



THE AUSTIN CENTER FOR
Grief&Loss
Hope › Healing › Transformation

Newsletter

Fall 2018

A Message from our Executive Director

The Austin Center for Grief & Loss offers more than a dozen different volunteer led peer-based support groups. There are groups based on type of loss for adults, and different groups for children of varying ages. There are groups for loss due to death as well as separation loss from divorce or break-up. One of the factors that makes our support groups so rich and helpful to those we serve is the trained volunteers who give their time, talent, and hearts to facilitate the bi-monthly sessions.

Austin Grief does not make it easy to be a volunteer support group leader either. I am learning this, first hand, since I am currently enrolled in the 24-hour volunteer facilitator training which spans four Wednesday evenings and two full Saturdays. Furthermore, Austin Grief charges the volunteers \$125.00 to attend. This all being said, we could not accommodate all the people that wanted to participate in the training. My training group has completed the second 3-hour Wednesday training. The sixteen people who have come together to form this volunteer cohort are from different parts of the country, varying professional and educational backgrounds, and have different life experiences. The common denominator is the authentic desire to service those who are grieving death and loss. I am so honored to serve as the executive director of The Austin Center for Grief & Loss, and I look forward to being counted as a trained volunteer grief facilitator in the near future.

As the days shorten and the nights grow cooler, we joyfully anticipate our annual Holders of Hope Gala and Fundraiser. This beautiful evening of great fun, fantastic food, live music and fellowship will, again, be in the beautiful Umlauf Sculpture Garden on Thursday, October 18th beginning at 6:30 p.m. I hope that all of you reading this newsletter will attend and support the important work that we do. Without community support our mission of providing hope, healing and transformation would not be possible.

With gratitude,
Mary Dickerson

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Loewy Family Commons

Austin Grief officially dedicated The Loewy Family Commons with a ribbon cutting ceremony and reception. Thank you to Adam and Phil Loewy for their generous \$50,000 donation. The Loewys feel a strong connection to Austin Grief's mission. Adam is



one of the top personal injury lawyers in Austin. As the owner and founding partner of the Loewy Law Firm, Adam has personally witnessed his clients' suffering from both grief and loss. Phil sits on the board of The Fertility Foundation of Texas and understands the grief couples share when they have difficulty or are not able to conceive a child. The Loewys believe in and advocate for grief counseling, and their gift helps make this possible for the Austin community.

IBM Grant Recognition

We are pleased to have received a grant from IBM to support The Austin Center for Grief & Loss' software needs. This grant has been awarded in recognition of the outstanding volunteer service of our Board of Directors President, Annahita Varahrami. Annahita is pictured above with Mary Dickerson, and Phil and Adam Loewy.

KUT Get Involved Spotlight

The Austin Center for Grief & Loss has been selected as KUT's Get Involved Spotlight for the month of October! Click here for more... [KUT Get Involved Spotlight Austin Grief](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS



HOLDERS of Hope Gala

Please join us for our annual Holders of Hope celebration at The Umlauf Sculpture Garden, October 18, 2018, 6:30 - 10:00 pm. The evening will feature a catered dinner by Whim Hospitality, complimentary wine, beer and a signature Tito's cocktail, live music featuring artists Jenny Reynolds and Michael Fracasso, and the wit and prose of typewriter poet, Scott James. The support provided by you is the heart and soul of the important work provided by The Austin Center for Grief & Loss. Our mission advancement depends on the funding received at this annual celebration of hope. Thank you to the many companies and individuals that have sponsored! Please visit our [Holders of Hope website](#) to see a complete list of the sponsors that have invested in Austin Grief and this spectacular gala!

With great excitement we have opened up an ADVANCED PURCHASE option for select silent auction packages! They are just too good to keep to ourselves, and we are sure you will feel the same! BUY NOW and support Austin Grief!

[Silent Auction BUY NOW!](#)

Perinatal Loss Professional Workshop

Led by: Elaine Cavazos, LCSW-S and Rachel Saffer, LCSW

October 19, 2018

The Austin Center for Grief & Loss will be hosting a 2-hour workshop on Perinatal and Stillbirth Loss. October is Pregnancy Loss Awareness Month. Participants will learn about the experience of the family, the emotional needs of these families after delivery and individual and group therapy interventions.

Crafting and Community with Jane

Thursdays beginning November 1, 2018

2:00 - 4:00 pm

We invite you to join Jane as she “holds space” for those in our community who are grieving a loss. You are welcome to bring a craft, a book, knitting, coloring or only bring yourself. A variety of supplies will be available. No crafting is required, and you are welcome to join and “just be” with a safe and loving community. Jane Lippman is a retired Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in the College of Liberal Arts and Professor of French from the University of Texas. Since retirement Jane has pursued her love of knitting, enjoys exercise, volunteering, and traveling.

Diá De Los Muertos Family Movie Night

November 2, 2018

Austin Grief is hosting a family movie night for Diá de los Muertos.

We will be watching the movie *Coco*. *Coco* is a fun, heartwarming, family adventure movie that explores the meaning of family and independence, set on the colorful Día de los Muertos.

Dinner and snacks will be provided during our viewing of *Coco*. We encourage all attendees to bring their loved ones favorite food or treat. As part of the Día de los Muertos tradition, all are welcome to place some of the food at an alter for our loved ones spirits to enjoy during our time together.

Evening of Remembrance

December 16, 2018

Austin Grief is hosting our annual Evening of Remembrance ceremony in honor of those we have lost. Remembrance Ceremony activities and child care will be available for younger children during the ceremony. Please bring a small picture of your loved one(s) for our candle light ceremony. Dessert reception to follow ceremony.

Break Up the Break Up Grief Writing Workshop with Spike Gillespie

Begins January 9, 2018

In this writing workshop for women, we explore the aftermath of relationship breakups and divorce. Award-winning memoirist Spike Gillespie has written often about the pain and grief that ensues when partnerships fall apart. Spike creates a safe place for you to explore all of your feelings, get them down on the page and, if you wish, share them out loud. Over the course of six weekly meetings we will: use writing prompts to investigate and acknowledge the broad spectrum of breakup emotions, honor what was, grieve what is no more, imagine a plan for a future in which the pain lessens, the grief quiets, and peace and hope prevail. No prior writing experience is required, seasoned writers and newbies alike are welcome.

Connecting with the Heart: Exploring How Attachment Patterns Influence Grief

Led by Marshall Lyles, LPC-S, LMFT-S, RPT-S

Friday January 25, 2019

The Austin Center for Grief & Loss is hosting a 6-hour advanced clinical workshop on how attachment patterns influence grief. This workshop will provide invaluable information and training on understanding the process of grief in light of attachment theory principles.

For more information on all our upcoming programs and to register for events, please click the link below.



SUPPORT GROUP SPOTLIGHT

Late Pregnancy and Infant Loss

For parents coping with the loss of a pregnancy 21 weeks or later (sometimes referred to as stillbirth) and infants up to 12 months.

Early Pregnancy Loss

For parents experiencing early pregnancy loss, up to 20 weeks.

Grupo de Apoyo para Familias en Espanol

Support Group for Families in Spanish

Para niños y sus familias que han sufrido una pérdida.

For children and their families who have experienced a loss.

Children's Bereavement Groups

Early Elementary, Late Elementary, Middle School and High School.

Children's groups are lively and interactive with the freedom and safety for each child to express their grief in their own way.

[Support Groups](#)

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Bluebonnet Conference



The Austin Center for Grief & Loss in partnership with The Christi Center, hosted a grief symposium welcoming grief centers from across Texas. The conference covered topics including EMDR, creating strong community

partnerships, and included a presentation from Beth Pomeroy, PhD, LCSW on helping parents and children cope with traumatic grief.

AISD School Counselors

Rachel Saffer, LCSW presented a training to the incoming AISD school counselors. The training covered recognizing grief and trauma in children and shared valuable community resources available.

Camp Red Bird on Fox



Rachel Saffer, LCSW, Austin Grief's Children's Program Manager and Camp Red Bird Coordinator, spoke with Fox 7 Good Day Austin about Camp Red Bird, the specific challenges children face in grief, and the importance of support from peers that

understand.

Check out the story by clicking, [Camp Red Bird](#).

Financial Planning Association Austin

Becca Van Tassel, LCSW-S, and Paula Loring, LCSW presented to the Financial Planning Association in Austin on the process of grief and understanding how grief impacts the clients the association serves.

Samsung Engineering Group



We were so happy to welcome back the Samsung engineering team! This group knows how to get projects done! We are so grateful to this crew for volunteering their time! The Garden of Love & Hope received some TLC and just in time for the Loewy Family Commons

dedication.

YOUR AUSTIN GRIEF COMMUNITY

A Message from our Clinical Director

It's hard to believe that fall is already here. This year's rains provided an obvious demarcation and a true feeling of change of season, along with the welcoming of football, and a desperate relief from the summer heat. The change in weather is also a reminder that the holidays are around the corner which can be a painful time for our community. It isn't just the leaves that swirl around us, but all the reminders of what will be different and absent this year. Despite our resilience, those who have had a loss may wonder, "How we will feel or if can I bare to feel at all."

The ways we handle anniversaries, holidays, and important dates are as individual as we are. Holidays are part of the grief journey to be felt fully. If a loss is present, give it a voice. While this season may have great sadness, one may catch themselves feeling okay, and even experience moments of laughter or joy. Whatever you experience, just remember that sadness is allowed because death, as they say, doesn't take a holiday.

This season may especially feel raw for the newly bereaved, yet as one carries their grief, these may be helpful suggestions in preparation for the holiday season.

- What are realistic expectations that you can set for yourself? There may be some traditions that you may not be up for this year, and that is okay. The best thing we can do is meet ourselves where we truly are rather than trying to get ourselves to a place we aren't ready for to meet other's expectations.
- Who can you reach out to for support? Share your plans with family and friends and let them know of any intended changes in holiday routine.
- Are you considering canceling/changing any traditions or events you would have normally attended? Sometimes there is a need to avoid circumstances that you don't feel ready to handle but be mindful if isolation is becoming unhealthy. Is there a way to find a balance between purposeful solitude for remembering/grieving, as well as planned events that provide connection?
- What do you need to grieve? It's okay to feel a whole range of emotions, honor all of them. It is important to recognize that every person has his/her own unique grief experience and may have different needs related to celebrating the holidays. No one way is right or wrong. Experiencing joy and laughter does not mean you have forgotten your loved one.
- What rituals and traditions are right for you? Some people find comfort in the old traditions. Others find them unbearably painful. Be intentional with your needs and the needs of your family members with clear communication about expectations.
- How will you take care of yourself? Develop healthy strategies for coping with stress now because an already stressful time of year is compounded by grief. Be gentle and remember what nurtures you.

The most important thing to remember is there is no right or wrong way to celebrate the holiday season after the death of a loved one. The best way to cope with any holiday season is to plan ahead, get support from others, and honor your resilience in this moment.

With Love and Gratitude,
Becca Van Tassel, LCSW-S
Clinical Director

Board of Directors Spotlight



Sarah Marshall joined The Austin Center for Grief & Loss Board in 2018. Sarah is a seasoned public relations and communications professional in Austin and she has made a significant impact with her time on the Austin Grief Board. Sarah shares what drew her to the important work here at Austin Grief.

I love being part of an organization that is doing such great work for Austin and Austinites. After losing my brother to cancer during high school, my family (three other siblings and parents) did not go through a grieving process. It was at a time when it was not common to have therapy and everyone went back to their routine - my siblings went back to college, dad back to work, I went to school - but we never really grieved. We all just tried to be normal. I recognized as an adult, that I had avoided the grief for decades, but it was still there. I now believe in the power of group and one on one therapy. Grief can be so powerful. Immobilizing. Crippling. The Austin Center for Grief & Loss provides hope for people dealing with the most devastating of circumstances.

Children's Program Manager

This past summer was a busy one for our children's programming! It was the second year of running Camp Red Bird, our day camp for bereaved children. We expanded to two one-week camp sessions and welcomed back many of our fantastic counselors. Campers in both sessions enjoyed therapeutic activities, games and yoga as well as arts and crafts, trips to Northwest Park, snacks (Goldfish Crackers were by far the most popular among the campers) and water fights. During our first session, a few lucky campers and counselors were interviewed by KVUE in a segment that aired on the morning news show. Not only did KVUE run a feature story about Camp Red Bird, but I was fortunate enough to be interviewed by Dave Froehlich from Good Day Austin on Fox 7 prior to our second camp session in August.

During the week, the campers bonded with each other and with the counselors, making it very hard to say goodbye at our ice cream socials on the last day. In addition to the amazing kids who attended Camp Red Bird, we were fortunate to have 8 amazing high school and college students volunteer as counselors. I am so excited to see what is in store for Camp Red Bird in 2019.

Another exciting development related to children's programming is we continue to expand our partnership with Communities in Schools in Austin Independent School District (AISD) as well as

Hays Independent School District (HISD). We began this partnership in September 2017 with two school-based support groups in two schools, Webb Middle School and Hart Elementary School. By Spring 2018, we were in Webb Middle School, Hart Elementary, Pecan Springs Elementary and Gus Garcia Young Men's Leadership Academy. This fall we have expanded even further and are now serving 5 schools in AISD: Webb Middle School, Hart Elementary, Pecan Springs Elementary, Gus Garcia Young Men's Leadership Academy and Reagan High School. In HISD, we have launched grief groups in 3 schools: Hays High School, McCormick Middle School and Wallace Middle School. We are grateful for the \$10,000 in funding from The Burdine Johnson Foundation which allowed us to expand services into Hays County.

As always, we continue to support bereaved youth at Austin Grief. Children's Support Groups are offered the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month for early and late elementary ages as well as for middle schoolers. Individual counseling for children is also available in both English and Spanish.

With love,
Rachel Saffer, LCSW
Program Manager of Children's Services

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, gardening, and board committee members. Please contact Katie Tarvin at ktarvin@austingrief.org for more information.

Introducing our Holder of Hope Giving Circle

We want you to be a part of the The Holder of Hope Giving Circle supporting the important work of The Austin Center for Grief & Loss. By supporting the Austin Center for Grief & Loss and becoming a Holder of Hope Giving Circle member you are a part of helping provide hope. Hope can be fleeting for those experiencing a loss - death, divorce, tragedy. A death often leaves people isolated and alone. 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 to those who have lost partners, children, and loved ones.

The biggest benefit you receive from being a part of The Holder of Hope Giving Circle is knowing you are making a difference in the lives of grieving individuals. Additionally, you will be invited to art exhibitions, book signings, and one private party each year. Thank you in advance for your support. We will provide you a Holder of Hope pin – we hope you will wear this proudly and often. Please also spread the word about Austin Grief’s mission and the important work we do.

On behalf of our clients, staff, and board of directors, thank you for your support and for helping The Austin Center for Grief & Loss bring about transformation in the lives of our clients and making aspirations, ambitions, expectations and dreams possible again.

[Holder of Hope Giving Circle](#)

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! Shop at Buffalo Exchange on Guadalupe street and ask for an Austin Grief token.

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

Sponsor Holders of Hope 2018. For more information visit our website, [Holders of Hope](#).

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.

[DONATE TODAY](#)

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