ABODE

CONTEMPLATIVE
CARE FOR THE DYING

NEWS From Home

FALL 2022 | 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.

Sept. 16 and 17: Staff and Volunteer Training

Our ABODE Staff and Volunteer Training is set for 5:30-7:30 pm, Friday, Sept. 16 and 9 am-2 pm, Saturday, Sept. 17, at the Church of Reconciliation. We welcome you to volunteer at ABODE even before the training starts, though! Interested? Please email **info@abodehome.org** or call us at 210.967.9891, and we'll get you started.

Thursday, Sept 22. to Friday, Sept 23: Big Give

The Big Give is back! We're excited to participate in this annual 24-hour online day of giving, set for Sept. 22 to Sept. 23. It's our biggest fundraiser of the year and we need your help! From midnight to midnight that day, please visit **thebiggivesa.org** and search for ABODE. Gifts of all sizes are so helpful. Details are on page 3, along with Martha's story.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Mary Thorsby

What an action-packed summer we've had! Among our most exciting news: We've added three new End of Life Navigators to our team – and we couldn't be more thankful. Our home is filled with a renewed spirit, energy and gratitude.

John, Claudia and I are very pleased to welcome Marynelda, Natalie and Crystal to ABODE.

Our Team: Mary, Marynelda, Claudia, Natalie, Crystal and John

Marynelda comes to ABODE with decades of experience in the hospice field – and has cared for many Guests here over the years. When we posted the open positions, she called and applied immediately!

Natalie leads our Bedside Yoga each Friday from 2:30-3:30 pm and decided she wanted to be even more involved with us. She says she immediately fell in love with ABODE as soon as she walked through the door.

Crystal's brother Joe was a recent Guest – you can read about the two of them on page 4. When we saw the love and compassion that she shared with him during her regular visits, we knew she would be a perfect match for our team.

For more background on each of us and what draws us to ABODE, please visit **abodehome.org/staff**. And come visit us! We're always happy to welcome you at ABODE.

Caring for our Guests, of course, is our main mission. Equally important is the community education we offer in support of our vision – that we live in a world where death is not feared, and we live fully until we die. Please check out our upcoming programs on page 7 – including our new ABODE Death Doula Certification program.

Spring Art Show & Sale

Another success! We had a wonderful turnout for our Spring Art Show & Sale in May, selling well over 100 pieces from our favorite artists – including our featured artist E. Gordon West.

Plus, we had fabulous catering from Frankie Boone, wines from Scout & Cellar and the musical stylings of Lou Cabaza!

Many thanks to our artists, volunteers, Church of Reconciliation and all of you for making this show so great! Let's do it again next year!

Along with that, we have Staff and Volunteer Training coming up 5:30-7:30 pm, Friday, Sept. 16 and 9 am-2 pm, Saturday, Sept. 17, at the Church of Reconciliation. If you've been thinking about sharing your hearts and talents with ABODE, please email us at **info@abodehome.org** or call us at 210.967.9891.

We recently completed our very successful ABODE Academy 4 – Death and Dying: Religious Customs and Rituals – featuring the Jewish, Hindu, Islam, Buddhist, Catholic, Orthodox and Christian faiths. You'll find the recordings at **abodehome.org/abode-academy-4**.

If you or someone you know could use more support in caring for loved ones, please check out our Powerful Tools for Caregivers six-week class starting Wednesday, Sept. 14. You'll find more information about that in our Education section at **abodehome.org**.

COMING UP: BIG GIVE

We're also busy planning for the Big Give, San Antonio's communitywide day of giving. You'll see more details to the right. We're featuring a very special Guest and former staff member as part of our campaign – Martha.

Martha's is a full circle story that will remain with us always. Her brother Larry died at ABODE, and that experience inspired Martha to join us as an End of Life Navigator for a few years, caring for many, many Guests here. She called us back in June to say that she was terminally ill, and she wanted to spend her last days at ABODE.

Martha, 64, was under the care of Guiding Light Hospice. We think of ourselves as extended family members to all of our Guests – and that was especially true with Martha. It was one of our greatest honors to walk her home.

THANK YOU FOR BEING PART OF OUR COMMUNITY

As we go to press, we will soon welcome our 300th Guest! Without your donations, we simply couldn't do what we do. We always appreciate your online donations at **abodehome.org/donate** – or checks made out to ABODE and sent to PO Box 47640, San Antonio, TX 78265. Got stock? We'd love that, too! 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. Let us know if you'd like more information.

Thank you for all you do for ABODE, our Guests, volunteers, hospice partners, staff – and one another. We are forever grateful for our ABODE Community. Blessings to you all.

Mary Thorsby
Executive Director

big give
presented by THE NONPROFIT COALITION

Thursday, Sept. 22 to Friday, Sept. 23: Big Give

The Big Give is back! We're excited to participate again in this annual 24-hour online day of giving, set for 6 pm Thursday, Sept. 22 to 6 pm Friday, Sept. 23. It's our biggest fundraiser of the year, and we need your help!

From midnight to midnight that day, please visit **thebiggivesa.org** and use the search tool to find ABODE. Gifts of all sizes are so helpful. The more donors we have, the more likely we are to win monetary prizes and matching grants.

Social media is a big component of Big Give. Please follow ABODE at **@ABODEcontemplativecare** on Facebook and Instagram, **@abodecare** on Twitter and look for us on LinkedIn. Please share our favorite stories with your own followers.

Here's how your gifts make a difference at ABODE:

- **$25** Provides cloth bed pads for our Guests' comfort
- **$100** Keeps our home and grounds beautiful for Guests and families to enjoy
- **$275** Covers 24 hours of care from staff and volunteers
- **$500** Supports memorial services for Guests, many of whom are veterans
- **$1,000** Contributes to meals, supplies, training and other aspects of our care
- **$2,500** Supports a Guest for nine days, the average length of stay at ABODE

Thank you in advance for helping us with another successful Big Give campaign.

Our Guests, Our Hearts

Brenda

One of our volunteers connected us with Brenda, 71, and we are so thankful. Brenda brought with her a beautiful smile and such great energy. She loved animals, especially cats, and spent part of her career as a wildlife photographer. Brenda had such a sweet soul and lively sense of humor. We know her friends will miss her very much. We will, too. Brenda was under the care of Kindred Hospice.

Santiago

Santiago, 77, was with us for just one day before he died. Though our time with him was short, we're honored to have provided a beautiful place for Santiago to spend his final hours, under the contemplative care of our beautiful staff, hospice partners and volunteers.

Santiago was under the care of Concho Hearts Hospice.

Joe

Joe and his lovely sister Crystal spent about two weeks at ABODE, reconnecting, telling stories on each other and experiencing the bond that only siblings can share. Crystal even gave him a haircut and beard trim on the porch right outside his room.

Theirs was quite a remarkable story. Joe struggled with addiction most of his life and had been homeless for quite some time. He sold his ID to a man who died in Dallas at the beginning of this year. When the police found the man, they assumed it was Joe – and they called Crystal to tell her that he had died.

Months later, Crystal and her husband were driving along, and who did they spot walking down the sidewalk – it was Joe! They couldn't believe their eyes. He was quite sick – and they were able to get him under the care of Christus Hospice and on to ABODE.

Joe was just 43 years old. Such a good reminder of the importance of family and remaining close to the people we love. We were honored to care for Joe and enjoyed his wonderful sense of humor.

And the story continues: Crystal is now one of our End of Life Navigators!

Anita

Anita was a Marines vet and very sweet and soft spoken. She leaves behind two young adult daughters, quite a few siblings and her mom. She was only 63 and under the care of Amedisys Hospice. She's pictured here, the day before she died, with Sunny, a Canines for Christ therapy dog.

Tim

Tim's mom spent every night on the couch for the week Tim was with us – she wanted to be with him every second. He died surrounded by his mom, dad, brothers and their wives and his dear, sweet dog Cash, giving him one of the sweetest family farewells we've had here at ABODE. Tim, 41, was under the care of Kindred Hospice. We're happy we could accommodate Tim and his sweet family. Being in ABODE's beauty, quiet, nature and peacefulness, they said, made his transition a bit easier on them all.

Tommy

Tommy served in the Air Force. Air Force Vet Colonel Hal Smarkola visited the day he arrived, thanking him for his service and presenting him with an American flag. Tommy was 85 and under the care of Christus Hospice.

Eugene

Eugene served in the Air Force and the Navy. Each time we welcome veterans to ABODE, Retired Air Force Colonel Hal Smarkola makes it his mission to help us make them feel right at home. "I don't even know you, but I love you so much for what you did for our country," Hal said. "We are a small band of brothers – military people. So many people here thank you." Eugene, 82, was under the care of Journeys Hospice.

Angel

Angel contracted lupus when she was just 20 and the disease had slowly deteriorated her body through the years. She decided that she'd had enough surgeries and treatments and that she was ready to let go. Her mother and siblings were here, supporting her every day.

Her mother said to Angel before she died, "Goodbye, preciosa, Daddy is waiting for you," as she leaned in to kiss her. Angel was only 62 – and she was our 275th Guest since we opened our doors seven and a half years ago. She was under the care of Kindred Hospice.

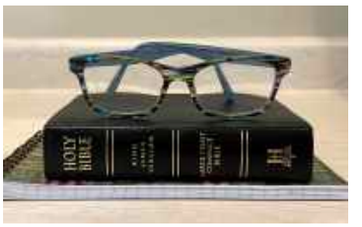
Tammy

Tammy's daughters lit our Tree of Life in honor of their mom. The framed note reads: "When the Tree of Life is lit, a Guest at ABODE is actively dying. We ask for soft voices and gentle energy please." Tammy's daughters warmed our hearts, spending as much time as they could with their mom. One daughter brought her young children to visit – a bit worried about how they would handle seeing their grandmother at end of life. There were, indeed, tears and hugs – as well as an understanding that their grandmother was in a beautiful place surrounded in love. Tammy, 52, was under the care of Christus Hospice.

Sylvia

Sylvia, 77, came to us with Stage 4 cancer and other ailments, including one of the most heartbreaking wounds we've seen. Her friends and family visited regularly. We were honored to care for her and will long remember her courage and sweetness. She was under the care of Embrace Hospice.

Suzanne



Suzanne was fiercely independent – she lived alone for most of her adult life. She was a fashion buyer for Dillard's and had collected a closet full of gorgeous clothes that she gave away or sold. We asked how she felt about that. "It doesn't matter now," she said. "I thought it would bother me, but it doesn't." In fact, her Bible, glasses and notebook were pretty much all she left behind.

Suzanne's sisters came from out of town to enjoy a nice long visit. And she got her last wish – to donate her body to the UT Health Science Center Body Donation Program. Our End of Life Navigator John was holding her hand and singing to her, and as he finished his song, she took her last breath.

Suzanne was 75, under the care of Compassus Hospice. Ben Getter MD was her physician – Ben is a former board member and a wonderful supporter of ABODE.

Dustin

Dustin was just 33 and had Cerebral Palsy all his life. While he couldn't communicate verbally, he understood everything we said – and we each formed such a special connection with him. Especially when it came to the classic rock music he loved. Our End of Life Navigator Natalie thought he resembled Freddie Mercury – so she'd play Queen for him.

Dustin had a difficult life – and was living in a group home when he came to us. He had no family at all. He'll be in our hearts and on our minds for a very long time. He was under the care of Embrace Hospice.

Phyllis

It's always such a treat to have Harpist/Music Thanatologist Deborah Marshall play for our Guests. Deborah stopped by ABODE to play for Phyllis in our Green Room. Deborah's beautiful gift touches those who are dying in so many ways.

Phyllis, 79, was under the care of Heart to Heart Hospice. We were happy to have Phyllis and her family with us when they needed us most.

Holding These Folks in Light, As Well

We've had several other Guests who arrived and died within days. In recent months, we've been honored to care for Adriana, Dale, Enrique, Eric, Jose, Kat, Larry, Mary, Michael, Robert, Santiago, Ted and Violet.

Follow Along with Our Guest Stories

We often share Guest stories at **@ABODEcontemplativecare** on Facebook and Instagram, **@abodecare** on Twitter and look for us on LinkedIn. 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.

Our Educational and Outreach Programs

We have a wonderfully packed schedule between now and the end of the year. Please join us for our educational programs! For more details, please visit the Events section of **abodehome.org** or give us a call at 210.967.9891.

Threshold Choir serenades Guests two Mondays a month.

Monday Meditation Group led by Edwin Sasek meets via Zoom Mondays, 5 pm.

Thursday Morning Meditation Group led by Ed Alderette at ABODE, 11 am; lunch 12 pm.

Friday Bedside Yoga led by EOL Navigator Natalie at ABODE, 2:30-3:30 pm. Open to everyone of all abilities!

Death Cafe led by Board Member Lynn Perez at ABODE, second Saturdays, 2-3:30 pm. Tea, cake and conversation around death and dying.

Powerful Tools for Caregivers, 3-4:30 pm, for 6 Wednesdays, Sept. 14-Oct. 19, via Zoom. These classes help caregivers take better care of themselves while caring for a friend or relative.

Staff and Volunteer Training, Friday, Sept. 16 and Saturday, Sept. 17, Church of Reconciliation. For current and new staff and volunteers – and those interested in volunteering.

Book Club & Study Group, 6:30-7:30 pm, for 6 Tuesdays, Sept. 20-Oct. 25. We'll discuss *The Lost Art of Dying: Reviving Forgotten Wisdom*, by L.S. Dugdale MD. Please read Chapter 1 before our first session. Dr. Dugdale will join us for our Oct. 4 session!

Big Give, 6 pm Thursday, Sept. 22 to 6 pm Friday, Sept.23. Our annual online fundraiser. Details on page 3.

ABODE Death Doula Certification Program, 9 am-5 pm, for 4 Saturdays, Sept. 24, Oct. 8, Oct. 22 and Nov. 5, featuring hands-on learning with ABODE Guests! 32-hour program in partnership with International Doula Life Movement. $300, includes lunch each session.

ABODE Open House, 5-7:30 pm, Thursday, Oct. 6. Friends and neighbors are invited to come for wine and cheese, get reacquainted with us and learn about our future plans.

Pull Up a Chair Lunch, 12-1 pm, Thursday, Oct. 13, ABODE. Topic: Preparing for Dia de los Muertos.

ABODE Academy 5 – Heart-Centered Planning: Making Sense of Life and Death, 6:30-7:30 pm, for 5 Thursdays, Oct. 20-Nov. 17, via Zoom.

Día de los Muertos Brunch, Sunday, Oct. 30. Our annual complimentary brunch featuring ABODE updates. Details on page 8.

Reading of the Names, 5-7 pm, Tuesday, Nov. 1, All Saints Day, ABODE. Join our ABODE families as we read the names of, and honor, those we've cared for since COVID.

Pull Up a Chair Lunch, 12-1 pm, Thursday, Nov. 10, ABODE. Topic: Hospice and the homeless.

Pull Up a Chair Quarterly Dinner, 5:30-7:30 pm, Thursday, Dec. 8, Brown Hall. Essential Oils and Aromatherapy at End of Life, featuring Dr. William E. Kurtin and Lyn Belisle Kurtin.

Luminarias Lighting, 5:30-7:30 pm, Sunday, Dec. 11, at ABODE. Our end-of-year celebration honoring those we've loved and lost. Details on page 8.

Alamo Area Home Care Council Gala, Benefits ABODE, 11 am, Friday, Dec. 16, SA Marriott Northwest, 3233 NW Loop 410.

A Sweet Surprise

Margaret, a senior at Clark High School, made it her beautiful mission to come to ABODE and bake chocolate chip cookies for us in our kitchen. And what a sweet day for it. All three of our Guests – Anita, Angel and Tommy – were nearing the end of their lives. Our house was full of family members and friends – and the delicious aroma and tastes of these amazing cookies.

Thank you, Margaret, for offering a little something extra here at ABODE.

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
Beverly Tuomala RN, Vice President
Carol Bertsch, Secretary
Charlie Watts, Treasurer

Peg Armstrong
Lynnell Burkett
Kathryn Eggerss RN
Richard Ferguson MD
Karen Lugar
Rigo Montero
Lynn Blanco Peréz
Roxanna Soza

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

A Look Ahead

Along with our Sept. 22 Big Give (page 3), please mark your calendars for our Dia de los Muertos brunch on Sunday, Oct. 30, and our Holiday Luminarias Lighting on Sunday, Dec. 11.

For Dia de los Muertos, we invite you to stop by ABODE and pick up a beautifully boxed brunch – complimentary – to go. We'll then meet online to share our meals and an ABODE update. If you'd like to RSVP, please email **info@abodehome.org**.

We'll hold our Holiday Luminarias Lighting event in our backyard, filled with music from the Conroy Christmas Carolers and luminarias in honor of our loved ones. Our luminarias are $30 apiece and ready for purchase at **abodehome.org/luminarias**.