

Aurora House News



The light of a new day...

FALL 2025 Newsletter Volume 18 Issue 3

Patient and families served: 1,688

Age Range: 6 wks - 103yrs

Average Length of Stay: 35 days

Students & Community #: 27,362

El Día de los Muertos: Honoring Life Through Remembrance

As autumn arrives and marigolds begin to bloom, many communities prepare for one of the most meaningful celebrations of the year—El Día de los Muertos, or the Day of the Dead. Observed from October 31 to November 2, this cherished Mexican tradition invites families to honor and remember loved ones who have passed on. Far from being a day of mourning, it's a vibrant celebration filled with color, music, food, and joy—a reminder that love continues to connect us across time and space.

Ancient Roots and Blended Traditions

The origins of Día de los Muertos date back more than 3,000 years, long before the arrival of the Spanish in the Americas. Indigenous civilizations such as the Aztecs, Maya, and Purépecha believed that death was a natural part of life's cycle—neither to be feared nor forgotten. They held festivals to honor Mictecacihuatl, the Aztec goddess of death, known as the "Lady of the Dead." These ceremonies took place around harvest time and celebrated the belief that the spirits of ancestors returned each year to visit their families. Offerings of food, drink, and flowers were made to welcome them home.

When Spanish colonizers arrived in the 1500s, they brought Catholic traditions like All Saints' Day (Nov. 1) and All Souls' Day (Nov. 2).

Over time, these beliefs blended with Indigenous customs, forming what we now call El Día de los Muertos. This fusion of cultures created a unique celebration, recognized by UNESCO as part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, that honors both faith and ancestry—a powerful reflection of how Hispanic cultures view death as part of life's journey, not its end.



Symbols of Life and Remembrance

Each element of the Day of the Dead carries deep meaning.

Marigolds—known as cempasúchil—are called "flowers of the dead." Their bright orange petals and strong fragrance are believed to guide spirits back to the world of the living.

Sugar skulls (calaveras) represent the sweetness of life and the humor that accompanies remembrance, while **pan de muerto**, a round bread often decorated with bone-shaped designs, symbolizes the circle of life and the nourishment shared between generations. **Candles**, incense, and music all play important roles, too—lighting the way, cleansing the air, and bringing families together in joyful reflection.

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Healing Through Celebration

For many, Día de los Muertos provides a comforting space to process grief and find peace. It allows families to speak openly about death—something often avoided in daily life—while focusing on joy, memory, and legacy.

By celebrating the lives of those we've lost, we also celebrate our own. The laughter, the shared stories, and the quiet moments by candlelight remind us that love does not end with death; it simply takes a new form.

Psychologists and grief counselors often highlight how rituals like Día de los Muertos help people heal. They encourage communal remembrance, promote storytelling, and validate the continuing bond between the living and the departed.

A Living Tradition for All

While deeply rooted in Mexican culture, Día de los Muertos has found resonance in communities worldwide. Schools, museums, and organizations host altars, art exhibits, and educational events that teach the beauty of this celebration. It has become a bridge between generations and cultures—a way to honor the universal experience of love and loss.

Whether you have Mexican roots or simply wish to celebrate remembrance, building an altar or attending a community event can bring meaning and comfort.

As candles glow and marigold petals line the way, we are reminded of this truth: To remember is to keep alive.

The Ofrenda: A Heartfelt Connection

At the heart of Día de los Muertos is the ofrenda, or altar—a lovingly crafted space where families honor the lives of their departed loved ones. Each altar is unique and personal, blending family memories with traditional symbolism.

Creating an **ofrenda** can be a deeply healing act, especially for those who are grieving. It invites reflection, creativity, and love, helping transform loss into connection.

- 1. Choose a Meaningful Space** -Set aside a small table, shelf, or even a corner of your home. Cover it with a bright cloth or papel picado, the colorful cut-paper banners that flutter gently like spirits in the breeze.
- 2. Honor Loved Ones with Photos and Keepsakes** -Place photos of those you're remembering, along with small items that represent them—perhaps a favorite book, hat, or a piece of jewelry. These tokens bring their spirit into the space.
- 3. Include the Four Elements** - Each altar traditionally represents earth, wind, fire, and water:
 - Earth: Offered through food such as pan de muerto, fruit, or a favorite dish.
 - Wind: Represented by the movement of papel picado or ribbons.
 - Fire: Shown through candles, symbolizing light and remembrance.
 - Water: A simple glass of water to refresh the spirits after their journey.
- 4. Add Marigolds and Offerings** -Scatter marigold petals or place vases of the blooms to create a path guiding the souls home. Add incense, small gifts, or personal notes filled with love and gratitude.
- 5. Personalize It** -Play a song your loved one cherished, write them a letter, or include a favorite drink or sweet treat. There is no "right" or "wrong" way—only what feels meaningful to you.



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Día de los Muertos represents a time dedicated to honoring those who have passed away, and a way of celebrating their life. It is believed that having happy spirits will provide wisdom and protection for their families. The focus on celebrating life, and honoring the legacy of those who have passed away is an ideal platform to honor and remember those who passed at Aurora House.

Today, in honor of Día de los Muertos, we encourage all those in our community to take the time to acknowledge and honor the legacy by donating in memory of loved ones so that we can continue to provide care and support to those who need us most.

**Celebrate with Aurora House by donating
in Memory of your special loved one**

**DÍA DE
LOS
MUERTOS**

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

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

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

Community Kindness in Action

Thank you to our amazing community for your generous donations to the Aurora House Foundation! Your support helps us continue providing compassionate end-of-life care to those who need it most. We are deeply grateful for your kindness and commitment to our mission.



Jessica Perez Pena



Knapp Medical Center &
Weslaco Rotary Club



Windsor Nursing &
Rehabilitation Center of
Weslaco



Knight of Columbus -
Council #3098

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Donations

July - September 2025

ADL Services
Alexis De Sela
Anthony (Ryan) Vaughan
B.J. Woodyard
Barbara Diedrich
Benavides Law Firm
Betty Lou Vitek
Brian Humphreys
Catholic Daughters of the Americas 2420
Charming Pediatrics
Christopher & Minerva St. John
David Miller
Dimas or Consuelo Martinez
Edith Vega
Elizabeth & Subram Gopal Krishnan MD
Eloy Gonzales & Marisela Gonzalez
Eugene R. Vaughan

Gloria Fitch
Henry & Susan Vanderzyden
Hollon Oil Company c/o Steve Wilson
Idalia Kimbro
Jacqueline Galloway
James Chapman
Johnny Broshears
Julieta Piando
Katrina Villagomez
Knapp Community Care Foundation
Larry & Gillian McClure
Life Giving Outreach Ministries/Crossroads
Liz Free
Lynda Durand
Mary Free
McAfee Insurance Agency
Melanie Riley

Michael Wagley
Mr. & Mrs. Alejandro L. Estrada
Mr. & Mrs. Rhonda & Robert Garza
Mutiat Adeoye
Norma Martinez
Pete & Jo Peters
Rachel Gil
Rebecca Fuller
Robert Antonacci
Ruben Villarreal
Shawn Fettig
Shirley Knutson-Nelson
Texas Mutual Insurance Company
Valerie & Lloyd Collins
William & Victoria Brisky
Yolanda Salinas

In Memory of

Alejos Saenz

Aurora Saenz
Ayuda Home Health Inc
Chris Grabar
Elizeo De Leon
Helen Cortez
Ventura Herrera

Betty Jane Piper

Erin Law

Carol Marie Plowman

James & Sondra Plowman

Charles Roberts

Donald & Shurlene Donaho
John & Susan Dorow

Daniel "Danny" E. Arnold

Emmett L Bills

Gregory Schmit

David & Joni Kachelhoffer

Juan Medina

Robert & Margaret McAllen

Larry Houger

James & Sondra Plowman

Leticia Anzaldúa

Anna Smith
Brian Humphreys
Valerie & Lloyd Collins

Linda Williams

Brian Humphreys
Lois Tryggstad
James & Sondra Plowman

Lynn Gallipeau

Robert Gallipeau

Maria Hernandez

Navia Hernandez

Matthew David Martin

James & Sondra Plowman

Patricio Briones

Felix Briones

Rosalinda Garcia

John Scaglione

Vangie Martinez

Javier Martinez

In Honor of

Leticia Anzaldúa

Victor R. Garza

In Kind

AllState Hospice
Anonymous
Crumbl - Weslaco
First Baptist Church
Herman & Shirley Castillo
Jessica Pena
Juan Tijerina
Lynette Castillo
Meli's Place of Beauty
Olive Garden - Weslaco
Residents' Assoc. of John Knox
Village of the RGV
Siesta Retirement Village
Snow to Sun RV Park
Valley Nature Center



In Honor of

Elda Moreno

Herman & Shirley Castillo

Mario Garza Jr.

Mario Garza

In Memory of

Alejandro Martinez

Noelia Martinez

Concepcion Vallejo

Francisco Vallejo

Leticia Anzaldúa

Anonymous

Placida Torres

Yasmin Pinon

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



November Event Calendar


TUE
11 & 25

Open House/ Volunteer Orientation
11:00am-1:00pm
Tour & Presentation
2646 W. 18th St. Weslaco, Tx




THU
13


RGV Death Cafe
5:00pm-6:30pm
Group Directed Discussion
525 S Kansas Ave Weslaco, Tx 78596




FRI
14

Lunch & Learn
12:00pm-1:00pm
V.A. Benefits Assistance with Ana Vasquez
2646 W. 18th St. Weslaco, Tx




**Mon 17th - Fri 21st**
Bountiful Harvest Drive
A drive to provide Aurora House with
needed items from out wishlist
2646 W. 18th St. Weslaco, Tx



FRI
21

Adult Bereavement Support Group
6:30pm-9:00pm
(Bilingual) "The Healing U"
2646 W 18th St. Weslaco Tx



2646 West 18th Street Weslaco, Texas 78596 | 956.973.9690

Bountiful Harvest Drive

MONDAY
Cleaning Supplies

TUESDAY
Groceries

WEDNESDAY
Office Supplies

THURSDAY
Paper Goods

FRIDAY
Household Items



A drive to provide Aurora House with needed items
from our wish list



Finding Healing in the Holidays: Creating New Traditions to Honor Loved Ones

The holidays often bring a mix of emotions—joy, warmth, gratitude, and for many, grief. When someone we love is no longer here to share the season, familiar traditions can feel heavy, even hollow. The sights and sounds that once brought comfort may now stir feelings of longing and sadness. Yet, even in grief, the holidays can offer a space for remembrance, reflection, and healing.

Grieving during the holiday season doesn't mean turning away from celebration; it means finding a new way to carry love forward. Rather than trying to avoid the pain, it can be helpful to acknowledge it—lighting a candle, setting out a photo, or saying their name aloud during prayer or conversation. These small acts remind us that love doesn't fade with absence. It lives on in the stories we share, the memories we hold, and the traditions we choose to continue or reshape.

"Those we love don't go away; they walk beside us every day—unseen, unheard, but always near, still loved, still missed, and very dear."

Creating new traditions can also help bridge grief with gratitude. Some families cook their loved one's favorite dish, make ornaments with their pictures, or play their favorite song during gatherings. Others take comfort in service—donating to a cause their loved one cared about or volunteering to help those in need. These gestures turn remembrance into action, keeping their legacy alive in meaningful ways. It's also important to give yourself permission to do less, rest more, or celebrate differently. Grief is personal; there's no right or wrong way to move through it. Some years may call for quiet reflection, others for laughter and light. What matters most is creating space for both sorrow and love—allowing them to coexist without guilt or expectation.

As we navigate the season, new traditions remind us that while life changes, the bonds of love remain. By honoring our loved ones through memory and meaning, we transform grief into a gentle presence—one that walks beside us, bringing comfort, connection, and hope for the days ahead.

Aurora House Events

AURORA HOUSE FOUNDATION

PRESENTS

ALL IS
BRIGHT

Annual Christmas Gala

Saturday, December 6, 2025

7:00 pm

Llano Event Center

2215 E West Blvd

Mercedes

Join Us For Dinner,
Festive Signature Cocktails,
Fabulous Auction Selection,
Drinks, Dancing, & Christmas Cheer!

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

Thank you!
TO OUR FUNDERS

the Valley Region
LEGACY FOUNDATION™

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



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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.