



CONTEMPLATIVE
CARE FOR THE DYING

NEWS From Home

SPRING 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.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY, MAY 14-15

Annual Spring Art Show and Sale Featuring E. Gordon West of the Watercolor Gang Plus: Vintage Chairs Reimagined

Ready to add a signed, original E. Gordon West of the Watercolor Gang to your art collection? Then don't miss ABODE's Annual Spring Art Show and Sale.

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

- Opening Reception with Silent Auction, 5-8 p.m., Saturday, May 14
- Brunch Show, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., Sunday, May 15

You'll find a beautiful array of Gordon's pieces and limited edition prints, along with art from many of our other local favorite artists – including several from Brother Cletus.

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



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Mary Thorsby

ABODE's 2022 is off to a wonderfully busy start. Our board, committees and volunteers have exciting initiatives in the works, and our staff continues to share our special love and contemplative expertise as we care for our Guests and their families and friends.

Annual Spring Art Show and Sale

Don't miss our Spring Art Show and Sale, May 14 and 15, at the Church of Reconciliation. You may recall last year's highly successful show featured the work of Brother Cletus. This year, we're featuring E. Gordon West of the Watercolor Gang – and other favorite local artists – please see our back page for the list.

Since 1964, the Watercolor Gang (Gordon, Clay McGaughey, Lee Ricks, Finis Collins, Ivan McDougal and Allen Richards) has traveled, painted and exhibited together, often doing shows to benefit ABODE. We are delighted to honor Gordon with our May show and hope you can join us.

Along with art, we'll have a silent auction of Vintage Chairs Reimagined. These chairs come from my mom's old family farm. According to our family folklore, relatives could come and spend their final months, weeks and days at mom's farm (sound coincidentally familiar?) – they just had to bring their own chairs.

I inherited these chairs after mom died, and I'm delighted that artists are transforming them with a new look – and a new life. Can't wait to see what they come up with!



Volunteer! Or Stop By for Bedside Yoga! Cake! Or All Three!



We're delighted to have so many fabulous volunteers helping us carry out our shared mission, vision and values. If you're fully vaccinated and would like to visit with Guests – or you've got a special talent to share – please email Susan at susan@abodehome.org. We plan to hold another training session this summer.

And come for a yoga break! We're excited to announce the addition of Bedside Yoga with Yoga Therapist Natalie Buster. She's now at ABODE each Friday, 3-4 pm, to lead Guests – and all of us – through breath work and gentle body movements. Please plan to stretch with us awhile!

We're also now the facilitators for San Antonio's Death Café, a discussion group that meets simply to talk about death and dying. We gather the second Saturday of the month, 2-3 pm, for coffee and cake at ABODE. Our group is one of almost 14,000 such Death Cafés around the world. All are welcome!



Remembering Glee

We recently received word that Glee Miller has died. Glee was a wonderful, very early ABODE supporter and volunteer, and active with us right up until COVID hit. She had a fulfilling career as a hospice chaplain and deeply loved ABODE.



Not long after I met Glee in October 2019, she was diagnosed with a terminal illness and went on hospice. She lived another two years or so, moving to Kansas to be near her daughter.

Among her many talents, Glee was an author – that's her signing my copy of her book, *The Moss Rose Antique Shop: Memories of Southern Grace*. She was a very special woman and mentor to many of us. Southern Grace, indeed.



Thank You for a Great Start to the New Year

As you know, ABODE does not charge our Guests, nor do we accept insurance. It's your generous gifts that keep our doors open and our rooms ready for those who need us most.

Our End-of-Life Navigators Sarah, Claudia, Diana, John and I welcome your tax-deductible donations at abodehome.org/donate or via checks made out to ABODE and sent to PO Box 47640, San Antonio, TX 78265.

We also happily accept gifts of appreciated stock for our Vanguard account, which is helping to build our endowment fund. For more details, please email info@abodehome.org and we'll send you the instructions.

ABODE Is Home

If you haven't visited us at 8619 Post Oak Lane lately, please give us a call at 210-967-9891, grab your mask and stop by. And bring your family, friends and colleagues. The more our community becomes acquainted with ABODE, the better for all of us.

We thank you so much, and we look forward to another incredible year of service together. We simply couldn't do what we do without you. Blessings to you all.



Mary Thorsby
Executive Director

Your Invitation to Everything!

Along with offering contemplative care for our Guests, ABODE's mission includes teaching the art of contemplative living and dying. Please RSVP to info@abodehome.org for any and all of these upcoming gatherings:

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

Threshold Singers serenade Guests two Mondays a month

Thursday Morning Meditation, led by Ed Alderette, 11 am Thursdays, followed by lunch at noon, ABODE

Bedside Yoga with Natalie, led by Natalie Buster, 3-4 pm, Fridays, ABODE

ABODE Academy 4: 6:30-7:30 pm, Thursdays, Through May 5, via Zoom
Topic: Death and Dying in Different Cultures and Communities

Pull Up a Chair Lunch, 12-1 pm, Thursday, April 14, ABODE
Topic: Family Dynamics

April 21 Cornhole Tournament, sponsored by the Alamo Area Home Care Council benefiting ABODE, details to come

Pull Up a Chair Lunch, 12-1 pm, Thursday, May 12, ABODE
Topic: Children's Bereavement

Death Café, 2-3 pm, second Saturday of the month starting May 14, ABODE

Annual Spring Art Show and Sale, May 14 and 15, see back page for details

Omega Home Network Conference, June 14 and 15, Hyatt Downtown Tulsa

Making Your Grief Count, 11:30 am-1 pm, 8 Wednesdays starting July 13, led by Darwin Haurtson, Porter Loring

Our Guests, Our Hearts

We've welcomed (and said goodbye to) quite a few Guests since our Winter 2021 newsletter. Thank you all for helping to care for these beautiful souls as they spent their final stretch of life at ABODE. We are so grateful to you.



David

Our December Luminarias Lighting came at just the right time for David. A few hours after the Luminarias event, he took his last breath, surrounded by his family. It was just the way he wanted it to be.

We knew earlier that morning that David had entered his final hours. He loved the Threshold Singers and had asked if they would sing to him when it was his time. Bill Pullen and Susan Ruch were already here, preparing for Luminarias. They called Deborah Carrithers – Deborah came right over – and around 4:30 pm, David got his wish. The three of them sang sweetly to him. That's them in the second picture. And during Luminarias, the Conroy Christmas Carolers serenaded him, as well.

So many of his family members and friends were here regularly, always bringing food and supplies, not just for David, but for all of us. The generosity they shared with one another and with us was wonderfully overwhelming.

His daughter Savanna (in the third picture with Christus Hospice Nurse Beverly Tuomala) and Bern (his son) adored David – and so many other of his family members, we know, miss him terribly.

Each Guest touches us in different ways. David is one of those Guests we'll be thinking about for quite some time. He made a big impact on us. And now he is at peace.

Fred

We joined the family of Fred, 88, as he left us, having spent just a handful of days at ABODE. Fred was an Army vet and a professional polo player. His father and brothers were also professional polo players – one brother, in fact, was the model for the Polo cologne logo.

Fred's three daughters surrounded his bed, holding his hands, when he took his last breath.



Chanch

Chanch, 88, was our second Guest from Laos! (Remember Kong? He was from Laos, too!) Chanch had a stroke a while back and never really regained consciousness. However, when the Threshold Singers serenaded her, she tapped her left foot to the beat. It was quite something to see.

Will

Will, 97, was among the last of his generation – a World War II Air Force mechanic/gunner who flew on the B-26 Marauder in Europe. Will loved fishing, camping, travel and all things Military. Duty, Honor and Country was always his motto.

Will lost his wife quite some time ago and was living alone. His children and grandchildren happened to be in San Antonio during Luminarias (that's the Conroy Christmas Carolers singing his favorite carols to him on the right) – he died a few days afterward.



John

An ABODE supporter who is dear friends with John's mom suggested that he come to us. John was just 54 and leaves behind his beautiful wife and two teenagers. We were honored to provide John with a safe, beautiful place to pass in peace – and his family with the opportunity they needed to tell him goodbye.

Alicia

Alicia, 68, had a form of blood cancer and grew weaker by the day. Her daughter, son-in-law and two young grandchildren visited her every morning and every evening, and several of our volunteers regularly read the Bible to her in Spanish.

Alicia knew her time was near – and she seemed to, as they say, lean into it, letting her body do what the body knows how to do. Very sweet woman. And so lovely that her family could spend so much time with her.



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Genevieve and Evangelina

Genevieve, 89, and Evangelina, 71, arrived at ABODE around the same time. That's Genevieve's son, Dan, with her on the left. He was always by her side – so devoted – and he was with her when she died.

Before he left ABODE, Dan asked if he could sit with Evangelina in the next room over. He'd noticed that no family or friends had visited her. A little later that day, Evangelina died, too.

Two lovely spirits of two lovely women...and a special gentleman who helped walk them both home.

Harold

Harold, 61, was living in Lubbock and had driven to San Antonio to spend the holidays with his soon-to-be ex-wife and her boyfriend. Evidently, they were all good friends! He became so sick, though, that he went to the hospital and then came to us. That's our Volunteer Coordinator Susan Ruch sitting with Harold. He died soon after.



Renee

Sometimes folks come to us looking quite lively, and then they die the very next day. Such was the case with Renee, 68. Renee was an Army Vet – and we barely had a chance to get to know her. She died 24 hours after being welcomed by Milo and Mary. Things can change so quickly at end of life.



Ken

Ken, 88, was Retired Army Colonel, and so well-loved by his family and friends. He received regular visits from them all, and from ABODE supporter Hal Smarkola – a Retired Air Force Colonel. Hal makes it his mission to visit every vet who comes to ABODE, and he often shares his experiences on Facebook. That's Hal on the left with Ken and Ken's son Allan, a Chinook pilot.

All four of Ken's children visited him often – his daughter Patty was with him when he died. He also had quite a few lady friends who doted on him, making sure his room was arranged just the way they knew he would like.

Ken served our country with honor, and we were very honored to serve him and help walk him home.



James

In January, we received this email: "We have a gentleman friend, James, who visits our parish (St. Anthony the Great Eastern Orthodox) who has been homeless for a while. He was diagnosed with cancer over the past week or two and is now getting set up for hospice care. However, he has no residence, and the hospital seems like they need to discharge him soon. I can't imagine him not having a place to live during this time...and want to ensure James does not end up back on the street."

We were able to welcome James – and he quickly stole our hearts. He was quite a character, and every now again would surprise us with a special sweetness. His church friends visited him regularly, taking him on outings and bringing him whatever items he wanted. He had quite a wonderful support group.

James very peacefully let go at 3 am one morning. By 4 am, his dear friend Father David was praying over him for at least an hour. He was only 56 years old. We will miss him very much.



Carlos

Carlos was with us a very short time. That's his lovely wife Terry lighting our Tree of Life in his honor. Carlos completed his journey soon after. 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."

Yolanda

Yolanda was a very tiny woman with the cruelest case of cancer that we've seen at ABODE for quite some time. We kept her pain under control and tended to quite a large wound several times a day. Through it all, she showed us nothing but the sweetest spirit and the most beautiful smile. Yolanda spent many days in a deep, deep sleep before she finally let go. She was just 54.





Janet

We didn't know much about Janet, 70, when she came to us except that she had a very interesting career as an attorney. While she was unable to communicate with us verbally, we made sure she felt safe, valued and loved at every step of her journey. Janet was our 260th Guest since we opened our doors eight years ago

Tom

Tom, 61, was quite far along with cancer when he joined us. His wife, Mary, heard about ABODE through friends of Ken (see opposite page) – and she's the cousin of another Guest we cared for in 2020 – Ruth. She very much wanted Tom to have the same lovely experience at ABODE. In fact, Tom was in the same room as Ruth was – our beautiful Blue Room.

Mary attended our Pull Up a Chair dinner in February featuring harpist/music thanatologist Deborah Marshall. She asked if Deborah would come play her harp for Tom. Deborah was happy to oblige. Such a beautiful experience.

Tom spent his final days listening to his favorites – Frank Sinatra and Bruce Springsteen – and enjoying visits from his pup, Harley. He died surrounded by Mary, his sister-in-law and his best friend.



Wilma

We're happy to have Wilma with us – with regular visits from her daughter Cindy and furbaby Bridget. Wilma spent her career as a bank teller – and she enjoys tiny beadwork. She's currently in our Peach Room and loves to have visitors, so please feel free to stop by and chat with her.

Holding These Folks in Light, Too

We've had several other Guests who arrived and died within days – Raymond (85), Linda (63), Jose (60), Richard (78), Susie (71), Richard (81), Vance (61), Dale (66), Enrique (77), Greg (74), Anatolle (72), Walter (88), Maria (73), Maria (92), Jesus (63) and Vaughn (67).

We thought Vaughn had just one friend in this world – a fella named John who came by several times to check on him. Turns out that Vaughn had a lady friend who came to see him, which warmed our hearts. Author Frank Ostaseski writes, "As people come closer to death, only two questions really matter: 'Am I loved?' and 'Did I love well?'" We hope Vaughn felt plenty of love in his final days.

Follow Along with Our Guest Stories

We often share Guest stories at [@ABODEcontemplativecare](#) on Facebook and Instagram. 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



Pull Up a Chair: Harpist Deborah Marshall

Such a wonderful Staff and Volunteer Dinner with Harpist/Music Thanatologist Deborah Marshall (held Feb. 10)! Here she is with our Ed Alderette, sharing her talents and experiences playing the harp for those who are dying. By matching her music to their breath, Deborah brings peace and tranquility as people enter the final phase of life.

Many thanks to Deborah, celebrity chef Frankie Boone, Church of Reconciliation and to our many volunteers and supporters for joining us for such a special evening.

Book Club and Study Group

We just concluded several weeks of reading and discussing Frank Ostaseski's *The Five Invitations* – an ABODE favorite. What a great experience! Our group includes members as far away as Canada and Australia – we're global! We'll tackle another great book later this year. Stay tuned for details and plan to join us.

Luminarias Lighting

Thank you for your luminarias purchases – more than 200 in all! We loved having so many of you stop by and enjoy the wonderful Conroy Christmas Carolers, treats from FrankieB Bakery and Scout & Cellar wines. What a lovely way to wrap up the year!



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!




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Saturday-Sunday, May 14-15 Art Show and Sale Featuring E. Gordon West of the Watercolor Gang – Plus: Vintage Chairs Reimagined



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

- Opening Reception with Silent Auction, 5-8 p.m., Saturday, May 14
- Brunch Show, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., Sunday, May 15

We have original, signed E. Gordon West art along with limited edition prints – plus art from other local artists (right) including Brother Cletus. Plus, we'll have a silent auction of vintage chairs repurposed and reimagined by our artists – see page 2 for details!

Both events include fabulous catering from Celebrity Chef FrankieB and wines from Judy Tierney – Independent Scout & Cellar Consultant. Please RSVP to **info@abodehome.org** to help us with our planning. We hope you'll join us!

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

Don't miss ABODE's Spring Art Show and Sale featuring a beautiful array of E. Gordon West pieces, along with art from many of our other favorite local artists:

Lyn Belisle
Michelle Belto
Frankie Boone
Toni Cheshire
Jim Collier
Marie Collier
Vikki Fields
Bruce Flohr
Lesta Frank
Becky Hadley
James Wyatt Hendricks
Terry Gay Puckett
Edwin Sasek
Patsy Sasek
Steven Smith
Peter Szarmach
E. Gordon West