



Compassion & Choices Arizona

Support • Educate • Advocate. Choice & Care at the End of Life

Compassion & Choices Arizona • P. O. Box 14556, Scottsdale, AZ 85267

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Previous issues at www.choicesarizona.org

Spring 2012

Dedicated to educating and expanding compassionate end-of-life choices for all Arizonans including the right of terminally ill adults to physician aid in dying as a fundamental civil right.

Greater Phoenix Chapter Meeting Features National Speaker

Please Join us for
"Peace at Life's End. Anywhere"

...No One Should Suffer When Legal Options Exist.



Hear the inspiring story of Armond and Dorothy Rudolph and their end-of-life decision

We invite you to hear this important presentation, which is part of the Compassion & Choices Nationwide Campaign featuring Neil Rudolph.

Saturday, May 12, 2012 - 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM

Burton Barr Central Library

1221 N Central Avenue

Phoenix, AZ 85004

Compassion & Choices is continuing its nationwide campaign to educate the public, caregivers and health care providers about Voluntarily stopping Eating and Drinking (VSED) that will help dispell many of the myths surrounding the process as well as explaining the physiological process once the decision to re- fuse fluids and nutrition has been made.

The campaign addresses potential pitfalls, such the story of Armond and Dorothy Rudolph and the resistance they encountered from their assisted-living facility when they announced their plan to voluntarily stop eating and drinking. They overcame eviction and achieved the peaceful ending they sought.

Voluntarily stopping Eating and Drinking (VSED) is not starvation and, with palliative support, is not painful. Compassion & Choices offers a free, informative look at the right to forego food and water to achieve a peaceful death.

Special guest, Neil Rudolph, will talk about his parents' being evicted from a New Mexico assisted-living facility for choosing VSED.

Armond and Dorothy Rudolph's (pictured above) challenging experience led to the development of the Assisted Living Facility Rider that can be added to anyone's Advance Directive to assure their end-of-life wishes are followed, no matter where they are living at the end of life.

Learn from their experience how to ensure your end-of-life wishes, or those of a loved one, will be honored.

Please come and bring a friend! Find out how you can remain in charge of your own end-of-life decisions.

For more information about this event, please contact Chapter Leader, Enci Lajos at (602) 301-9826 or email her at choicesaz@yahoo.com.



Waking up to Death

An essay by Giselle Suarez,
Sedona Chapter Leader

Like spelling out the word c-o-o-k-i-e around a child to avoid setting off the hyper-excited reactions generated by hearing the word, we often handle the subject of d-e-a-t-h in the very same way.

- We don't talk about it because it might kill us.
- We avoid going near it because we might 'catch' it.
- Hospice, we think to ourselves, is a like putting a hit on yourself.

And a funeral is a dreadful party in a place that smells kinda funny and some of the guests are family members you once made a great effort to move far, far away from. And of course of course of course, our guest of honor, is the corpse the corpse the corpse!

Let's face it: death is here; always has been always will be. And we, as a community, as a society, as a country, as humanity, need to awaken to this reality in our hearts. We need to make death as normal as ice cream and as sacred as ice cream. We need to talk about it, not only in grief and bereavement support groups, but on Taco Tuesdays over \$2 margaritas.

I believe that we need to have Death Centers where people can walk in anytime and have access to resources and services run by conscious, compassionate professionals who are generously compensated for their work and presence. These Death Centers should be right in the center of town, between the library and the Girls & Boys Club or across the street from the supermarket.

Unlike the days in which death was a private, family affair, we are living in a time where Death is constantly in the news. The Earth's transformations are continually causing death. Wars add to the death toll. Everyone on this planet knows at least one person, directly connected to them, who has died. Animals, our beloved pets... gone just like that. Old structures and paradigms, dying.

Both literally and figuratively, we see Death getting closer and closer. Death is within us and impacts our lives every day. Some of us determine to change, to "die" to our old ways. Only then are we free to be radiantly alive in the new, NOW.

We need to make Death our friend because Death

urgently needs us to be its friend. Befriending death will allow us to bring the grace, peace, light, consciousness, honor and joy back into dying. This would not only create a huge shift for those who are dying, but also shift everyone's experience of Death.

It is that powerful. It is that essential.

Let us wake up to Death. Every morning before our feet hit the floor we can ask ourselves, "What aspects of my life need to be released, to die? How can I put a particular experience that may be holding me back 'on Hospice' and assist it to die consciously, gracefully, lovingly, in peace and honor?"

It's been my experience that we are supported beyond our wildest imagination in this process. Everything in the Universe will stop what it's doing and become available to us to assist with the growth produced by letting go of the old.

Angels will dance and celebrate and eat ice cream.

And we will be amazed at the energy and S P A C E that is freed up when we release the old and embrace the new: a clarity of presence that is the "New You," in the new light of a new day.

And there, beside you, is your new friend, winking at you.

Giselle is a hospice volunteer and very committed and passionate about her work. She also offers her services to those who need assistance in "dying to the old" in their lives, on all levels. You can email her at gisellesuarez8@hotmail.com or call 928-274-1391.

Editor's Note: a wise person once said, "Don't let yesterday take up too much of today." It seems that "dying to the old" is another way of reminding us of that.



Editor's Corner

By Deb Darby

As with all dynamic, growth-oriented processes, change happens. After a year of service, Enci Lajos has stepped down as our state president and is now serving as Chapter Leader for the Greater Phoenix Chapter of Compassion & Choices. We are most grateful to her for her continued service and appreciate how her youth and vitality may reshape our future! Enci will also stay on the state board.

A familiar face has come back on the board, too. Margot Champagne has rejoined us and re-assumed

the role of Vice President. Though we haven't had a state conference in a couple of years, Margot was instrumental in bringing us some amazing speakers at the last one. (Read about it at "www.choicesarizona.org. On the left menu click on "newsletter" and review the Spring 2010 edition.) *Many thanks Margot!*

And, of course, we are most grateful to Freda Anderson for stepping up to become the president of the state board. Her description of the passing of her beloved 18-year old cat is inspirational. Many of us share her sentiments.

In Sedona, we welcome a new Chapter Leader, Giselle Suarez. After having served in that role myself for several years, I am especially grateful to her for taking the position and I continue to be amazed by her dedication to the work of educating and guiding those who need her assistance through the process of death and dying. Giselle is blessed with wisdom and insight that belie her youth.

Please take a moment to get in touch with our new leaders. You'll find contact info in the stories throughout the newsletter.

If you'd like to get in touch with the editor to send information, ideas, comments or suggestions, please email Deborah Darby at peacefulpassing@q.com.

Welcome to Freda Anderson Our new state chapter president

Freda grew up in South Africa and trained as a classical pianist, performing with local orchestras and serving as a Faculty member at the College of Music, University of Cape Town. When presented with the chance of working in London at the Guildhall School of Music, she seized the opportunity to live in a city filled with diversity and culture. Eight years later, upon meeting her American husband in Hawaii, she moved to New Mexico and was married soon afterwards.

After several years of volunteering with the Santa Fe Community Foundation primarily in a fund-raising capacity, she entered the hospitality business. In the early 1990s, she and her husband moved to



Scottsdale, where she entered the leisure travel business, establishing her own company in 1999.

Life was bliss until late 2004, when her husband was diagnosed with terminal cancer and told to "go home and smoke the cigars he occasionally cherished." The following weeks were a nightmare: a crash course in advance directives, trying to learn about palliative care in hospitals (which was then less widely available) and hospice options. "I felt as though I was trying to play poker with a half deck of cards – all the odds were stacked against me." Although she had lost her father at the age of 11 and two grandparents soon after, nothing had prepared her for this roller coaster ordeal that thankfully was over in less than two months.

In the following years, Freda lost her mother and a colleague with whom she had a 40-year professional relationship, both to cancer. "Without a doubt, the more you are exposed to these situations, the more you learn not only about death, but also about life."

Just a few weeks ago, Freda put the last of her four cats to sleep. At 18 ½, he had enjoyed a wonderful (i.e. extremely spoiled) life – but as importantly, he was blessed with a peaceful death. She found a local vet who visits pets in their home. "So curled up lovingly on the bed, with the sunshine streaming through the window, without even flinching, he moved serenely on to his next life. Finally after experiencing so many deaths, I felt I had 'got it right'. This is how passing on should be. This is how I want to go – peacefully and with dignity."

While legislation in our state of AZ may regretfully be years away, Freda knows personally that it's a fight worth fighting and a cause our organization will never give up on. "Every individual deserves the right to choose how and where they leave this world. For me, that is true freedom."

"Meantime, the task of educating and advocating for all those facing end of life, is greater than ever. Too often we find ourselves totally unprepared to make vital decisions when we are most vulnerable. While the subject of death and dying is becoming more acceptable to discuss openly, our goal of helping others to find compassion in dying drives us all to fulfilling our organization's mission."

"As the new President, I welcome any opportunity for an open dialogue with you, our valued members, regarding your end of life issues, and how our organization can best help you."

Freda looks forward to hearing from you, either by email at info@choicesaz.org or by phone at 480-585-0824.

Meet Your Board Members

Irene Weitzman, Ph.D
**Chapter Leader, Northwest Valley Chapter,
Compassion & Choices AZ**

State Board Member, Compassion & Choices AZ

I was born in Brooklyn, New York where I attended New Utrecht High School and then Brooklyn College.

I spent a year at Brooklyn College, before deciding to join a kibbutz in Israel. Planted onions, (really scallions), laid irrigation pipes and in winter drilled holes in hammer-heads.

I was called home when mother was dying of cancer. My husband, whom I had known since Junior High School, and married in Israel, returned with me and was immediately drafted. I almost couldn't recognize my mother. She was bent over, drawn, yellow complexion and eyes from the metastasis of the cancer to the spine and liver. She begged to die. I was helpless. I couldn't bear to stay at home and see her in such terrible pain. I had to find a job quickly to support my parents and to help my husband's parents who were ill and couldn't work. Got a job full-time as a clerk and hated every minute of it. Went to Brooklyn College at night. Came home around 11 PM and spent time with mother, did my homework and collapsed into bed. Dad had a heart condition and couldn't work but he did the food shopping and became a good cook.

After graduation, I got a job as a mycology tech at the Downstate Medical Center, and was sent to Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center to learn medical mycology. I found mycology fascinating and returned to Downstate. At one point I cultured a specimen from a leg biopsy that turned out to be one of the most dangerous fungi capable of causing a disease that was severe to fatal when the spores were inhaled. I had beginners luck and didn't get sick. After two years there, I left when I received a job offer at Columbia that offered more challenges.

After four years working as a tech at Columbia I decided I wanted to go for my master's degree at Columbia and continue with mycology. I succeeded in getting



a scholarship for one year with the help of many recommendations. This was followed each year followed with teaching assistantships. After attaining my master's degree, I decided to go for my Ph.D. It was very difficult. I took classes full time, worked as a teaching assistant and did my research, often until midnight. When my research was almost completed, I came down with meningitis and my professor left for his research project in the South Pacific, delaying my thesis for almost a year.

After finally receiving my Ph.D. I went to work back to Columbia in the Department of Dermatology as a research associate. Later I was promoted to assistant professor. When our research grant ended (and knowing that women in the medical school at that time did not advance beyond the assistant professor rank), I left to go to the New York City Department of Health as a Research Scientist level II and chief of the tuberculosis and mycology laboratories.

I stayed for 24 years, discovered several new pathogenic fungi and a new Mycobacterium species. I then left to go back to Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons, department of Pathology, microbiology laboratory, to teach and do research. Eventually I was promoted to Associate Professor of Pathology in Medicine.

I retired five years later because my husband's arthritis was getting very painful in cold, damp NY weather. We came to Sun City West where I learned about End-of-Life Choices, later to become Compassion & Choices. I remembered my mother's suffering and attended several meetings because C&C fought for physician aid in dying for the terminally ill. At one meeting I was chosen VP of the Northwest Valley Chapter and later became president.

And here I am seven years later and still president!!

Irene invites your questions and comments. She'll be happy to share her commitment to Compassion & Choices and invite you to a meeting. You can reach here by email at ireneweitz@aol.com or call her at (623) 214-6552.

We are very grateful for the dedication and consistent effort that Irene has demonstrated for Compassion & Choices AZ. She is also a member of the state board and has been instrumental in gathering support throughout her service area, which (mainly) consists of Carefree, El Mirage, Glendale, Morristown, Peoria, Sun City, Sun City West, Surprise, Wickenburg, Goodyear, and Youngtown, AZ. Irene helped spearhead our Rally and Marches on the Capital in years past.

Compassion & Choices Featured on the Dr. Oz Show

In November of last year Barbara Lee Coombs, the Compassion & Choices President, appeared on the Dr. Oz television program. Although the program wasn't entirely focused on the right to die, Barbara was given a chance to address the Compassion & Choices stance.

There was quite a bit of discussion of the right to "commit suicide," a term Compassion & Choices does not use, instead referring to the process of hastening one's death as physician aid in dying.

Suicide is usually an act of desperation based on irrational feelings and a feeling of helplessness, carried out when the person is alone and possibly terrified, leaving loved ones to discover the body, often unexpectedly and/or in an awful state of injury or decomposition.

Physician aid in dying is a rational act based on a diagnosis of six months (or less) to live, done in conjunction with discussions among family and friends, with persons you care about present at the end in a comfortable situation.

At the end of the show, Dr. Oz made the following statement regarding physician assisted dying:

"I believe that if someone is terminally ill and at a point which they feel they can no longer continue to enjoy any quality of life—they've lost their dignity—their doctor should be able to legally prescribe medication to help them end their lives with that dignity." (Closing statement on his November 1, 2011, TV Show)

A pertinent comment made during the show came from Gustin Reichbach, a New York State Supreme Court Justice, on PAD:

"I think there's a confusion of two different concepts: one of rationality and one of morality. Now I think the state has a role to play in terms of rationality to make sure that someone making this decision is competent, to make sure that the decision is voluntary, to make sure that it is informed and in understanding of their own prognosis and what's available to them. I think the state has that right. The state does not have the right to tell me that my prolonged suffering is a moral duty." (Judge Reichbach was an audience member at Dr. Oz's November 1 show.)

Thanks to Dr. Oz for opening the door to this discussion. Another important discussion of the right

to die is a documentary called *How to Die in Oregon*. This HBO documentary shot with compassion and clarity is available to buy or rent now. You can buy it online at Amazon.com and there are several online sites that allow you to watch it.

Sedona has a New Chapter Leader

Our new Sedona Chapter Leader is Giselle Suarez, a Cuban-American born actress, mystic, and medicine woman. In 1995, her heart carried her to the Netherlands where she met her husband Jorrit, who is also the father of their three year old child. Her lifelong dream of acting and performing came true in Europe, where she spent over a decade playing, directing and teaching in the professional theater circuit.

In 2009, her heart carried her and her family back to the US of A, to be with her mother who had been diagnosed with a brain tumor. She spent nine months with her mother assisting her on her death journey.

This experience changed her life drastically and she became fascinated by the 'miracle' of death. It has become one of her passions to help shift the consciousness of death in our societies. She does this in many ways, some which include her private practice where she assists people in transcending the fears, suffering and grief associated with death and dying.

Giselle believes and has witnessed that the final journey of a lifetime can be one of great peace, grace and even joy. The process can be one of compassion and dignity for all involved in the journey, bringing the light and truth deep into our hearts.

Giselle is also a hospice volunteer. She now lives peacefully in the Verde Valley with her family. We thank Giselle for giving so generously of her time. To contact her for more information, please email her at gisellesuarez8@hotmail.com.

Join - Renew - Surf

Want to join Compassion & Choices, renew your membership, make a donation or download an advance healthcare directive or other helpful forms?

Visit www.compassionandchoices.org. For information specific to Arizona, visit us at choicesarizona.org/

Other Chapter News

Northwest Valley Chapter

Friday November 9, 2012 at the Sun City West Foundation Center, 14465 R.H. Johnson Boulevard Sun City West. For more information, please email Irene: ireneweitz@aol.com.

Sedona Community Chapter

Saturday, April 28 from 10 to 11:30 AM at the Sedona Community Center, 2615 Melody Lane. We will hear a brief update on the Compassion & Choices legislative front from Deborah Darby and a presentation from new Chapter Leader Giselle Suarez on how she came to be an advocate for the death and dying process. Don't miss this chance to meet our new, dynamic Community Leader. For more information, email Giselle at gisellesuarez8@hotmail.com.



Heights of Compassion - Bridges to Choice There's Still Time to Register!

Connect with other end-of-life choice supporters, caregivers and activists in Chicago for Compassion & Choices Conference from June 28-30, 2012 at the Hyatt O'Hare. Special presenters include "Dear Abby" and Megan Cole. Betty Rollin, author of *Last Wish* and the PBS series *Religion and Ethics Newsweekly* will be there, as will Bruce Brodigan, who will share his story about being charged with manslaughter after answering his father's plea for a peaceful death after a lengthy battle with Alzheimer's. For more details, and to register, visit www.compassionandchoices.org/conference.

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