

heart strings

Spring 2018

A Newsletter for the Community from
The Children's Bereavement Center of South Texas

(Un)Gala Sets New Records

Maybe it was the people being honored – or maybe it was the fact that it was a more casual event. Whatever the reason, the Children's Bereavement Center's 2018 Hearts in Harmony (un)Gala broke records for the number of attendees and the funds raised for the Center's programs.

Over 400 friends of the Center gathered at the San Antonio Country Club on February 22 to celebrate the Center's mission and honor Suzy and Cappy Lawton for the many ways they have supported the Center – and for all they do and have done - to make San Antonio a kinder and more caring community for children and families.

Special guest speaker was Gaby Vallandingham, who shared the story of her four-year-old daughter Zoe's sudden death, and how the Center helped her, her husband and surviving daughter, Emma, recover and heal. She cited the Pet Therapy portion of the program as especially helpful for Emma.

Gaby ended her presentation by saying, "We are deeply grateful for all the amazing services we have received. We will continue attending sessions, as we continue learning to navigate this new kind of life. Our goal as a family is to be as involved as possible. We hope that we can help other parents that are just starting this path – to share the light."

The Center is especially grateful to Brooke Leddy, President of the Friends of the CBCST, Zoe Reilly, Chair of the 2018 Hearts in Harmony (un)Gala Committee, as well as all the Friends of the CBCST for the many hours of thought and effort they contributed to ensure that this was an outstanding event. Thank you to all our community supporters who donated



Client Speaker, Gaby Vallandingham

auction items, bid on auction items, attended the event and helped set new records.



Honorees, Cappy and Suzy Lawton



Zoe Reilly, Gala Committee Chair and Brooke Leddy, President of the Friends of the CBCST



Pictured from left to right: Bert Pfiester, Strategic Initiatives; Marian Sokol, Executive Director; Cappy & Suzy Lawton, Honorees; Deborah Knapp, Emcee/KENS-TV Anchorwoman; Mayor Ron Nirenberg

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And the award goes to...

The San Antonio Business Journal's Corporate Philanthropy and Non-profit Awards honor nonprofits and the corporate citizens supporting our community through philanthropy, volunteerism, board support, and corporate partnerships. The Business Journal's second annual event presented by The Najim Family Foundation and was held on Thursday, November 16th at the Pearl Stable. The Children's Bereavement Center of South Texas was named the premier organization in the Small to Mid-Size Non-profit category.



To read the full article, visit our website at: www.cbcs.org and click on News in the top right corner.

Happy Anniversary CBC-RGV!

The Children's Bereavement Center-Rio Grande Valley opened its doors on February 16, 2017 and spent the ensuing 12 months reaching out to communities throughout this region and educating professionals and the public both about childhood grief and the services provided by CBC-RGV. Valley residents welcomed the new program, and by the end of 2017 a total of 245 individuals had received grief support services. The RGV Center now hosts four peer support groups. Individual counseling sessions are fully booked, and consideration is now being given to opening the RGV Center on weekends, to assist more families.



RGV Staff photographed from left to right: Cindy Waddle, Joanna Gomez, Corie Olivares, Rubi Salinas

Also during 2017, CBC-RGV: invited students ages 8-12 to attend the first annual overnight grief camp, Camp Caterpillar; provided Grief Education Training for every school counselor in the Sharyland, McAllen, Harlingen, Brownsville, Mission, and Los Fresnos school districts; initiated partnerships with Los Fresnos CISD and McAllen ISD to provide on-campus grief support services for high school students; were called on multiple times to respond to school crises after the death of a teacher or student; accepted and supervised undergraduate student interns from University of Texas, Rio Grande Valley to serve as volunteer facilitators.

At the end of its first year, CBC-RGV staff celebrated the fact that families and professionals alike have expressed gratitude that grief support services are available for the first time in the Rio Grande Valley.

New Center coming to Floresville!!

The Children's Bereavement Center of South Texas (the Center) is pleased to announce the opening of Paloma Place, a children's bereavement center in Wilson County. In partnership with the University of Texas-San Antonio's Academy for Crisis and Trauma Training, the Center will provide grief services for residents of Sutherland Springs and the surrounding communities in the aftermath of the November 2017 tragedy. The Center's staff has been providing support for the community since the tragic loss of lives occurred. This collaborative partnership is funded in part through a grant from The Victims of Crime Act, Whataburger, a gift from the San Antonio Area Foundation and designated support from caring friends of the Center.

Paloma Place is a replication of the program established in San Antonio in 1997, with an additional center operating in the Rio Grande Valley to serve the residents of the border region of Texas. Each center utilizes innovative programming for children and families developed by Children's Bereavement Center of South Texas to provide healing and recovery for individuals who have experienced the death of a loved one.

Commenting on the new center in Wilson County, Executive Director Marian Sokol said, "We are all saddened by this tragedy that occurred only a few miles from our Center in San Antonio. We feel fortunate to have the expertise, resources, and earned confidence from leadership throughout Texas to respond to the needs of those who have been impacted by this tragic event."

As more information on this program becomes available, it will be posted on our website at www.cbcs.org or please call the Center at (210) 736-4847.

Hope is a Powerful Thing

In the aftermath of local and national tragedies, many students turn to their teachers, school counselors and support staff to cope with the grief they face. To help schools prepare to help their students, the Children's Bereavement Center hosted "Supporting Our Students Through Crisis and Loss" the Center's 2018 Grief Education Institute Symposium.

Held in early February, the program featured Dr. David J. Schonfeld, Director of the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement (NCSCB) at the University of Southern California. Dr. Schonfeld, one of the country's leading experts on childhood grief caused by events such as school shootings and natural disasters, has provided consultation and training after a number of crisis events, including those in Newtown, CT; Aurora, CO and Townville, SC. During his time in San Antonio, Dr. Schonfeld spent several hours with Floresville ISD faculty and staff who are coping with the Sutherland Springs shooting crisis.

Other presenters for the symposium were Dr. Thelma Duffey and Dr. Shane Haberstroh from the University of Texas at San Antonio's Academy for Crisis and Trauma Counseling. For the past five years, Drs. Duffey and Haberstroh have been providing services to Sandy Hook Elementary School and the Newtown community, and shared their insights and suggestions with the teachers and counselors who attended the symposium.

In addition to these presentations, the Children's Bereavement Center was proud to present the 2018 Hope Award, which pays tribute annually to individuals who have dedicated their lives to improving outcomes for children, in addition to impacting policy, and serving as change agents to improve systems of care. This year the Hope Award was presented to both the Molak Family and Senator José Menéndez for achieving



Packed House: Teachers, school counselors, social workers and nurses filled Whitley Theological Center to hear presentations by national experts.



Hope Award presenters and recipients: (left to right) Rose Sherman-Williams; Marian Sokol, Executive Director; Jacqui Peace, Board Chairman; Senator José Menéndez; Maureen and Matt Molak.

passage of David's Law (SB 179). This legislation mandates all public schools to create anti-bullying policies, which include protection from abuse after school hours, as well as systems that allow students to anonymously report instances of bullying.

The Children's Bereavement Center is honored to recognize the Molak Family, as well as Senator José Menéndez for bringing HOPE to every child in Texas who faces bullying and acts that demean the dignity that he or she deserves.

THANK YOU to the following people for supporting the Center throughout the year:

To our in-kind donors: Mandy Coolbaugh, First Baptist Church's Hope Bible Class, Enedina Vasquez, Kappa Kappa Chapter of ESA International, PBK Architects, Methodist Healthcare Cancer Services, Santikos Entertainment, Mr. and Mrs. Matthew Michelson, Mr. and Mrs. Trevor Markham, and the multiple groups and families who donated teddy bears for our little ones.

To our Pot-Luck Partners: Barbara Cantrell & Teens Give Back, Curtis Ruder & the APLC High School Crew, Bobby Rios and Family, SWBC PEO, Debra Cox, UTSA's School Psychology Graduate Organization, Lauren Ferrero, Girl Scout Troop 77, Connie Gilbert, Jacqui Peace & Family, Susan Kilgore, Alamo Heights Rotary Club, SAMMC Pediatrics, WellMed Charitable Foundation, Junior League of San Antonio, SWIM of First Unitarian Universalist Church, Barbara Williams & the GIFT Class at First Baptist Church.

A special THANK YOU to Laura and Jack Richmond for their generous matching gift of \$100,000 for program support in 2017 and to the 2017 Valero Texas Open for supporting the Center's mission to foster healing for grieving youth and their families.

Without all of you, the work we do would not be possible. THANK YOU!



Marian Sokol and Gary Simmons 2017 Valero Texas Open Company Chair



Laura and Jack Richmond



Thank you to Core Creative Promotions for the beautiful production and medal design.

Don't miss out on the 2018 Children's Bereavement Center Fiesta Medal!!!

Purchase your 2018 CBCST Fiesta Medal online through the Fiesta Store for \$8 at <https://www.fiesta-sa.org/shop/>. You can also pick up your medal at Schnabel's True Value Hardware store, located at 4337 McCullough Ave, San Antonio, TX 78212. OR you receive them directly from the Center for \$10 at <https://cbcst.org/fiesta-medal-sales/> (This price DOES include shipping).

All money raised through Fiesta Medal sales will help fund the Center's free grief support groups for children and their families.



Have you ever wished you could leave a legacy?

You can.

Please consider a 20th Anniversary Legacy Gift.

By including the Children's Bereavement Center in your estate plans, you will be part of the driving force in assuring that thousands of children... perhaps even your grandchildren... will never have to walk the painful journey of grief alone.

For additional information, please contact Dr. Marian Sokol, Executive Director at (210) 736-4847.






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