July 2026

Informed Final Choices Crestone End of Life Project

Issue #15

VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER

CEOLP Volunteers Serve in Remembrance

June was an active month for CEOLP volunteers and the Crestone community. An invitation-only cremation was held for Gary Simonson on June 14th with many friends from Shambala Sangha in attendance. This was followed by a celebration of life for CEOLP co-founder, Stephanie Gaines, on June 18th whose service to the community touched so many lives.

Less than a week later another request for volunteers was made as fellow volunteer and friend of many, John Rowe, died suddenly. On July 25th CEOLP hosted a large gathering of friends and family for his cremation. Gratitude to all!

History Colorado Archives

History Colorado is the state historical center in Denver dedicated to the rich heritage of the Centennial state. Liv Wisnewski, Assistant Curator of Architecture, recently expressed interest in documenting CEOLP's social significance to the community and the role of the pyre as a permanent part of the constructed space in Crestone. Liv is hoping to interview volunteers and others about CEOLP and to gather materials that would be made available to researchers digitally and at the organization's research center in Denver. For more information, she invites you to contact her at: liv.wisnewski@state.co.us

News From the Board

- CEOLP's next Registration Party will be held **July 18th from 2-4 p.m.** at Crestone's Charter School. CEOLP volunteers will be standing by to help you fill out forms and answer questions.
  A reminder that only Saguache County residents who have resided in the county for at least 90 days prior to registration AND who are registered with CEOLP at the time of death are eligible for services. For those already registered, the party is a convenient time to update your forms and make any changes you wish!
- The next IFC/CEOLP quarterly meeting will take place on **July 8th at 7 p.m.** in person at the Little Shepherd fellowship hall in Crestone and on zoom. Our guest speaker will be Karen G. Johnston, an ordained Unitarian Universalist minister and practicing Buddhist. Karen has trained as an End of Life/Death Doula and is founder of the Date with Death Club which explores issues of mortality and death education. To learn more, go to: https://datewithdeathclub.com/

Volunteer Highlight

Long-time CEOLP volunteer, former board member, and current Registrar, Blake is the person to contact for questions and updates to your registration materials: blake.luminousjewel@gmail.com

Blake Walton

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

- I have primarily served as a co-facilitator for 25 CEOLP cremations. During that time, I've also done Care of the Body and Family Liaison, as needed. To help the flow of getting the numerous and sometimes overwhelming details of a cremation accomplished in just three days, I condensed the job descriptions for the Facilitator and Family Liaison into a checklist/worksheet format that is still used today.

2. About how long have you been volunteering?

- I started volunteering for CEOLP in 2020 when I first moved full time to Crestone from Santa Fe. At the urging of my friend and mentor, Stephanie Gaines, I became the registrar (a job that I still perform) and joined the CEOLP Board.

3. What first motivated you to become involved?

- What motivated me to volunteer with CEOLP was my previous work with Hospice and my desire to be of service to the Crestone community. Spiritually, I have dealt with death and dying for years and wanted to support others who are facing one of the great mysteries of life.

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

- The most meaningful part of my volunteer roles at CEOLP is providing the support for the family and friends of the person who has died, and to help provide a dignified and uplifting community closure to a life well lived.

5. What do you enjoy about it?

- I enjoy working with a team of like-minded volunteers, and the deeply authentic connection to those who are grieving the loss of a loved one.

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

- Serving as a volunteer for CEOLP has confirmed my belief that death is not the end. By providing a loving, supportive end of life experience, the family and friends of the deceased can more easily move forward with their lives, cherishing the memories of their loved one and feeling the support of the community.