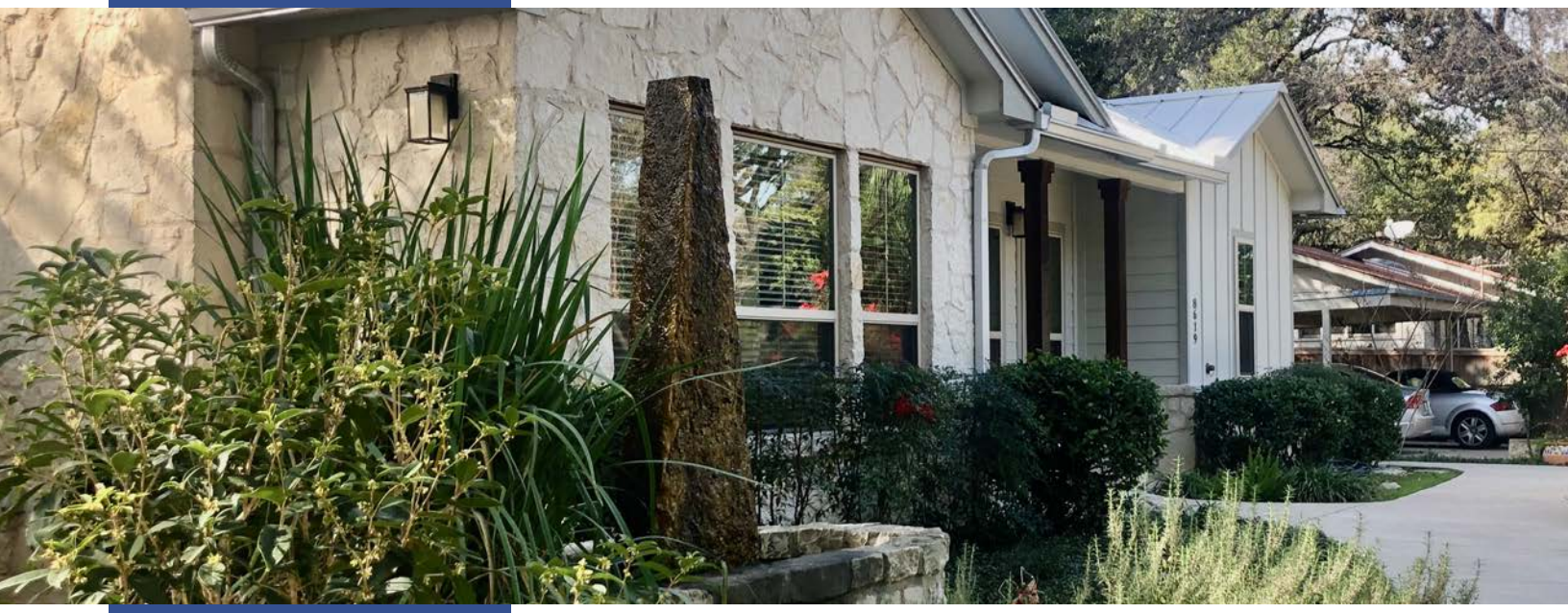
ABODE

CONTEMPLATIVE CARE FOR THE DYING

NEWS From Home

SPRING 2021 | ABODEHOME.ORG



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.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY, MAY 1-2

Celebration of the Soul Art Show and Sale Featuring the Art of Brother Cletus

Ready to add a signed, original Brother Cletus to your art collection? Then don't miss ABODE's Celebration of the Soul Art Show and Sale.

Join us at Brown Hall, Church of Reconciliation, 8900 Starcrest Dr., for our two events, masked and socially distanced:

- Opening Reception with Silent Auction, 5-8 p.m., Saturday, May 1
- Brunch Show, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., Sunday, May 2

You'll find a beautiful array of Brother Cletus pieces, art from many of our other local favorite artists and rare Audubon bird prints beautifully framed and ready for your walls.

Turn to the back page for a full list of participating artists and other helpful details. We hope to see you there!

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Mary Thorsby

What a busy, crazy, snowy start to 2021! Many thanks to you all for checking in on us – and even bringing us goodies – during February's week of "Snowmageddon." Wasn't that something? We were grateful that, aside from a few short power outages, we could keep our Guests safe and warm. We hope you made it through those difficult days with minimal disruption, too.

Welcome Back, Volunteers!

With more and more of us getting our COVID vaccines – including our ABODE staff – we're beginning to welcome volunteers back to our home. If you're fully vaccinated and would like to help us with Guest care – or you've got a special talent to share – please email Susan at **susan@abodehome.org**. We plan to hold in-person, socially distanced volunteer training this summer.

Your Ongoing Support Makes Such a Difference – We Now Accept Stock!

As you know, we provide our wonderful, contemplative care to Guests at no charge – nor do we bill insurance or accept any government or city funding. ABODE operates completely on your generous donations and a few very competitive grants. We are so grateful to all of you for your continued support of our important mission.

And now we can accept your appreciated stock through our new Vanguard account. By donating stock directly to us, you avoid having to sell it and pay capital gains – and you get to deduct the full fair market value. We've already received our first lovely gift, which serves as the start of our endowment fund – something we've long wanted to create. If you'd like more details, please email **info@abodehome.org** and we'll send you the instructions.

As always, we welcome your tax-deductible donations online at **abodehome.org/donate** or via checks made out to ABODE to PO Box 47640, San Antonio, TX 78265. We very much appreciate and will send you a receipt for your tax files.

Your Invitation to Everything!

Please join us by emailing info@abodehome.org:

Monday Meditation
Mondays, 5-6 pm, Zoom

Book Club and Study Group
Tuesdays, 6:30-7:30 pm, Zoom

Celebration of the Soul Art Show and Sale, May 1 and 2
See back page for details

Omega Home Network Conference
June 22 and 23, Zoom

ABODE Academy 3
Thursdays, July 15-Aug. 19, Zoom

Big Give
Thursday, Sept. 23

Dia de los Muertos
Sunday, Oct. 24

Luminarias Lighting
Sunday, Dec. 12

Thank You For a Great Start to the Year

Our End-of-Life Navigators Sarah, Claudia, Diana, John and I are so very thankful for your donations and for helping us spread the good word about our work. We simply couldn't do what we do without you.

Blessings to you all.

Mary Thorsby
Executive Director

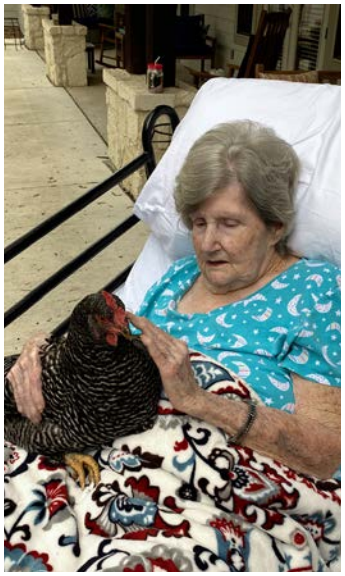
Charlie's Contemplative Chicken

We always love surprises at ABODE, so when Charlie's granddaughter Amy suggested bringing some of Charlie's chickens to visit, we *crowed* at the idea. (See what we did there? A little poultry humor!)

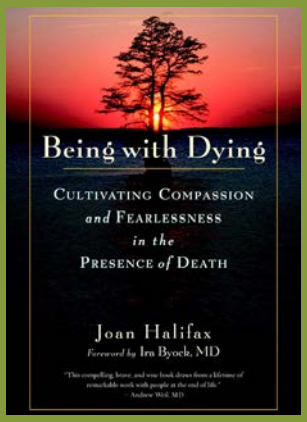
Amy brought two of Charlie's chickens in an animal carrier and set up a mini chicken coop in our backyard. We wheeled Charlie outside through her room's French doors and watched her take the birds in her arms, petting them and feeding them, just as she would do at home.

What we love about this is Amy's contemplativeness and thoughtfulness. There's no doubt that Amy has paid attention to the important things in Charlie's life and wanted to find something that would bring her joy. This fits right in with our contemplative nature at ABODE – paying attention and being in the moment. May we all be so lucky to have a loved one think of us in this way.

It got us thinking – what special things will we do for our own loved ones as they near the end of life? And when it's our time, what would we like folks to do for us? What will be our contemplative chicken?



Our Educational Outreach



Book Club and Study Group

We're off to a great start with our ABODE Book Club and Study Group. In fact, we've been enjoying it so much that instead of twice a month, we now meet every Tuesday evening. Our current book: *Being with Dying* by Roshi Joan Halifax – the book that inspired the creation of ABODE. It's not too late to join in!

Texas Public Radio

ABODE Academy 2 and 3

And we recently concluded our very successful ABODE Academy 2 focused on "Preparing for the End." You probably heard our Texas Public Radio spots generously sponsored by The Law Offices of Carol Bertsch and Sunny Markham of Countryside Memorial Park. The spots promoted the Academy and brought us many new participants. You'll find all six recordings at abodehome.org/education.

We're already planning ABODE Academy 3, which will focus on "Care for the Caregivers." Mark your calendars for each Thursday, 6:30-7:30 pm, July 15 through Aug. 19. We'd love to have you!

Our TPR spots are continuing thanks to our new sponsor, San Antonio Kidney. You've likely heard the promos for our March 25 H-E-B Virtual Cooking Class (which was a fun success) and our upcoming May 1 and 2 Celebration of the Soul Art Show and Sale – please turn to the back page for art show details.

Our Guests, Our Hearts

Jack

His whole being would light up every time we asked Jack about his beloved Charlene, whom he lost in April. He joined her last December, which is exactly what he'd been so longing to do. Jack passed away quietly and peacefully in his sleep.

At 92, Jack had led a full life. He leaves behind adult children, grandchildren and great grandchildren, and they love him very much, too. Everyone did. He had a wonderful career in the oil business, and he was quite the athlete. Jack was an avid tennis player, Senior Olympics high jumper – and he and Charlene participated in long Volksmarch hikes in every state of the U.S.

He greeted each ABODE staff member, volunteer, hospice team member and his friends and family with the sweetest smile, cheery personality and wonderful sense of humor.

Helen

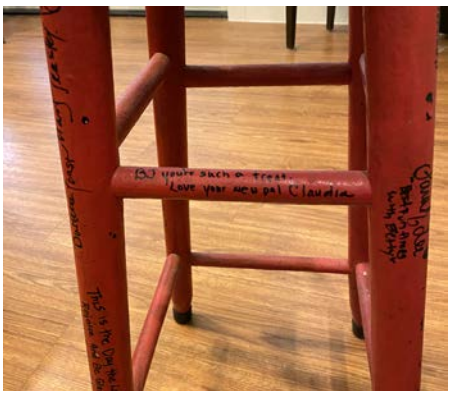
We welcomed Helen just a month shy of her 95th birthday. Helen had been fairly independent, living with her son (pictured) and his wife – until her health took a turn. She spent her career as a beautician and a musician, and played the piano for her church for 72 years. She learned how to play when she was 17. When she passed away, her family stood in a circle around her bed, sharing sweet stories and prayers.

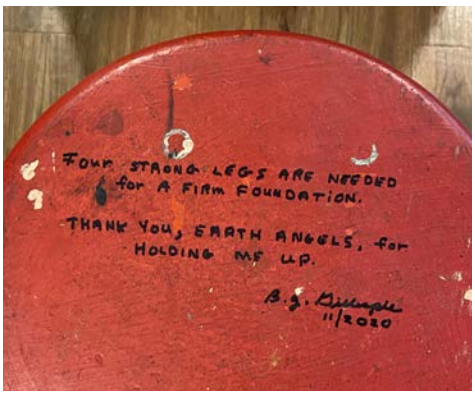
Esther

Esther joined us right after Christmas as our 200th Guest at ABODE. She was 99 years old, and died right before turning 100. Her niece spent a good part of the day with her, and her beloved grandson, who lives out of state, called regularly to tell her how much he loved her.

Brenda

When Brenda, 70, arrived, she seemed to have quite a bit of energy – even asking that Milo join her on her bed for a while. That's not unusual. Milo seems to perk up most folks. Brenda's decline was steady – though filled with so much love. So many of her family members and friends came to see her during her short time with us. They even had a little prayer service for her on the Sunday morning before she died.





BJ

BJ had such a sweet smile. She loved animals. She was an artist and a very successful entrepreneur. At 74, she was a successful entrepreneur and fiercely independent. Her cancer, though, made it impossible to live alone any longer.

Opening up and trusting folks did not come easy to her. Our staff, volunteers and her hospice team did a beautiful job of winning BJ over and providing her with love, care and a sense of safety.

During her time at ABODE, BJ asked each of us to sign the legs of her red stool. On the top she wrote: "Four strong legs are needed for a firm foundation. Thank you, Earth Angels, for holding me up." – BJ Gillespie, 11/2020

We were all honored to be part of BJ's team of Earth Angels. We think of her often.

Helen

A Vietnam vet and very independent, Helen, 82, arrived at ABODE in quite a bit of pain. It took a while for her various medications to alleviate her discomfort, and then she was able to settle into her journey with frequent visits from family and neighbors. We take great pride in caring for veterans. We've served folks from all branches of the military, and we always place a flag representing their branch outside their room.

Chuck

Chuck arrived at ABODE with his beautiful bride Tatiyana. The two met on a dating app, fell in love instantly and were married last spring. A few months before their wedding, Chuck, 64, was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. "I asked her if she still wanted to marry me, and she said yes," Chuck recalled. And Tatiyana cared for him ever since. They absolutely adored each other. "She's as beautiful on the inside as the outside," Chuck would tell us. "She's the love of my life."

Patricia

Patricia, 60, came to ABODE quite unresponsive – no eye contact, no cues that she was listening to us or understanding our words. Yet when her son, Stephon, arrived for a visit, she perked right up and the two began talking and joking just as moms and sons do. We were astonished! And we're grateful that Patricia was able to spend some special time with her son and other loved ones before she passed away quietly and peacefully in her sleep.

Michael

Mike came to us in a quite nervous and agitated state. But mostly, he was tired, nauseous and feeling very alone. At 69, he'd been on dialysis for many years and, a few weeks prior, he decided that it was time for those treatments to come to an end. He needed a place to rest and let go.

He found that place at ABODE. We quickly earned his trust and, after he calmed a bit, he said, “I’ll do whatever you suggest and follow any advice you give me." Our advice is always pretty simple: Let us help you. Let us be here for you. Let us hold your hand as you rest.

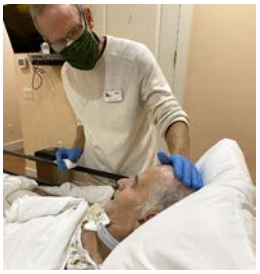
And that’s just what happened. Mike found a level of peace he hadn’t experienced in quite a long time.

Margaret

Margaret, 86, spent her career as a very popular English professor. Her favorite students were those she taught while they were in jail. Because of her wonderful influence, so many of her students emerged from incarceration with confidence and a desire to make the most of their lives. Such a blessing. Evidently, she used to refer to death as “graduation” – and she was very much ready to “graduate” and be reunited with her beloved husband. Happy Graduation, Margaret.

David

David, 64, came to us after suffering from a stroke. He couldn't communicate verbally – in fact, he remained in a deep sleep most of his time with us. When we welcome Guests who are unable to speak or open their eyes, we offer our soft voices, music, meditation, aromatherapy – and being with them, in the moment, letting them know that they are safe and in a beautiful home filled with love.



Lorena

Lorena, 95, died at ABODE during the February snowstorm. Her granddaughters Rachelle and Stephanie called her “Momo” and were such a comfort to her in her final days. Weeks before coming to ABODE, Momo was dancing on her porch. Not long after, she suffered a stroke that severely affected her speech and brought on other ailments that shortened her life. Rachelle and Stephanie braved the snow and ice to get to ABODE to be with her.

They spent several days and nights here – and even helped us with our other Guests. Momo would often reach out – she would tell us that she was seeing someone’s hand. Rachelle would tell her: "Lean into the hand with the love and grace from all who will join you soon enough.”

Upon Momo's death, Rachelle (pictured) expressed how grateful she was that she could spend this tender time with her. “We reached a new level of bonding that I’d never experienced with her before,” she says.

That’s one of the many beauties of ABODE. We offer families and friends a way to focus fully on the most important care of all: Holding your loved ones' hands and being with them, every step of the way.

Barbara

After being with us for just a handful of days, Barbara, 74, passed away at the end of December. Bob, her husband of 51 years, barely left her side. They married on Valentine's Day in 1969, sneaking in a wedding during his time as a Vietnam Green Beret. He misses her so much.

Christine

Christine, 91, is in our Blue Room. She has devoted her life to taking care of her children and grandchildren. She worked many jobs, often several jobs at once, in order to make ends meet. Now it's our turn to help Christine's family, including daughter Mindi (pictured), take care of her. We are honored and delighted to make her last stretch of life as beautiful as we can.

Maria

When she looks at us through her beautiful eyes and long lashes, it's as if she's staring right into our souls. Maria, 90, is in our Green Room. She's very, very quiet and then, when we least expect it, she'll say a few words or even a sentence. Her family visits regularly, bringing her treats and decorating her room with mementos from home. There's no doubt that she knows she is loved.

Charlie

Our Peach Room is now home to Charlie, 87, and her stuffed chicken – read about her love of the real kind on page 3! Charlie has had such a full life. You may recognize her from The Antler Café in Spring Branch where she worked as the manager. She enjoys watching westerns and mysteries – and she has a very funny sense of humor. We're sure to have a good laugh each time we visit with Charlie.

We've also cared for John, Charlie, Richard, Einer and Skipper over the past few months – each were with us for just a handful of days. That often happens. Folks come to ABODE at end of life and, feeling the peace and serenity here, they're able to let go sooner than we anticipate. Our hearts are with their families and friends.

Follow Along with Our Guest Stories

We often share Guest stories at **@ABODEcontemplativecare** on Facebook, **@abodecontemplativecare** on Instagram and **@abodecare** on Twitter. Give us a follow and some "love" and please share our posts with your followers.

To receive our e-newsletter, please look for the newsletter sign up section on our home page at **abodehome.org**. We're eager 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.

Recent House Happenings

Luminarias Lighting

Thank you for your luminarias purchases – more than 175 in all! We loved having so many of you stop by, enjoy the wonderful Conroy Christmas Carolers and pick up your luminarias, treats from FrankieB Bakery and Scout & Cellar wines. Plus, author Virginia Blakeney signed her new novel, *Richilene Trunk*, now available in our ABODE Boutique.

ABODE Boutique

Speaking of our ABODE Boutique: Visit **abodehome.org/shop** and see our fun items for sale, including a treasure trove of vintage Gorham Sterling Silver Snowflake Ornaments starting with 1970 on up!

The Jibaros Motorcycle Club

We look forward to our Thanksgiving visit from the Jibaros Motorcycle Club of San Antonio. These fine folks roll up on their snazzy bikes and drop off much-welcomed goodies for us. We appreciate the generosity of this adventurous group – and all our donors!

ABODE

CONTEMPLATIVE
CARE FOR THE DYING

NON PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
SAN ANTONIO, TX
PERMIT NO 572

8619 Post Oak Lane
San Antonio, TX 78217

www.abodehome.org
info@abodehome.org

210.967.9891

ABODE LEADERSHIP

Mary Thorsby
Executive Director

Board of Directors
Robert Soza
President

Roxanna Gonzales-Soza
Secretary

Guy Acerra
Peg Armstrong
Richard Ferguson, M.D.
Karen Lugar
Francesca Rattray
Beverly Tuomala
Elsa Underwood

Advisory Board
Diane Datz
Arthur Dawes
June Ferguson
Chuck Gibbons
Deborah Hanus
Petra McCann
Liz Newhouse
Edwin Sasek
Patsy Sasek
Hal Smarkola
Rev. Judith Rhodes
Susan Ruch
Peter Szarmach
Denise Miner-Williams
Jane Marie Young

Saturday-Sunday, May 1-2 Celebration of the Soul Art Show and Sale Featuring the Art of Brother Cletus

Join us at Brown Hall, Church of Reconciliation, 8900 Starcrest Dr.

- Opening Reception with Silent Auction, 5-8 p.m., Saturday, May 1
- Brunch Show, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., Sunday, May 2

We have original, signed Brother Cletus artwork along with limited edition prints – plus art from many other local artists (right).

Spend $100 or more and receive a free Brother Cletus poster (while supplies last). Both events include fabulous catering from FrankieB Bakery and wines from Judy Tierney – Independent Scout & Cellar Consultant.

Please RSVP to **info@abodehome.org** to help us plan our social distancing – and how much food and wine to order! We hope you'll join us!

Interested in volunteering at these events? Please email **susan@abodehome.org**.

Don't miss ABODE's Celebration of the Soul Art Show and Sale featuring a beautiful array of Brother Cletus pieces, along with art from many of our other favorite local artists:

Lyn Belisle
Michelle Belto
Jim Collier
Bruce Flohr
Lesta Frank
Terry Gay Puckett
Octavio Quintanilla
Edwin Sasek
Patsy Sasek
Steve Smith
Peter Szarmach
E. Gordon West

Plus rare Audubon bird prints beautifully framed and ready for your walls.