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Informed Final Choices Crestone End of Life Project

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VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER

CEOLP To Participate in Upcoming Documentary

Passing Through is a feature-length documentary produced by Smile Films and award-winning documentary filmmaker Brett Nicoletti. The film follows the extraordinary story of Michelle Wulfestieg, a two-time stroke survivor who founded the Heavenly Home, Southern California's only 24-hour live-in hospice facility. As the film progresses, Michelle's story intersects with that of the **Crestone End of Life Project**, America's only legal public open-air cremation site. While these two nonprofits differ greatly in style and approach, they share a common mission: transforming how we experience death and dying in America. The film's theme is grounded in the idea that recognizing and engaging with death on a daily basis leads to a more meaningful life.

Brett Nicoletti

Production began in the fall of 2022, is currently scheduled to complete filming in spring 2026, and is slated for release in early 2027. Once complete, the filmmakers plan a year-long educational screening tour with Q&A sessions for interested partners and organizations throughout the U.S. and abroad. The film's ultimate goal is to ignite healthy conversations around death and dying, helping to ease societal fears and allowing us all to welcome and honor our final transition with dignity and grace.

Smile Films has recently launched www.passingthroughfilm.net, where visitors can watch the trailer, learn about the filmmakers, connect with the team on social media, and make a 100% tax-deductible donation through a 501(c)(3) fiscal sponsor. Donors are eligible to be credited in the film's opening or closing credits, and a percentage of all donations will go directly to CEOLP and the Southern California Hospice Foundation.

News From the Board

- Guest speaker, Michelle Wulfestieg, Executive Director of the Southern California Hospice Foundation, spoke by zoom at IFC/CEOLP's open meeting on October 8th. Her presentation and portions of the meeting were recorded (with permission) by Brett Nicoletti to be used in his documentary film, *Passing Through*.
- CEOLP held a Death Café on Saturday, October 25th at the Crestone Charter School. About 14 local residents attended the lively discussion on issues related to death and dying.

Volunteer Spotlight: Sharon Corcoran

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

- I have long worked on the hosting team and have also done care of the body. I have served as treasurer, and as a board member for perhaps eight years.

2. About how long have you been volunteering?`

- My husband Terry and I began attending open monthly meetings during the first year we moved to Crestone, in 2016, and I began volunteering then.

3. What first motivated you to become involved?

- Before we moved to Crestone, we subscribed to the Eagle newspaper and learned of CEOLP there. We were immediately intrigued and knew this was a unique organization and one we were particularly interested in, as we embarked on the retirement phase of life.

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

- CEOLP's mission of serving people who have passed over, as well as their loved ones, demonstrates a particular kind of compassion and respect for life-and-death as an inseparable whole. Each opportunity to serve is unique and is a challenge to facilitators and team leaders of volunteers, to adapt and respond to the needs of each situation, in a very limited time span (within 72 hours after death).

5. What do you enjoy about it?

- I really enjoy working with other volunteers, and especially my fellow board members. Everyone serves with dedication, respect, compassion, and humor. I enjoy the teamwork and the give and take involved.

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

- The past few years the organization has restructured itself with the retirement of one of our founders, and it was a challenging task to find a less centralized, more distributed model of leadership. It was definitely an exercise in thinking outside the box, and the model we derived, I believe, is now serving the organization well. Past and present board members contributed to the process, and I learned once again the joy of dedicated, collaborative creativity.