

heart strings

Fall 2017

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

New Program Provides Comfort and Hope for Families

It's news you never want to receive – unimaginable, life-changing, devastating. Someone you love has been diagnosed with a serious/life-threatening illness. Some react bravely, others break down, still others become paralyzed with fear and worry. However, the reality is that family members must carry on. Doctor's appointments must be made and kept, arrangements must be made for treatment or surgery, all while trying to allay the fears of your children and maintain some balance for your family.

What families need most at this point is support, comfort, understanding, and guidance. Until March of this year, the San Antonio community did not have such a resource. Then, thanks to a collaboration between the START Center for Cancer Care and Austin-based Wonders & Worries, Children's Bereavement Center began to provide unique, new services for area families whose lives are in turmoil due to this type of diagnosis.



When Dr. Lon Smith of the START Center requested the collaboration and offered rent-free space in its Medical Drive offices, a long-time dream of the Children's Bereavement Center staff was fulfilled. "We have been aware of this need for some time," explained Executive Director Marian Sokol, "but the Bereavement Center is not a suitable site for providing support for these families, who need to maintain hope for the recovery of their loved one. We are so pleased to be partnering with the START Center and Wonders & Worries to fill this gap in services, and hope to make a real difference for San Antonio families faced with this challenge."

The program was initiated in March, when a Bereavement Center Counselor began offering services for children ages 2-18, in association with Child Life Specialists from Wonders & Worries. The Medical Center site opened its doors on July 14, and staff is already

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With your support, we **HEAL** lives.

This October, double your donation impact during our \$100,000 matching grant offered to the Center by the Wade Richmond Foundation.

All funds received from October 1 through October 31 will be matched dollar-for-dollar if we meet our goal.

Donate online or visit our website for more information!



Going Green

Help us reduce printing, postage and other mailing costs by receiving paperless updates! Stay up to date on exciting news and events at the Center, as well as trainings and other opportunities available. Text CBCST to 22828 or visit our website at www.cbcst.org and click on the "Get Updates" icon at the top of the page.

Shop for a Cause

Summer is over, Fall is in the air, and the holiday season will be here in no time. Wise shoppers have already made their gift-giving list and "checked it twice." There is no better way to find the best selection and prices than logging onto Amazon. You can find everything you need – and lots of stuff you don't – without ever having to search for a parking space or stand in line. Best of all, you'll have the satisfaction of knowing that a portion of every dollar you spend, will come back to the Center to support programs for grieving children. To make this happen, all you need to do is designate Children's Bereavement Center of South Texas as your beneficiary when logging onto Amazon Smile. It's that simple.



Visit www.Smile.Amazon.com for more information and search for the Children's Bereavement Center of South Texas to designate us as your charity of choice.

Happy Holidays!!!

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Cindy Perez Waddle, LPC, Counselor
Joanna Gomez, LMSW, Counselor

Welcome!



Laura Villarreal joined the Center staff in July as the organization's Development Director. Laura is a graduate of the University of Texas at San Antonio, where she earned both her bachelor and master's degrees in communications. She joins the organization with more than eight years of professional experience in marketing, public relations, and fund development. Currently, Laura serves on the leadership team for Young Nonprofit Professionals of San

Antonio and is a member of the Younger Women's Task Force San Antonio chapter. As a native of San Benito, TX, she is thrilled to be working for an organization that also serves the Rio Grande Valley area of South Texas. When she's not supporting the Center, Laura spends quality time with her long-haired Chihuahua rescue, Pierre!



Emily Price joined the Center team in January in 2016 while completing practicum hours for her Master's degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, which she received in May from the University of Texas at San Antonio. Prior to that, Emily attended Texas Woman's University where she received a Bachelor's degree in Child Development. As an intern at the Center, Emily helped facilitate Tuesday night support groups, then went on to work with both

groups and individual clients. Emily has now taken on the full-time role as Intake Coordinator, where she serves as the first point of contact for new families wishing to receive services. She also provides psycho-education for families and professionals as needed.

Asked about her new position, Emily says, "In my brief time with the Center, I've had several roles but have loved each one. It's been such a blessing to be a part of this team!"

Heart Strings is the community newsletter for the friends and families of



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This October, double your donation impact during our **\$100,000** matching grant challenge.

Laura and Jack Richmond of The Wade Richmond Foundation are offering a **\$100,000 matching challenge in memory of their son, Wade.**

DONATE ONLINE AT cbst.org

You can also donate via check, cash or through any of our October events.

Please visit our website for more information.

Your donation will be matched *dollar-for-dollar* if we meet our goal!

We're Going to the Dogs – And We Love It!

A transformation takes place inside the Center whenever the therapy dogs arrive. Children and adults both seem to relax and smiles begin to appear. "It's a little like magic," says Program Director Tami Logsdon, LPC-S. "Even when a child or adult is a little timid, they soon learn there is nothing to fear and are more interested in getting close to pet the dogs."

"Therapy dog" is the correct term to use when referring to a dog that is specially trained to help with a patient's physical therapy, or to help patients relax and communicate, as they do at the Center.

"We are fortunate to have animal-assisted therapy teams who have been sharing their specially trained dogs with our Tuesday night Sibling Loss support group for the past two years. This Fall, more volunteers will be coming to our Monday evening Sibling Loss gatherings, and to our Wednesday night Beyond Violence peer support groups," added Logsdon. The dogs who come to the Center engage in friendly interaction with children and adults and provide comfort, support and encouragement in non-verbal and non-judgmental ways.

Therapy dogs are required to be calm, even-keeled, friendly, obedient and healthy, and they must receive special training and register with a group that represents therapy dog teams. These dogs must enjoy interacting with people and being touched – sometimes by many people at once! According to Therapy Dogs United,



We are excited to announce the addition of Pet Partners to several support groups this Fall. In addition to Tuesday's Sibling Loss group, these furry friends will also be joining the Monday Sibling Loss group and Wednesday evening Beyond Violence group. Three teams of pets and owners participated in a special orientation and are now ready to attend groups. Welcome and thanks to: (standing, left to right) Pet Partners Gwen with Rose, Steve with Bellin, and (kneeling) Kathi with Duncan, and Angela with Fancy. Also pictured are Center staffers, (far left) LPC Intern Rachel Weber and (standing, far right) Associate Counselor Julie Dunlap and Marcella Garcia, LPC.

interacting with a therapy dog reduces anxiety, fatigue and depression, lowers blood pressure and promotes healing.

"The fact that the dogs are nonverbal makes it easier for children to connect with them, and

share their feelings," says Logsdon, adding, "they have been a great addition to our program during the past two years. We are delighted to be able to expand their participation and add their presence to other peer support groups."



Specht's Store  Oct. 28, 2017

Come for the Run, Stay for the Fun!

Plan to Participate!

The third annual Brew-Ha Roundup is right around the corner and there's still time to sign up! Bring the whole family out to Specht's Store on Saturday, October 28th for our 5K, 10K and Kids' Mile. After the race, take part in the costume contest, enjoy live music and free beer on Specht's patio.

Thanks to our 2017 Sponsors!



New Program Offers Hope *(Continued from p.1)*

working with a number of families, one of which comes regularly from Laredo. The program's goal is to ease the anxiety of children – to answer their questions and help them understand, so they will not continue to wonder and worry about what is happening to their parent or sibling. Parent consultations also provide support for the adults who are coping with the many challenges that accompany a life-changing diagnosis.

"The partnership between the START Center for Cancer Care, the Children's Bereavement Center of South Texas, and Wonders & Worries meets a growing need," said Pam Sparks, Director of Physician Integration at the START Center. "Nearly three million children in this country are living with a parent who is either battling or has survived cancer."

Wonders & Worries services are provided at no charge to any family in the San Antonio community who has received a serious/life-threatening diagnosis. Offices are located at the START Center, 4383 Medical Drive, Suite 127. If you know someone in need of this service, contact Wonders & Worries at 210-307-4853 or Leslie Wood, LCSW at lwood@cbcst.org.



(Above and below) Playing with dolls that are "undergoing treatment" similar to that of their parent or sibling allows children to become more familiar with and less frightened by the medical technology they may now be encountering in their family.



Wonders & Worries Child Life Specialist Adrianna Ortega (at right) explains how engaging a child in therapeutic play can help ease a child's anxiety and give them a sense of empowerment and hope. Child Life Specialists are currently coming to San Antonio from their Austin headquarters twice each week to provide services for the new program. A San Antonio Child Life Specialist is now in training and expected to begin serving families in January 2018.



The Wonders & Worries space is filled with many ways for a child to find comfort and express their feelings, including the drum, xylophone and teddy bear shown above.



Wonders & Worries

Professional support for children through a parent's illness.

We will, together.

Reaching Out to Military Families

San Antonio is nicknamed "Military City USA." For almost 300 years, the city has served as home to a military installation of some kind, and today welcomes nearly 40,000 military trainees every year. Additionally, San Antonio is home to one of the country's largest populations of active and retired military. The Children's Bereavement Center has long been aware of and served military families who have experienced the death of a loved one. These families may be stationed many miles away from family and friends, and need the comfort and support offered by the Center's programs.

To better understand and care for these families, two staff members attended the Military Child Education Coalition's National Training Seminar in Washington D.C., a three-day event providing insights for how to best serve the military-connected child.

Leslie Wood, LCSW, Director of Grief Education and Community Response and Patricia A. Ruiz, PhD, LCSW, Director of External Initiatives, attended the seminar at the end of July. They were able to interact with a large number of military personnel who were there to learn how to advocate for grieving military children. According to Ms. Wood, "They were eager to hear about the services the Center provides, and we helped people from other areas of the country find the grief support programs nearest to them. Many of the people we spoke to were unaware of these services. We were encouraged to return next year as presenters."

During the seminar, they distributed 300 copies of *Out Came the Sun*, the Center's resource book for grieving families.



Providing Resources Patricia Ruiz, PhD, provides information and suggestions for one of many counselors who attended the Military Child Education Coalition's National Training Seminar in Washington, DC. During the three-day conference, the Center distributed over 300 copies of its *Out Came the Sun* book to interested professionals from across the country.

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New Friend! Leslie Wood, LCSW (left) and Patricia Ruiz, PhD, enjoyed participating in this annual meeting and helped many professionals find the grief center nearest their home location. They also enjoyed making new friends like the one pictured above.

Summer Camps Mean Plenty of Fun and Smiles

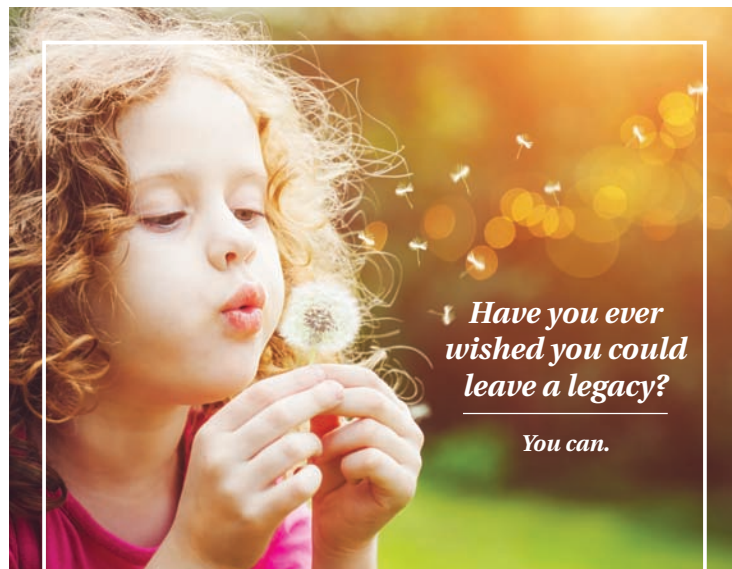
In 2013, the Center began to offer grief camps to meet the needs of children who are not able to attend regular peer support groups at the Center. Some of these children and young people have parents and caregivers who work in the evening; others lack transportation.

Since then, overnight camp experiences have been received with enthusiasm by both children and adults. Through standard camp activities, camp provides children with freedom and the opportunity to concentrate on something other than their loss. Grief specific activities provide children with the opportunity to form relationships with others who have lost a loved one, to ask - and receive - straightforward answers to questions that have been troubling them, and to develop the coping skills necessary to process their grief in healthy ways.

This summer, the Children's Bereavement Center hosted three camps: Camp Heroes-Beyond the Walls, specifically for teens; Camp Kangaroo hosted by the San Antonio Center at a nearby youth camp; Camp Caterpillar, the first camp held at the new Center in the Rio Grande Valley. The pictures at right tell the story better than words ever could!



Camp Heroes-Beyond the Walls, designed especially for at-risk teens, was held on the campus of Our Lady of the Lake University. One of the empowerment activities involved teens helping to plant spring flowers in one of the gardens for the retired nuns at the adjacent convent.



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.



Teen girls attending Camp Hermann Sons in Comfort decided to decorate the entrance to their dormitory with a symbol of new life and hope.



The new Center in the Rio Grande Valley hosted its first Camp Caterpillar in August. Above, participants seem very enthusiastic about the drums they made and the circle held the second day of camp.



Camp Heroes was held at the San Antonio Center in March. Above, Program Director Tami Logsdon (at left) gathers young participants outside for some sunshine and sharing.



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