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Informed Final Choices Crestone End of Life Project

Issue #10

VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER

A Focal Point for Remembrance

People have been creating shrines for thousands of years and it remains a practice that continues across many cultures and traditions throughout the world. Shrines or altars, words often used interchangeably, provide a focal point for remembrance, grief, and reflection of those who are no longer with us.

As part of CEOLP's open-air cremation and natural burial ceremonies, we invite family and friends to honor their loved one's memory by creating a uniquely personalized altar which is located at the pyre site.

Pictures of the deceased, whether past or present, often adorn the altar, along with objects that hold meaning, such as books, tools, musical instruments, items of clothing or other memorabilia. Everyday objects connected with the person, for example, a favorite hat or mug, might also be displayed. While the choices and styles of arrangement vary, every altar reflects the unique relationship between the deceased and those who come to celebrate them.

Altar for Adam Deh at the
CEOLP pyre site, July 2025

News From the Board

- On **Wednesday, October 8th at 7 p.m.** mountain time, IFC/CEOLP will hold its next quarterly meeting in person and on zoom. The guest speaker will be Michelle Wulfestieg, Executive Director of the Southern California Hospice Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to help ease the transition of terminally ill children and adults with comfort, quality of life, and dignity with death. We hope you'll join us.
- CEOLP will hold its next Death Café on Saturday, **October 25th from 2-4 p.m.** at the Crestone Charter School. The aim of this community gathering is to increase death awareness as a natural part of life.

Volunteer Spotlight: Gussie Fauntleroy

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

- For cremations or natural burials, I lead the juniper gathering team - we go out the day before and cut juniper sprigs to hand out to guests for placing on the body and for the fire team to add to the fire. I'm also on the hosting team, so I help hand out juniper and I'm in charge of the sound system for the ceremony in the pyre circle.

I'm on the joint CEOLP/IFC board, serving as IFC (Informed Final Choices) secretary, taking minutes, keeping up with Gmail correspondence, taking my turn on the board's rotating co-chair position, and helping with events we host, including Death Cafés and registration parties. I also donate time writing articles about CEOLP for the Eagle.

2. About how long have you been volunteering?`

- Probably about 14 years, on the board and also volunteering.

3. What first motivated you to become involved?

- Like many people I was curious when I heard the name Crestone End of Life Project, not long after I moved here. I went to an open meeting and remember being amazed at volunteers so casually talking about care of the body. I really liked the people and felt a deep respect for their commitment and what they were doing. I continued to attend open meetings and at one point offered to take notes from the meetings when William Howell left. Then I found out that meant I was on the board!

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

- A big aspect is selflessly offering service to people at a very tender moment in their lives, when they've lost someone they love, as well as offering respectful, sacred service to the person who has died.

5. What do you enjoy about it?

- I enjoy the board meetings and our events because the board is made up of incredibly dedicated, conscientious people who have all become good friends. We laugh a lot and get things done. On the mornings of cremations or natural burials, I enjoy the elements: the sun rising over the mountains as the fire is lit, often when it's quite cold, and being with people gathered to remember and celebrate someone well-loved who has gone on. I always learn things about the deceased, even when it's someone I knew fairly well.

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

- I've grown into taking on leadership roles, which years ago I never imagined myself doing. And over time I've gained acceptance of the realness of death, including my own and everyone I love, as a natural part of life.