



CONTEMPLATIVE
CARE FOR THE DYING

NEWS From Home

SPRING 2024 | [ABODEHOME.ORG](https://abodehome.org)



Our Mission

We teach the art of contemplative living and dying while providing a beautiful home and compassionate care for those at end of life – at no charge.

Our Vision

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

Saturday-Sunday, April 6-7

Annual Art Show and Sale Featuring Steven G. Smith

Ready to add a signed, original Steven G. Smith to your art collection? Then don't miss ABODE's Annual Art Show and Sale.

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

Saturday, April 6 – Opening Reception with Silent Auction, 5-8 pm

Sunday, April 7 – Brunch Show with Silent Auction Finale, 10 am-1 pm

You'll find a beautiful array of Steven's pieces and limited-edition prints, along with art from many of our other favorite local artists – including several from Brother Cletus. Turn to the back page for a full list of participating artists and more details. We'd love to have you with us!

CEO'S UPDATE

Mary Thorsby

Happy 10-Year Anniversary, ABODE!

Can you believe it? 2024 marks our 10th year of serving Guests and their loved ones. Ten years of caring for so many sweet souls in their final stretch of life's journey.



In November 2013, ABODE's founders Edwin and Patsy Sasek and several supporters gathered to break ground for our beautiful home. Here, we see Waheeda Kara, Tom and Judy Taylor, Gordon Hartman, Rusty Wilson, Edwin Sasek, Peter Szarmach, Arthur Dawes, Martin Martin, Craig Newhouse, Michael Gentry, Diane Thomas, Patsy Sasek, Liz Newhouse and Petra McCann – folks who remain wonderful supporters today!

By Dec. 3, 2014, we welcomed our first Guest, Scott, just 36 years old, under the care of VITAS Hospice.

Since then, we've welcomed our 415th Guest – that's 415 people, plus their families and friends, who have experienced our contemplative, compassionate care since we opened our doors 10 years ago. Such a blessing.

A CENTER FOR END-OF-LIFE EDUCATION

Along with caring for folks, ABODE has transformed into a center for education on all things end of life. We now offer 16 popular programs, from ABODE Academy and Death Cafe to Grief and Caregiver Support, Meditation, Bedside Yoga, Sound Healing and new this year – Deep Listening – all designed to teach the art of contemplative living and dying.

Through our ABODE End of Life Doula Certification program, we continue to teach others in the community to do exactly what we do at ABODE. We now dispatch our ABODE-trained Doulas to help care for hospice patients who want to remain in their own homes, thereby extending ABODE's contemplative reach exponentially.

And we have one more new offering for you – our ABODE End of Life Yoga Certification! This training is for yoga teachers, therapists, doulas, hospices and anyone drawn to serving those who are dying. Yoga therapy can so beautifully alleviate the mystery and fear often associated with the dying and death process.

UPCOMING



Annual Art Show and Sale

Don't miss our Art Show and Sale, April 6 and 7, at the Church of Reconciliation. You may recall last year's highly successful show featured the work of Terry Gay Puckett. This year, we're featuring Steven G. Smith – and our other favorite local artists.

Please see our back page for the full list of artists and our show times. We are delighted to honor Steve with our April show and hope you can join us.



For details on our ABODE End of Life Doula Certification (in partnership with IDLM) and all of our other wonderful programs this year, please refer to our insert.



MEET OUR STAFF

We have some new beautiful faces and big hearts on our staff! These are the folks who keep our home and programs running – and who provide our contemplative, hands-on care for our Guests 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:



Nicole Adams
End of Life Navigator



Claudia Baca
End of Life Navigator



Natalie Buster
End of Life Navigator, End of
Life Doula and Yoga Director



Anthony Morales
End of Life Navigator and
House Manager



Terry Ramirez
End of Life Navigator



Crystal Reisher
End of Life Navigator



Sarah Sasek
End of Life Navigator



Mary Thorsby
Chief Executive Officer



John Vinson
End of Life Navigator

OUR HOME IS YOUR HOME

As always, we so appreciate and need your online donations at abodehome.org/donate – or checks made out to ABODE and sent to PO Box 47640, San Antonio, TX 78265.

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 April 6 and 7 Art Show, all the better. More details at abodehome.org/art.

As ABODE moves forward into our 10th year, we extend our deepest gratitude for helping to begin the journey. Your support has created a lasting legacy that continues to serve our city so well.

Mary Thorsby
Chief Executive Officer

Recent House Happenings



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.



Photos by Patty Garza

Beautiful Luminarias

Thank you for your holiday luminarias purchases – more than 600 in all! We loved having so many of you stop by and enjoy the musical stylings of Lou Cabaza, the festive Conroy Christmas Carolers and treats from FrankieB Bakery and Scout & Cellar wines. What a lovely way to wrap up the year!

Our Guests, Our Hearts

We've welcomed (and said goodbye to) quite a few Guests since our Winter 2023 newsletter. Thank you all for helping us care for these beautiful souls during their final stretch of life. We are so grateful to you.

Ronald

We called him The Candy Man. An Army Veteran under the care of Trinity Hospice, Ronnie joined us in our Peach Room in December, and he brought along a festive supply of cookies, candies and Moon Pies.

He loved visitors – especially visits with šeima (pronounced Shay-ma), Navigator Sarah Sasek's new pup. šeima brought Ronnie such joy in his final days. The two were big buddies. And it didn't hurt that Ronnie kept a stash of dog treats nearby.



Retired Air Force Colonel Hal Smarkola came for a visit, as he does for all of our Vets. Nurse Beverly Tuomala was on hand to experience this sweet exchange.

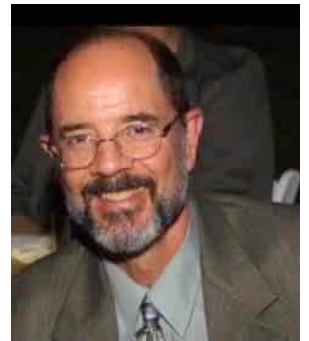
"I love you so much for offering to serve in our United States Military," Hal said, as they exchanged a final salute. "Not everyone wants to serve in the military. But you stepped up and answered the challenge. I just want to thank you."

We were honored to care for Ronnie, and we'll think of him often.

Robert

Robert joined us in our Peach Room in November – we were deeply honored to care for him. Robert was a Church of Reconciliation minister many years ago when our Founders Edwin and Patsy Sasek began attracting support for their vision for ABODE. He was a wonderful supporter from the beginning.

Robert loved birds, fly fishing, wilderness backpacking and traversing as often as he could to the Continental Divide in the Rocky Mountains, and shared his passion with his family, friends and parishioners.



In January 2020, Robert received a devastating dual diagnosis of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), formerly known as Lou Gehrig's Disease, and Frontotemporal Dementia (FTD). He called the diagnosis his "last great adventure" and somehow held onto his gentle spirit. In the end, the FTD and ALS rendered him unable to move or speak or swallow or breathe.

His wife Julie brought Robert to ABODE for his final days. He was under the care of Trinity Hospice – and of Lily, his canine caregiver extraordinaire. That's Lily, sitting in her usual spot, on top of Robert.

We're thankful that Robert wanted to spend his last stretch of time with us, in our home, which he helped build.

Shirley

Shirley was our Guest in our Peach Room in November, under the care of Compassus Hospice. Her son John and his wife Mary Ann were always by her side. They decorated her room with photos and quilts she'd made – including the one on her bed.

We continue to receive donations in memory of Shirley, even from as far away as England – she was clearly well loved. Our hearts were especially warmed by the love she shared with John, Mary Ann and their family.



David

Every now and again, the loved one of an ABODE Guest will refer another sweet soul to us. Such was the case with David, who joined us in our Green Room in December under the care of VITAS Hospice. We'd taken care of Brian's wife a few years back, so when his friend David got sick, Brian suggested that he come to ABODE, too.

David was an Army Vet and came from a military family. When Retired Air Force Colonel Hal Smarkola arrived to share a final salute, they all joined in, including his mom. David was born in Orleans, France, and traveled with his family as a military "brat" half his life. He served his country for 12 years.

Jesus

In a sweet coincidence, Jesus came to us during the Christmas holidays. He was an Air Force Vet – so that called for a special visit from Retired Air Force Colonel Hal Smarkola. Hal delivered a final salute, as he does for all of our Veterans, and presented Jesus and his family with a small flag that he folded himself.

Jesus, or Jesse, as he was called, was under the care of Christus Hospice in our Green Room. He served his country as an Air Force Fire Protection Specialist for 20 years and retired as a Technical Sergeant. While in the Air Force he served tours overseas in Korea and Vietnam and was stationed in Alaska, Wyoming, Maryland and Louisiana, receiving various Merit medals.

Jesse and his wife were married 61 years. He was her devoted caregiver during the last years of her life. We were honored to do the same for Jesse.



Guiman



Every now and then, a Guest will come to ABODE and, because of the peacefulness and our contemplative care, they get better! Such was the case with Guiman. She joined us in our Blue Room in November and returned home with her husband and son in December.

Guiman and her husband only speak Mandarin, so we kept tabs on her, asking her friend Wai to check in and let us know how she was doing. That's Wai serenading Guiman in Mandarin with volunteer Bill Pullen of the Threshold Choir, serenading in English.

Wai let us know that it was time for Guiman to return to ABODE. It just so happened that our Blue Room was available. We welcomed Guiman back – and she died the next day. We were honored to be with her and were so thankful that her family shared her with us again. Guiman was under the care of Beacon Hospice.

Philip

Philip joined us in December as our 400th Guest! That's our volunteer Sharon Bennett welcoming Philip to our Green Room in December, reassuring him that he was in a safe, beautiful home surrounded by the sweetest caregivers.

Philip was the youngest of six and very much loved and adored. We had a lot in common with Philip – he was the owner and operator of Vinyard Funeral Homes in Floresville, serving many families with love and compassion – just like we do!

Philip was an adventurer and a maverick who had a quick wit, even in his final days, and loved traveling, a wide variety of music, hunting and spending time with cherished friends and family. Montana and Yellowstone National Park were dear to his heart. He was a wonderful cook and enjoyed cooking for others.

"He was a hero and a cowboy at heart and came to the rescue of many throughout his life," his family wrote. "He will be deeply missed."

Philip was under the care of Gentiva Hospice.



Ramiro

Ramiro – or Ram, as he was called – was our Guest in our Green Room, under the care of Abundant Hospice. He joined us in January.

A famous chef, Ram was the owner of The Owls Nest restaurant in Nicola Park, OK. Folks were crazy for his chicken-fried steak. Ram told us he learned his cooking skills from his mom, who, along with several other family members, stayed by his side for most of his time with us at ABODE.

We loved caring for Ram – Milo made a special point of checking on him daily. We'll think of this special family often. RIP, Ram.

Deborah

Deborah joined us in our Blue Room in January. Originally from New York, Deborah was an active mom, joyfully serving in parent-teacher organizations at her daughters' schools, often in leadership roles. And she loved organizing creative arts and crafts projects for her girls and their friends. That's Deborah's daughter Lindsay with her, upon arrival at ABODE.

Once her children were grown, Deborah pursued a lifelong dream of living in the American Southwest and relocated to Uvalde, where she taught history at Uvalde High School.

Deborah loved bird watching at Cook's Slough and had an uncanny ability to spot bald eagles and red-tailed hawks and could seemingly find them just about everywhere while driving. In Uvalde, Deb enjoyed antiquing, crafting (especially knitting and wreath-making), volunteering at the hospice thrift shop and walking her beloved dog, Sweetie Pie, along the Leona River.

Deborah was under the care of Christus Hospice.



Felix

Each time we welcome a Vet to ABODE, we send a text to Retired Air Force Colonel Hal Smarkola and he heads right over. In January, Hal shared his sweet message, a small folded American flag and a final salute with Felix, a Vietnam Army Vet, in our Blue Room. Felix's daughter, granddaughter and tiny baby great granddaughter were with us, proudly watching the special moment.



The morning after his final salute from Hal – and on his dearly departed wife's birthday – Felix took his last breath, quietly and peacefully. That's our Navigator Anthony Morales, providing his special blend of care and comfort during Felix's final hours.

Felix was under the care of Christus Hospice.



Ramon

Just hours after receiving a folded flag, a beautiful message and a final salute from Retired Air Force Colonel Hal Smarkola, Ramon, a Marines Veteran, took his final breath in our Blue Room. Ramon was under the care of Gentiva Hospice.

"I don't know you, but I love you," Hal told Ramon. "You know why? Because we both served in the same military, and we supported the same country. The best country in the world. You did a wonderful job protecting the United States. You're dismissed, and you're free to go." And perhaps, that's just what Ramon was waiting to hear. Semper Fi.



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 Rosalina, Luis, Rachel, Alice, Geraldine, Maria Guadalupe (Lupita), Edgar, Thomas, Patricia, Honario, Rodney, Irene, Rudy, Michelle and Antoine.

Many thanks to these hospices for partnering with us: Abundant, Amedia, Amedisys, Beacon, Christus, Compassus, Embrace, Gentiva, Methodist, Suncrest, Summit, Trinity and VITAS.

Follow Along with Our Guest Stories



We often share Guest stories at **@ABODEcontemplativecare** on Facebook and Instagram, 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.



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Saturday-Sunday, April 6-7 Art Show and Sale Featuring Steven G. Smith and Many Other Favorite Local Artists

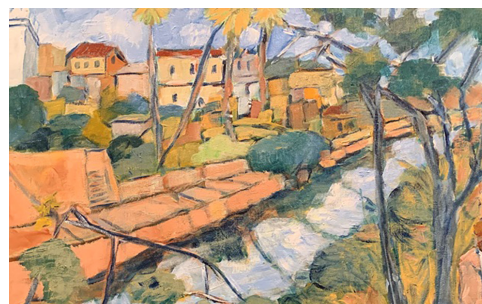
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10 am-1 pm

We have original, signed Steven G.
Smith art along with limited-edition
prints – plus art from other local
artists (right) including Brother
Cletus.

Plus, we'll have a silent auction of
more beautiful art. 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!



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

Anita Centeno	Terry Gay Puckett
Brother Cletus	Christine Sanchez
Jim Collier	Edwin Sasek
Lesta Frank	Patsy Sasek
Nancy Gerfers	Sandy Smith
Becky Hadley	Peter Szarmach
Tabarus James	E. Gordon West
Claudia Langford	Dona Walston
Cindy Morawski	Charlotte Wyatt
Roy Murray	