ABODE
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HOLIDAY LUMINARIA ORDER FORM

Would you like to honor your loved ones with Holiday Luminarias?

We invite you to order online at AbodeHome.org/Events

Or, mail this form and your check payable to ABODE to:

ABODE Contemplative Care for the Dying
PO Box 47640
San Antonio, Texas 78265

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

_____ in Honor of _____ in Memory of

Name: _____

Luminarias are $20 each.
Pre-orders accepted through Saturday, Dec. 14.

Questions? Please contact Mary Thorsby,
mary@abodehome.org or 415-271-4974.

ABODE
CONTEMPLATIVE CARE FOR THE DYING

DECEMBER 2019 | ABODEHOME.ORG

NEWS From Home

OUR MISSION

ABODE is Home. We offer compassionate, interfaith and spiritual care in a contemplative community so those who are dying leave this world with dignity and grace. We teach the art of contemplative living and dying.

OUR VISION

We live in a world where death is not feared, and we live fully until we die.

SAVE THE DATE

HOLIDAY LUMINARIAS: DEC. 15

The holiday season is one of the most beautiful times of the year at ABODE. We have so much to celebrate and to be thankful for – our volunteers, board members and all of you, our generous donors.

We are especially grateful to be blessed by our Guests. ABODE is now home to Daniel, Jack and 100-year-old "and some" Ruth, whose beautiful smile will melt your heart.

On Sunday, Dec. 15, we honor our Guests and all our loved ones with Holiday Luminarias filling the grounds around ABODE. Please join us at our home from 5-7 p.m., for this special year-end celebration featuring the Conroy Christmas Carolers along with Mexican hot chocolate, cider and plenty of holiday treats.

If you'd like to purchase luminarias in honor of your loved ones, please visit abodehome.org/events or complete and return the form on the back page of this newsletter.

Happy Holidays from ABODE!

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE | MARY THORSBY

WE LIVE IN A WORLD WHERE DEATH IS NOT FEARED, AND WE LIVE FULLY UNTIL WE DIE.

– ABODE VISION STATEMENT

IT WAS AROUND THIS TIME LAST YEAR when I became acquainted with the wonderful work of ABODE. I knew from the moment I stepped through the front door that I was entering an incredibly special place. A sacred space. A home filled with love, care and compassion. I was drawn to our staff, board, volunteers, our co-founders Edwin and Patsy Sasek, our Guests – and, of course, to Sadie, our favorite four-legged greeter.

I had the honor of working with our former ED Martha Jo Atkins to produce the Omega Home Network National Conference this summer. When Martha Jo began thinking of focusing more on research and education, she asked if I'd be interested in her position. My immediate reaction: YES! The thought of carrying the ABODE torch forward? What an honor.

My first several weeks on the job have been a whirlwind of amazingness:

- Team building with our staff while attempting to wrangle a horse without the use of reins – let alone anything resembling equine expertise (see page 3).
- An exceedingly well-attended celebration of Dia de los Muertos, complete with mariachis, ofrenda building, wonderful food and presentations – and meeting ABODE's old and new friends (see pages 4-5).
- Adopting Wednesday as my new favorite day – that's when volunteer Nancy Rios brings us a home-cooked lunch (homemade pecan pie!) that we enjoy seated around our table, family style.
- Updating our donors and grants lists and being deeply moved by the generosity of so many.
- Strategizing new ways to raise awareness for ABODE and expand our service – we welcome speaking opportunities.
- Getting to know so many special members of our ABODE Community.

Jeff St. Onge

But perhaps the most moving experience to date was the memorial for Jeff St. Onge, our Guest who died a few weeks ago. Several of us from ABODE attended Jeff's service at Trinity University. His friends and loved ones thanked us for taking such good care of him in his final days. Many of them traveled great distances to be with him at ABODE and made donations to us in Jeff's honor. Our home became their home. It still is.

Our home is your home, too. If you haven't visited us at 8619 Post Oak Lane lately, please stop by. If you can join us for our Sunday, Dec. 15 Holiday Luminarias, all the better.

I'm thankful and delighted to be a part of ABODE and to collaborate with you as we fulfill ABODE's incredible mission. If we haven't yet met, please reach out. I'd love to visit with you.

And if you haven't yet made your end-of-year tax-deductible gift, we would be very grateful if you'd consider ABODE.

Wishing you a very warm and wonderful holiday season,

Mary Thorsby
Executive Director
mary@abodehome.org

HONORING TISH

MARCUS VISITS

Our hearts are always touched when a family member or friend of a previous Guest makes a point to stop by ABODE. Just the other day we received a visit from Marcus Segui. His mother, Leticia "Tish" Segui, spent two weeks with us before she died in February.

Marcus and Suzette reminisced about how very lovely his mom was – and the funny story of the bed skirt she added to spruce up her hospital bed.

Every Guest leaves an imprint on our staff – and our house. And so do their family and friends. Thank you, Marcus, for spending some time with us. We enjoyed seeing you.

Suzette & Marcus

ABODE NIGHT AT KENDRA SCOTT, THE QUARRY

Monday, Feb. 10, 2020 • 310 E. Basse Rd. • 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Speaking of ABODE Guest Tish Segui – her sister, Michelle Lawton, invites us to celebrate Tish's life with an evening of jewelry shopping at Kendra Scott – Tish's favorite.

Join us for hors d'oeuvres, prosecco and beautiful jewels, just in time for Valentine's Day. Kendra Scott will donate 20 percent of all sales to ABODE. Please RSVP to michellelawton@kw.com.

SHOP 'TIL YOU DROP AT AMAZON SMILE

Here's a way to do holiday shopping that gives twice. When you shop via smile.amazon.com instead of amazon.com, you can select ABODE Contemplative Care for the Dying as your beneficiary and Amazon will donate a portion of your purchase directly to us. You'll find all the same great items – and an easy way to support our work. Happy holidays and happy shopping!

THERE'S STILL TIME TO GET THAT END-OF-YEAR TAX DEDUCTION

If you're looking to fill that Gifts to Charity line on your tax form, we'd be delighted if you'd consider ABODE. Be sure to get that end-of-year tax deduction by sending a check – or you can call with a credit card or donate via abodehome.org/donate. We'll provide you with a receipt – and our sincere gratitude.

DIGITAL CONNECTIONS

Hey there, social media fans! If we're not yet connected, please head over to @abodeway on Facebook and @abodeccftd on Instagram. Give us a follow and some "love" and please share our posts with your followers.

To receive our e-newsletters, please click the "Join our email list here" button at the top of abodehome.org. We'd love to share our news with you – and if you've got related news, we can share that, too. It's all about community here at ABODE.

HAPPENINGS

Jack's Bucket List

Jack has always been a huge Astros fan but had never attended a pro baseball game. He also wanted to savor a park hotdog. When volunteers Sylvia and Missy got wind of these "bucket list" items, they managed to find tickets to the Sept. 5 game. From behind the dugout at Minute Maid Park. Jack cheered on the 'Stros as they beat the Mariners 11 to 9 with a homer in the 13th inning. What a game! On top of that, an Astros PR rep presented Jack with a goodie bag of Astros swag.

Suzette, Jack & (center) Astros representative

Martha Jo's Fire

On her last day as ABODE ED, Martha Jo Atkins invited us to join her as she built and tended to a beautiful fire from midmorning until after sunset. "The fire is for ABODE's future," she said. "I've invited our community to offer prayers and intentions with logs and notes to fuel a strong internal fire for what comes next for this remarkable place."

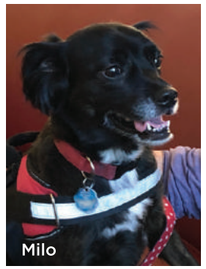
Many thanks to you, Martha Jo, for making ABODE so remarkable. We miss you already!

Martha Jo's Fire

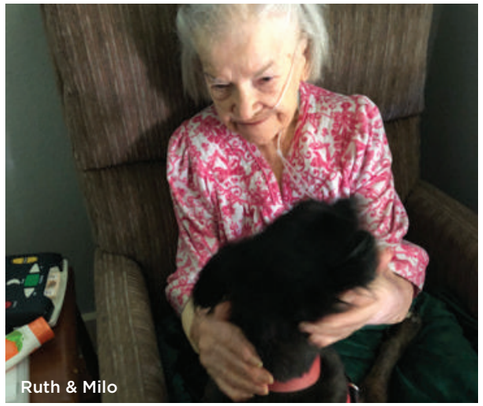
Meet Milo

We've got another four-legged, furry greeter in the house. Meet Milo, the world's sweetest Spaniel mix. Milo belongs to our new ED, Mary Thorsby. And while he's absolutely devoted to her, he's very friendly to everyone he comes across – including our newest guest, Ruth.

Milo and Sadie are fast friends, as well. There's plenty of puppy love to go around at ABODE.



Milo



Ruth & Milo

ATTENTION NIGHT OWLS, HANDY PEOPLE AND HOLIDAY GARDENERS!

If you've got some time, we've got plenty of "to-dos" that need to get "to-done" – with these requests in particular:

- We're on a special search for volunteers to help on the night shift. So if you're revving up while the rest of us are winding down, we can put you to work.
- Are you handy? We need you! We'd love to have someone we can call when something jiggles, gurgles, burns out or breaks.
- And we need some help setting out our luminarias for our Dec. 15 Holiday Luminarias event.

Interested in lending a hand? Please email adriana.garza@abodehome.org.

OUR GUESTS, OUR HEARTS

House Manager Suzette O'Calliham captures some tender moments we've shared with our Guests over the past few months:

JAMES

We received our new Guest, James, from Mission Trail Baptist Hospital. We know very little of his history except that he had been homeless in Corpus and sick. James was very happy with his new room, and he liked looking outside at the trees. We removed all the hospital bracelets and pads.

Sadie even jumped on the bed so that he could pet her, and that made him happy. Then he laid down and went to sleep. James died at 10:30 PM that night very quietly.

LOUISA

With a broken but joyful heart, I want to let you all know that our beloved Louisa is making her way to the Palace, as she called it. A group surrounded her bed the day she died. We were in hopes she could hear the expressions of love we all conveyed. The energy of serenity was palpable. Our ABODE community is very special, and that day was a true testament to that.

Louisa

ALICIA

Alicia looked so peaceful and beautiful. Krachele had noticed the change with her, and turned on the Tree of Life to notify those coming in that a transition was happening. Adriana was able to find a priest to come and anoint Alicia.

Her nephew brought Alicia's brother that day to see her before she died. They stayed in the same room at home, and he missed her. She waited until he came to say goodbye, and she died holding her brother's hand.

CHECK

Check died before sunrise. His body stayed at ABODE until that afternoon, which gave his family time to process. Adriana offered a winding down ceremony to the family – a time when the family remembers who they are and that they're carrying their beloved with them as they continue on in their own lives.

From this place of strength as a family, they supported each other through a painful and beautiful ritual of saying goodbye to this man they clearly all adored. They wept together. We all did. There was no hurry. No emergency. Just togetherness and space for each to do what they needed. It was really something special.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING AT THE ESPERANZA CORRAL

"Step into a round pen with a horse and discover the leader within you."

That was our challenge from Equus Coach Renee Sievert in late October – and that's exactly what we did. ABODE staff members gathered at Esperanza Farm Stables in Helotes, Texas, for a daylong Leadership Equus Workshop led by Renee. The idea? To learn how to inspire a horse to follow your lead by communicating through your energy and intuition.

Such a great day of learning how to establish trust, communicate more effectively, live with more presence and step into our roles as leaders.

ABODE TURNS 5

WITH A DIA DE LOS MUERTOS BRUNCH

1

The lively music of Mariachi Internacional greeted more than 80 guests at our Dia de los Muertos brunch Sunday, Oct. 27, at Los Patios. The room was filled with fragrant orange marigolds, burgundy mums, colorful papel picado, wonderful food and libations and an ofrenda, which we built to honor those we've loved and lost.

ABODE's Volunteer Coordinator and Administrative Assistant Adriana Garza, who grew up in Mexico steeped in its culture, explained the history of ofrenda building and other elements of the Mexican tradition.

"Be sure to visit a Mexican cemetery on Dia de los Muertos," she told our guests. "You'll see families keeping their loved ones company with picnics, music and activities they loved in life."

ABODE's Founder, Edwin Sasek, folded the tradition into his remarks after thanking those who had made the event possible. "We in San Antonio are fortunate to be close to this Mexican tradition so we can be reminded that death is viewed as a natural part of the human cycle. At ABODE, we get to know those who are dying, to touch and care for them and to help relieve suffering. Thanks to you all for your treasure, time, talent and prayers."

ABODE Board President Robert Soza learned about ABODE when his son Javier, an Eagle Scout, helped create and build a labyrinth in our backyard. Robert immediately connected with our purpose.

"One universal thing we all share as humans is that we are born and we die," Robert said. "An increasing number of people in our own community are facing those final hours alone. ABODE is a place that honors our humanity by providing a loving, compassionate place to die, and space and time to give meaning to a life lived."

Other brunch highlights: celebration of our fifth anniversary, the introduction of Mary Thorsby as ABODE's new ED, remarks by Guest Jack Hall about how ABODE has changed his life – and wonderful storytelling by Suzette O'Calliham, our house manager.

"I go into homes, horrible homes, and pull people out of those dark places and bring them to the ABODE," Suzette said. "Here, they find love from all of us. ABODE is truly something important in our society, in this village we have."

2

Many thanks to:

John McClung, Los Patios
Mariachi Internacional
Frankie Boone, FrankieB Bakery
Trader Joe's
Allegra Printing
Mustard Seed Designs
Chuck Gibbons
Nena King
Adriana Garza

3

4

5

6

7

8

1 Mariachi Internacional set the tone for a lively brunch | 2 An anniversary cake by FrankieB Bakery? Yes, please!

3 Founder Edwin Sasek makes a special connection between Dia de los Muertos and ABODE

4 Board Members Rosie Ortiz, Heather Veeder and Waheeda Kara along with the ever-entertaining Martin Martin and Nooruddin Kara

5 Berdine and mom Adelina Rodriguez | 6 Theodore Hervey and mom Tracie Shelton Hervey

7 Board Members Robert and Roxanna Soza and our former ED Jane Marie Young

8 Volunteer Coordinator and Administrative Assistant Adriana Garza, Volunteer Renee Tijerina and Board Member Roxanna Soza