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Media Contact:

Brian Flowers
Moles Family Funeral Services
(360) 384-3401
brianf@molesfs.com

Ryan Pemberton
Baron & Company
(360) 671-8708, ext. 205
rpemberton@baron-co.com

Western Washington's First Natural Burial Ground

Inauguration Scheduled for Saturday, January 31

Green Burial Council Exec, others to speak at Moles Greenacres Memorial Park in Ferndale, WA

Ferndale, WA — January 23, 2009 — Moles Family Funeral Homes and Greenacres Memorial Park, Whatcom County's family-owned provider of funeral services for four generations, is announcing the inauguration of The Meadow, Western Washington's first natural burial ground. "Green burial," a practice growing in popularity in recent years, is a natural process, in a natural environment, that is dedicated to burying the deceased free of traditional chemicals and non-biodegradable materials often associated with burial practices.

An open house, with a national speaker, tours, and refreshments, will take place at 2:00 PM at Moles Greenacres in Ferndale on Saturday, January 31 to commemorate the opening of this new, natural burial ground.

"We are honored to offer our community a natural setting that is not only respectful and serene, but is also approved by the Green Burial Council and so many who share our value of environmental stewardship," said John Moles, fourth generation owner and president of Moles Family Funeral Homes, Crematory and Greenacres Memorial Park. "Our overriding mission is 'Caring for all families as we would our own,' and I cannot imagine a better way to serve the needs of one of the fastest growing segments of the families we serve than through The Meadow at Greenacres."

Joe Sehee, founder and executive director for the Green Burial Council, will be the event's featured speaker. Sehee is a recognized expert on the topic of green burial and established the Green Burial Council in 2005 as a nonprofit organization to encourage sustainability in the death-care industry. The Meadow is Western Washington's first setting that meets all requirements of the Green Burial Council for becoming certified as a natural burial ground.

"Greenacres has become a role model for green cemeteries in the United States," said Sehee. "Moles has done everything we have asked and more to show a commitment to a new ethic rooted in environmental stewardship."

Green Burial standards include the requirement to use only biodegradable burial shrouds or containers, excavation techniques and technology that minimizes impacts on surrounding land and native plants, to avoid the use of any formaldehyde-based embalming fluids, to avoid introducing any non-native plants in the area, and to develop a deed restriction to prevent the cemetery from accommodating conventional burial in the future. In addition, certified natural burial grounds are required to establish an endowment fund whereby four percent of all burial sales are set aside to ensure the long-term maintenance of the land and its trail system.

In an effort to offer local, sustainably produced caskets, Moles Family Funeral Homes is partnering with

local businesses such as The Casket Makers at Lummi and Smith & Vallee Woodworks.

“We’ve been talking with Moles about partnering together to offer green burial caskets for about two years now,” said Wesley Smith, co-founder of Smith & Vallee Woodworks, a Deming-based company that mills sustainably harvested trees into high-quality, handcrafted wood products. “One of the benefits of this partnership is that the caskets we offer are harvested right here in Whatcom County. The whole premise of this partnership is to keep everything local. The trees we use are so close we can actually hear them fall.”

Smith & Vallee’s green burial caskets are made by hand and are completely non-toxic and biodegradable. An example of Smith & Vallee’s green burial caskets will be on-hand for the January 31 open-house event.

“A lot of people, particularly in this region, see the value of creating a unique place that will restore and preserve the natural ecosystem both in terms of the grounds and what goes in them,” said Moles Cemeterian Brian Flowers, who joined Moles to help bring green burial to Whatcom County. “We are pleased with the local partnerships we have been able to forge to help make this a reality.”

In addition to local craftsmen, local consultants were used to assess the grounds. Before becoming certified as a natural burial ground, a biological evaluation of the area must be conducted in order to ensure that no plant or animal life will be disrupted as a result of creating the burial ground. Northwest Ecological Services, an environmental consulting firm, completed a biological assessment for The Meadow this past December.

More information on Moles’ natural burial services or the January 31 open house, including a schedule of the event, can be obtained by contacting Moles Greenacres Memorial Park at (360) 384-3401, or by visiting www.MolesFamilyFuneralHome.com.

About Moles Family Funeral Homes

Serving families from four Whatcom County facilities in Ferndale, Lynden, Bellingham’s Bayview Chapel and Greenacres Funeral Home & Memorial Park, Moles provides a range of funeral, cremation, cemetery and grief support services for those dealing with the death of a loved one. For more information, please visit www.MolesFamilyFuneralHomes.com.

Additional information on Joe Sehee and the Green Burial Society

In addition to instituting the nation's first certifiable standards for cemeteries, funeral providers and cremations facilities through the Green Burial Council, Sehee works as a consultant to bring together land trusts, park service agencies, open-space districts and disposition companies for the purpose of permanently protecting endangered landscapes throughout the U.S. More information on the Green Burial Council and its mission can be found online at www.GreenBurialCouncil.org.

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