

# end OF *life* CONSENSUS COALITION

## Vol. 18, October 2008

The newsletter of the Washington End of Life Consensus Coalition (WEOLCC)

Washington End Of Life Consensus Coalition  
**Annual Fall Conference 2008**  
**Friday, November 21, 9:30am – 2:00pm**  
Red Lion Hotel Seattle Airport  
*Agenda and registration form enclosed*

### Family-directed home funerals the focus of the 2008 Fall Conference

A fascinating presentation on family-directed home funerals will be the keynote presentation at the WEOLCC Fall Conference, Friday, November 21 at the Red Lion Hotel Seattle Airport.

Char Barrett, a licensed funeral director and midwife and founder of A Sacred Moment, a home funeral service (<http://www.asacredmoment.com/>), will explain the new (old) concept of family-directed home funerals, a profoundly different approach to funerals that extends the loving care families experience through hospice and allows families the time to work through their grief as they care for their loved one for the last time.

Included in her talk will be an introduction to the concept of environmentally conscious burials, or 'green burials,' which will be addressed during a breakout session following her presentation. Other breakout sessions will include the topics of child grief, creation of legacy, the POLST program, and palliative care during a natural disaster/pandemic.

The half-day meeting is open to anyone interested in end-of-life issues. The meeting will provide networking opportunities with other end-of-life organizations, as well as an opportunity to join the coalition, a group of dedicated volunteers seeking to change the way we think about care at the end-of-life. The cost is \$25. A continental breakfast and lunch will be provided. Included with this newsletter is a conference registration form and agenda. You can also download the form at [www.wsma.org/about\\_wsma/weolcc](http://www.wsma.org/about_wsma/weolcc).

For more information, contact Graham Short at (206) 956-3633, 1 (800) 552-0612, [gfs@wsma.org](mailto:gfs@wsma.org).

### New leadership at the Coalition

2008 saw a change in the leadership of the End of Life Coalition. Sharmon Figenshaw, RN, MN, ARNP, of Bellingham will replace Stu Farber, MD, as Chair. Sharmon has been in the hospice and palliative care field for over 15 years, working both as a nurse, ARNP and a community organizer and facilitator, and has been involved with the WEOLCC since 1999. She currently works for the Everett clinic as part of the new palliative care service available through the hospitalist team, which the clinic contracts to Providence Regional Medical Center Everett.

Anne Koepsell, of Federal Way, will replace Sharmon as Vice-Chair. Anne Koepsell is a registered nurse, but most of her work around end of life issues has been in an administrative/advocacy capacity. She was the Executive Director of Hospice of Spokane for 10 years, and is currently the Executive Director of the Washington State Hospice and Palliative Care Organization. She's been a member of the WEOLCC steering committee since 2005.

Many thanks to the many years of inspired and steady leadership of Stu Farber who will now serve as Chair-Emeritus.

### Update on Steering Committee 2008 Spring Retreat

The Coalition steering committee held its annual retreat on May 9 and 10, 2008, in sunny Spokane. At the retreat the committee:

- Tasked the POLST Taskforce with developing a strategic plan for education as well as overseeing program/form revisions;
- Committed to providing input and support for the WSMA end of life web pages
- Committed to support the revision and re-publication of the WSMA Quality End of Life Resources brochure
- Discussed presenting an educational session at the 2008 WSMA annual meeting
- Discussed strategies to fill the gaps in the group's membership/representation

Also at the retreat, the following long-range goals for the WEOLCC were articulated:

- Recruiting new members to the steering committee
- Positioning the WEOLCC as an incubator/connector – bringing people together, providing resources
- Collaborating with the Washington State Hospice and Palliative Care Organization in 2009 to host a conference focusing in diversity in end of life care.
- Being advocates for improvements to the DOH online living will registry

### **Update from the POLST Taskforce**

The Olympia POLST stakeholders meetings (covered in the November 2007 newsletter) resulted in proposed legislation in early 2008 that, if passed during the Spring legislative session, would have provided immunity to facilities and providers for following a patient's POLST form in good faith (as already exists for Advance Directives). Two things of note that occurred as the language was shaped during these meetings:

- DSHS recognized the POLST forms – a clear positive development. DSHS then sent a 'Dear Admin' letter to their constituents (adult family homes/assisted living facilities/skilled nursing facilities) in support of the form.
- A budget for POLST education, a provision supported by the WEOLCC and the POLST Taskforce, was removed from the legislation.

In the course of the legislative session, the POLST legislation was derailed in the Senate Judiciary Committee. Some of the opposition was led by Jeff Crollard, the Ombudsman for Elder Law; the issue was raised that if the POLST form is signed by a surrogate, what assurance is there that it's in accordance with that person's advance directive? In the Taskforce's assessment, the take-away lessons from the session are:

- It may not be worth taking the issue of immunity to the legislature – having immunity for Advance Directives has not improved honoring those forms, and most physicians polled said legislative immunity would be unlikely to affect their decision to follow the orders on the POLST, that this would be a clinical decision relying on their assessment at the time.
- Bringing legislation before the legislature brought out groups that opposed POLST, which did help the Taskforce identify whom to reach out to with educational efforts.
- The POLST form is already a good form, and the legislative process may change it for the worse.

The WEOLCC and the POLST Taskforce believe that what is needed is a strategic plan for education that WSMA/WSHA and hopefully DOH can support – a

certified training course, based on the train-the-trainers course developed by the WEOLCC and POLST Taskforce.

The WEOLCC and POLST Taskforce have recommended that further legislation for immunity for POLST not be pursued this year, and acknowledge Representative Jim Moeller's outstanding efforts to promote the use of POLST, and the positive outcomes that have resulted.

### **The Washington State Living Will Registry**

POLST forms and other important end of life documents such as medical health care directives and durable power of attorney forms can now be stored on the Washington State Living Will Registry, a secure, online database ([www.doh.wa.gov/livingwill](http://www.doh.wa.gov/livingwill)) maintained by the Department of Health.

Only authorized health care providers — such as physicians and nurses working in hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, or in hospice and home health agencies — may register for access to the registry. The system stores emergency contact information so next of kin can be contacted immediately.

Registration is free. Patients will receive a wallet card with a unique registration identification number and instructions to access the documents they've filed. They'll also get stickers to put on their driver's license, insurance card, or identification card. Patients, through their own security code, can access, make changes, or remove their documents at any time. Each year, they'll automatically receive a letter reminding them to update their information.

### **End of Life Resources**

*The Washington State Living Will Registry Educational Materials*

Available through the Department of Health, the following materials are available, currently for free:

- Fact-sheet
- Brochure for health care providers
- Poster
- Brochure for general public
- DVD for providers and general public

To order, contact Carol Wozniak at (360) 236-4369.

### **Participation and Staying Informed**

Visit the coalition's Web home to find out more.  
[http://www.wsma.org/about\\_wsma/weolcc.cfm](http://www.wsma.org/about_wsma/weolcc.cfm)

**For more information regarding the End of Life Coalition, contact Graham Short at [gfs@wsma.org](mailto:gfs@wsma.org), or (800) 552-0612**