NEWS From Home

SPRING 2025 | 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, May 3-4

Annual Art Show and Sale Featuring Patsy and Edwin Sasek

Ready to add signed, original Patsy and Edwin Saseks to your art collection? Then don't miss ABODE's Annual Art Show and Sale coming up in May.

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

- Saturday, May 3 – Opening Reception with Silent Auction, 5-8 pm
- Sunday, May 4 – Brunch Show, 10 am-1 pm

You'll find a beautiful array of Patsy and Edwin'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!

PATSY SASEK

EDWIN SASEK

CEO'S UPDATE

Mary Thorsby

I'd like to take a moment and thank you all for a fabulous 2024 and a stellar start to 2025.

Last year was another record breaker for us! Together, we served 141 Guests – 87 Guests at ABODE, and our ABODE Doulas served another 54 folks through our ABODE at Home Doula Dispatch program. Such a blessing!

This year, we've already cared for 18 Guests – and we recently welcomed our 500th Guest since opening our doors 10 years ago. Just think: 500 sweet souls have experienced peace, warmth and love in our contemplative setting, surrounded by our staff, volunteers and doulas – and the many family members and friends who come to visit.

We also enjoyed another record-breaking year of donations and grants. We are so thankful for all of your many gifts to ABODE. Nonprofits like ours depend on their supporters' time, talents and treasures to fulfill our mission and vision. Thanks to you, we are fortunate to have a healthy helping of all three!

Our Education programs continue to expand and thrive with our award-winning End of Life Doula Certification training, ABODE Academy, International Book Study, caregiver and grief support groups, our beautiful Evening with Alua Arthur – the list goes on!

On top of that, we've welcomed new staff, volunteers, doulas and donors, all committed to what we do best – providing compassionate, contemplative care and education for those who need us most.

ON A PERSONAL NOTE

For a place where people come to die, there's so much life at ABODE. I'm so grateful to Edwin and Patsy Sasek for creating the sweetest nonprofit I've ever come across – and to all of you for making my time here so incredibly rewarding, heartwarming, friendship-filled – and fun.

You may have heard that, after five amazing years at ABODE, my heart is tugging at me to write a new chapter. Given how well ABODE is doing in every aspect, I'm confident that now is the right time to pass the baton. The search is under way for my replacement, so stay tuned for details! In the meantime, the wonderful Shavonne Conroy is stepping in as Interim CEO. Welcome aboard, Shavonne!

A GIFT TO ABODE IS A GIFT TO ME

To quote board member Peg Armstrong: "A gift to ABODE is a gift to me." If the spirit moves you, I'd be honored if you'd make a donation to ABODE in celebration of our five years together. You can donate online at **abodehome.org/donate** – or you can send a check to ABODE, 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.

All my best as we strive to live in a world where death is not feared, and we live fully until we die. What a journey!

Mary Thorsby
Chief Executive Officer

MEET OUR STAFF

Speaking of new staff – we have some new beautiful faces and big hearts on our team. 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:

Claudia Baca
End of Life Navigator

Natalie Buster
End of Life Doula/Yoga Director and Volunteer Coordinator

Carol Caldwell
End of Life Navigator

Dana Fox
End of Life Navigator

Yasmine Gonzales
End of Life Navigator

Rachel Epp Miller
End of Life Navigator

Anthony Morales
House Manager and Volunteer Coordinator

Jessica Quintanilla
End of Life Navigator

Courtney Sheets
End of Life Navigator

Brandy Thomas RN
End of Life Navigator

Sandy Travis and Wayne Beamer
End of Life Navigators

John Vinson
End of Life Navigator
Certified Grief Educator

CELEBRATING LIFE'S END

What a beautiful Feb. 25 evening with Dawn Walsh, Executive Director of The Lily House on Cape Cod. Dawn shared the history of after-death care – and how she and her team incorporate special touches for their guests.

She even guided us through a mock shrouding ceremony using CEO Mary Thorsby as her "model." Several members of the ABODE Community joined in, adoring Mary with flowers and ribbon and offering sweet thoughts as they "laid her in honor." Who knew "corpses" can cry!

Many thanks to Dawn for sharing these beautiful practices with us.

JESSICA QUINTANILLA PHOTO

Recent House Happenings

Beautiful Luminarias
Thank you for your holiday luminarias purchases – almost 700 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 made by our volunteers.

The Jibaros Motorcycle Club
We always 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.

Reading of the Names
There were few dry eyes during our 3rd Annual Reading of the Names – such a sweet ceremony. So many families and friends gathered as we read the names of, and lit candles for, the more than 80 Guests we'd cared for since the previous year's event.

We built our ofrenda, wrote and hung messages on paper butterflies and enjoyed music by Rudi Harst and cookies by several volunteers. Many thanks to all who created and produced this program – and all of ABODE's special gatherings.

Our Guests, Our Hearts

We've welcomed (and said goodbye to) quite a few Guests since our Winter 2024 newsletter. Thank you all for helping us care for these beautiful souls during their final stretch of life. We are so grateful to you.

Karen

Karen died in our Green Room, under the care of Pacific Hospice and Palliative Care. That's our Navigator John Vinson, sharing his special presence with Karen, letting her know that she's not alone.

Karen was our 500th Guest since we opened our doors 10 years ago. What a blessing that 500 sweet souls have experienced peace, warmth and love in our contemplative setting, surrounded by our Staff, Volunteers and ABODE Doulas – and many family members and friends who come to visit.

Michael

Michael died in our Peach Room under the care of Trinity Hospice. Each time we welcome a Vet to ABODE, we send a text to Retired Air Force Colonel Hal Smarkola and he heads right over. Here, Hal shares his sweet message, a small American flag that he folds himself and a final salute with Michael, a Navy veteran.

Jerome

Jerome died in our Peach Room under the care of Embrace Hospice. Threshold Singers Bill and Warren stopped by to serenade him.

Jerome's son Bill was constantly by his side, recalling sweet stories about his dad who had been a well-known restaurateur in California. "He had a talent coming out of his fingertips," Bill told us. "He was an amazing man."

Inez

Inez died in our Green Room, under the care of Amedia Hospice.

That's our volunteer Catherine Lillibridge reading The Book of Revelation with her. Inez was deeply religious and loved sharing Bible passages with us.

Louis

Louis died in our Peach Room, under the care of Embrace Hospice. Here, Retired Air Force Colonel Hal Smarkola shares his sweet message, a small folded American flag and a final salute with Louis, a Marines Vet.

Louis found the peace he needed to let go, and he died very quietly soon afterward.

Olga

Olga died in our Blue Room, under the care of Embrace Hospice.

Olga and her husband Herbert had five children and 12 grandchildren – Herbert served on the San Antonio City Council in the late 1960s with Olga as hostess for many important events. Olga loved sewing and needlework of all kinds, and she even had a clothing shop where she sold her unique designs. In later life, Olga enjoyed Pilates and was an avid yogi – both practices served her well in her final weeks and days of life.

Stephen

Stephen died in our Peach Room, under the care of Opus Care Hospice.

Stephen was an Army Vet – so that called for Retired Air Force Colonel Hal Smarkola to come share a few words and a final salute, and present a small flag that Hal folds himself.

Stephen was always surrounded by so many who loved him – even gathering for a Mariachi fiesta in our backyard soon after he arrived. He had a gorgeous voice. We know he will be missed so very much.

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 Diana, Kathleen, Paulene, Eloise, Maria, Lowell, Dora, Martha, Jamie, Jose, Michael, Nicanor, Norma, Lisa, Marilyn, Steven, Diane, Marcia and Michelle.

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.

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.

For questions or to RSVP for any of our programs, please email **info@abodehome.org**. Everyone is welcome!

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; with lunch at 12 pm. We also have **Deep Listening Circles, Caregiver Support** and our **Before You Go** podcast. Follow us at **@abodecontemplativecare** on Facebook/Instagram for updates or visit **abodehome.org/education**.

RSVPs or questions: Please email **info@abodehome.org** and we'll get right back to you!

Death Cafe, second Saturdays, 2-3:30 pm. Tea, cake and conversation around death and dying.

Labyrinth Walk led by ABODE Co-Founders Edwin and Patsy Sasek immediately follows.

Contemplative Drum Circle with Edwin and Mario Aguirre, begins at 4 pm. (Next gatherings are Saturday, April 12.)

Sunday, April 20: Exploring Our Grief
Join us 3-4:30 pm, the third Sunday of each month, including Sunday, April 20, at ABODE. This special grief support group is facilitated by End of Life Navigator, Certified Grief Educator and ABODE Doula John Vinson.

Please bring anyone you think would benefit from John's contemplative approach to, well, *everything*, including grief.

Starts Tuesday, April 22: ABODE Academy 8 Death: Let's Talk About It
ABODE Academy 8 is all about death. The logistics of death, our fears around it, what to expect as our bodies move through our final months, weeks and days of life, how our medieval relatives viewed death and expressed their thoughts through art and so much more.

Plus! Questions that make us squirm! Tune in for a session of audience questions and answers as we dive even deeper into the subject of death.

Five complimentary sessions (via Zoom), 6:30-7:30 pm, starting Tuesday, April 22. Email **info@abodehome.org** for the Zoom link.

Saturday, May 3 & Sunday, May 4: ABODE Art Show and Sale
Mark your calendars for ABODE's Art Show and Sale, Saturday, May 3 and Sunday, May 4! This year, in honor of our 10th Anniversary, we're featuring the work of our Co-Founders Patsy and Edwin Sasek, along with many other favorite artists.

We'll have a lovely array of Edwin and Patsy's signed originals and limited-edition prints ready for your walls. Plan to join us in Brown Hall at the Church of Reconciliation, 8900 Starcrest:

- Saturday, May 3, Opening Reception with Silent Auction, 5-8 pm
- Sunday, May 4, Brunch Show with Silent Auction Finale, 10 am-1 pm

Interested in attending? Email **info@abodehome.org** by May 1 to help us plan our catering and libations. We hope you'll join us!

Starts Saturday, July 26: End of Life Yoga Certification
If you enjoy yoga, and you're curious to learn how closely this beautiful practice can be incorporated at end of life, check out our 60-hour ABODE End of Life Yoga Certification. We've designed it specifically for yoga teachers and therapists, doulas, chaplains, hospice care workers or anyone who wants to serve those at end of life.

Our next in-person training starts Saturday, July 26, though our online version is under way now – you can still join in! Email **natalie@abodehome.org** for details.

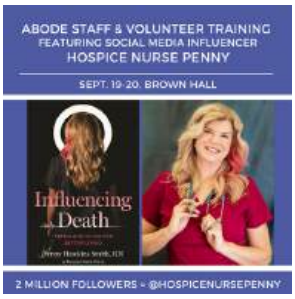
Starts Saturday, Sept. 13: ABODE End of Life Doula Certification
The ABODE Way with Real Hands-On Training (9 Saturdays)

Interested in the emerging career field of End of Life Doulas? We're excited to offer our End of Life Doula Certification program, designed just for you!

Along with our 40 hours of in-class instruction, ours is the only Doula Certification featuring our contemplative approach to care and real, hands-on training with those who are at end of life – our very own ABODE Guests.

Plus, we offer field trips, complimentary access to additional resources, networking with other Doulas, inclusion in our online Doula Directory, potential client leads – and even paid opportunities to serve as ABODE Doulas and fill-in Navigators!

Friday, Sept. 19 & Saturday, Sept. 20
ABODE Training with Keynote Speaker Hospice Nurse Penny
Ready to volunteer? We're ready for you! ABODE welcomes experienced and new volunteers, former volunteers, staff, board members and anyone interested in learning more about ABODE and how we make a difference in our Guests' lives, even at the end of their lives.



This fall, our training program features An Evening with Hospice Nurse Penny! Penny Smith BSN RN is a nationally certified hospice and palliative care nurse, social media influencer and author of *Influencing Death: Reframing Dying for Better Living*.

Penny is a passionate advocate for hospice education with a mission to normalize the end-of-life process and remove the stigma and fear around hospice care, death and dying. During the pandemic, she found her way to social media and now has more than 2 million followers across her social media platforms as **@hospicenursepenny.**

Before You Go Podcast
Hey podcast fans: Check out our "Before You Go" podcast hosted by Doula Director Natalie Buster. This season features interviews with various ABODE Community members who share their experiences in the end-of-life field. Scan the QR code to find it on YouTube, Spotify and other platforms.

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Saturday-Sunday, May 3-4 Art Show and Sale Featuring Patsy and Edwin Sasek and Many Other Favorite Local Artists

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

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We have original, signed Patsy and Edwin Sasek art along with limited-edition prints – plus art from other local artists including Brother Cletus.

Plus we'll have a silent auction of more beautiful art. Both events include catering and libations.

Please RSVP to **info@abodehome.org** to help us with our planning. We hope you'll join us!

PATSY SASEK

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

Michelle Belto
Anita Centeno
Lesta Frank
Becky Hadley
Cindy Morawski
Cynthia Murray
Terry Gay Puckett
January Ross
Jackie Salgado
Courtney Sheets
Sandy Smith
Steven Smith
Lynn Staggs
Peter Szarmach
Dona Walston
Charlotte Wyatt