CCR) in Crestone. Courtney gave an interesting presentation about CCR's work and goals and how her longtime Buddhist practice influences the way she looks at dying and death.
- CEOLP is holding a Death Café on Saturday, November 2nd from 1:30 to3:30 at the T Road Brewing Company in Crestone. All are welcome!

Natural Burial Grave Diggers

- When a registrant chooses natural burial two volunteers are needed to dig the grave the day before the burial, along with eight people to serve as pallbearers and lower the body. Please consider volunteering for these roles the next time a call is made.

CEOLP/IFC Open Meetings

- A reminder that open meetings are now held quarterly.
- The next meeting will take place **Wednesday, January 8th, 2025 (!!), at 7 p.m.** Mountain Time on zoom only. We hope you'll join us!

To learn more about CEOLP and read descriptions of each volunteer role, visit https://crestoneendoflifeproject.org.

Bindi Beal

1. What volunteer role(s) do you take part in with CEOLP?

I have served on the hosting, fire (cremains) and care of the body teams. I was a guest speaker for an Informed Final Choices (educational program on crisis management at end of life. I have facilitated small groups at annual Death Cafés, helped at CEOLP registration events and more recently, joined the CEOLP.

2. About how long have you been volunteering?

I started attending CEOLP meetings in 2020. It was during that time that I was also grieving the loss of my beloved mother and so the meetings offered valuable information and insight. During the past four years, I have gradually increased my level of service with CEOLP. Soon, I will be retiring from employment and look forward to having more availability and hands-on involvement.

3. What first motivated you to become involved?

Becoming a volunteer for CEOLP was a natural fit for me as I have long been interested in end-of-life issues and topics. From 2004 to 2006, I served as a hospice volunteer in Gunnison County, and more recently I completed the hospice training in Alamosa County.

4. What's most important and meaningful to you about it?

There are so many wonderful people involved in CEOLP. Here at the end of the road, I found a strong community and a deep connection to a long-standing tradition in Crestone. Due to the tireless commitment of volunteers, this worthy and sacred mission is slowly spreading across this nation and the world.

5. What do you enjoy about it?

There is always something new to learn in end-of-life care. Early on, I spent a lot of time observing and taking in the activities of not only the volunteers during various events, including the cremation ceremonies, but have also witnessed how family members and friends move and grow through the process of saying goodbye to their loved ones.

6. Is there anything that has challenged you about it, and if so, how that's helped you know yourself better or grow?

More recently, I assisted with the care of the body team and was humbled by the process. In some ways, the work feels intuitive, yet it can be unnerving. There are deeply held practices and procedures that require a willingness to learn new skills, an open mind and heart, and excellent communication with the team and family members. There is much to learn and consider, including how to handle the body with respect, honoring the deceased one's wishes, and attending to the needs and feelings of the extended family. Patient care does not end with a death. Because these responsibilities can be emotionally or physically taxing, team members must also make time for self-care.