

For Immediate Release
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**New Public Information Website Launches to Educate Oregon Families & Professionals
About Families' Rights When Death Occurs**

Oregon Funeral Resources & Education: <http://www.oregonfuneral.org/>
Making Oregon Home Funeral Information Easy to Find
Dedicated to 4 ½ year-old [Max Carver](#) of Maupin, Oregon

Oregon Funeral Resources & Education, a new, non-commercial, public interest website launches this month. Dedicated to providing Oregonians with information about their legal rights and resources when death occurs, [OregonFuneral.org](http://www.oregonfuneral.org/) helps Oregon consumers care for their own dead with or without the assistance of a funeral director. The site is being [lauded by medical and funeral industry professionals](#) as a much-needed resource for both families and professionals.

“Oregon Funeral Resources & Education website is exactly as named – a thorough education in the legal rights, responsibilities, and processes for caring for a loved one after death, with clear writing, personal stories illustrating a variety of situations, an easy-to-follow layout, and links to an extensive compilation of resources to assist in those tasks,” says Monica Dostal, RN, MS, FNP-retired.

“People need a website where they can go while they're sitting by the transitional bed or in the middle of the night when they can't sleep to find information. The web truly doesn't host anything else like this,” says funeral director Elizabeth Fournier, author of *The Green Burial Guidebook*.

Tragically, the site was occasioned by the accidental drowning death of [four-year-old Max Carver](#) on his family's Central Oregon ranch. After the investigation of his death was complete, authorities mistakenly thwarted the release of his body to his parents who planned to take Max's body home for burial. Marking the one-year anniversary of his death, his mother Keelia Carver returned to meet with those authorities who confirmed that despite their professional expertise, they were not aware of families' legal rights to care for their dead under Oregon law. “My dedication to the creation of this website is so that professionals like these, along with families like ours, have access to accurate and practical information,” Carver says. She writes on the site: “I hope that you get the chance that I was denied, to lay with your dearly departed's body in the privacy of your own home keening until your voice is gone. Spending those last hours with that body that you hugged and kissed, talked to and laughed with.”

Oregon's Acting Chief Medical Examiner Dr. Sean Hurst, who reviewed the site for accuracy, describes it as “a good resource for families as well as medical investigators.” When informed of the error made by the county medical examiner in handling Max Carver's death, Dr. Hurst responded by including information on families' legal rights to care for their own dead in Oregon in their annual in-service

training. Dr. Hurst told Keelia, “We will continue to present this topic in our yearly death investigator course to hopefully minimize the chances of future miscommunication about families’ rights.” Monica Dostal, whose 33 years as an Oregon nurse includes teaching graduate-level nurse practitioners, says, “I appreciate the specificity and the practicality of the information for professionals on the site.”

She cites the suggestion that officials ask the bereaved, “How can we assist you with plans?” rather than “Which funeral home would you like us to call?” She welcomes having a non-commercial resource for county medical examiners, first responders, hospitals and other care providers to share with interested families. Handing out lists of local area funeral homes is standard practice for both private and public entities when a death occurs or is anticipated. “This inadvertently implies that families have no alternative but to pick the commercial entity of their choice,” Dostal says. “By including www.OregonFuneral.org on the lists of funeral services providers, interested families will have both non-commercial sources and commercial sources of information to guide their choices.”

WHAT’S INCLUDED IN THE NEW WEB RESOURCE

“Up until around 1900, when a death occurred, the tasks that are now performed by paid professionals were performed by the family,” says David Noble, recently retired from five decades of service to Oregon families as a funeral director, cemetery owner/ operator, and Oregon Mortuary & Cemetery Board member, who reviewed the site for accuracy. “Most people today think that they are legally required to use a funeral home, which simply is not true. More and more families desire hands-on involvement, but don't know how to go about doing so. Enter this website, a great asset for anyone who desires to have a home funeral or who just wants to be personally involved in the care and handling of their loved ones after death.”

The website is for anyone wishing to avoid unnecessary expenditures for funeral products and services they don’t want or need, or wanting to explore the continuum of hands-on death care options, including home funerals, home burial, and green burial. In addition to detailing [death care law in Oregon](#), OregonFuneral.org walks readers through the [practical “How-To’s”](#) of whichever aspects of after-death care they want to handle, and provides guidance in [how consumers can get what they want from professionals they hire](#) or authorities they encounter when a death occurs. The site provides [quick links to get assistance](#), a [glossary of terms](#), and [informative stories](#) of how others have cared for their dead.

Because so many helping professionals are unfamiliar with family- and community-directed care for the dead, the site includes concise but detailed, [professionally-specific in-service training materials](#) along with resources for use in [community education](#).

FAMILIES’ RIGHTS TO CARE FOR THEIR DEAD UNDER OREGON LAW

In Oregon, no one is required to purchase the services of a funeral director or funeral home. Families may conduct any or all tasks commonly performed by a funeral home (except embalming which is not required by Oregon law), and may bury on their own property if certain provisions are met. Sometimes called “family-led after-death care” or “home funeral” this may include: bathing and dressing the

deceased; sheltering the deceased at home; spending time with the deceased (sometimes called a wake, vigil, or viewing); filing the death certificate and obtaining a transportation permit; making arrangements for final disposition (generally burial or cremation); transporting the body for care and viewing and to place of final disposition; and making arrangements for any ceremony.

“For me, there are three primary reasons why the right to care for our own dead can be so important,” writes mother Keelia Carver. “First, we are a country founded on religious freedom; how we handle our dead is an important part of that freedom. Second, there is the cost associated with engaging the services of a licensed funeral director. For anyone, but especially a person with limited financial means, this is an additional burden on an already grieving family. Third, there is the matter of privilege born of love. There is no reason that a family should be required to surrender the privilege of housing and caring for a body that they love so deeply to strangers, even licensed strangers like a funeral director.”

ABOUT THE WEBSITE CREATION TEAM

Oregon Funeral Resources and Education is a non-commercial public interest site dedicated to helping Oregon consumers care for their own dead with or without the assistance of a funeral director. Volunteer collaborators include: Keelia Carver (Maupin, OR), bereaved mother turned home funeral advocate; Holly Pruett, life-cycle celebrant, home funeral guide, and content contributor and manager (Portland, OR); Judith Moman, advising attorney with an estate planning practice focusing on social support, personal growth, and empowerment (Eugene, OR); Jodie Buller, cemetery manager of White Eagle Memorial Preserve (Goldendale, WA); and Lee Webster, website designer and content contributor from the National Home Funeral Alliance, Green Burial Council, and other related nonprofits (Holderness, NH).

Development of this site was supported in part by a generous donor-advised grant from Nancy Wernecke, in memory of her parents, sister, niece and nephew, through The Oregon Community Foundation. Landscape photography was gifted for use on this website by renowned photographer [Joni Kabana](#).

David Noble, recently retired from five decades of service to Oregon families as a funeral director, cemetery owner/ operator, and Oregon Mortuary & Cemetery Board (OMCB) member, provided content review. Chad Dresselhaus, Executive Director of the OMCB, which regulates death care facilities and practitioners in the state, was invited to review the site for accuracy and has committed to do so as staff capacity allows.

Oregon Funeral Resources and Education is based on the New Hampshire Funeral Resources & Education website concept developed by Lee Webster and is expected to serve as a model for replication in other states.

SEE [Media Page](#) for One Page Media Advisory, Public Service Announcement, “What People Are Saying”. Downloadable overviews: [Information for Professionals](#), [Printable Informational Flyer](#).

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