

# LIFT

*Grief is a process, not a state. –Anne Grant*

September 2023

Bereavement Newsletter

Living Is For Today

West Texas Rehab's Hospice of San Angelo

## IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

### Grief Education Support Group

Monday, Sept 5, 5:30 pm

WTRC/HOSA Bates Bereavement Center

1933 University Avenue

### Monthly Luncheon

Tuesday, Sept 19, 11:00 am

WTRC/HOSA IDT Room

1933 University Avenue

### Pet Loss Memorial Service

Thursday, September 14, 6:15 pm

Pavilion, Civic League Park (International Waterlily Collection)

2 S. Park Street, San Angelo

### Building Bridges:

#### A Support Group for Grieving Children and Their Families

Tuesdays, September 19 – October 24, 6 :30-7 :30 pm

WTRC/HOSA Bates Bereavement Center

*For more information about any of HOSA's bereavement offerings, including individual counseling, support groups, and/or memorial services, please call the Bereavement Department at 325-658-6524 or email Karen at [kschmeltekopf@wtrc.com](mailto:kschmeltekopf@wtrc.com). For information about Building Bridges, please contact Libby at [lprobandt@wtrc.com](mailto:lprobandt@wtrc.com).*

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## Remembering the Importance of Pets

If you have ever had a pet, you know the comfort and joy that animals can bring to our lives. They offer companionship, trust, interest, humor, and activity. Even if you have only occasional contact with four-legged or two-winged friends or enjoy them through photographs, art work, or online videos, you also recognize the positive impact they make.

This month's LIFT focuses on two aspects of companion animals: some guidance for those who are grieving the loss of a pet and an introduction to the pet therapists who work with Hospice of San Angelo.

If you have lost a pet, these suggestions may help.

- Recognize that you have a valid reason to grieve; don't deny your feelings or try to diminish the importance of your loss.
- Seek support from people who understand the significance of your loss.
- Celebrate the memory of your pet with a ritual: perhaps burial, cremation, a few words at a chosen time and place, a poem or an essay that captures your relationship. The HOSA Pet Loss Memorial Service offers this unique special and sacred venue to remember and honor a deceased companion animal.
- Create a permanent display that commemorates your pet; it might include photographs, a leash, a food dish, a cushion, a collar, or other memorabilia.

- Structure your activities so that you have things to do during times you would have been with your pet.
- Give yourself whatever time it takes; the grieving process has its own timeline.

*(These and other ideas are elaborated on in [whatsyourgrief.com](https://whatsyourgrief.com).)*

Hospice of San Angelo is fortunate to claim among its volunteers four whose dogs are certified pet therapy dogs through the Alliance of Therapy Dogs: Connie Strube, with her Golden Retrievers Georgia and Mabel; Julie Shar, with Black-Mouth Cur Luna, Labrador- Border Collie Remus, and Boxer-Great Dane Sirius; Jeanette Hobb with Goldendoodle Piper; and Libby Probandt with her Scottie Rosie and Westie Lainey. (Libby is also the HOSA Building Bridges Coordinator, which provides care to grieving children.) All of them are experienced in visiting patients and their families, and they attest to what the research reveals: that time spent with pets reduces loneliness, boosts the mood, lowers blood pressure and heart rate, instills a sense of purpose, increases feelings of social support, and increases motivation to recover ([supportpets.com](https://supportpets.com)).

These volunteers have observed powerful moments created by the interaction of their dogs with sick and grieving patients. Connie told of one elderly patient who was cold, harsh, and volubly opposed to dogs—until she got to know Georgia. After a few visits, she was asking for time with the dog, and she was clearly comforted by her presence. Julia worked with a child receiving hospice services who loved to lie with her head on Remus when he came to visit her. And a friend who recently lost her own dog and was visited by a therapy dog in the hospital said, “There’s nothing better than a visit from a beautiful animal for healing. It's better than any medication anyone could give me.”

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***Thank you to all WTRC HOSA volunteers! Whether it’s offering pet therapy, visiting or caring for patients, or printing and folding the LIFT newsletter, we couldn’t do the work of HOSA without you! If you are interested in knowing more about HOSA volunteer opportunities, please contact Shrona Shannon at 325-658-6524 or email her at [sshannon@wtrc.com](mailto:sshannon@wtrc.com).***

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