A Message from our Executive Director

Dear --FNAME--, 

It is amazing to realize that spring is already here. Along with the bluebonnets blooming and baseball season starting, more and more vaccines are becoming available each day. We are finally beginning to emerge from what feels like a prolonged winter with a renewed sense of possibilities for the future. We realize we are still in the midst of the pandemic, and we can actually see the potential for better days ahead.

However, for those suffering with loss and grief…it can feel like time has stopped. That is why The Austin Center for Grief & Loss is here, to come along-side those suffering to assist people by meeting them where they are. Our team of dedicated therapists and well-trained, committed volunteer facilitators make it possible to serve those in need. We are providing therapy services to 100% more people today than prior to the pandemic. We have 13 support groups up and running and we have just trained our newest group of facilitators to meet the increased needs. We also have 13 school-based support groups for children operating in 5 Central Texas school districts: Travis, Hays, Bastrop, Manor and San Marcos. We anticipate more school-based groups coming on line in the fall.

None of this would be possible without the ongoing support from our generous financial supporters who make it possible for us to serve those in need, regardless of ability to pay. We are grateful and humbled by your on-going support and belief in our mission to assist adults and children as they transition from loss and grief to healing and hope for the future. We also could not operate without our dedicated and wonderful volunteers who are so passionate about the support groups they facilitate. You make it possible to provide peer support to so many. I am thankful and humbled by your compassion and dedication.

In Gratitude,
Kim Nugent-Anderson
**Burdine Johnson Foundation Grant Awarded**

We are grateful to have been awarded a $20,000 grant from The Burdine Johnson Foundation towards our school-based programs in Hays County ISD that support grieving children.

**Holders of Hope Gala Committee**

The Holders of Hope Committee had the 2021 gala kick-off meeting! The planning has begun and there is excitement in the air, along with gratitude, for the opportunity to come together in person. Holders of Hope 2021 will be Thursday, October 14th at the Umlauf Sculpture Garden! Austin Grief is delighted to announce that Valerie Archer will serve as committee chairwoman. Valerie is a manager with ISO and is married to American artist Jason Archer, 'Austin's Contemporary Art Pioneer'. If you are interested in joining the committee or learning about ways to support Holders of Hope, contact Kim at knugentanderson@austingrief.org.

**Texas Oncology**

Texas Oncology has sponsored The Austin Center for Grief & Loss Holders of Hope gala and fundraiser at the Marquee $15,000 level. Thank you Texas Oncology for supporting our mission and our community in need of grief support.

**HOLDERS OF HOPE GIVING CIRCLE**

Please consider becoming a member of our Giving Circle, by contributing a gift of $10, $25, $50, or $100 per month.

Receiving help after experiencing a trauma can change the trajectory of a person's life. When children receive support in their grief process, it helps the entire family cope and heal together. Please help us sustain this important work and
The Austin Center for Grief & Loss is proud to welcome, Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD., presenting, *Pandemic Grief and the Quest for Meaning*, for our July virtual professional conference.

Robert A. Neimeyer, PhD, is one of the foremost authorities on bereavement and grief. Dr. Neimeyer, directs the Portland Institute for Loss and Transition, and maintains an active consulting and coaching practice. Neimeyer has published over 500 journal articles and book chapters as well as 30 books, including Techniques of Grief Therapy, and serves as Editor of Death Studies. He is currently working to advance a more adequate theory of grieving as a meaning-making process.
Camp Red Bird is a bereavement summer camp for children ages 6-12 who have experienced the death of a parent, sibling, or primary caregiver.

Children who attend camp learn to develop healthy coping skills in a safe and supportive environment.

Registration is open now!

Two sessions available
Session 1 - June 21st - 25th
Session 2 - August 2nd - 6th
9:30 - 11:30 AM

COMMUNITY IMPACT

"Let's Talk Black Grief"

Scott Van Camp, LMFT, Clinical Director, participated in a panel discussion hosted by Black Leaders Collective & Hearts2Heal to discuss the impact of grief & loss, in the black community. We are hopeful that this collaboration will be the beginning of a relationship that will help us to better serve our community. We are passionate about our BIPOC community in Austin, and we are taking action to have more therapists, group facilitators, staff, and clients of color.

YOUR AUSTIN GRIEF COMMUNITY

Volunteer Appreciation - Here for Each Other

The seasons are changing. April is National Volunteer Appreciation Month and here at Austin Grief we’re thrilled to take a collective pause in the midst of all that is currently going on in our world to celebrate you— our dedicated Volunteer Facilitators. Without you, we could not support the many people we serve in their grief. Our volunteers embody and bring to life the vision of our organization: you courageously hold space by offering support to our community, and you bring deep compassion and lasting hope to those who need it most.

The commitment and dedication of our trained volunteers is
fundamental to our mission. You have served more than 125 community members in the first four months of this year alone. You make all the difference. Spring is a time of abundance and new beginnings. We want to abundantly express our gratitude to you. We’re planning an event to show that we’re here for gratitude, here for each other, and here for you. We are small, YOU make us mighty.

Join Us for a Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast!
Saturday, June 5th
8:00 am - 10:00 am
2413 Greenlawn Pkwy, Austin, TX 78641
In person with social distance and COVID safety protocols in place.

Children's Programs

We are wrapping up our 3rd school year with our partner, Community in Schools (CIS)! When we started this partnership in the fall of 2018 we were in 2 schools in AISD. As of today, we are in 5 school districts (AISD, Hays County ISD, Bastrop ISD, Manor ISD and San Marcos ISD) in 13 schools. Due to COVID-19, all groups are virtual. As the pandemic has gone on, our amazing volunteers have navigated facilitating Zoom school groups beautifully and we appreciate the hard work and dedication they have shown. CIS has also been an amazingly supportive partner and the directors and staff have spent hours helping to get our groups running.

As the school year winds down, we are entering Camp Red Bird season! This year, Camp Red Bird will be virtual again with the highest hopes that we will return to in-person Camp in 2022. Like last year, we will be providing “Camp in a Box” for all campers so that everyone has all the materials they need for a fun week of camp. Since last year was so successful, we have added a second session of Virtual Camp Red Bird. We can’t wait to see all of our campers this summer!

If you know a child that could benefit from Camp Red Bird, reach out to Rachel at rsaffer@austingrief.org.

A Message from our Clinical Director

Taking a Mindful Look at Gratitude...Merriam-Webster Learner’s Dictionary defines gratitude as: a feeling of appreciation or thanks. We have all experienced a feeling of gratitude at some point in our lives; yet is gratitude a situational experience or can it also be a mindful and purposeful practice?
First, some may be wondering, why practice gratitude, especially in the face of a year of unprecedented adversity for so many? Please consider the following:

Gratitude helps us adapt and evolve with change. This has been a year of grief for all with losses ranging from the loss of precious human life to the destabilizing loss of our normal lives. An important factor in making meaning is noticing the good that change may bring; practicing mindful and specific gratitude, we can become more flexible and accepting. Practices of gratitude pave the way for the recognition of ambivalence or the co-existence of multiple, often seemingly-contradictory thoughts and feelings. Ambivalence allows us to see more possibilities and move in our grief.

Gratitude reduces anxiety. Gratitude triggers the release of oxytocin, serotonin, and dopamine and can help ward off the cortisol reactions caused by cumulative stress. The reward centers of the brain that are activated during gratitude are heavily connected to the parts of the brain that control basic emotional regulation, such as heart rate, and are associated with stress relief and our bodies’ abilities to mitigate pain.

Gratitude improves mental wellness and health. Studies have supported that people who write letters of gratitude report significantly better mental health four weeks and 12 weeks after their writing exercise ended. It is thought that ongoing practices of gratitude help train the brain to be more sensitive to sensory experiences that elicit joy; the long-term impact of this being positive neural pathways and cognitive constructs being reinforced and more likely to be accessed in our daily lives. Overall, people who practice gratitude report: less illness, more positive thinking, and decreased anxiety and depression.

There are now many studies related to gratitude, and you may choose to do further research. If you have (or discover) practices that support a practice of gratitude, I would love to know more about them! Please consider emailing these to svancamp@austingrief.org.

Scott Van Camp, LMFT  
Clinical Director

For Scott’s complete article on ‘Taking a Mindful Look at Gratitude’, please click the link below.

**Taking a Mindful Look at Gratitude**

You can easily support Austin Grief when you shop on Amazon with AmazonSmile. Designate The Austin Center for Grief & Loss as your charity of choice with one click and donate while you shop. Easily select Austin Grief on your computer and phone. Doing good while shopping, that’s a reason to smile.
Support Austin Grief

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.

Holder of Hope Giving Circle, by contributing a gift of $10, $25, $50, or $100 per month, you will become a Holder of Hope Giving Circle member and will help sustain the much-needed work of providing hope, healing, and transformation.

Sponsor Holders of Hope 2021. For more information visit our website, Holders of Hope or email Kim at knugentanderson@austingrief.org.

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 TODAY

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