



CONTEMPLATIVE
CARE FOR THE DYING

NEWS From Home

WINTER 2022 | ABODEHOME.ORG



Our Mission

ABODE provides a beautiful home and compassionate care for those at end of life, at no charge. 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 | Sunday, Dec. 11 Holiday Luminarias

The spirit of ABODE is especially bright during the holidays. We have so much to celebrate and to be thankful for – our Guests, staff, volunteers, board, hospice partners and all of you, our generous donors.

On Sunday, Dec. 11, we honor our Guests and all of our loved ones with Holiday Luminarias filling our backyard. Join us outdoors, 5-7 pm, for our annual gathering and enjoy the beautiful luminarias, the Conroy Christmas Carolers, cider and holiday treats.

To purchase luminarias in honor of your loved ones, please visit abodehome.org/luminarias. Or complete and return the form on page 8. Luminarias are \$30 apiece and will feature your loved ones' names.

Happy Holidays from ABODE!



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Mary Thorsby

In his book, *Sum*, David Eagleman writes: "There are three deaths. The first is when the body ceases to function. The second is when the body is consigned to the grave. The third is that moment, sometime in the future, when your name is spoken for the last time."

ABODE has the beautiful privilege of extending the third death. We often share memories of the remarkable, loving people we've had the honor of knowing and caring for in their final days.

Since we opened our doors eight years ago, you, our ABODE Community members, have helped us care for more than 300 Guests. During the Dia de los Muertos weekend in San Antonio, we honored every single one.

From our beautiful ofrenda at MuertosFest downtown to our annual Dia de los Muertos Celebration Brunch to our first-ever Reading of the Names – those we've served at ABODE are always in our hearts, as are their families and friends. These events are featured on page 7.

EXTENDING OUR REACH

Our End of Life Navigators, Marynelda, Claudia, Crystal and John, focus on our Guests' physical needs – and their emotional and spiritual needs, as well. We've long wanted to teach others our contemplative approach to care, and we're happy to report the success of two key initiatives:

First, our fall Staff and Volunteer Training was exceptionally well attended, with presentations, hands-on practice and wonderful food and fellowship. New volunteers have joined in with our longtime folks, and ABODE just gets better and better!

Second, we're delighted to partner with the amazing Anna Adams of International Doula Life Movement to launch our very successful ABODE Death Doula Certification program. Our inaugural cohort of 15 students graduated a few weeks ago, and we're busy planning several 2023 cohorts now.

If you'd like to explore the emerging career field of Death Doulas or volunteer at ABODE (or both!), please email info@abodehome.org. We'd love to connect with you!



Christus Hospice RN Beverly Tuomala shows how to help when Guests are bed bound.

We Surpassed Our Goal!



Your Love + Support
Are what make the beauty of ABODE possible. We are deeply grateful.

big
give

A Big Give Thank You

Many, many thanks for your gifts during San Antonio's Big Give campaign. With your help, we not only met our \$50,000 goal – we surpassed it by \$3,000!

We are very grateful to you all. Several donors have expressed interest in making a gift of appreciated stock to us. We'd be delighted to accept! In fact, we've set up a brokerage account to make these kinds of transactions quick and easy.

Email info@abodehome.org if you'd like more information.



Co-Founders Patsy and Edwin Sasek welcome everyone to our training session.



Joe Errington shares the significance of his altar piece.



ABODE Death Doula Instructor Anna Adams in action!



LEADING OUR WAY FORWARD

We are deeply appreciative of our Board of Directors, led by Board President Robert Soza, for their wise counsel, innovative ideas, tireless support and wonderful resources and community connections.

Our monthly meetings are a wonderful mix of brainstorming, strategy and a healthy dose of humor. Thank you all so much for your commitment to ABODE. We've made such great strides this year.



Robert Soza
Jackson Walker



Peg Armstrong
Grief/Bereavement
Psychotherapist



Lynnell Burkett
Retired Journalist



Carol Bertsch
Law Offices of Carol
Bertsch



Kathryn Eggers RN
H-E-B



Rich Ferguson MD
Hospice Physician



Karen Lugar
Cornerstone Home
Lending



Rigo Montero
Embrace Hospice



Lynn Perez
Toyota
Manufacturing



Roxanna Soza
Community Leader



Beverly Tuomala RN
Christus Hospice



Charlie Watts
Ameriprise

OUR HOME IS YOUR HOME

Without the generosity of our ABODE Community, we simply couldn't do what we do. We 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.

COME SEE US, FRIENDS!

If you haven't visited us at 8619 Post Oak Lane lately, please give us a call at 210-967-9891 and stop by. If you can join us for our Sunday, Dec. 11 Holiday Luminarias, all the better. More details at abodehome.org/luminarias.

Thank you for a wonderful 2022. We wish you a very warm and love-filled holiday season and an even more exciting new year.

Mary Thorsby
Executive Director

Educational Outreach: It's Part of Our Mission

Along with offering compassionate care to our Guests, ABODE's mission includes teaching the art of contemplative living and dying. Our Education initiatives do exactly that, and we invite you to participate in any and all going forward. Here's what we have planned:

Threshold Choir serenades Guests two Mondays a month.

Monday Meditation Group with Edwin Sasek, 5-6 pm on Mondays, Zoom.

Thursday Morning Meditation Group with Ed Alderette, 11 am on Thursdays, followed by lunch, ABODE.

Death Cafe led by Lynn Perez, 2-3:30 pm, second Saturdays, ABODE.



Contemplative Drumming with Mario and Edwin, 4 pm, second Saturdays, ABODE.

Luminarias Lighting, 5-7 pm, Sunday, Dec. 11, ABODE. Our end-of-year celebration honoring those we've loved and lost. Details on page 1.

Healing Holidays with Edwin Sasek, 6-8 pm, Tuesday, Dec. 13, ABODE.

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

Making Your

Grief Count

with Darwin Huartson, Porter Loring, 11:30 am-1 pm, for 8 Wednesdays, Jan. 23-March 12, ABODE.



Essential Oils and Aromatherapy at End of Life

with Dr. William E. Kurtin and Lyn Belisle Kurtin, 5:30-7:30 pm, Thursday, Feb. 9, Brown Hall, Church of Reconciliation.

Interested in any (or all) of the above? Please email info@abodehome.org.

Our Guests, Our Hearts

Miller

Miller, 73, was an Air Force Veteran and much loved by his family and friends who remember his sense of humor and love for pranks.

His sister and brother traveled from Chicago to spend every minute with Miller, and his son visited, wearing his full military uniform. Miller was under the care of Kindred Hospice.

The day before he died, Miller received a final salute from Retired Air Force Colonel Hal Smarkola, who makes it his mission to salute every Vet who comes to ABODE. We are honored to care for all of our Guests at ABODE, and we have a special place in our hearts for our Veterans.



Alan

Alan, 50, was with us for just two days, under the care of Embrace Hospice. Here, he's visited by our Board Member Kathryn Eggerss, Nurse Care Manager at H-E-B. Alan, a Veteran, had worked in H-E-B's Pharmacy Services.

"ABODE's care of Alan came at such a critical time – he could no longer live on his own and there were very few options for care in his final days," Kathryn says. "His time at ABODE was short, but so beautiful. We are so thankful that he didn't have to die alone."

Jane

Jane, 74, came to us under the wonderful care of the Christus Hospice team. Jane had worked as the receptionist in her brother's dental office – coincidentally, Volunteer Susan Moreno's dentist! We're starting to see these kinds of connections more and more.

Jane was with us a little over two weeks. Susan and Volunteer Jen LeCavalier were with her when she died.

Here's Jen's description of Jane's final moments:

"What a special passing Jane had! I opened the patio door for the sun setting, birds singing, cicadas gearing up – and I described it all to her. I massaged her hands and shoulders and prayed and told her, 'I bet you helped lots of people who were afraid to see the dentist. You were the first impression for so many and the person they needed to make them feel safe.'

"Her breathing stayed so paced and relaxed the whole time. Very peaceful. A sweet way to pass with the sun!"

A sweet way, indeed. RIP, Jane.



Charlotte

Charlotte, 79, was one of those folks who never met a stranger, and she always chuckled as she shared her many adventures of her life. Charlotte came to us under the care of Christus Hospice.

She'd had a wonderful career in banking – and she loved to stay up to date on world happenings. Her husband had died a few years earlier. We were happy to be her friends and family as we cared for her at ABODE.



Gary

Gary, 81, came to us because his wife Jenn loves ABODE and very much wanted him to be here when he died. The timing worked beautifully, and we were able to care for him in partnership with Trinity Hospice.

Gary was an Army Veteran and received a final salute from Retired Air Force Colonel Hal Smarkola. Gary's son and daughter were so touched to witness Col. Smarkola's important tribute. (Hal drove through a terrible rainstorm to get here that day.)

Jenn and family were very appreciative of their time at ABODE and eagerly embraced all the contemplative practices that we offer, making for a truly beautiful and transformative experience.



Martha

After caring for many, many Guests here at ABODE, we were able to return that same loving, contemplative care to beautiful Martha – a full circle story that will remain with us always.

Martha's brother Larry died at ABODE in 2016, and that experience inspired her to join us as an End of Life Navigator for a few years. She and John (pictured above) have quite fond memories of working with one another – their reunion was quite heartwarming.

Martha, 64, was under the care of Guiding Light Hospice. She called us back in June to say that she was terminally ill, and she wanted to spend her last days at ABODE. She knew her time was limited, and she just needed a quiet, peaceful place to rest.

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

Mary

Mary, 94, was pretty far along in her journey when she arrived at ABODE. In fact, she was with us for just a few days – just enough time for the lovely Threshold Singers to serenade her as she slept.

Mary was under the care of Vitas. We're happy we could care for her at such a tender time.



Craig

Craig, 70, came to us under the care of Embrace Hospice, and had quite a few ailments. It took him several days to feel completely at home here – and once he did, we could see that he'd found the peace he needed.

Craig had no immediate family – his nephews and nieces and their kiddos, though, spent many hours at his bedside. He definitely knew he was well loved.

Holding These Folks In Light, As Well

We've had several other Guests arrive and die within days. In recent months, we've been honored to care for Betty, Charles, Norma, Danika, Ellen, Curtis and Janna. And we've welcomed Irma, Frances and Maria.



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. You can still get your end-of-year tax deduction – or a couple of them! – by sending a check, calling with your credit card or donating directly at abodehome.org/donate. We'll provide you with a receipt – and our sincere gratitude.

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!



Follow Along with Our Guest Stories



We often share Guest stories at [@ABODEcontemplativecare](https://www.facebook.com/ABODEcontemplativecare) on Facebook and Instagram, [@abodecare](https://twitter.com/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.

Dia de los Muertos Celebrations



What a festive Sept. 29-30 Dia de Los Muertos weekend! We were thrilled to participate in MuertosFest downtown for the first time – and our annual Dia de Los Muertos Celebration Brunch was a sweet success.

Many thanks to our Board Member Lynn Perez and her husband Gabe for creating our gorgeous ofrenda. Our altar, shaped like a home, was dedicated to the more than 300 Guests we've served since we opened our doors eight years ago. Each "room" featured photos of Guests and other mementos.

Our annual Dia de los Muertos Brunch was just as touching, with folks picking up gourmet brunch boxes by Frankie Boone Catering and libations from Judy Tierney of Scout & Cellar. We then met on Zoom to honor our Guests and recap our year.

Many thanks to everyone – especially our dedicated Volunteers – for making San Antonio a beautiful place to remember and honor those we've loved and lost.



Reading of the Names

Our Dia de los Muertos celebrations continued on Nov. 1 with the Reading of the Names. This first-ever ABODE event honored the more than 120 Guests we've cared for since COVID. Families and friends gathered at ABODE and stood as we read their loved ones' names and lit candles in their honor. We look forward to making this an annual event.





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 210.967.9891

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Peter Szarmach
Denise Miner-Williams
Jane Marie Young

Holiday Luminaria Order Form

Would you like to honor your loved ones with Holiday Luminarias? We invite you to order online:

abodehome.org/luminarias

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

ABODE Contemplative Care for the Dying
P.O. Box 47640, San Antonio, TX 78265

Luminarias are \$30 each.

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

I'm honoring:

Name: _____

Name: _____

Name: _____

Name: _____

Pre-orders accepted through Saturday, Dec. 10.

Questions? Please contact Mary Thorsby,

mary@abodehome.org or 415-271-4974.

