



A Message from our Executive Director Mary Dickerson

In the three short months that I have been the executive director of The Austin Center for Grief & Loss (Austin Grief), we have launched therapeutic yoga, a children's bereavement camp, Camp Red Bird, and hired a new clinical director, Becca Van Tassel. We have established a partnership with Communities in Schools to provide support groups in two AISD schools this fall. Austin Grief also welcomes two new members to its board of directors, Sarah Marshall and Elaine Cavazos.

Marcy Greer, Butch Hayes and Catherine Morse graciously hosted a fundraiser and informational social for Austin Grief at the law offices of Weisbart, Hayes and Springer. There were over 50 guests in attendance including Austin Grief founder Khris Ford. Khris shared our history and mission, and long-time therapist and supporter Julie Dickerson discussed Austin Grief's importance as a resource for both the business and legal community. Board chair-elect Anna Varahrami spoke about her involvement with Austin Grief as well as her hopes and aspirations for the future.

We are busy planning the 10th anniversary festivities that will be celebrated October 19, 2017 at the Umlauf Sculpture Garden. The garden setting is the ideal venue for this milestone Holders of Hope celebration as it is a beautiful melding of nature, art and a tranquil event space. The evening will feature a catered dinner, live music featuring singer songwriter, Christina Cavazos, and the wit and prose of typewriter poet, Scott James. Please visit the Austin Grief website for more information about attending or sponsoring this event.

One of the most inspiring things for me to experience since I have been at Austin Grief is the wonderful words that therapeutic professionals in the community have said about our work. This confirms that what we do is important, valued and respected. Specifically, our grief support group model is one of the strengths of

our organization. Support groups are based on the idea that sharing ones own grief experience with others helps the group navigate the grief journey and move towards hope and healing. These groups are free and are open to anyone who is suffering from grief or a loss.

A Message from Brittany Neece

Dear members of the Austin Grief community and family,

I simply cannot put into words what a joy and a privilege it has been serving as your Clinical Director and being involved in the organization as a whole since it's creation almost 10 years ago. The words that come to mind, however, are hope, healing, and transformation: these words truly portray my experiences, both personally and professionally, that have happened here. I have met the most wonderful people - everyone from staff, volunteer, client, group member, and community members engaged in the topic of grief and loss. The Austin Center for Grief & Loss and everyone who has ever been connected to it knows the power and magnitude of the incredible work that we do, and the richness of the grief community we have created.

With that being said, and knowing that words do not do justice in showing my gratitude and deep respect for the organization and those in it, it is time for me to shift my role here as I grow and expand in the direction of private practice. I am delighted to welcome our new Clinical Director, Becca Van Tassel, into this position and am incredibly excited for her to lead us in what comes next for programs, services, and carrying the heart of what we do so beautifully. I will remain involved with AustinGrief in many capacities, so this is not goodbye, but rather a transformation into something different.

I am so fortunate to have been involved with this organization in a number of different roles - it has been life changing, and I will be eternally grateful for everyone I have met and worked with along this journey. Please continue to offer your amazing love and hope to one another, and to this incredible organization that touches the lives of so many. We know far too well how precious and important life is. I will keep you in my heart always. Thank you!

With much love and gratitude,
Brittany Neece

Welcome Clinical Director Becca Van Tassel, LCSW



Becca Van Tassel, LCSW, joined The Austin Center for Grief and Loss as its new Clinical Director effective July 10, 2017. Becca has been involved with Austin Grief since 2014 - first as a volunteer and then as a group coordinator. Becca is passionate about providing high quality clinical care while at the same time offering a safe and welcoming space for her clients as they navigate their unique and often difficult journey through grief. She has experience in a variety of settings, most recently at Integral Care as a utilization manager. She has also worked in acute psychiatric settings and substance abuse treatment settings, school based social work programs, and in private practice. Becca's extensive background will help Austin Grief as it continues to grow and expand its programming.

Outside of work, Becca enjoys spending time with her dear pup, Charles, and exploring the sights and sounds of all the unique events Austin has to offer. She also enjoys traveling off to her next great adventure whenever possible.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Ice Cream Social

Join us on National Ice Cream Day for an ice cream social!

Sunday July 16th from 2:00 - 4:00 pm.

Bring your family and friends to enjoy sweet treats to beat the heat.

Ice cream with all the fixin's and cold beverages will be provided.

Location: Austin Grief, 2413 Greenlawn Pkwy., Austin TX 78757

Brown Bag Lunch and Learn: Trauma Informed Care

Friday July 28th, 12:00 - 1:30 pm

Led by: Lori Pelliccia, LPC-Intern, Asst. Clinical Director

CEU's included for LPC, LMFT, LCSW

Trauma Informed Care involves understanding, recognizing, and responding to the effects of all types of trauma. Trauma Informed Care also emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety.

It

helps survivors rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.

Location: Austin Grief, 2413 Greenlawn Pkwy., Austin TX 78757

Redbird Summer Camp

Austin Grief is hosting a summer day camp for children ages 6-12, August 7th - 11th.

It will be a week filled with fun, therapeutic games and activities, and arts and crafts.

Registration deadline 7/17/17, only 2 spots still available!

Location: Austin Grief, 2413 Greenlawn Pkwy., Austin TX 78757

More information can be found at, www.austingrief.org or email rsaffer@austingrief.org.

Healing from the Heart Therapeutic Yoga Group Fall Series

6 week fall series beginning 9/15/17

Led by: Rachel Saffer, LMSW and Nityda Gessel, LCSW, E-RYT

This therapeutic yoga group provides an opportunity to deepen your sense of well being and connection to your own wisdom through the mind/body connection, in a community of shared

understanding, healing, and support. Each class is customized to the needs of the group and includes meditation, yoga and yoga-inspired practices. These practices are blended with rich discussion and experiential learning opportunities to deepen your capacity to receive and experience nourishment, love, healing and wholeness in each moment as we go through our own personal grief process.

Location: Austin Grief, 2413 Greenlawn Pkwy., Austin TX 78757

Therapeutic Art for Pregnancy Loss

October 1st, 1:00 - 4:00 pm

Led by: Elaine Cavazos, LCSW and Rachel Saffer, LMSW

In honor of Pregnancy Loss Awareness month in October, Austin Grief will be hosting a memorial group for parents who have experienced a pregnancy loss. This group experience will help parents create a keepsake that memorializes their lost child and process together, receiving support from each other and our trained facilitators.

Location: Austin Grief, 2413 Greenlawn Pkwy., Austin TX 78757

Financial Planning During and After Divorce

November 3, 12:00 - 1:30 pm

Led by: Caitlyn Biedrzycki, Financial Advisor

This workshop will discuss the common process used to separate assets. It will also review ways to maintain and maximize assets once the divorce is finalized.

Location: Austin Grief, 2413 Greenlawn Pkwy., Austin TX 78757

Financial Planning After the Death of a

Spouse

November 10, 12:00 - 1:30 pm

Led by: Caitlyn Biedrzycki, Financial Advisor

This workshop will discuss options for transferring assets to the beneficiaries and the tax consequences of receiving inheritance. It will also cover social security benefits for the surviving spouse and children.

Location: Austin Grief, 2413 Greenlawn Pkwy., Austin TX 78757

Amplify Austin 2018

March 1-2, 2018

Mark your calendars! We will celebrate Amplify Austin Day on March 1-2, and we hope you will join us once again as we honor a community that amplifies giving.

HOLDERS OF HOPE



HOLDERS of Hope

Save the date to celebrate on October 19, 2017 at the Umlauf Sculpture Garden. Live music featuring singer songwriter, Christina Cavazos, and the wit and prose of typewriter poet, Scott James. For information about attending, please visit www.austingrief.org, contact Mary Jo O'Neal at devdirector@austingrief.org or Mary Dickerson at mdickerson@austingrief.org.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Law offices of Weisbart, Hayes and Springer

Thank you to Marcy Greer, Butch Hayes and Catherine Morse for graciously hosting a fundraiser and social for Austin Grief. There were over fifty guests in attendance raising awareness for ACGL.

Photo: Mary Dickerson, Marcy Greer and Khris Ford



Breast Cancer Resource Center

Austin Grief hosted a presentation for the Breast Cancer Resource Center in our new training and multi use space. Brittany Neece and Lori Pelliccia presented on the topic of survivors guilt and grief within a close community.

Photo: Brittany Neece and Lori Pelliccia



Region 13 Education Service Center

Brittany Neece and Mandy Davidson presented to a group of twenty incoming local school counselors about children's grief on June 15th.

They presented information regarding the developmental stages of children, how they understand and experience grief, how grief impacts the family system, what grief looks like within the classroom, and therapeutic interventions and techniques used to help these children manage and process their grief in healthy ways.

TAPS

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors

Mandy Davidson is presenting at the Tragedy Assistance Seminar for Survivors on the topic of Suicide Loss: What We Wish People Knew.

TAPS is an organization that cares for the families of America's fallen heroes based out of Virginia. The presentation will focus on the recognition of the uniqueness of grief in suicide loss, as well as the impact of grief and special needs associated with this kind of loss.

This seminar is being held in Austin on July 14-16th with an expected audience of 250.

YOUR AUSTIN GRIEF COMMUNITY

A Message from our Clinical Director

Becca Van Tassel

In the spring newsletter, Brittany Neece, our former clinical director, responded to *13 Reasons Why* and the influence it has on teen mental health. I feel that it is important to continue this discussion as a new internet 'game', The Blue Whale Challenge, may have claimed the life of a Texas teen. Our community is grieving and in crisis. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for ages 10-24.

We continue to see evidence that the social media and the internet are influencing the mental health of teenagers. It is critical to be educated on how teens use social media and be proactive in recognizing warning signs for suicide. A new national survey shows that Instagram and Snapchat are preferred by teens age 13-17. Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr are less commonly used but still popular social media platforms. Studies report 91% of teens text regularly, and 40% are using alternative messaging apps including Kik, WhatsApp, and Line.

Parents should be knowledgeable about posts children are making. Four out of five teens who attempt suicide have shown warning signs. Research has shown that victims of cyber bullying are nearly two times more likely to attempt suicide. These are just some warning signs that are indicators of suicidal ideation:

- Talking about suicide including comments about feeling hopeless, helpless, or worthless
- Reckless or self-injurious behavior
- Substance abuse
- Sudden changes in mood or worsening depression
- Decreased interest in hobbies, activities, friendships, etc.
- Making arrangements, such as giving prized possessions away, or having conversations with loved ones that may feel like a goodbye.

To address this crisis, we need to be talking to our teens. Ask them directly about the struggles they are experiencing in school and on social media. Instead of judging or dismissing their experience, offer love, unconditional support, and understanding. Strong connections to family and community support have shown to be a protective factor against teen suicide. It has also been shown that skills in problem solving, conflict resolution, and coping skills can promote resilience making suicidal behaviors less likely. Therapy services for mental, physical, and substance use are invaluable to this fight.

For more information on Austin Area resources please visit [NAMI Austin](#).

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255 can be reached 24/7 and also offers online chats.

For more information go to: [The Blue Whale Challenge](#).

Austin Grief is committed to serving our community in promoting its emotional wellness, and we hope you join us in supporting our youth. If you are a survivor of suicide loss, please know we have support

groups that can help you in your grief experience. This is an incredibly difficult loss to process, and you never need to be alone in your journey.

Becca Van Tassel
Clinical Director, Austin Grief

Welcome Mandy Davidson, LPC-I, Therapist



Mandy earned her Master's in Counseling from St. Edward's University, and worked in higher education for several years before becoming a mental health counselor. In her personal time, she loves to hang out with her son, travel, and eat her way through Austin. Mandy has been a wonderful addition and we are grateful to have her.

Welcome Katie Tarvin, MSSW, Outreach Coordinator

Katie earned her Master's of Science in Social Work Degree from the University of Texas at Austin. She first became involved with The Austin Center for Grief and Loss as a student intern in 2015, where she completed two semesters of graduate clinical work. Katie has experience in community outreach, facilitating support groups, and counseling individuals who have experienced grief from loss. Katie is passionate about grief work and helping clients connect with support during difficult times in life. We are thrilled to welcome her in her new role.



Our Community is your Community: Client Testimonials

Take a look at our [website](#) for first hand reports of Austin Grief's client relationships with you... our community. If you would like your testimonial to be considered, please contact us.

Volunteer Opportunities

Austin Grief has a compassionate volunteer community. If you would like to be a part of transforming lives after loss, please consider joining our volunteer community. There are numerous ways you can support hope, healing and transformation, including child care during our evening support groups, event coordination, fundraising, special projects and group facilitation. Our sought after Volunteer Group Facilitator Training will be open for registration soon! Please contact Rachel Saffer at Rsaffer@austingrief.org for more information.

How can you support your Austin Grief Community?

Referrals, individuals can schedule an intake appointment by phone at: 512.472.7878 or [online](#) anytime. For consultations or trainings in the community please call 512.472.7878.

Shop and give at the same time! When you shop using Amazon Smile, Freytag's Austin Community Bloom's program and even using your Randall's card!

Spread the word and let your community know why you support The Austin Center for Grief & Loss.

Donate, without your support, we could not continue to change lives providing hope, healing and transformation. To make a donation visit our [website](#) or click the link below.

[DONATE TODAY](#)

www.AustinGrief.org

2413 Greenlawn Pkwy., Austin, TX 78757

512.472.7878

