



NEWS From Home

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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.

Thank you for a great start to our New Year!

And we're off! We are embarking on our 12th year of teaching the art of contemplative living and dying while providing a beautiful home and compassionate care all at no cost. We are here, able to do this incredible mission, thanks to your support. You are the foundation of our home, ABODE and we couldn't thank you enough.

Welcome Home to ABODE.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Natalie Buster

Dear Friends of ABODE,

ABODE is home. When the call came in to apply for the Executive Director position, I didn't hesitate. ABODE has been my home for the past four years. I have witnessed firsthand the compassionate and contemplative love and support everyone brings when they walk through the door and I'm delighted to be in this new role.

ABODE is home to a dedicated community, and it is with great pride that we look back on the contributions and growth that have strengthened our mission.

Our journey began with a volunteer spirit and a servant's heart - the vision that Edwin and Patsy Sasek had to open a home to serve people at the end of life - at no charge. This foundation led to the establishment of our Navigators and Volunteers, a team honored to serve our Guests with tender and contemplative care, performing work that is as challenging as it is profoundly rewarding.

ABODE maintains a robust End of Life Doula Certification Training, currently welcoming its 10th cohort. This program has trained over 100 End-of-Life Doulas. If you or someone you know is in need of this sacred service, please consult our [Doula Directory](#) on our website to connect with a certified doula.

Expanding our educational offerings, ABODE launched the End of Life Yoga Certification program in the summer of 2024. We have celebrated the graduation of three cohorts since its inception. The innovative nature of this work was recently recognized in an article published in the trade journal of the International Association of Yoga Therapists, [Yoga Therapy Today](#).

Furthermore, ABODE's very own podcast, [Before You Go](#), was launched in the Fall of 2024 and has completed three successful seasons. It can be found on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, YouTube, and all major podcast platforms.

All this to say, I love ABODE. And I have a strong suspicion that if you are reading this newsletter, you do too. We have gone through quite a few ups and downs in the past year. We've explored certain paths, experimented with different processes...but at the end of it all, we re-discovered that ABODE is where the heart is. Our community is strong. We have Volunteers, Navigators, Doulas, Householders, Donors - all of us make up the foundation of ABODE. We honor our heritage, our founders, and our guiding mission and vision. No matter where the road took us this past year, somehow it brought us all home.

So welcome home to ABODE. I hope to see you all soon.



Executive Director



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.

We 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. We'd also love it if you consider us in your legacy planning. Let us know if you left us in your will so we can celebrate you today!

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.



Our Guests, Our Hearts

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

Jeffrey

An ABODE supporter who is dear friends with Jeffrey suggested that he come home to us. Jeff was an Air Force veteran and was given his final salute by our beloved Retired Air Force Colonel Hal Smarkola. Jeff was surrounded by friends, family, music, and laughter. Jeff was under the care of Guiding Light Hospice.



Opalee

From the moment Opalee was wheeled into ABODE, her radiant spirit filled ABODE with warmth, love and light. Dressed in her pink nightgown and greeting everyone lovingly with "honey" and "sweetheart," she quickly captured our hearts. One particularly heavy day, I visited her room, her steadfast kindness instantly lifted my spirits and filled my aching heart. When I began to share with her how her steadfast love consistently brightened ABODE and my days here, we both became overwhelmed with love, tears falling, we shared a tender and heartfelt embrace. That evening, I reflected on how her gentle, consistent love reminded me that even in seasons of goodbye, love still blooms. It truly was a Happy Valentine's Day at ABODE. Opalee is under the care of Methodist Hospice.

This tribute was written by Navigator Angelica Scott

Dorathy

When 99 year old Dorathy arrived at ABODE, we couldn't know the impact she would have on staff, volunteers, and our other Guests. Dorathy is a wonderfully sharp-witted woman who has charmed us all with her humor, tenderness, insistence on "double raisins" in her oatmeal, and her love of going outside in her bed to watch the birds and search for Max, the cat. She has become known for frequently breaking into song (with or without an audience) and speaking prayers of blessing each day for the other Guests of ABODE (and grieving Guests' deaths as they've happened during her stay). Each Guest we are privileged to come to know at ABODE changes us as we bear witness to who they are and how they live their last hours and days. Dorathy, perhaps, says it best: "We are all companions on this journey." Dorathy is under the care of Devoted Care Hospice.

This tribute was written by Navigator Rachel Epp Miller



Kenneth

Kenneth came to ABODE having been lovingly cared for by his wife Faith and son Cory. Though Kenneth couldn't communicate very clearly any more, Faith taught us his cues. Kenneth loved Dr. Pepper (so much so that, when he could no longer manage a straw, we gave him little sips with a syringe!) and gummy bears, soft piano music, and having his family by his side. Kenneth, 66 was under the care of Reliant Hospice.

This tribute was written by Navigator Rachel Epp Miller

Joe

Joe arrived, giving us the impression he largely wanted privacy, but we soon learned that he was hungry for the opposite: true, heartfelt connection - which we were happy to offer him.

His reaction to that caring attention was perhaps best summed up in his adult children's excited comments about how happy he was at ABODE and how much he loved being here, - for which they were grateful beyond words to see. We also got to witness Joe and his family having joyful, love-filled visits together, and only days before Joe's departure, he and his divorced wife had a beautiful reconciliation, forgiving each other, helping make room for deep heart healing for all of them. The experience they each had will be with them the rest of their lives. Joe was under the care of Touchstone Hospice.

This tribute was written by Navigator John Vinson

David

David, 68 was an Air Force Veteran and was only with us for three days. David was under the care of Trinity Hospice. Here he is receiving his Final Salute from several of our Veteran Volunteers.



Helga

Helga was born and raised in Germany, was old enough to remember the last few years of World War II, and the closing of the conflict with Germany as it was overrun by the allied forces. A few years later she would meet, and with her family's blessing, marry an American soldier, a testament to the power of love and reconciliation. Their devoted daughter Evelyn said she was strengthened and prepared for her mother's death by being with us at ABODE, as we all walked alongside Helga for her final journey home, which had Evelyn beyond words to express her gratefulness. Long live love. Helga, 91 was only with us for four days and was under the care of Trinity Hospice.

This tribute was written by Navigator John Vinson

Karl

Karl, 80 was only with us for a few days before he took his final breath. His friend and partner Robbin was so grateful for the care and love Karl received at ABODE. Karl was under the care of Trinity Hospice.

Raymond

Raymond, 69 was only with us for one day and was under the care of Bristol Hospice.

Robert

Robert, 60 was only with us for three days and was under the care of Southern Sky Hospice.

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.

Sister Alice Holden, spiritual friend and a guiding force in creating ABODE 16 years ago, transitioned into new life this week. She was 91 years old. A Sister of Charity of the Incarnate Word, she was an advisory board member for many years. A mystic, spiritual companion, poet, author and artist, her creative loving spirit will linger and bless through and through. Meet Sister Alice, introducing herself, in her poem, *Alice*.



This tribute was written by ABODE Co-Founder Edwin Sasek

ALICE

I wear a garment called Alice,
The incarnation chosen this time 'round.
In this reality seeming
Like a proper woman:
Sometimes like a nun,
Sometimes like a poet
Fretting and fuming
Juggling words
To make sense of it all.

I'm comfortable enough with this garb
Though it often hides my true Self & Soul
Under layers of shoulds and oughts,
And nettings of nebulous thought.

With a precious few I choose
To de-vest.

I become Self or Soul,
But then forget and begin again
To appear, even to them,
Like a needy beggar.

Today I am my Self,
Light and joyous,
Filled with Faith to move mountains
And humility to let them fall.

I look forward to the day
When I'll shed this garb,
This worn, torn,
Tailored-print-of-Self
Like a *tight shoe**

And breathe a sigh of release,
Dissolving into Soul.

Ah...

Alice Holden, CCVI 9/9/99
*Ram Dass

Your Invitation to Everything ABODE

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

Monday Meditation, led by Edwin Sasek, 5 PM Mondays via Zoom, FREE

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



Contemplative Drum Circle led by Mario Aguirre and Edwin Sasek, 4-5 PM on the second Saturday of the month at ABODE, FREE



Exploring Our Grief Support Group led by John Vinson, 3-4:30 PM on the third Sunday of the month at ABODE, FREE

ABODE Academy – Around the World in Final Days, led by Beverly Tuomala, Dates TBA via Zoom, FREE

ABODE End of Life Doula Certification Training – Fall Cohort - Dates TBA

ABODE End of Life Yoga Certification Training – Dates TBA

Omega Home Network Conference: We are a proud member of the Omega Home Network. You can read more about their mission at omegahomenetwork.org. Their annual conference, *The Art and Heart of Caring* is in Santa Fe this year - June 1-3.

We are also delighted to welcome the **Threshold Singers** to serenade our Guests. They usually drop by once or twice a month.

Graduates from our Doula program and other Volunteers periodically host events in the community that we love to celebrate. Please follow us on Facebook and Instagram as we share their offerings and invite you to support their outreach.



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Your Gift, Your Impact

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our supporters. Every contribution, whether time, talent, or treasure, helps us fulfill our mission of providing comfort, dignity, and love during life's final journey.

Your generosity ensures we can provide compassionate, around-the-clock care at no cost for our guests and families. There are many ways to give:

- Online: Visit abodehome.org/donate to make a secure gift.
- By Check: Mail to ABODE Contemplative Care for the Dying, 8619 Post Oak Lane, San Antonio, TX 78217.
- Stock Donations: 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.
- Volunteer Your Time: Share your compassion and skills with our guests and families.

We Need Your Stories!

Has ABODE touched your life or the life of someone you love?

We're gathering personal stories and testimonials to help share the heart of our mission. Whether your experience was recent or many years ago, your words can inspire and comfort others.

 Email your story to: stories@abodehome.org