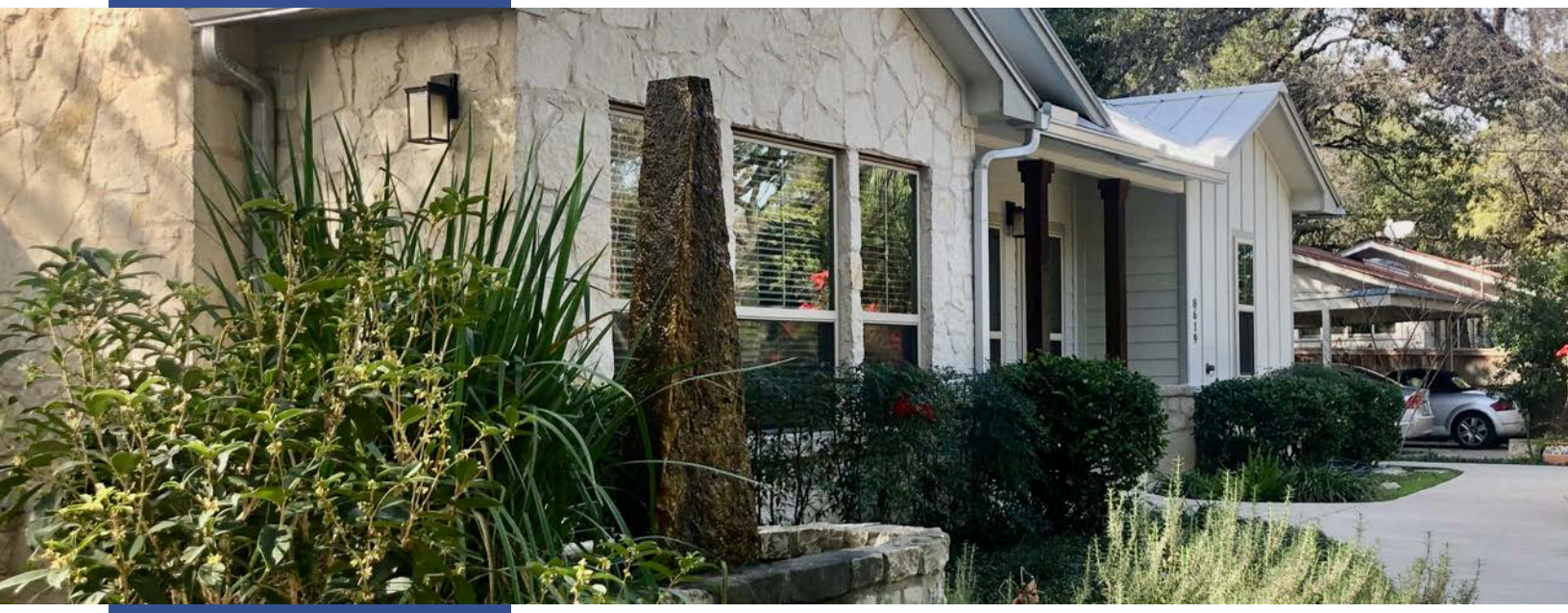
NEWS From Home

WINTER 2024 | 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.

SAVE THE DATE | Sunday, Dec. 15

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, doulas, board, hospice partners and all of you, our ABODE Community.

On Sunday, Dec. 15, we honor our Guests and our loved ones with Holiday Luminarias filling our backyard. Join us, 5-7 pm, for our annual gathering and enjoy the beautiful luminarias, the musical stylings of Lou Cabaza, the Conroy Christmas Carolers, libations and holiday treats.

To purchase luminarias featuring your loved ones' names ($35 apiece), please visit **abodehome.org/luminarias**. Or complete and return the form on page 8.

Happy Holidays from ABODE!

CEO UPDATE

Mary Thorsby

When our founders Edwin and Patsy Sasek began imagining ABODE, they and many early supporters brainstormed: What would ABODE look like? How would we operate and be funded? How many people could we care for? And – will it work?

I'm delighted to share that since we welcomed our first Guest on Dec. 3, 2014 – 10 years ago – our beautiful home has run quite smoothly, we've attracted wonderful support and we've cared for close to 500 Guests – more than 80 this year alone. ABODE most definitely works. And we have you, our ABODE Community, to thank.

AN EVENING WITH ALUA ARTHUR: CELEBRATING ABODE'S 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

Close to 300 of us filled the Church of Reconciliation for An Evening with Alua Arthur: Celebrating ABODE's 10-Year Anniversary. This is where most of ABODE's early brainstorming took place, so it was only fitting that we gathered at the church with Edwin and Patsy for our celebration, including a proclamation from Mayor Ron Nirenberg.

Our featured speaker Alua Arthur – a leading death doula and *New York Times* bestselling author – was riveting! Alua shared her story of moving from depression to living life fully and finding her gifts in caring for those at end of life. She inspired us, lifted our spirits, made us laugh and asked us to contemplate: What must we do to be at peace with ourselves so that we may live presently and die gracefully?

We gathered for a champagne and cake reception afterward, and Alua graciously signed copies of her book, *Briefly Perfectly Human*, spending special time with everyone.

STAFF AND VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Each fall, we look forward to our two-day Staff and Volunteer Training, filled with engaging presentations, panel discussions, hands-on demos, our famous *Sticky Situations: How Would You Have Handled That?* session and wonderful food and fellowship. And new this year – "yoga snacks" and "contemplative connections" sprinkled throughout. New volunteers have joined in with our longtime folks, and ABODE just gets better and better!

WE WELCOME YOUR DONATIONS

abodehome.org/donate

ABODE, PO Box 47640, San Antonio, TX 78265

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 $60,000 goal – we surpassed it by $5,640!

We are very grateful to you all.

READING OF THE NAMES

Our 3rd Annual Reading of the Names honored the more than 80 Guests we've cared for since last year. Families and friends gathered Nov. 9 at ABODE and stood as we read their loved ones' names, lit candles and chimed the singing bowl. Such a heart-warming event.

OUR HOME IS YOUR HOME

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. 15 Holiday Luminarias, all the better. More details at **abodehome.org/luminarias**. Thank you for a wonderful 2024. We wish you a warm and love-filled holiday season and an even more exciting new year.

Mary Thorsby
CEO

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 that touch your heart. Here's what we have planned:

Threshold Choir serenades Guests two Mondays and two Tuesdays a month.

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

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

Death Cafe with Lynn Peréz, 2-3:30 pm, second Saturdays, ABODE.

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

Exploring Our Grief with John Vinson, 3-4:40 pm, Sunday, Dec. 15, and each third Sunday of the month, ABODE.

Luminarias Lighting, 5-7 pm, Sunday, Dec. 15, ABODE. Our end-of-year celebration honoring those we've loved and lost. Details on page 1 and 8.

ABODE End of Life Doula Certification Program, eight Saturdays with hands-on training. Winter Cohort begins Jan. 11. Fall begins Sept. 13.

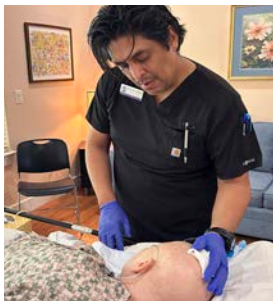
ABODE End of Life Yoga Certification Program, five weekends with hands-on training. Kula 1 (online) begins March 8. Kula 2 begins July 26.

Our Guests, Our Hearts

Shanon

Shanon was a colorful, expressive soul. Of the various tattoos we see from time to time, her tribute to her kiddos showed how much she loved them – and they loved her. We're honored that we could provide Shanon with peace, love, beauty and dignity in her final days.

Shanon died in our Green Room, under the care of Gentiva Hospice.



Holly

Holly was with us a little over a week – her son barely left her side. That's our House Manager and Navigator Anthony, sharing ABODE's gentle, compassionate touch. All of us at ABODE strive to make our Guests' final days as sweet, and as contemplative, as possible.

Holly died in our Peach Room, under the care of Amedisys Hospice.

Hope

Hope died with her teddy bear in her arms. We've had quite a few Guests bring their favorite stuffed animals recently. And we're curious: When you reach the end of life, what would you like to be holding in your arms?

Hope died in our Green Room, under the care of Good Shepherd Hospice.

Mark

Mark was a young man with such a beautiful family who visited him regularly. We were honored to be of service, and we know they'll miss him so much.

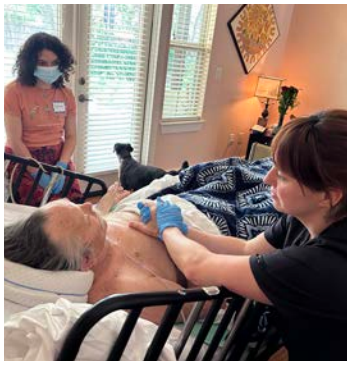
Mark died in our Blue Room, under the care of VITAS Hospice.

Dana

Dana enjoyed a steady stream of visitors during his time with us – he was definitely well-loved. That's our Yoga Doula Serena and our Navigator Yasmine with him.

Among Dana's many talents: He made beautiful wooden bowls and trays. Navigator Sharilynn photographed him holding a few of his pieces.

Dana died in our Peach Room, under the care of Amedisys Hospice.



Nancy

Our Volunteer Coordinator and ABODE Doula Susan sat vigil with Nancy as she died. We have several doulas who are available to come at "the 11th hour," as it's called, to sit, pray and "be" as Guests enter their last few hours, minutes and seconds – and afterward. We're honored that we could support Nancy as she journeyed through her final phase of life.

Nancy died in our Blue Room, under the care of Suncrest Hospice.

Maria

Maria died with her favorite stuffed lamb by her side. She was with us for such a short period of time – and that sometimes happens. When folks arrive at ABODE, they find a gentle peace that allows them to rest and, when they're ready, to surrender...to let go.

Maria died in our Peach Room, under the care of Crest Hospice.

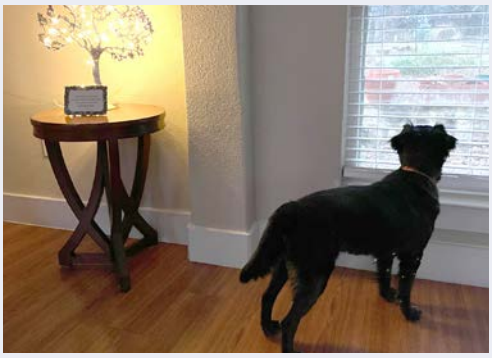
Frank

Frank was a Marine Veteran – so that called for the wonderful Retired Air Force Colonel Hal Smarkola to come share a few words and a final salute, and present Frank with a small flag that Hal folds himself.

Frank was always surrounded by his wife, Pat, and so many others who loved him. He died in our Blue Room, under the care of Trinity Hospice.

Holding These Folks In Light, As Well

We've also cared for several other sweet souls who arrived and died within days: Debra, Mattie, Philip, Albert, Margaret, Rebecca, Susan, Dora, David, Mike, Lucy, Michael, Danielle, Marta, Santos, Mary and Maria.



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.

Teaching the Art of Contemplative Living and Dying

We have so much goodness going on at ABODE – and we simply couldn't share it all without the support of our board, staff, volunteers and our doulas! Have a look at how we're teaching the art of contemplative living and dying:

BEFORE YOU GO PODCAST

This fall, Doula Director Natalie Buster and CEO Mary Thorsby launched "Before You Go: The Official Podcast of ABODE Contemplative Care for the Dying" to share our experiences in the end-of-life field and to raise awareness for ABODE.

Scan the QR code to find it on YouTube, Spotify and almost all other podcast platforms. We'd love for you to tune in and let us know what you think!

A MORNING RETREAT

Also this fall, Edwin Sasek, Ed Alderette and Gretchen Bealer facilitated A Morning Retreat, an interspirtual contemplative practice experience including periods of guided meditation, a labyrinth walk, silent group meditation, deep listening and conversation. We'll repeat this sweet offering at the Church of Reconciliation in 2025.

DEEP LISTENING CIRCLES

If you've been around ABODE lately, you've likely heard us raving about our Deep Listening Circles, facilitated by the lovely Linda O'Neal and Catherine Lillibridge. For those of us who have been through their training, this dynamic duo has completely changed the way we listen to one another – for the better. For many of us, it has been absolutely transformative.

Deep Listening Circles are small groups that follow a simple format of sharing and listening. Each participant speaks for a few minutes – without interruption from other participants. We simply open our ears and…listen. Once the speaker is finished, we share loving feedback. Compassion. Support. And then we move to the next participant.

Learning to listen without feeling the need to jump in with comments – especially anything involving our own stories – is a beautiful skill to have and a lovely gift to give. Our Deep Listening Circles are a safe place, with each of us able to be open and authentic because the Circles are, indeed, safe.

Interested? Please email **info@abodehome.org** for more details.

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.

ABODE END OF LIFE DOULA CERTIFICATION

Our End of Life Doula Certification program is in hot demand! We've trained 75 doulas to date. Many have created their own Doula practices and, through our ABODE at Home Doula Dispatch service, they are now serving those who are able to remain in their own homes during their final phase of life. This initiative greatly increases the number of people we can reach with our special contemplative approach to care. Our next cohort starts Jan. 11.

ABODE END OF LIFE YOGA CERTIFICATION

Yoga at end of life? Yes – and it's a wonderful service to offer in death care. Think about it: Yoga is all about being present and in the moment, which is exactly what we teach at ABODE. It's about breath – the first thing we take when we're born and the last thing we take before we die. And the final pose of every yoga class? It's Shavasana – also known as Corpse Pose.

Our first cohort, also called Kula, was a sweet success. Our next Kula will be online starting March 8.

If you'd like to explore the emerging career field of End of Life Doulas and Yogi Doulas or to volunteer at ABODE (or all three!), please email **info@abodehome.org**. We'd love to connect with you!

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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 $35 each.

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

I'm honoring:

Name: _____

Name: _____

Name: _____

Name: _____

Pre-orders accepted through Saturday, Dec. 16.
Questions? Please contact Mary Thorsby, **mary@abodehome.org** or 415.271.4974.