

Healing Hearts



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The Journey Continues at Fall Family Camp

The weekend of November 16-18, Bo's Place took over 110 campers to Camp For All in Burton, Texas for our two family camps: Camp Healing Hearts and Campamento Sanando Corazones. Utilizing a labyrinth theme to represent the journey over the weekend, campers were able to focus on the struggles and growth they have experienced so far on their grief journey and what they need going forward.



CAMP HEALING HEARTS
CAMPAMENTO SANANDO CORAZONES

The weekend was filled with new experiences: learning to listen to what's happening within one's body during trauma-sensitive yoga, stepping out of one's comfort zone on the ropes course, and digging deep to process how far one has come from on their grief journey and where that journey will lead next, as well as opportunities to experience fun and joy as a family at the family dance and during other family activities.





One camper shared an important revelation from the weekend: "Camp helped me realize that it's okay to not be okay, strong or sad. I also realized that I was only existing and that I need to start living again." Another shared poignantly about the impact of camp on her family: "Camp joined our hearts back together and stitched the cracks up." And, a mom shared her most important take away: "Camp taught me there can be joy again, but it must be a day to day process. I take with me the hope of continuing to find joy with my daughter. Thank you so much...Bo's Place has been a true blessing for us."

Camp Healing Hearts and Campamento Sanando Corazones would not be possible without the generosity of The Hamill Foundation, the Upton Family and The Junior League of Houston, Inc., as well as the many individuals who volunteered over 1,134 hours to make these family camps a reality.



Volunteer Spotlight: Blaine Edwards

we *heart* our volunteers!

On November 20, the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, Blaine Edwards spent the night in the Bo's Place parking lot!

Despite the fact that he and his wife are still displaced from their home after Hurricane Harvey, Blaine was determined to provide turkey dinners for the families of Bo's Place this Thanksgiving. With scrupulous planning based on years of experience, he brought his BBQ pit up to Bo's Place and staged the cooking in the parking lot. Supported by a crew of volunteers and staff, Blaine made an event of it, cooking roughly 1,000 pounds of turkey in one day.



Blaine was first introduced to Bo's Place through his good friend Mark Goldie

who invited him to a fundraiser. By 2004 he had joined the board of directors, just as Bo's Place transitioned into its current home on Buffalo Speedway. Blaine served on the board for nine years, including one year as board president, and is currently a member of the advisory board. It was at a Hearts of Hope luncheon that Blaine had a conversation with a guest that made him truly understand the critical importance of the work being done at Bo's Place. He had asked a gentleman sitting alone at his table about what brought him to the luncheon. The man replied "Bo's Place saved my life. My son died and I thought my life was over. But Bo's Place saved my family and saved my life." Through this experience and others, Blaine shared that it was his involvement with Bo's Place that helped refocus his life and readjust his priorities on family and community. He joked that the board always needs an obligatory lawyer, but he didn't want his profession to be the top priority, his perspective shifted as he realized "you don't need to live to work, but you should work so that you can truly live."

And, one of the ways that Blaine makes sure he's "truly living" is to make giving back a priority. He does that through cooking which has always been a big part of his life. Blaine helps cook for the Boy Scouts' annual fundraiser, which serves between 400-450 guests. He believes in the power of meals to bring people together, and knows that by reaching out to feed them, he can show how much he cares. "You can write a check or you can feed people. I love to cook and it has become my way of giving back." He has also volunteered in the kitchen for potluck meals at Bo's Place over the years, which are moments he'll never forget. Time after time at these dinners, he observed a diverse group of people who shared one thing in common and that was the death of someone they loved. That common bond erased any other differences and the end result was a group of bereaved families eating dinner together and reaching out to help one another through their sadness and struggles.

Bearing witness to this is why Blaine decided almost ten years ago to start cooking turkeys for Bo's Place families for Thanksgiving. It started out as a way to honor the spirit of Thanksgiving and became an important family tradition. When Blaine first met his wife, Julie, and explained that he'd be cooking 100 turkeys for Bo's Place, she was shocked. But now she understands, and joins him every year to help make it happen. This year, Julie was out in the parking lot, along with her daughter and Blaine's son and daughter, making it a family affair that they are proud to participate in each year. And Blaine has had a lot of help over the years, especially from his friend Randy Crump, who has pulled many all-nighters to help finish the job. "Randy has been a wonderful friend and one of the people who has made this thing work."

Blaine and Randy were disappointed when they were forced to take a break from the tradition last year after both their homes were flooded after Hurricane Harvey. Blaine explained that, at the time, they were still trying to put their lives together and just didn't have the infrastructure to get it done, with no power, no way to make it work. Looking back on the experience of Hurricane Harvey and the flooding that followed, Blaine shares: "What I walked away with is how everybody wanted to help out. I walked up to a guy who had a pickup truck and a boat and he was at the corner launching his boat to go in and help people. I walked up to that guy and told him thank you and broke down crying. What I saw made me realize that we're all in this together, we've got to help each other out. The next time there's water anywhere, I'll be there with a boat and a BBQ pit."

He went on to add: "And, you know I'll be at Bo's Place at Thanksgiving, cooking turkeys for the families who come for support after someone they love

has died."

We give thanks, with grateful hearts, to Blaine Edwards and to his entire family.



A very special award from St. Martin's Episcopal Church

Bo's Place was honored to receive the MacGregor Award from the St. Martin's Episcopal Church Endowment Fund last month. The MacGregor Award is given annually to a partner organization of St. Martin's that displays excellence in their outreach and service to the community.



Susan Padon, President of the St. Martin's Episcopal Church Endowment, shared "On behalf of St. Martin's Endowment Fund and Outreach Ministries we are delighted to recognize Bo's Place for providing children and families with life-changing opportunities to move through grieving the loss of loved ones. We are indeed grateful for and blessed by our wonderful partnership with Bo's Place."

The award presentation was made even more special since it was presented during a Holiday Dinner that St. Martin's provided and served for our families. St. Martin's has been an incredible partner to Bo's Place, providing family meals several times throughout the year. One St. Martin's member, Pam Hicks, consistently volunteers to serve these meals at Bo's Place. She shared with us her special connection to Bo's Place and why this activity is so important to her.

"I have been a volunteer for a number of years at Bo's Place, particularly through the Outreach Program at St Martin's Episcopal Church. I initially began by decorating the tables for Thanksgiving and Valentine's and St. Martin's would provide a meal and volunteers from SMEC would come and serve the meal to the families. I then decided to do Easter Decorations and now St. Martin's provides and serves an Easter Meal.

My husband, Taylor, and I have both volunteered for Bo's Place through St. Martin's Episcopal Church Outreach by helping cook meals that could be frozen and taken to Bo's Place to serve. We now work every year to make welcome bags for every new person who enters the program at Bo's Place. Every year we fill 500 bags with notebooks for journaling, a picture frame for their loved one, and many other things that are fun and handy for the new person coming into the program.

It has been a very rewarding experience for me to volunteer for Bo's Place. My family went to Bo's Place for two years with our daughter after losing a beloved child. It has helped us continue our own grief work because we feel a connection with the families who come to Bo's Place for grief support. We

know how difficult it is for them to get there on time and with food that can be shared with the other families. We understand the painful process of working through the grief of losing a loved one. It may seem like a small thing but it is my way of trying to do my share to help the families in need of grief support."

St. Martin's Episcopal Church not only brings meals for our family support groups on a regular basis, but they provide supplies, volunteers and funds for various projects that help support our programs. They are very special heart healers.

Cyd Gillette, the St. Martin's Episcopal Church Director of Outreach Ministries summed up this partnership so well: "St. Martin's Episcopal Church has received many blessings from our partnership with Bo's Place. We are grateful for the love and support Bo's Place unconditionally gives to those suffering a loss of a loved one while on the road to healing."



It is nearly impossible these days to watch the evening news, or scroll through your social media feed, and not be affected by the tragedies occurring in our communities and across the globe. Although we can often feel powerless in such situations, some people find that by helping others who have been impacted by tragic circumstances, we can begin to restore balance in the world. When one learns about the mission of Bo's Place, *to enhance the lives of those who have experienced the death of a loved one*, it may initially seem sad and disheartening, but a conversation with one of our volunteer support group facilitators elicits a much different story.

To bear witness as group members move through their grief journey toward healing can be a powerful antidote to the chaos of our modern lives. To watch participants form connections with each other, and become a part of the greater Bo's Place family, can offer a sense of hope when yet another tragedy strikes. Our volunteers have the unique opportunity to create a space for our families to process the pain of grief and to walk alongside as they navigate the unknown. The story told by our volunteers supporting the bereaved is undoubtedly one of resilience and hope.

If you are looking for a way to make a real difference in the lives of those who have experienced the death of a loved one, please consider the gift of your time as a Bo's Place support group facilitator. We are currently accepting applications for our upcoming Volunteer Facilitator Training the weekend of February 16-17, 2019. To arrange an interview and tour with our Volunteer Manager Rina Ocampo, please email volunteer@bosplace.org or call 713-942-8339.

"How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world." -Anne Frank

EMAIL US



Children's Grief Awareness Month - Why It's Important

November was Children's Grief Awareness Month. Why is it important to set aside a month to talk about grieving children? It's important because there are so many more children who experience the death of a loved one than most people realize and the future health and wellbeing of these children can be adversely affected by this significant event in their childhood.

According to the recently released Childhood Bereavement Estimation Model developed by the JAG Institute in Denver, Colorado, it is estimated that one in 16 children in Texas will experience the death of a parent or sibling by the time they reach the age of 18. That does not include other significant losses including the death of a friend, grandparent, teacher, coach or mentor. That's a lot of children.

It means that in each of your children's classrooms, there is likely to be at least one child struggling after the death of someone they have a connection to and care about. And, we know from the work that we do at Bo's Place that these children often feel isolated and alone in their grief, that no one understands what they are going through.

Bo's Place works every day of the year to raise awareness of the prevalence of childhood bereavement and the ways in which our community can help support bereaved families, but we use November as a month to bring this issue to the forefront of public conversation and dialogue. Below are two of the initiatives that we participated in last month to do just that.

"Words that Help" and "Words that Hurt"

If you follow Bo's Place social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook and Twitter), you saw that throughout the month we shared tips about how to reach out to bereaved children so they do not feel so alone in their grief. There are words that can be helpful and other words that can unintentionally be very hurtful. For example, words that help: "I'm here to talk if you need me", "I wish I could make this better for you, but I know that I can't", and "I made you a card". And, examples of words that hurt: "You'll move on", "I know how you feel", and "You'll get over it". Visit our [facebook page](#) to see more of these tips.



Supporting Youth and Schools After a Community Tragedy

As a member of the National Alliance for Grieving Children, Bo's Place was one of 120 sites across the country that broadcast the NAGC Fall Conference and Webcast: *Supporting Youth and Schools After a Community Tragedy* live from Princeton High School in Princeton, New Jersey on November 8. Death, dying and bereavement are unfortunate themes that appear almost daily in news headlines. Rarely, however, is there a national dialogue about how community tragedy impacts the lives of children and teenagers. This conference provided insight into the challenges faced by children and teenagers and practical information and advice for supporting youth in the aftermath of a community tragedy, a topic of particular relevance to those supporting youth in the Houston community in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey and the Santa Fe school shootings last year.



Online national resources referenced at the conference for supporting children and teens:

- [American Academy of Pediatrics Disaster Preparedness Initiative](#)
- [The Coalition to Support Grieving Children](#)
- [The National Alliance for Grieving Children](#)

Right now, it is estimated that over 4.8 million youth are bereaved. As Children's Grief Awareness Month comes to an end, let's vow to not just talk about it each November; let's talk about it year round. At Bo's Place, we do.



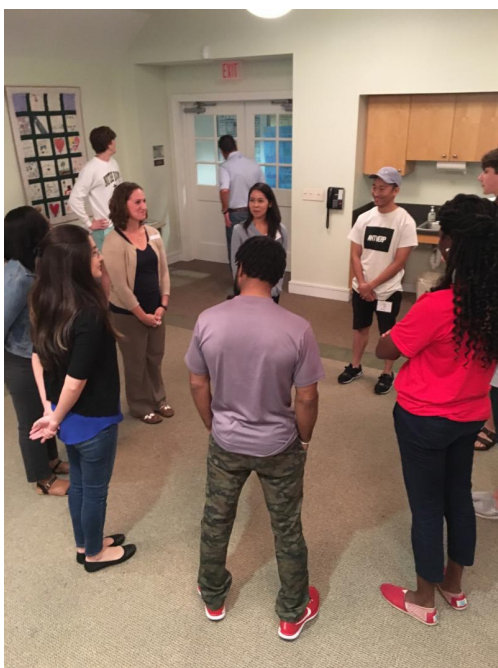
Bo's Place is excited to announce that the 3rd Annual Hats, Hearts & Horseshoes will take place on Saturday, May 4, 2019. We hope you will save the date and join our Chairman, Hallie Vanderhider and Honorary Chairmen, Megan & Luke Hotze and Hannah & Cal McNair for the festivities. Don your finest Derby Chic attire and join us at place to sip mint juleps and watch the "run for the roses" in Houston!

RESERVE YOUR TABLE



Happenings

Bo's Place is grateful to be a recipient of a \$20,000 grant from **KoonsFuller Family Law Foundation**. The check presentation was at the Houston Zoo on Sunday, November 4!



On November 6, volunteers for our family camp attended **Camp Volunteer Training**, doing team building exercises and learning how to be the best "counselors" at camp. Here they are playing an icebreaker called "1, 2, 3, Look!"

Moms and daughters from **National Charity League** spread some cheer and decorated Bo's Place for the holidays on November 30. The building feels a lot more festive thanks to these wonderful volunteers!





Bo's Place Grief Support Services

At Bo's Place, we believe that enabling grieving families to share their experiences with each other helps these families navigate the grief journey and move towards hope and healing. We offer free Grief Support Groups in English and Spanish to families and individuals.

If you or someone you know would like information about Bo's Place Grief Support Groups for children, families, and adults, click [here](#) or call 713.942.8339.

Bo's Place exists to enhance the lives of those who have experienced the death of a loved one.
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