



BEYOND THE HURT

Healing and Purpose

When young couples are planning for the birth of their child, they think about preparing the nursery, buying cute onesies, stocking up on diapers, opening a college fund. They look forward to gathering the family to help welcome their child into this world.

This was certainly the case for Shannon and Jon Turner, who were getting ready for their long-anticipated second son. They never thought about preparing themselves to bear the greatest burden of grief any parent can imagine – the loss of their new baby.

Andrew was not yet two months old when he died. No one in the family was prepared for this loss. The pain was overwhelming to Shannon and Jon – but especially so for their first child, Christian who – “for a very long time” – had wanted nothing more than a sibling to watch over. Shannon had to explain to her oldest son that his little brother “was going back to Heaven.” She remembers his dignified tears and heartbreaking response as he searched her face for answers, “I’ve prayed for him my whole life and now I have to give him back?” This is a question no mother should ever have to face.

Shannon remembers the moment well. “My heart broke into yet another million pieces as I looked into his eyes and told him yes. In that moment between his question and my answer, I was deeply aware that I was the one delivering the defining moment that would end Christian’s childhood innocence. I was crushingly aware in that moment, too, that I was having to say goodbye to not just one but both of my sons. Andrew was gone and Christian, as we knew him, was gone now, too.”



Mayor Ron Nirenberg, Erika Prosper Nirenberg, Marian Sokol
Executive Director, CBCST

In what she now feels was Andrew intervening and guiding his family away from overwhelming grief and toward understanding and healing – Shannon found a gift on their porch when she arrived home from the hospital that day. It was from their close friends, Jodi and Mike Wood – friends she knew supported Children’s Bereavement Center in every possible way. “It was a reminder, a blessing straight from God and, we believe, from Christian’s baby brother, that there was a place for Christian to go where he could process his grief; a grief too big for his little boy hands to hold.”

Christian began to visit the Center weekly, sometimes engaging in arts and crafts projects, other times simply talking about his feelings with the counselor, who was always available to Shannon as well. “I learned a lot from the Angels at the CBC about how children work through their grief. I learned things I wouldn’t otherwise have known,” she remembers. One of those things was how to cope with her own grief in healthy, beneficial ways “for the sake of the son I still had.”

This experience with the Center also brought the realization that “...having a philanthropic spirit is essential in this world. Each of us, if we haven’t already, will need help of one kind or another one day.”

Expressing gratitude for the services received by her family, she pointed out to those gathered, “As adults, we are the ones to continue the legacy of healing that the Children’s Bereavement Center has established in South Texas. By doing so, our legacy will be one of having cared enough to make a difference in the lives of children who will eventually be leading the way themselves...”

Shannon brought her remarks to a close, saying, “As Christian’s Mom – as Andrew’s Mom – I say with the deepest of gratitude – my children’s lives have great purpose. They are strong and good and pure. And my Andrew? I look around this room and know, without a doubt that losing him was not in vain.”



Thank you to the 2019 Friends’ Gala Committee for organizing such a beautiful event.



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THE CENTER WELCOMES NEW STAFF

As demand grows for the Center's services, so does the agency's need for staff. Since September 2018, the Center has welcomed the following dedicated professionals to the team!

KIM FOX, LPC Intern, MA, NCC
Counselor, Paloma Place



A recent graduate of Texas State University's Professional Counseling program, Kim's passion has always been working with underserved children and adolescents. She is especially interested in helping children overcome the impact of trauma and healing from traumatic grief. Kim's background is in improvisational theater, so that is helpful as she incorporates creative therapeutic techniques into sessions with her clients. Her goal is to help clients live their best lives, whether it be through processing grief, working through traumatic experiences, or managing anxiety and depression. Prior to becoming a counselor, Kim worked as a grant writer for Child Advocates of San Antonio and Communities in Schools of South Central Texas. She is a member of several professional organizations, including the Association for Play Therapy and serves as Communications Chair for the San Antonio Society of Psychoanalytic Studies.

KERRY QUINN

Finance Director, CBCST



Kerry Phillip Quinn joined the Center staff in October 2018 and brings with her a wealth of nonprofit experience, having worked as a nonprofit executive in San Antonio for the past 21 years. She received a BA degree from Texas Tech University and completed post-graduate work at the University of Vienna as a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar. She also holds a Certificate in Nonprofit Management from UTSA. Past work experience includes Boys & Girls Clubs of San Antonio, Seton Home, and Catholic Charities, in addition to consulting for many other local non-profits. Married to husband, Chris, since 2013, both Quinns are active members of the Rotary Club of San Antonio, with Kerry serving as an officer at both local and district levels. She also serves as treasurer for the San Antonio Public Library Foundation and volunteers with Texas Public Radio and Impact San Antonio.

LETICIA VILLAREAL, LPC
Counselor, CBCST



Leticia – better known as “Letty” to friends, family and the Center's clients – is a graduate of the University of Texas at San Antonio and the University of Missouri at Kansas City. She is a Licensed Professional Counselor and is now completing an internship to become a Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor. Her previous work experience includes

Laurel Ridge Treatment Center and Family Violence Prevention Services, where she worked as a therapist with both adults and children. Leticia is experienced in facilitating parenting groups, assisting new foster parents, and advocating for victims of crime. She has also worked with military veterans and is trained in Cognitive Processing Therapy, which is used to help reduce the symptoms of PTSD. Leticia is passionate about “walking with people during their greatest time of need and providing a safe space to freely express their inner voice.”

KRISTINA HERNANDEZ

Development Director, CBCST



Kristina Hernandez joined Children's Bereavement Center in February as Director of Development. Most recently, she served as Director

of Community Investments for the San Antonio Food Bank, where she managed all corporate fundraising efforts. Prior to her role at the Food Bank, Kristina worked 17 years for a local credit union, the last 11 of which she spent in marketing and community relations.

A San Antonio native, Kristina holds a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from the University of the Incarnate Word with a concentration in Marketing, and a master's degree in Nonprofit Management from Our Lady of the Lake University. She has served on the national Board of Directors for the nonprofit Bright Pink, and on the Strengthening Families Issue Council for United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County. Kristina and her husband, Scott, have three children – Brianna, Riley, and Keller.

PAWSITIVELY PERFECT!

It was love at first sight the first time he visited the Center! From that moment, every time Bellin came to visit, the staff, interns, and families would gather to shower this special volunteer with love. It might have been his calm and loving manner, or his soulful blue eyes, or all that soft, silky fur – whatever the reason, Pet Partner Bellin has always brought smiles to the faces and joy to the hearts of everyone he's encountered at the Center since becoming a volunteer in 2015.

In recognition of their untiring volunteerism and enthusiastic support



Steve, Bellin and Kassia Fontenot

of the Center, Bellin, and owners Steve and Dr. Kassia Fontenot, were honored with the *Pawsitively Perfect Award* during the Center's 2019 Symposium in February. Since becoming involved with the Center in 2015, Bellin, Kassia, and Steve have become not just volunteers,

but friends, supporters, and advocates of the program.

Not only does Steve bring Bellin for his “appearances” during the Center's evening peer support groups and Camp Heroes, he has taken on the responsibility for recruiting and training new Pet Partners for the Center. Kassia also comes with Bellin when he volunteers. As a pediatrician, she also makes herself available for the “Ask the Doctor” sessions held at each Camp Heroes, during which children can get answers to their questions about the causes of their loved one's death. When appropriate, this team also travels to schools and organizations around San Antonio to bring comfort and peace to those affected by a traumatizing death.

Many thanks to Bellin, Kassia, and Steve Fontenot for their extraordinary support of the Center's mission!

THE 2019 HOPE AWARD

The Hope Award was established in 2015 by the Children's Bereavement Center of South Texas to honor individuals who - through their work - improve outcomes for children. The award recognizes those who have made a difference in the lives of individual children, in addition to impacting policy and serving as change agents to improve the system of care for children in Texas.

The 2019 Hope Award recipient is State Representative Diego Bernal, of District 123, which encompasses downtown and north central San Antonio, parts of the city's west side, and the City of Castle Hills. During the time he spent on the City Council and now at the state level, Rep. Bernal has



Texas State Representative Diego Bernal, CBCST Executive Director Marian Sokol and George Block, Child Advocate

focused much of his official attention on improving the public education system. He currently serves as Vice Chairman of the House Committee on Public Education. In this capacity, Rep. Bernal has spent a considerable amount of time interviewing teachers and administrators at the 55 public, 20 private, and 10 charter schools that serve the 30,000 children in his district. The purpose of this effort is

to learn what those who work within the education system feel is needed to improve that system.

Bernal is passionate about renewing public education and feels, "Education is the one issue that can touch and affect all others. During every school visit and in every conversation, I continue to witness the power of potential and the evidence of excellence. I see this in our students and in the dedication of educators..." His research identified five issues that he intends to pursue through legislative action: 1) equity in internet access, 2) state school funding formulas dependence on attendance over enrollment, 3) the positive impact of pre-kindergarten preparation, 4) need for mental health resources and personnel, and 5) literacy.

Congratulations - and Thank You - to State Representative Diego Bernal for his work on behalf of Texas children!

THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE FOR SUPPORTING THE CENTER

To our in-kind donors: Thank You to First Baptist Church Hope Bible Class for donating teddy bears; Thank You to Eric & Cindy Ku, Mr. and Mrs. Daren Chauvin, Molly Dupnick, Nathalie Stegemeier, Sue & Russ Brennan, Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Drawert, and Rosa Agüero for donating various art supplies and other materials needed to support groups; Thank You to Pace Counseling Group for donating water and supplies to Camp Heroes;



Eric Ku with his Teddy Bear Donation



Various Art Supplies Donated



GameStop 410 and Blanco 2019 Donation

Thank You to Canyon Ridge Elementary School, Clements High School, Alamo Heights ISD Combined PTO Council, and the Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran School for hosting a supply drive to gather supplies and teddy bears for our groups.

Thank You to our Pot-Luck Partners for warming the hearts AND BELLIES of our families!! Thank You to Christ Lutheran Church, Brad Dawson & Movement Mortgage, Junior League San Antonio, NCL Rose Chapter, Abiding Presence Church, Magnolia Pancake Haus, Beth Fix & the Grateful Girls, NCL Alamo Chapter, the First Baptist Church G.I.F.T. Class, Girl Scout Troop 77, Alison Barrow, Jessica & Ryan Berg, Eva & Ben Holliday, Lauren Ferrero, Paula Gulley, Mary & William Herff, Elisabeth

Koehler, Jennifer Marshall, Jacqui Peace & Family, Curtis Ruder & Family, Paula Shaver, Snooze, an A.M. Eatery, Eliza Sonneland, First UU SWIM, and Jessica Worth!

A special THANK YOU to The Najim Family Foundation for their continued support of the Center's Sibling Loss Support Group, as well as their support for the Wonders & Worries collaboration at the START Center. And a special Happy Birthday and Thank You to Ana Perez, who selflessly hosted a birthday party from which the money raised went to supporting the Center's mission, as well as another charity.

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



Magnolia Pancake Haus



Ana Perez and Friends'

SAVE THE DATE!

TOUR OF THE HEART

First Friday of Every Month
11:00am - Noon

*FREE to attend!
BRING A FRIEND!*

GRIEF EDUCATION INSTITUTE

Presented by:



*Honoring through SandTray
Process: Experiencing a Deeper
Sense of Self*

*Presenters: Melissa Dilworth, MA,
LPC-AT-S, RPT -S, and Vicki Williams-
Patterson, MCAT, LPC-AT*

Located at: Say Si (1518 South
Alamo Street, SA, TX 78204)

Friday, September 13, 2019
1:00pm - 4:00pm

*\$25 registration fee,
CEUs available*

THE FRIENDS OF THE CBCST PRESENTS: SISTERHOOD SOIREE

Thursday, November 21, 2019
7:00pm - 10:00pm

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S GRIEF AWARENESS DAY

Thursday, November 21, 2019
Wear BLUE to show your support!

For more information on these and other upcoming events, please visit our website at CBCST.org/events.



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Pawsitively Perfect!



CBC-RGV Advisory Board at the 2019 Paella for a Purpose

(photographed left to right, back row): Renee Sanchez, Joe Perez, Roberto Ledezma, Jason Wolfe, Julie Herrington; (photographed left to right, front row): Martha McLemore, Carla McCaleb, Laura Warren, Ana Verley, Pam Fuller, Randy Baker, Robin Farris, Lupita Gutierrez-Garza.

POOLING THEIR TALENT

Demand for services is growing rapidly at Children's Bereavement Center-Rio Grande Valley. Recognizing the need to meet this demand, several members of the advisory board came together to organize a unique fundraiser. **Paella for a Purpose** was held at the historic Alonso Building in Brownsville and is the result of a great deal of planning and preparation by an enthusiastic volunteer committee. Thank you for all your hard work!

