



# 2021

## ANNUAL REPORT

 Children's Bereavement Center  
OF SOUTH TEXAS





*The faces of Resilience*

# TABLE OF *Contents*

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Our Mission . . . . .                      | 2  |
| Letter from Marian . . . . .               | 3  |
| Financials . . . . .                       | 5  |
| Counseling + Peer Support Groups . . . . . | 6  |
| Camp Heroes . . . . .                      | 8  |
| School-Based Program . . . . .             | 10 |
| Community Impact . . . . .                 | 12 |
| Grand Opening . . . . .                    | 14 |
| 2021 Donors . . . . .                      | 16 |



## OUR *Mission*

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To foster healing  
for grieving  
children and youth,  
their families and  
the community.



# A LETTER FROM

## Marian



Dear Friends,

As I write this letter, our hearts are still aching for the community of Uvalde as they begin taking the steps toward healing after the act of violence at Robb Elementary School. We are honored and grateful to be able to establish a presence in Uvalde and will be there for years to come, helping families heal. Your support and generous donations make this possible.

As we look back at 2021, we celebrate the opening of our beautiful new 6,000-square-foot addition on the Harvey Najim Campus of Children's Bereavement Center of South Texas. So many caring donors to the Center's capital campaign made this possible, and just in time to accommodate the rush of families impacted by COVID deaths. The resilience of these post-COVID families gives us hope. So many children are moving forward with their lives while holding on to the precious memories of loved ones lost during the pandemic.

Our Board and staff are also pleased to support the growing presence of our staff grief counselors in the schools, as part of our school-based program. In 2021, we more than doubled the number of counselors dedicated to serving children in schools. There is a tremendous need for integrated quality mental health services on school campuses. This program will allow us to have a greater geographic reach and bring options for families who cannot easily reach us on Olmos Drive. Ensuring equity will help us break barriers for so many in our community.

So much change, so fast, over the past year. But the one thing that has not changed is our dedication to the mission of helping grieving children, their families, and the community heal. We have endless gratitude for your support and thank you for the gift of hope that you continuously share with us and the families we serve.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marian Sokol".

**Marian Sokol, Ph.D.,MPH**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

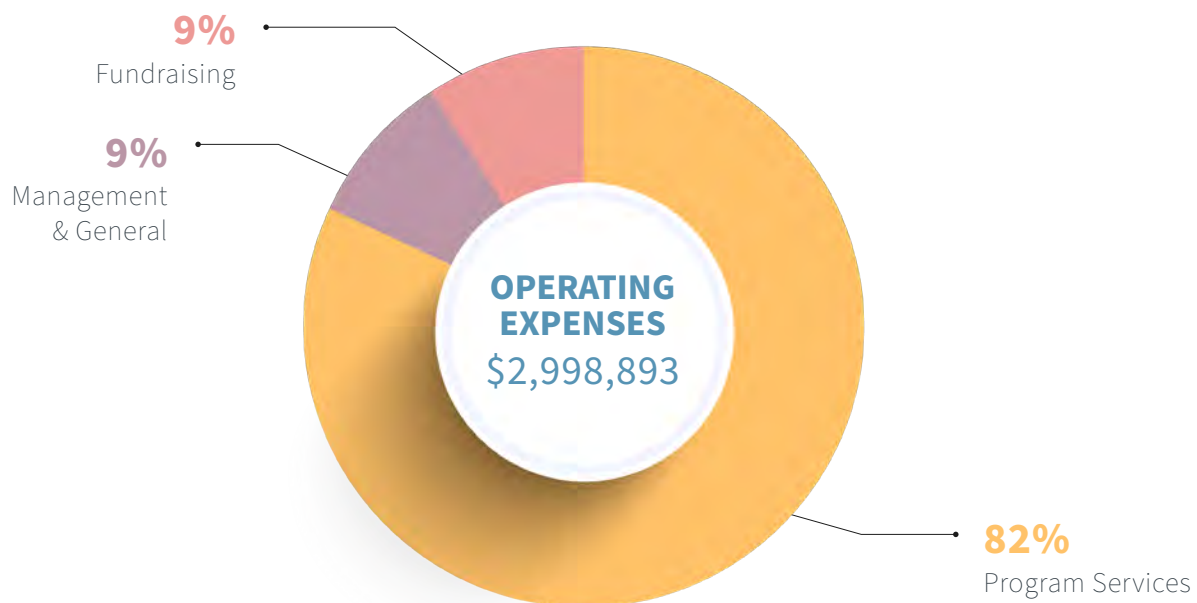
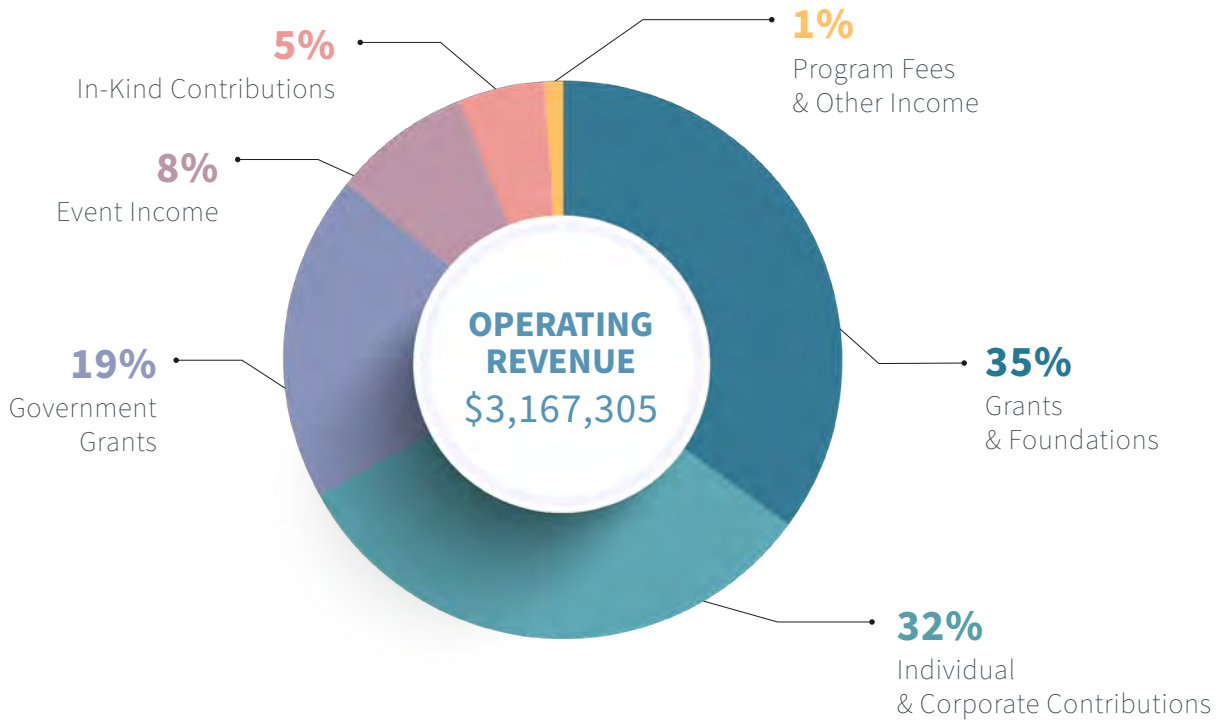


The Peaceful Pathway was generously funded by the SWBC Foundation.



# FINANCIALS

*Fiscal Year* January 1 - December 31, 2021





## Individual Counseling + Peer Support Groups

Transitioning back into our new, expanded space allowed us the opportunity to invite families back for in-person peer support groups. Gathered together, families maintained strong connections to one another as they worked through the emotions and feelings associated with their specific loss. Through various therapeutic activities, our counselors help normalize each family's feelings of grief, reminding them that they are not alone.

Our peer support group model continues to be a beacon of hope for anyone who feels isolated in their grief. While the situations that bring families here are not ideal, we are hopeful that they will find comfort and support from a counselor, facilitator, caregiver, or another child. In this group setting, hearts heal together.



2,665

**Peer Support Group  
Visits in 2021**



5,573

**Individual & Family  
Counseling Visits in 2021**



# HOPE & HEALING

## *Through Connection*

When Roselyn's husband died, she worried about finding a place where her three children - Preston, Analisa, and Gabrielle - could feel like everyone else despite their difficult loss. When her late husband's friend shared the Children's Bereavement Center booklet, "Out Came the Sun" with her, she and her children found their way to the Center.



**ROSELYN, PRESTON, ANALISA & GABRIELLE | PEER SUPPORT GROUPS**

Roselyn shared, "It's good just sharing, and hearing from people, it is helpful. Their struggles are all so different, the way they cope is different."

Preston, Analisa, and Gabrielle all mentioned their favorite activities at the Center, ranging from snacks to sliding down the slide on the backyard playscape, and getting to know new friends in the art room and drama room.

"The first time we got in the car after the initial session, they were very chatty saying, 'Guess what we did? This is great!' Which was the first time I had really seen them be happy since he passed; so that was very helpful for me."

Roselyn encouraged any parent or caregiver searching for grief support for their children to take a step of bravery and courage. "This has given me some things to hold on to, to help them and it's priceless."

“I felt comforted. I just thought that it was nice too - you know, it's a shame we have to need this - but it's awesome that there's a place for children to have a place where they can be with peers that have experienced this.”



## Camp Heroes

When a child is grieving, it is important that they have a safe space to explore their grief and all the emotions that come with it. Our grief camp sessions continue to hold space for children and their caregivers while they grieve. After adding Camp Cardinal to our selection of grief camps for families, we saw an increase in the number of children and now families we are able to serve through this program.

Our grief camps, Camp Heroes and Camp Cardinal provide children and caregivers the opportunity to heal through meaningful activities while also creating new memories together. With caring staff, our grief camps continue to be a space filled with hope and healing for so many.



141

**Children Served through  
Grief Camps in 2021**



4,721

**Family Assessments  
Conducted in 2021**





## A PLACE TO *Be Yourself*

“Just to know I can relate to them. When we would all meet in group, I would look around and know everyone in here has lost someone.”

### AYVA AND JESSICA | CAMP HEROES

When Ayva's dad died, Jessica struggled to find ways to allow her daughter to cope and grieve. Before reaching out to the center, Jessica felt that Ayva guarded her emotions to protect her mom from being sad. This kept Ayva from exploring and truly understanding her own grief and sadness.

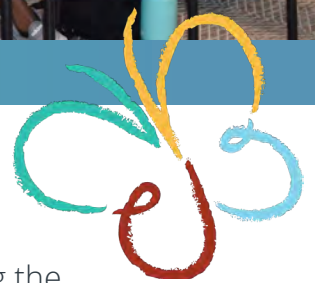
When a coworker recommended Children's Bereavement Center to Jessica, Ayva was able to begin virtual counseling sessions and eventually was invited to attend Camp Heroes. At Camp Heroes, 11-year-old Ayva was able to process and express her grief in fun and creative ways.

Ayva shared, "It was nice to go from that small computer screen that you would hop on every Wednesday to such a wonderful place where you can just come and be yourself."

At Camp Heroes, Ayva loved creating sand jars, filling the jars with different color sands to help express and represent the different ways she grieves. She also enjoyed playing tag, petting the pet therapy poodle - Annie, making photo frames with a picture of her dad, and getting to know other campers.

But it was the staff at camp that really made a difference to Ayva. "Oh my gosh, they're just amazing! They were wonderful, lovely people. They were so kind and they welcomed everyone with open arms."

Seeing Ayva's excitement and smiling face was all the confirmation Jessica needed, that she'd made the right choice in bringing Ayva to the center and taking her to Camp Heroes. "I would definitely say that the best experience you can have for your child is going through counseling, going through the center, going through the camps. Not only for yourself to grieve and process as a parent, but to provide that opportunity for your child. I'm very appreciative of everything."



## School-Based Program

With so many children making the transition back to the classroom following the pandemic, many teachers noticed more children struggling to manage their grief. Children may express their grief in ways that interfere with their academic performance.

This led us to decide to expand our school-based program growing from 1.5 to 9 staff dedicated to serving children within some of the school districts around town. Through this growth, we realized the need for our services for so many who find barriers to reaching us on Olmos Drive.

As we continue to grow this program, we remain grateful for the opportunity to help heal hearts across our city.



917

**School-Based  
Visits in 2021**



725

**Professionals  
Trained in 2021**

### Districts Served in 2021

- San Antonio Independent School District
- Harlandale Independent School District
- Edgewood Independent School District
- South San Independent School District





I think hearing from other people could help because it helped me.

- Jade, 15 years old



THE FLOWERS FAMILY | SCHOOL-BASED SUPPORT GROUPS

## FINDING COMFORT

### *In the Process*

When the Flowers family lost their patriarch, Robert, fifteen-year-old Jade struggled to find a support system that could provide her with the coping strategies she needed to process her grief until a school counselor told her about the Children's Bereavement Center's school-based program.

Jade shared about the school-based peer support group she attended during the school day, saying, "Seeing how we all relate to the same feeling was something I liked because it was good knowing you have people around you who feel the same way, who are going through the same thing, sort of, that you're going through."

Through the school-based program, Jade was able to learn and practice coping skills such as journaling, yoga, and breathing techniques. She was even able to share these helpful skills with her mom, Dora, who said she could hear a change in Jade; she was more calm and able to use her words and strategies when she was feeling overwhelmed or anxious instead of lashing out or getting upset.

"It doesn't have to be grief every time you come here," Jade shared when discussing the center and the counselors' ability to help guide clients through every emotional aspect of living with loss. "It's kind of whatever you're feeling, they'll help you through it."



**DR. MEGAN MORRISON | DONOR**

## Impact on the Community

When Dr. Megan Morrison opened her practice, she knew she wanted to make an impact on her community that reached further than the walls of her office. When a friend mentioned the Children's Bereavement Center, everything clicked for Megan.

"It was really cool to me because I lost my younger sister when I was in middle school and I didn't have any resources like the Bereavement Center. I think that would've been really impactful and made a big difference in my life at that time."

Since May of 2021, Megan and her team agreed to make a donation to the Center for every new patient she sees.

Dr. Megan is creating a legacy out of a loss by contributing to, what she refers to as, a happy place where people can go to heal. Megan said that, for a long time, she and her family didn't necessarily talk about their loss, but this work with the Center has given them a reason to open up to each other.

"To have that opportunity just to let it be a part of your life and to give back in such a beautiful way, it's been really great."



1.723

**Unduplicated Children  
and Caregivers  
in 2021**



**Nancy Darrow**

I give to the Center because it is such a worthwhile endeavor. Children and their families need this place and I have seen firsthand how extraordinary these services are for those that are grieving. It's been the absolute pleasure of a lifetime giving to such a wonderful organization and knowing that I am helping them make a difference!



**Becca Bromley**

I give to the Center because there's no other place doing work like them. It is really easy to lose sight of a grieving population. The Center not only says, 'I see you, but also, I'm here for you.' The Center helped me in my deepest time of need. Being in a position where I am financially, spiritually, and mentally able to give back is only possible because the Center gave me the tools to heal.





## WAYS TO *Give*

### Hearts in Harmony Gala

Consider attending or sponsoring our annual gala and help us continue to provide grief support services at no cost to grieving families. Individuals can also donate items to our silent and live auction as well!

### Wish List

Consider purchasing items from our curated wish list to help families on their personal journey through grief. These in-kind donations are so appreciated and received with big smile from the Center's staff!



Donate and make an impact today!



### Holiday Shop

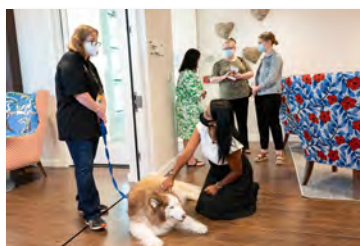
At the Center's Holiday Shop, children select presents for their caregivers and get help from volunteers as they wrap them and write a card to go along with it. Help make the holidays a little brighter for grieving children by donating gifts for Holiday Shop!

### Potluck Partners

Consider sponsoring and serving a meal to our families before they start their peer support group. This unique opportunity allows you to provide support to families through a hot meal!

# 2021 GRAND *Opening*

On August 26, 2021 staff and Board Members of Children's Bereavement Center of South Texas gathered with donors and friends in the community to celebrate the completion of the 6,000 square-foot expansion to the existing building. This expansion was driven by the need to create spaces welcoming to the teens and young adults who utilize the Center's grief support services.

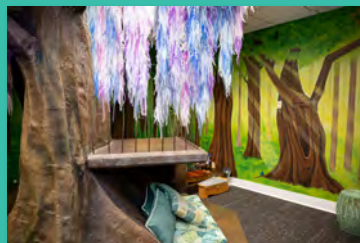






This expansion added 8 counseling suites, all equipped with technology for telehealth counseling sessions, offices for Development staff, and a state-of-the-art training room for our staff to host trainings and workshops for community professionals on various grief-related topics. This expansion also provided the opportunity to increase counseling capacity from 6,000 to 16,000 hours.

Our staff at the Children's Bereavement Center of South Texas is so grateful to have completed this project during a truly difficult time filled with obstacles brought on by the global pandemic. This expansion came at a time when the need for grief support services were at an all time high. We remain grateful to everyone who made this project possible!



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*Thank you!*

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