

Healing Hearts



e-Newsletter | December | 12.01.2022

In This Issue

- Story Starters
- *Ofrenda: Día de los Muertos Festival*
- Volunteer Spotlight: Ellen Van Wart
- *Ethics & Self-Care: Recalibrating Our Approach through Mindful Self-Compassion*
- Why Your Annual Gift Matters
- Time is Running Out to Join Team Bo's Place!
- Grant Spotlight: Houston Pi Beta Phi Foundation
- Kendra Scott Gives Back
- Chevron Charity Challenge



Story Starters

Used in school-based groups, "Story Starters" uses open-ended prompts to help group members share stories about the person who died. For elementary school groups, facilitators prepare students for the activity by reading *Is Daddy Coming Back in a Minute?* written by Elke Barber based on the real-life conversations she had with her then three-year-old son, Alex, after the sudden death of his father. After hearing the family's story, students are invited to share their own. The activity begins by folding a piece of paper into eight sections, one for each story starter. Facilitators invite students to talk, write, or draw about each piece of their story using story starters such as:



- The person who died is...
- I knew that they died because...
- I wish I could tell them...

Students are reminded that, though they may have parts of their story in common with others, everyone's story is different. They can create a booklet using whichever parts of the story they choose. Older students do a modified version of this activity using puzzle pieces. Group members can share at their own comfort level and can always pass (choose not to share). Sharing in smaller bits and offering various forms of expression such as talking, drawing, and writing allows students to share in the way that feels most helpful to them.



Ofrenda: Día de los Muertos Festival



Bo's Place celebrated the annual *Ofrenda: Día de los Muertos* Festival on Sunday, October 30. The event provides an opportunity for Bo's Place families to celebrate and memorialize the lives of those who have died. Paper marigold flowers (*cempasúchil*) lined the Bo's Place walkway, representing a path to attract the souls of our loved ones to the celebration. Paper flags (*papel picado*) hung over the patio, signifying the fragility of life. The *ofrenda*, an altar that includes pictures and mementos of the deceased, was the focal point. More than one hundred families submitted a picture of their loved ones for the *ofrenda*. We also invited families to write messages to their loved ones on a memorial wall.

Participants created their own picture frames to display on altars at home and made memory bracelets to honor and remember their loved ones. Guests enjoyed a special performance by *Mariachi Luna Llena* and *Mixteco Ballet Folklorico*. Bo's Place served a light lunch that included tamales, empanadas, and pan dulce.

Special thanks to our amazing team of staff and volunteers who welcomed families to this special event. For many attendees, it was their first time visiting the building. We are grateful to The Junior League of Houston, Inc., for its generous support, which helped make *Ofrenda: Día de los Muertos* Festival possible.



Volunteer Spotlight: Ellen Van Wart

Ellen Van Wart has been a Bo's Place volunteer facilitator for less than a year, but she has already become an integral part of our support groups. In February 2022, Ellen attended our first volunteer facilitator training after the COVID pandemic and quickly completed her observations. She first facilitated for an online Adult Group and then started working with adolescents in the Saturday Spanish Ongoing Family Group. As a graduate student in clinical mental health counseling, Ellen has already attended many of our additional trainings to learn more about the grief process.

When Ellen first learned about Bo's Place from a neighbor who attended one of our support groups several years ago, she quickly knew that she wanted to volunteer. She started helping with special projects while waiting for facilitator trainings to begin again after the COVID

pandemic. Through her volunteer experience at Bo's Place, Ellen says she has seen so much resilience and hope within other's grief and that it is an honor to accompany participants on their grief journeys. Volunteering with Bo's Place increases her sense of hope, gratitude, and pride in the human spirit.

In addition to being a graduate student and volunteer facilitator, Ellen is an avid runner who has run marathons and half-marathons. She and her husband have three children and a cat. Ellen returned to Houston in 2019 after living in Central America for almost 25 years, and we are lucky to have her here!

Thank you, Ellen, for your dedication to Bo's Place!



Ethics & Self-Care: Recalibrating Our Approach through Mindful Self-Compassion

On Friday, January 27, 2023, Bo's Place will host *Ethics & Self-Care: Recalibrating Our Approach through Mindful Self-Compassion*, presented by Sandra Lopez, LCSW-S, ACSW from 9:00 am – 12:00 pm.

This ethics training gives helping professionals an opportunity to pause, reflect on, and recalibrate how to approach our work with a stronger commitment to self-care. The COVID pandemic thrust helping professionals into a whole new experience of service delivery. When helping professionals are under stress, working with clients can become challenging and create ethical dilemmas. This webinar will give participants a framework for connecting ethics to self-care by engaging in mindful self-compassion practices.



Opportunities for continuing education are available through this webinar. Please plan to attend and share with your networks!

[Register Now](#)



Why Your Annual Gift Matters

Annual Giving is at the heart of what makes Bo's Place possible. Annual gifts made by loyal supporters are an investment in Bo's Place today and into the future, immediately meeting the needs of bereaved children, families, and adults. These gifts keep the doors of Bo's Place open and our mission very much alive. Without the steadfast support of our annual donors, we could not provide grief support services free of charge to the bereaved, or education and resources to those who assist people in grief.

While the amount of your gift may vary from year to year, your annual support provides a sustainable foundation that allows us to continue to enhance the lives of those who have experienced the death of a loved one. Unrestricted

Annual Giving allows Bo's Place to provide our accessible and free to all support programs and education and outreach services. No matter the size of the gift, everyone plays a vital role in helping hearts heal by sustaining Bo's Place today and for years to come.



[Give Now](#)

A heartfelt thank you from all of us at Bo's Place!



Time is Running Out to Join Team Bo's Place!

Lace up your sneakers and join Team Bo's Place for the We are Houston 5K, Aramco Houston Half Marathon and Chevron Houston Marathon on January 14 and 15. Runners and walkers of all abilities are invited to be part of Team Bo's Place. All members will receive a tech shirt, monthly updates and training tips, and an invitation to the Pancake Breakfast at Bo's Place on race weekend. The top fundraiser will receive a one-night stay at The Westin Houston Downtown for race weekend. Don't miss the chance to make your miles matter by supporting bereaved families.



For more information, please email marathon@bosplace.org.

[Learn More](#)



Grant Spotlight: Houston Pi Beta Phi Foundation

Throughout the COVID pandemic, Bo's Place staff found new and creative ways to support the bereaved at home. Bo's Book Club helps Bo's Place ensure bereaved families have access to additional grief support resources when there are barriers to accessing in-person grief support programs due to distance or wait lists. Families in Bo's Book Club receive age-appropriate grief support literature at home, including story books, activity books, and journals. Through Bo's Book Club, we seek to increase access to grief support resources for children and families to use at home, encourage parents/guardians to use bibliotherapy to initiate and facilitate conversations with their children about death and grief, and increase resiliency and positive coping skills for bereaved children and families.

This program would not be possible without the support of our longstanding partner, the Houston Pi Beta Phi Foundation. The Houston Pi Beta Phi Foundation has supported Bo's Place since 2004. In May 2021, the Foundation awarded Bo's Place a \$2,500 grant toward the Bo's Book Club helping enable Bo's Place to distribute 358 books to 80 families in FY2021-2022. Ninety percent of families in Bo's Book Club responding to our feedback survey said they found the books helpful to their family's grief journey, and 91% agreed that the books gave



their family a better understanding of grief. The Houston Pi Beta Phi Foundation doubled its gift to \$5,000 in May 2022, enabling Bo's Place to continue this program in FY2022-2023. Here are a few quotes from families in Bo's Book Club:

"I am so grateful for the book resources program by Bo's Place. The books for children were extremely helpful and easy for my grandson to understand and created great conversations around death and grief. I loved Tear Soup. My therapist highly recommended it."

"My daughter picks up the different books. We just recently went over the activities in one of the books without crying, but just sharing stories and memories."

"The books for my kids were really good at explaining grief on a child's level and helped my school-age son understand grief more."

Bo's Place is grateful for the significant and supportive role the Houston Pi Beta Phi Foundation has played in our efforts to make grief support literature support accessible to bereaved families.



Kendra Scott Gives Back

We are pleased to announce a special opportunity to support Bo's Place and check a few items off your holiday shopping list at the same time! Kendra Scott at the Boardwalk Townlake is hosting Bo's Place on Sunday, December 11, 2:00 – 5:00 for a Shop for Good in store event. There will be seasonal sips and sweets at the store and best of all 20% of all proceeds made during the event will be donated to Bo's Place.

Great news for those of you who can't make it – you can still participate by shopping online from December 11 through December 13 at KendraScott.com using the code GIVEBACK-DDWJK. We hope to see you there!



[View Invitation](#)



Help Bo's Place Win \$25,000!

Team Bo's Place needs your help to win \$25,000 in the Chevron Charity Challenge! Each vote counts as we try to win in the most votes category.

Here's how to vote now

Go to <https://poll.fm/11227031>

Choose "Bo's Place"

Click SUBMIT

Vote each day through December 9 and share the link!

You can vote once per day per IP address.

A vote every day gets us one step closer to the finish line and the \$25,000 prize!



[Vote Now](#)



Happenings

Bo's Place was honored to receive the **Texas Association of School Psychologists (TASP) Children's Assistance for Living Award** during its annual conference on November 3. Sable McElveen, Community-Based Programs Director, and Mary Lou Hollender, Development Director, accepted the

award on behalf of Bo's Place.



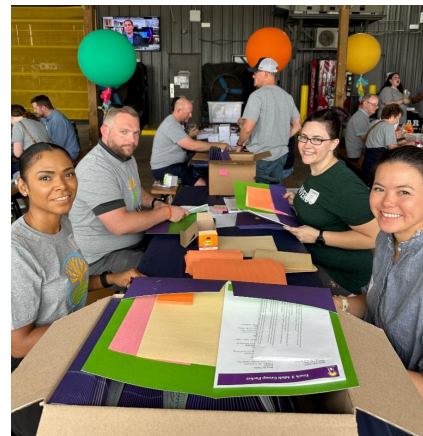
On November 4, Bo's Place was the local host for the **National Alliance for Children's Grief Fall Conference and Webcast: "Supporting Children and Families Following a Stigmatized Death"**. The event included presentations by thought leaders in the field of children's grief, with the focus on supporting children and families as they cope with a stigmatized death. Many of our Bo's Place staff attended this informative conference.



On November 9, Bo's Place honored our longtime friend and colleague, **Leroy Finner**, who is retiring from his position as Bo's Place Night Assistant after 17 years. Leroy's family and friends joined staff for a celebratory luncheon and shared stories about the wonderful contributions Leroy has made to Bo's Place. Executive Director Mary Beth Staine presented Leroy with a commemorative piece recognizing his contributions. A brick in Leroy's honor will also be placed on the walkway.



Bo's Place was honored to be a featured partner in the **Spindletop Community Impact Partners Unity in Community** event on November 11. The event gave Spindletop volunteers the opportunity to learn about Bo's Place while helping assemble online Adult Group Welcome packets and preparing Notes of Hope and Memory Boxes for School Group participants. In their never-ending generosity, Spindletop also surprised Bo's Place with a \$12,500 donation during the event! We send a huge thank you to Spindletop for supporting Bo's Place for more than 20 years!



On November 27, the **National Charity League Heart of Texas Chapter** once again came to Bo's Place to deck our halls with festive decorations for the holiday season! They always make our space feel warm and welcoming for our participants, volunteers, and staff. It's an event we look forward to every year!



Bo's Place Grief Support Services

At Bo's Place, we believe that grieving families heal when they share their experiences with each other. 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.

