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Informed Final Choices — Crestone End of Life Project

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VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER

Fire – In Its Right Place

When someone dies who is registered with the Crestone End of Life Project (CEOLP) and whose wish was to be served by cremation, one of the first steps is for the CEOLP facilitator to contact the local fire department. The fire chief then determines whether conditions will be suitable for a fire on the morning of the cremation. He consults the fire weather outlook, a forecast very specific to the cremation site on the planned date and time.

If conditions are favorable for a burn, he gives CEOLP the go-ahead. On rare occasions he will suggest a different day; for example, if conditions are very dry and early morning high winds are predicted.

Once the cremation is set, the fire chief puts out a call for two or three firefighters who will park a fire truck above the pyre site and remain until the cremation fire has subsided. Their job is simple: to watch the fire and the area outside the pyre site to make sure no embers land where unwanted fire could start. If something were to catch fire they would extinguish it, although in the more than 17 years since the pyre site was built, they have not needed to take this step.

Those of us who volunteer with CEOLP are most grateful for the Baca Grande Volunteer Fire Department, without whom an open-air cremation would not be possible.

For more information about CEOLP, visit https://crestoneendoflifeproject.org. Also stay connected by visiting the website of CEOLP's sister organization, Informed Final Choices https://informedfinalchoices.org.

CEOLP/IFC Next Open Meeting

- The scheduled speaker for our CEOLP open meeting on **January 14th** is Karen Keeran, president and founder of Golden Heart Transition, based in Golden Colorado.

  Karen is an educator and end of life doula focused on holistic and supportive care for those in need. Her talk will focus on grief and grieving and positive approaches for coping with the death of a loved one.

  The meeting will be held on zoom at **7 pm MT**. Look for the zoom link in the upcoming agenda.

Volunteer Spotlight: Will Wilboldt

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

I am usually part of the Fire Team during cremations. I also help with site prep on the day prior to cremation. Additionally, I served as a board member for one year and for the past few years have served as the Treasurer for both IFC and CEOLP.

2. About how long have you been volunteering?

About four years.

3. What first motivated you to become involved?

I had attended several outdoor cremations at the Drala Mountain Center in the northern Colorado Rocky Mountains about 25 years ago. That experience impressed me with the realization that outdoor cremation brings us a bit closer to the reality of death and offers a way to process the loss as a community of friends and neighbors. It is a transparent, direct and simple way to mark this important transition. The fire element is strong, palpable and present.

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

Death is a powerful time of transition. The cremation ceremony provides a helpful way to mark this transition and to support each other. We have a unique opportunity available to us here in Saguache County that is not available to most people in the U.S. I hope to go out this way when I die.

5. What do you enjoy about it?

We have a cheerful and consistent group of committed volunteers who regularly show up and create this ritual. It is an honor to be a part of this -- to hear the stories and memories of loved ones. Being reminded of death informs our perspective for how we might live. I am drawn to interacting closely with the fire element.

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

Getting up early on cold winter mornings and then having to wait in the cold until the pyre is lit can be challenging. During my first cremation on the Fire Team, I melted the coatings on my glasses when I approached the fire for the first time! Since then, I have used a designated pair of glasses with no coatings.

Happy New Year!