August 2026

Informed Final Choices Crestone End of Life Project

Vol. 16

VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER

The Cost of Providing Volunteer Services

When CEOLP established its Natural Burial Ground adjacent to its pyre site in 2022, the requested donation was between $300 and $500. In contrast, CEOLP's requested donation range for open-air cremation is $500 to $800. However, as more natural burials have taken place, it has become clear that expenses for burial and cremation are similar and that the required volunteer efforts are virtually the same.

Both forms of final disposition always include a ceremony in the pyre site circle. Moreover, natural burial involves expenses related to hand-digging and maintaining graves and having grave locations recorded by GPS and archived with the Saguache County Clerk and Recorder's Office. Donations also pay for a sandstone gravestone on a small metal stand, with the deceased's name and birth/death dates sandblasted into the stone and painted in black, and a permanent below-ground identification marker.

In considering these facts, the CEOLP board recently made the decision to adjust the requested sliding scale donation for a natural burial to match that of an open-air cremation. For either form of final disposition, CEOLP now requests a donation of $500 to $800. Despite this increase, CEOLP, as an all-volunteer nonprofit organization, is happy to provide services for a fraction of the price of a conventional cremation or burial.

News From the Board

- The number of Saguache County residents who chose to register for CEOLP's services continues to grow! At our last Registration Party on July 18th at the Crestone Charter School, we had 26 new registrants fill out their paperwork and another 11 people who came to make corrections/additions to their pre-existing forms. According to Blake Walton, CEOLP registrar, the total number of people we now serve is up to 442.
- The next IFC/CEOLP quarterly meeting will be held on **October 8th at 7 p.m.** in person at the Little Shepherd fellowship hall in Crestone and on zoom. Our guest speaker will be Darci Meyers, a poet, Buddhist Chaplain, and somatic therapist who lives and practices in Crestone. Darci will read from her newly released book, *The Marvelous Contentment of Belonging: Poetry, Prose & Prompts for Navigating Grief* and facilitate a discussion about grief and finding meaning and belonging after loss.

Volunteer Highlight

Long-time CEOLP volunteer and former board member, Noah Baen, reflects on what CEOLP means to him.

Noah Baen

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

- I answer the CEOLP phone line to receive the reports of a registrant's death, serve as a backup Facilitator and, when needed, assist with the hosting and parking. In past years I have been a Board member, Facilitator, handled Electronic Death Registration, occasionally been a Family Liaison, and assisted with Care of the Body. I was CEOLP Treasurer for a while. I consider myself semi-retired from CEOLP.

2. About how long have you been volunteering?

- Since 2011.

3. What first motivated you to become involved?

- My wife Robin connected with CEOLP first and drew me in. When she died in 2015, I was so grateful and impressed with CEOLP's services that I was drawn to make deeper commitment -- to pay it forward.

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

- I feel blessed and honored to be part of keeping CEOLP's services available to the community. They are important for the living as well as the dead. Participating with CEOLP means consciously acknowledging death. For me that makes life more precious and more vital. For the community, processing death together makes us stronger, more cohesive and more focused on what really matters.

5. What do you enjoy about it?

- Seeing the transformation that lightens grieving hearts at every cremation is very gratifying. So is the no nonsense camaraderie of shared service.

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

- Facilitating cremations I had to learn to be a calm, grounding element in the often-chaotic aftermath of a death. In the shock of a loved one passing, family and close friends can become disoriented. Dealing with these situations has helped me find a center in my own difficult times.

Pyre Site Maintenance Day

Due to prior commitments as well as intense heat-related weather, the Pyre Site Maintenance Day has been rescheduled for Saturday, **August 29th from 9 a.m. to noon** at the pyre site. The site work will include basic maintenance, clearing weeds, stacking wood, etc. as well as oiling benches and painting the black posts/rails. We also plan to dig an additional grave in preparation for the winter at the Natural Burial Ground adjacent to the pyre.