Why Go Green? An Exploration of Eco-Friendly Burial

Ludington Library

Adults

Why Go Green? An Exploration of Eco-Friendly Burial

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Free

Byline

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This online program, presented in partnership with a local cemetery, discussed what green burial is, its benefits and other options for being more sustainable in death. The lecture also covered the history of funeral methods.

Advanced Planning

This program originated from brainstorming unique and intriguing Earth Day concepts. Due to a scheduling conflict, I postponed an April event to the end of September and kicked off our spooky season with an unconventional topic.

Our goal was to educate the public on alternative, Earth-conscious death planning. We also sought to present an alternative to traditional and often costly funeral planning. The program speaker was Thomas Chamberlain, the family service representative at Laurel Hill, a local non-denominational cemetery and funeral home.

Marketing

We used social media, flyers and our monthly physical and virtual newsletters to market this program.

Budgeting

This program was free to attend and put on.

Day-of-event Activity

Thomas Chamberlain presented the program on Green Burial, a term that distinguishes itself from traditional funerals and burials due to its low environmental impact, focusing on the "Triple Bottom Line," treating people, planet and profit equally. This approach, while not new, embraces simpler end-of-life rituals. Bodies are not embalmed but prepared and dressed in a biodegradable shroud, then buried in a compostable casket on a site dedicated to the beauty of natural surroundings.

The lecture provided a broad overview of different funeral methods (burials, cremations and donations), shifting between Victorian-era methods and those experienced during the Civil War when soldiers' remains were shipped long distances for burial. This marked the beginning of a shift from extravagant caskets and concrete vaults.

The presentation concluded by highlighting the safe and legal ways that going green positively affects the earth, reducing the use of lumber, steel, concrete, embalming fluid, copper and bronze. Laurel Hill Cemetery showcased its three green garden options.

No setup was needed in the library because this was a Zoom event. Only one staff member was needed to manage the virtual space.

Program Execution

Five people attended this program, partially because of the sensitive topic. Those who did attend were satisfied and interested in the topic. Questions that came up during the program focused on how the business of death is changing and whether cemeteries are in danger of running out of room. The program left attendees pondering the potential social and economic impact on their families.

Advice

This was a unique partnership between the cemetery and the library. We plan to continue this relationship and encourage other libraries to think outside the box when thinking of offering programs geared towards the environment, real estate, economics, gardens, book clubs and holidays, as well as highlighting particular library collections.

If a certain organization has a 'contact us' option on their website, send a quick message to connect them with your library!

Did you try this program at your library? Share your experience using this form.

Supporting Materials

Download this Program as a PDF

- Programming Librarian Facebook Group

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