



# THE AUSTIN CENTER FOR Grief & Loss

*Hope › Healing › Transformation*

Newsletter

Summer 2023

## **A Message from Clinical Director/ Interim Executive Director Dr. Pamela A. Malone, LCSW-S, Fellow in Thanatology**

Therapy focused on grief and loss aids the bereaved in learning coping strategies, developing resilience, and making meaning. Attempting to make sense out of the senseless takes time, patience, a reworking of one's life story, and a space in which to do this important work. This is what happens at Austin Grief. It happens when a person has the courage to call our Intake Care Coordinator and begins to share their story of loss and grief.



It happens in the individual, couples, and family therapy sessions provided by our talented and compassionate therapists. It happens in the 20 support groups led by our caring volunteer support group facilitators. It happens with our trusting clients ranging in age from 4 years to 80 years.

Pamela A. Malone, Ph.D., LCSW-S, Fellow in Thanatology  
Clinical Director/Interim Executive Director

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## Results from Support Group Research Study

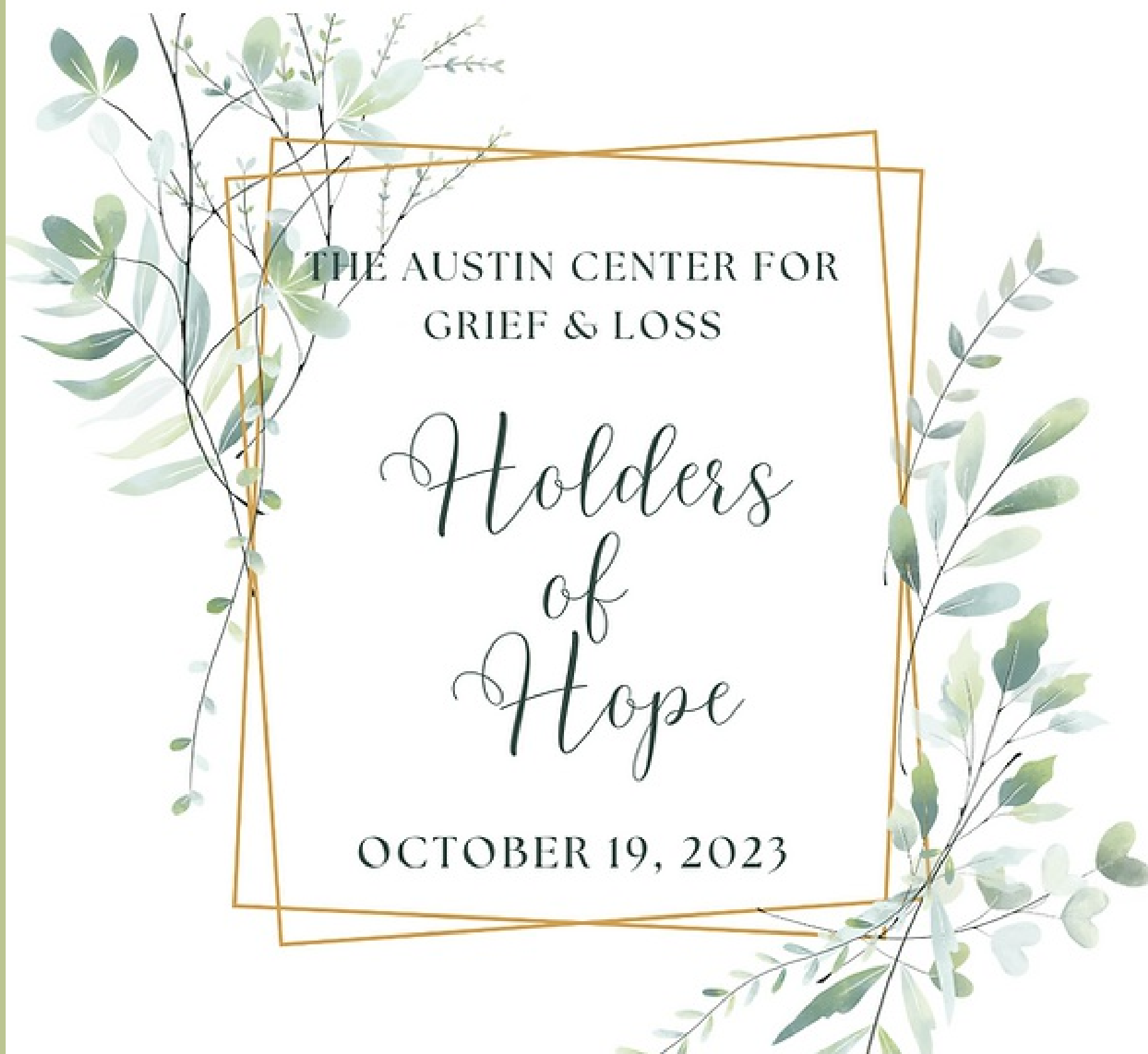
Clinical Director Dr. Pamela Malone, LCSW-S, Fellow in Thanatology and a colleague gathered and analyzed data from a research study of Austin Grief's support groups. We thank all the group participants who responded to the surveys and scales. The results are being used to enhance and improve Austin Grief's support group program as well as the ongoing training of our volunteer group facilitators. The study results were well-received at the ADEC conference by an international audience of grief therapists and researchers. The results support the supposition that participation in a grief support group:

Protects against the development of complicated grief; allows for secure emotional expression which emerged for those participating in death loss groups as well as those in divorce loss groups; and, offers a safe community in which to vent and express feelings.

For a more detailed look at the support group research study results, please click the link below.

[Results Support Group Research Study](#)

**UPCOMING EVENTS**



The Austin Center for Grief & Loss is celebrating its annual Holders of Hope fundraiser and gala at Umlauf Sculpture Garden on Thursday, October 19, 2023. This special evening will feature inspiring stories of those lives touched by our programs and services. We recognize the vital role of our supporters and donors in helping us provide healing services to those that have experienced trauma and loss.

This annual mission-driven event secures the funding needed to provide services to children and adults including therapy, support groups, bereavement summer camp, and school-based groups in Title 1 schools.

Join us in supporting our mission to expand and meet the exponential growth in mental health needs in our community by sponsoring our HOLDERS OF HOPE GALA, taking place on **Thursday, October 19, 2023, 6:30 - 10:00 PM** at the Umlauf Sculpture Garden. New this year is an exclusive VIP Happy Hour at 6:00 PM!

**Become a Holders of Hope Sponsor!**

# COMMUNITY IMPACT

## Community Connections

The Austin Center for Grief & Loss is often called to offer immediate and crisis-based grief support to various community sites as well as to provide psychoeducation about grief and loss.

- In April, Rachel Saffer, LCSW-S, the Director of Children's Services gave a presentation to APD Victims Services interns.
- In February, Ariana Valadez, LMFT practicum student represented Austin Grief at the Central Texas African-American Family Support Conference.
- In March, Nadia Velasquez, LCSSW-S, contract therapist, spoke to Capital City Village staff.
- In April, Rachel Saffer, LCSW-S, the Director of Children's Services gave a presentation to Texas State University counseling students.
- In June, Jessica Marquez, LCSW, contract therapist, offered support to staff and residents of a local apartment community grieving a recent homicide.

## St. Edward's University Community Counseling Clinic

The Austin Center for Grief & Loss has partnered with the St. Edward's University's Community Counseling Clinic to help support the growing demand for Camp Red Bird, our bereavement summer day camp for children and teens. The St. Edward's University master's in counseling students will be camp counselors that will lead a variety of therapeutic activities for the children and teens to process their grief experiences. These students will gain hands-on professional experience in creating a safe space for grieving youth and leading groups for young children and adolescents, all while giving back to our local community. We are so appreciative of the St. Edward's University staff and students for partnering with us and making it possible to support the growing needs for accessible grief support for children and teens.

## Professional Trainings

In March, Dr. Pamela Malone, LCSW-S, Fellow in Thanatology, Clinical Director presented on "Attachment-Informed Grief Therapy with Adolescents" as a 3-hour training to clinicians and students.

In April, Dr. Pamela Malone, LCSW-S, Fellow in Thanatology, Clinical Director/Interim Executive Director presented with a colleague at the Association of Death Education and Counseling



(ADEC) conference in Ohio on “Therapeutic Factors Associated with Grief in Volunteer Facilitated Grief Support Groups.”

In June, Dr. Tashel Bordere, CT, an internationally-known scholar and author who serves as Vice-President of the National Alliance for Children’s Grief (NACG), presented on “Culturally-Conscientiousness Practice with Bereaved Youth and Families” to clinicians and graduate students.

## YOUR AUSTIN GRIEF COMMUNITY

### Children's Programs

	<p>THE AUSTIN CENTER FOR</p> <h1>Grief&amp;Loss</h1> <p><i>Hope &gt; Healing &gt; Transformation</i></p> <h2>Bereavement</h2> <h1>Summer</h1> <h1>CAMP</h1>	
		<p>June &amp; July</p> <h1>Free</h1> <p>Children ages 6-12 &amp; Teens</p>
	<h2>Safe &amp; Supportive</h2> <h2>New in 2023:</h2> <h2>Camp RedBird for Teens!</h2>	<p>Outdoor games, yoga, fun therapeutic games, arts, and crafts</p> <p><a href="http://www.austingrief.org/campredbird">www.austingrief.org/campredbird</a></p> <p>Call Us 512-472-7878</p>

The Austin Center for Grief & Loss is hosting Camp Red Bird a bereavement summer day camp for children ages 6-12 that have experienced the death of a parent, sibling, or primary caregiver.



Camp Red Bird has expanded to provide three sessions and new for summer 2023 is a dedicated camp for teens! All sessions of Camp Red Bird are full and we are serving more children than ever before.

*"My favorite thing about camp is the community of people because it's really nice to be around people who have experienced similar things,"* said Jake, a Red Bird camper.



# Grief and Loss Support Groups

Our peer support groups provide a safe space to connect with others who have experienced a similar loss. Our groups provide the opportunity to share personal experiences, learn new ways of coping, and increase feelings of hope. The following groups are accepting members.

## Virtual Groups

- Elementary Children's Loss
- Bereaved Parents
- LGBTQIA Grief & Loss
- Adult Parent Loss

## In-person Groups

- Adult Death Loss

Austin Grief peer support groups have two trained facilitators and are supported by a clinically licensed coordinator. Peer support groups meet online two times per month. **To join please call 512.472.7878.**



THE AUSTIN CENTER FOR  
**Grief&Loss**  
*Hope > Healing > Transformation*

512-472-7878  
info@austingrief.org  
www.austingrief.org

The Austin Center for Grief & Loss is now offerings both in-person and virtual groups. We currently have 20 different support groups available, based on client need. We have openings in the Adult Death Loss in-person group along with the virtual groups listed above. We also have openings in our new LGBTQIA Grief & Loss virtual support group.



# Individual Counseling Services

The Austin Center for Grief & Loss offers individual, couples, and family therapy for both adults and children. Our therapists have training specific to grief and loss in children and adults. The need for mental health services is greater than it has been in all our 15 years of operation. We strive to help anyone in need of hope and healing, regardless of one's ability to pay. We offer a sliding fee structure for those in need and a care assistance subsidy.

## AUSTIN GRIEF TEAM



Clinical Director/Interim Executive Director  
Pamela A. Malone, Ph.D., LCSW-S, Fellow in  
Thanatology (she/her)



Director of Children's Programs  
Rachel Saffer, LCSW-S (she/her)



Operations & Marketing Manager  
Jessica Owens (she/her)



Intake Care Coordinator  
Bea Casarez (she/her)



Bilingual Staff Family Therapist/Community  
Engagement Coordinator  
Ariana Valadez LMFT-Associate (she/her/ella)



Administrative Assistant  
David Winsman (he/him)



Volunteer Coordinator  
Kelsey Williams (they/them)



Staff Therapist  
Joey Fechtel LPC-Associate (he/him)

The Austin Center for Grief & Loss is happy to introduce and welcome **David Winsman** as Administrative Assistant. David brings knowledge and ideas from his previous work in NICU/NICU bereavement support and marketing administration. In addition, we are also excited to welcome **Kelsey Williams** as our new Volunteer Coordinator. Kelsey will be training and supporting our volunteer community. Kelsey is a dedicated Austin Grief volunteer and currently a MSSW student at UT Austin.

Austin Grief is also happy to introduce our new therapists! **Joell Agee, LCSW, MDiv**, will be joining us as a contract therapist. She also works as a pediatric oncology social worker. **Joey Fechtel, LPC-Associate**, has joined the team as our new staff therapist, where he will work with clients of all ages. Joey recently graduated from St. Edward's University and completed his practicum hours at Austin Grief. **Ariana Valadez, MA,**



**LMFT-Associate**, who many of you know her as our previous Events & Volunteer Coordinator, recently graduated from St. Edward's University and completed her practicum hours at Austin Grief. We welcome Ariana as our Bilingual Family Staff Therapist and Community Engagement Coordinator.

To learn more about our therapists, please visit our website to read our therapist's bios or click the link below.

[Meet Austin Grief Therapists](#)

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## Therapist Spotlight



In providing grief therapy there are occurrences of meaningful therapy moments. To illustrate this, let's highlight Julie Biechlin, LMSW who has been a contract therapist at Austin Grief for almost four years. Her personal experiences of loss and her meaning-making endeavors have led her to provide grief therapy where she helps her clients gain confidence about their ability to come through grief. Julie does this with three areas of focus: witnessing, normalizing, and educating. She witnesses the grief journey, normalizes the accompanying thoughts and feelings, and provides psychoeducation about the process.

Julie worked with a very distraught woman whose college-age daughter died of suicide. The client blamed herself for not seeing the signs although there were none. "I know people tell me it is not my fault. But I am her mother. I should've known." Through Julie's witnessing, normalizing, and educating, this client realized it was not her fault; "I was not in control of this. I realize there are many things not in my control." The client's realization and



ability to exhibit calmness exemplifies the meaningful therapy moments that occur at Austin Grief.

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## Volunteer Shout-Out



Austin Center for Grief & Loss would like to highlight the contributions of volunteer Jenn Fike! Jenn has been an incredibly kind and compassionate volunteer in many capacities, including Volunteer Support Group Facilitator, In-School Grief Group Facilitator, and more recently, Camp Red Bird Camp Counselor. Jenn has gone above and beyond for the ACGL community, and we couldn't continue to provide support to grieving folks without dedicated, empathetic volunteers like Jenn. Thank you so much, Jenn!

## 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 our mission.

[Holder of Hope Giving Circle](#)

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## 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 2023. For more information visit our website, [Holders of Hope](#) or email Jessica at [jowens@austingrief.org](mailto:jowens@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.

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

[DONATE TODAY](#)

[www.AustinGrief.org](http://www.AustinGrief.org)

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512.472.7878

