

# Aurora House News

*The light of a new day...*



**Summer 2025**

**Newsletter Volume 18 Issue 2**

Patient and families served: 1,688

Age Range: 6 wks - 103 yrs

Average Length of Stay: 35 days

Students & Community #: 24,983

## **Understanding End of Life and Hospice Care: Breaking Through Misconceptions**

End-of-life care is a deeply personal and emotional journey — for patients and families alike. Yet, when the words “hospice” or “end-of-life” are mentioned, they’re often met with fear, misunderstanding, or silence. Misconceptions about what hospice truly is can prevent people from receiving the compassionate, holistic care they need during life’s final chapter.

**What Is End-of-Life Care?** End-of-life care refers to the support and medical care given during the time surrounding death — when a cure is no longer possible, and the focus turns to comfort, symptom management, and emotional support.

**What is Hospice?** Hospice is a type of specialized end-of-life care designed to support patients with a life expectancy of six months or less, along with their loved ones. Hospice addresses the physical, emotional, spiritual, and practical needs of both the patient and their family.

Below are the top FIVE myths that can stand in the way of comfort, dignity, and peace.



### **Myth #1: Hospice means giving up.**

**Truth:** Hospice is not about giving up — it's about choosing how you want to live. It prioritizes quality of life, dignity, and comfort when curative treatments are no longer effective or desired. Many families say they wish they had started hospice sooner because of the relief and support it brought.

### **Myth #2: Hospice is only for the last few days of life.**

**Truth:** While many associate hospice with the final days, hospice can begin as early as six months before expected death. Early involvement allows for better symptom management, more time for patients to process and prepare, and deeper support for caregivers.

### **Myth #3: End-of-life care happens only in a hospital.**

**Truth:** Most hospice care happens at home, where people are most comfortable — whether that's a private residence, nursing home, or at Aurora House. Hospice professionals visit regularly and are available 24/7 to respond to needs.

### **Myth #4: You stop all medications and treatments.**

**Truth:** Hospice care focuses on comfort, not abandonment of care. Aurora House patients all have comfort medications at hand if needed, provided by their hospice. Patients continue receiving medications and therapies that ease pain, manage symptoms, or enhance quality of life — even oxygen, antibiotics, or physical therapy, if beneficial.

### **Myth #5: Families are left alone to manage care**

**Truth:** Hospice provides a team approach — including nurses, aides, social workers, chaplains, and volunteers — to support patients and families. They offer caregiver training, respite care, 24/7 support, and even grief counseling after a loved one passes.

Hospice can be a gift. It is not about dying — but about living as fully and comfortably as possible, with the time that remains. It offers patients the chance to be seen, heard, and supported on their terms. It gives families tools to cope and the reassurance that they are not alone.

Our goal at Aurora House is to normalize conversations about death and dying, to ensure we all have a voice in how our final days are lived. Understanding what hospice is — and what it is not — can lift the fear and empower families to make decisions that reflect love, compassion, and respect.

The right support can make all the difference. To learn more please visit our website <https://www.aurorahouse.org/education-outreach/useful-links-and-videos> .

# Aurora House News

## Sabor y Alma!



On April 23rd, the Aurora House Foundation hosted our annual Administrative Professionals Day Luncheon at the Knapp Convention Center. This year's theme, "Pour Your Heart Out in Havana," brought a burst of tropical flair and Cuban charm to the celebration. With vibrant décor by the amazing Vachoram Productions and an upbeat island-inspired atmosphere, guests were transported to a colorful escape right here in our community.

We were thrilled to welcome a packed room of local businesses and organizations, all gathered to honor their incredible administrative professionals — the true backbones of every organization. We hope each guest felt seen, celebrated, and deeply appreciated for the vital role they play every single day.

This year's event featured a lively bucket auction, with fantastic items generously donated by local businesses. Thank you for supporting our cause and helping to make the day even more memorable! And let's not forget the food — the crowd couldn't get enough of the delicious ropa vieja prepared by the incredible Chef Roberto Torres, whose culinary magic brought our theme to life.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to our community leaders who volunteered to serve beverages. Your warm smiles and energy added something truly special to the event. A big thank you to Ryan Vaughan, our Master of Ceremonies, and the Rios of Mercedes team for being such incredible supporters. Ryan's MC skills never fail to create an engaging, joyful atmosphere that plays a huge role in the success of our event.

Together, we raised over \$55,000! This incredible show of support will make a lasting impact for the Aurora House Foundation and the families we serve. Thanks to everyone who helped us honor the heart of every workplace — and for continuing to believe in our mission.



# Thank you !



Pedro E. McDougal, M.D.



San Martin De Porres  
Catholic Church



SINCE 1853 • HANDMADE IN TEXAS



Since 1905



Jose F. Peña, M.D.

# SWEB

SHEPARD & WALTON EMPLOYEE BENEFITS  
AUSTIN • RIO GRANDE VALLEY • SUGAR LAND



St. Pius X Catholic Church

# Aurora House News

## Donations

February - June 2025

Aaron Thorburn	Development Corporation of Mercedes	Lesley Barron	Robert Antonacci
ADL Services	Diana Casares	Life Giving Outreach	Robert Gallipeau
Advantage Healthcare Consulting	Dr. Jose F. Pena	Ministries/Crossroads	RMCF of the RGV
Affordable Homes of South Texas	Elizabeth & Subram Gopal Krishnan, MD	Lilly Garcia	Rondal & Linda Sween
Alexis De Sela	Eloy Gonzales & Marisela Gonzalez	Linda & Dale Graham	Rosalinda Molina
AllState Hospice	Emily Martinez	Linda Wallin	Ruben Villarrea
Amanda Brewer	Eric L. Polzin	Llano Grande Lake Park Church	San Martin De Porres Church
Amanda Elizabeth Martinez	Esmeralda Loredo	Love of Christ Lutheran Church	Sentinel Partners LLC
Amedisys	Esperanza Garza	Magic Valley RSPA	Sharon Sadusky
Ana Garcia	Eugene Michael Andrew Paul Ksepka	Maria Cisneros	Shepard & Walton Employee Benefits
Andy & Pam Scott	Eugene R. Vaughan	Maria Gomez	Sheryl L. Henry
Angel Wings Hospice	Evette Babich	Maria Vega	Shirley Knutson-Nelson
Angelica Olivo	First Christian Church	Martin Ziegler	Siesta Retirement Village
Anonymous	Frances Tovar	Marvin & Lorna Glesne	SJ Hospice Services LLC.
Anthony (Ryan) Vaughan	Frost Bank	McAfee Insurance Agency	Smith Security & Fire
April Castaneda	Garry & Shirley Rhoades	Melanie Riley	Snow to Sun RV Park
Araceli Cantu	Harbor Hospice Foundation, Inc	Melecia Fuentes M.D.	Soila Reyna
Audrey Eoff	Henry & Barb Fisher	Michael & Cheyanne Zink	Sosa's Insurance Agent Advisors LLC
Aymara Ortez	Hollon Oil Company c/o Steve Wilson	Michael & Karen Myers	South Texas College
B.J. Woodyard	Howard Christopherson	Mitty Reyna	Southern Comfort Chapel
Barbara & Alfred DeLange	Hoyt & Rhonda Deaver	Mr. & Mrs. Alejandro L Estrada	Southern Comfort Park
Barbara Diedrich	Idalia Kimbro	Mr. & Mrs. Rhonda & Robert Garza	St. Pius X Catholic Church
Benavides Law Firm	J & E McConnell	Ms. Jeanne M. Creasy	Star Martinez
Betty Lou Vitek	Jacquelin Reposh	Mt. Sinai Hospice	Ted & Sarah Shaw
Blanca Perez	Jacquelyn Dyer	Mutiat Adeoye	Texas Regional Bank
Brian Humphreys	James & Silvia Rahto	Navia Hernandez	Texas Workforce Commission
Burton Companies LLC	James & Sondra Plowman	Norma Martinez	Theodore & Barbara Wire
Carmel Reyna	James Wilt	Norma Olvera	Tops Tx 1694
Catholic Daughters of the	Janice Munson	Oralia Tafolla	Tu Vida Medical Transport, Inc
American Court No. 2215	Jean Adams	P.A.C.E. Health Care, Inc.	Valley Women's Specialists, P. A.
Cecilia Longoria	Jean M. Wilken	Patricia & Alan E. Bortnem	Vantage Bank Texas
Charles & Lucille Richardson	Jeremy & Linda Keefer	Patricia Alexander	Veronica Rios
Charming Pediatrics	Joann & Leonard Friedman	Patricia Leon	Violanda Cantu Abrego
Cheryl Garrett	JoAnna Ybarra	Paul & Deborah Skouge	Wade Pelletier
Christina Perez	John & Penny Berry	Paula Delgado	Walmart
Christopher & Minerva St. John	Johnny Broshears	Pete & Jo Peters	Walter & Karen Fix
Clarice A. Fodness Nystrup	Julieta Piando	Priscilla Hinojosa	Wellsential Health
Claudia Barbosa	Karen Schroeder	Rainbow Pediatric Clinic	Weslaco Economic Development
Dan & Ginger Dougherty	Kendra Scott Design	Ranchero Village Church	Corporation
Daniel & Beverly Selky	Kirk Bloomquist	Rebecca Fuller	Weslaco Vision Source
David & Virginia Bailey	Knights of Columbus Council 3098	Red Hats at Trails End Park	William & Victoria Brisky
Davis Equity Realty	La Mision Palliative Care & Hospice	Rhiannon Mann	Yolanda Salinas
Delores Nelson	Larry & Gillian McClure	Richard Zillman	
Dennis L. & Sharon M. Sejkora	Leisure World Chapel	Rios of Mercedes	

**Thank You!**

TO ALL OUR  
COMPASSIONATE  
GEMS

- Alexis De Sela
- ADL Services, Inc.
- Eugene Vaughan
- Hollon Oil Company
- Idalia Kimbro
- Janice Earl
- Jo Peters
- Mutiat Adeoye
- Oralia Tafolla
- Rhonda Garza
- Robert Antonacci
- Ryan & Jode Vaughan
- Sheryl Henry
- Yolanda Salinas

### Giving Made Easy

Your commitment through monthly or quarterly giving is vital to Aurora House's ability to continue to serve our community and ensures that our residents spend their last days surrounded by compassion, dignity, comfort, and peace.

### An Easy Way to Give Your Support

You can schedule monthly or quarterly gifts through ACH (Automated Clearing House) debits.

ACH debit allows you to make your donation electronically. It is a more efficient, cost-effective program for both you and Aurora House.

For more information, please contact  
Marisela Gonzalez  
956-973-9690 or  
aurorahousefoundation@yahoo.com

# Aurora House News

## Donations/Memorials

February - June 2025

### In Memory of



**Chito Montalvo**  
Atanacio Jr. Hinojosa  
**Christie Staubs**  
Roland Staubs  
**Concepcion Vallejo**  
Ruben Vallejo  
**Consuelo Ramirez**  
Orlando & Araceli Nava  
**Daniel "Danny" E. Arnold**  
Emmett L Bills  
**Doris Jacobson**  
John Jacobson  
**Edgar Puder**  
Barbara Puder  
**Elida Hinojosa**  
**Carlota Reigner**  
**Gregory Schmit**  
Betty Knutsen  
Jeff & Sandy Anderson  
Nanette Litecky  
Wendy Crowell  
Wylie & Diane Walton

**Jack Steinhoff**  
Barbara Theis  
**John Leggett**  
Fanny & Buddy Ross  
**John Roan**  
Karen Arnold  
**Juan Medina**  
Brian Humphreys  
Tom J. Weigel  
**Kelly Smith**  
Liselotte Pinkerton  
**Kenneth Hood**  
Jan Kesler  
Loy Self  
Robert Jones  
Tom J. Weigel  
**Loretta Barbee**  
Beth Masso  
Carolyn Bell  
James Theodore Hunt  
**Lynn Gallipeau**  
Robert Gallipeau

**Maria Gomez**  
Jose & Hilda Gonzalez  
**Maria Hernandez**  
Navia Hernandez  
**Maria Marleny Arango Salinas**  
James & Sondra Plowman  
**Marlene Vos**  
Catholic Daughters of the Americas  
Janice Vos  
Linda Vickers  
Phillis Machen  
Rio Grande Valley Sugar Growers,  
Inc.  
Stephanie Aranda  
**Rosalinda Garcia**  
John Scaglione  
**Shirley Blackstead**  
Mary Brundige  
**Therman Eoff**  
Audrey Eoff

### In Honor of

**Adelmira "Mitty" Reyna**  
Tom & Lynn Carter  
**Anita Gamez**  
Herminia Baldano  
**Leticia Anzaldua**  
Victor R. Garza  
**Nathan Cody Luginsland**  
Janice L. Earl  
**Nennette Dee Grantham**  
Janice L. Earl  
**Raquel Chapa**  
Arkadio Chapa  
**Roger Phelps**  
William Davis  
**Rosalinda Garcia**  
Hector & Rosie Garcia



AllState Hospice  
Alma Gallardo  
Anonymous  
Aylin Sanchez  
Christina Perez  
Country Sunshine RV Park  
EPSILON PHI CHAPTER  
First Christian Church  
Gail Wanner  
Horacio Ramirez  
Janet Cruz  
Janet Kruse  
Judy Alsobrooks  
La Mision Palliative Care & Hospice  
Lorina Flores-Molina

Magic Valley RSPA  
Mason Hernandez  
Patricia Barrera  
Patty Limon  
Ranchero Village  
Red Hats at Trails End Park  
RMCF of the RGV  
Siesta Retirement Village  
Southern Comfort Park  
Stacie Olivarez  
Superior Health Plan  
Trails End Club  
Trails End RV Park  
W. C. Wright

### In Kind

### In Honor of In Memory of

**Elda Moreno**  
Herman & Shirley Castillo  
**Florinda Mireles**  
Rosa Olivarez  
**Julian Villarreal**  
Oscar Villarreal  
**Leticia Anzaldua**  
Anonymous  
Ed Rodriguez  
**Rosalinda Garcia**  
Anonymous

**Concepcion Vallejo**  
Francisco Vallejo  
**Gregory Schmit**  
Dixie Schmit  
**Laurencia Villanueva**  
Rolando Mejorado  
**Maria Mireles**  
Norma Mireles  
**Maribel Rivera**  
Jessica Rivera  
**Rolando Perez Sr.**  
Belinda Saenz

### How You Can Help

#### Become a Sponsor

By choosing to become a sponsor for Aurora House you'll be allowing us to continue providing compassionate end-of-life care for those in need in our community.

Contact Marisela Gonzalez at (956) 973-9690 or (512) 865-8085 or email mari@aurorahouse.org

#### In-Kind Donations

To help reduce costs, our program is always in need of items to support our activities - from blankets and wipes for the patients to office supplies. Visit our Wish List to see what you can help with.

[www.aurorahouse.org/wishlist](http://www.aurorahouse.org/wishlist)

#### Monetary Donations

Aurora House does not receive any government aid or funding from national or state humane societies and relies entirely on private donations to fund our program. To donate, visit

[www.aurorahouse.org/donate](http://www.aurorahouse.org/donate)

#### Planned Gifts & Legacy Requests

Including Aurora House in your will or trust can create a lasting legacy to help the community for years to come.

Contact Marisela Gonzalez at (956) 973-9690 or (512) 865-8085 or email mari@aurorahouse.org

# Aurora House News

## The Power of Purpose: Why Internships at Aurora House Matter

Internships are often seen as stepping stones into the professional world—an opportunity for students and emerging professionals to gain real-world experience, build networks, and explore potential career paths. Aurora House offers something more profound: the chance to contribute to meaningful work that touches the lives of individuals and families during one of life's most vulnerable and sacred times.

End-of-life nonprofits—such as Aurora House—exist to provide compassionate support, services, and education to individuals facing terminal illness, as well as to their loved ones. Our Vision is that everyone faces end of life with peace, and education plays a big part.

### The Value Interns Bring

The field of palliative and hospice care, like many areas of healthcare and human services, is facing a growing demand for skilled professionals. Internships serve as a pipeline for talent—introducing interns to the field and inspiring them to pursue careers in social work, counseling, chaplaincy, public health, or nonprofit management.

Interns often share their experiences with peers, professors, and their broader communities, helping to demystify and normalize conversations about death, dying, and grief. Their advocacy and outreach can play a role in shifting public perceptions and encouraging early engagement with end-of-life planning.

### The Value Interns Receive

Interns gain real-world experience not just in professional skills, but in empathy, active listening, and cultural humility—qualities that are invaluable in any career path.

Interns often work closely with seasoned professionals, gaining insights into healthcare systems, nonprofit operations, and the ethics of end-of-life care. These mentorship relationships can be career-shaping.

Facing the realities of mortality through internship work can lead to deep personal reflection. Interns often report a heightened sense of purpose, resilience, and appreciation for life.

Whether fulfilling a requirement for a degree program or strengthening a résumé, an internship at an end-of-life nonprofit signals maturity, commitment, and experience in sensitive environments—qualities highly valued in graduate school and job applications.



Internships at end-of-life nonprofits are not only resume-builders—they are heart-expanders. They connect people in the earliest stages of their careers with the realities, challenges, and beauty of life's final chapter. For the organizations, interns bring vitality, skills, and a sense of hope for the future of compassionate care.

By investing in internship programs, Aurora House cultivates a generation of professionals who are not only technically capable but also deeply grounded in empathy, ethics, and service. In a world that often avoids conversations about death, these internships offer a rare and vital education in humanity.

# Thank You!

## TO OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Thank you to our dedicated Board of Directors for volunteering their time and efforts to provide leadership and direction for Aurora House. We truly appreciate their commitment and their service.

Thank you to the companies they represent for allowing them time to make a difference in our community.



Please support those who support our community.

# Aurora House Events



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON TICKETS OR SPONSORSHIP,  
PLEASE CALL (956) 973-9690 OR EMAIL  
[MARI@AURORAHOUSE.ORG](mailto:MARI@AURORAHOUSE.ORG)

*Thank you!*  
TO OUR FUNDERS

the Valley Better  
**LEGACY FOUNDATION™**

CommunityCare.Today  
KNAPP COMMUNITY CARE FOUNDATION  
Caring Today for a Healthier Tomorrow

THE  
RAUL TIJERINA JR.  
FOUNDATION

## Aurora House Foundation Board of Directors

**Mark McCaleb**  
President

**Patricia Barrera**  
Vice President

**Laura Lopez**  
Treasurer

**Rhonda Garza**  
Secretary

**Yoli Salinas**  
Member at Large

**Mitty Reyna**

**Dr. Rafael Rodriguez**

**Kevin Bloomquist**

**Oralia Tafolla**

**Adrian Farias**

**Jean Pena**

**Melisa Canales**

**Marisela Gonzalez**  
Executive Director

**Aymara Ortez**  
Administrative Coordinator

**Monalisa Gonzalez**  
Educational Outreach &  
Development Program Coordinator

**Araceli Cantu**  
Caregiver Supervisor

**Becky Contreras**  
House & Grounds Supervisor

**Brittany Hernandez**  
**Chris Martinez**  
**Christina Perez**  
**Juanita Espinoza**  
**Kendra Contreras**  
**Lauro Clarke III**  
**Martha Rodriguez**  
**San Juanita Rodriguez**  
**Tanya Mata**

Caregivers

## OUR MISSION

To provide compassionate care  
for persons in the last chapter  
of life, in a home-like setting, so  
they can approach a peaceful  
death with comfort and dignity.