

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 2, 2008**

## **Green, Even Beyond the Grave**

Talks Introduce Earth and Family Friendly Funerals and Burials

**Ann Arbor, MI** – The Blueprint for Aging and Matthaei Botanical Gardens have joined together to sponsor *After You're Gone: Earth and Family Friendly Funerals & Burials*. This two-part event—September 23<sup>rd</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> from 7p.m. to 9p.m. at Matthaei Botanical Gardens Auditorium (1800 N. Dixboro Rd., Ann Arbor)—will first give community members an opportunity to learn about natural burial options and land conservation followed by a second evening focused on the variety of choices in natural funeral practices that can support the wishes and needs of families.

On the first night of the series, Joe Sehee, founder of the Green Burial Council, and Donna Folland, of the Six Rivers Regional Land Conservancy, will discuss sustainable burial practices and how they can help protect Michigan's land resources. Sehee, a leader of the green burial movement, observes, "Each year in the United States, we bury enough formaldehyde-based embalming fluid to fill eight Olympic-size swimming pools, enough metal to build the Golden Gate Bridge, and so much reinforced concrete in burial vaults that we could build a two-lane highway from New York to Detroit."

On the second night, Erika Nelson, MSW and licensed funeral director, will discuss the reawakening of historically traditional practices of home funerals and natural death care. This talk will also include local residents speaking about their experiences participating in home funerals. Nelson explains, "The home funeral was actually the traditional way to care for our dead. Conventional funeral practices like embalming became necessary, and later the norm, when Civil War soldiers were dying far from home. Now, we have all but forgotten our connection to traditional services, and I think it's time to remember."

Jill Kind, director of the Blueprint for Aging, adds, "As adult children face the funerals of their parents and friends, the enormous significance of this event in our lives becomes more and more clear. Much has been written and spoken about death and dying, not as much about funeral and burial practices and options. This presentation gives the opportunity to consider what will be most meaningful for us and for our families. The Blueprint for Aging hopes to expand the discussion beyond what we have come to think of as a traditional funeral and burial practice and see if there are options that might more closely represent a broader range of beliefs and values."

The Blueprint for Aging ([www.BlueprintForAging.org](http://www.BlueprintForAging.org)) is a collaborative of seniors, family members and government, non-profit, and for-profit organizations working together to build community and improve the quality of life for older adults in Washtenaw County. The Blueprint is supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation through its Community Partnerships for Older Adults national initiative (CPFOA). CPFOA helps communities develop leadership, innovative solutions and options to meet the needs of older adults over the long term.

The Matthaei Botanical Gardens and Nichols Arboretum seek to promote environmental enjoyment, stewardship and sustainability through education, research, and interaction with the natural world.

There are a limited numbers of seats for this series. Advance reservation is required. Tickets cost \$5. For registration information, call 734-647-7600 or visit [www.mbgna.umich.edu](http://www.mbgna.umich.edu)

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