ADEC Holiday Hours

In observance of the December holidays, ADEC will be closed on December 24, 2020 - January 1, 2021.

ADEC will reopen at 9:00 am EST | 8:00 am CST on Monday, January 4, 2021.

Please visit our website to see a list of 2021 holiday closures.

President's Message

Dear @first_name@,

As we round the corner on 2020 and try to get into the holiday spirit (as my cat gets into the garland, pictured below) many of us are looking forward to 2021 and hoping for all things good. As we look ahead to the next conference, the Conference Planning Committee, your Board of Directors, and ADEC’s management company (MHQ) have spent the past several months considering what the landscape for professional organization conferences will look like in 2021.

Earlier this year, despite our deepest hopes and best efforts, ADEC was required to cancel our annual conference, out of an abundance of caution, and facilitated by the Ohio state restrictions on large gatherings.

Now, as we look ahead to the next conference, ADEC has committed to holding our 2021 annual conference in a
fully virtual format. There are so many positive things that have come out of this process: 1) We were able to successfully re-negotiate our hotel contract in Houston to 2024, so that we aren’t financially compromised from the switch from a hybrid model to one which is on a fully virtual platform;

2) We are able to shift the times of some of the networking sessions to accommodate our international members; and 3) We are especially excited that due to the virtual nature, we will be recording all concurrent sessions, which means no more of the dreaded “but there are two/three presentations I want to attend, all in the same time-slot! ARGH!!”

This change in venue to online leaves us much for which to be thankful.

Continuing in the spirit of gratitude, I want to acknowledge all who have reached out to share memories and celebrate the life of Dr. Howard Winokuer. His death earlier this month was a devastating loss, as he was a man who seemed invincible, and touched so many. Please continue to build his legacy through the sharing of photos, videos, memories, and anecdotes on the various websites and social media platforms.

Many of the stories I’ve heard were grounded in Howard’s love for life, and his sheer joy in being with and encouraging other ADEC members. His legacy is a reminder to all of us to embrace life to the fullest – and I would again encourage everyone to practice compassion for yourself, as we practice kindness toward others. And last but not least, I hope that each one of us will take a moment to go outside as close to nature as is safely possible, breathe deep, feel the ground under us, the sky above us, and appreciate just being.

Peace be with you all,

Rebecca S. Morse, PhD
President, Association for Death Education and Counseling

Executive Director’s Message

Although just a few months into my role as
ADEC’s Executive Director, the various member connections, depth of volunteer efforts underway, support from the MHQ team, and key board initiatives to implement has fully immersed me into my ADEC learning journey. One of the first things I’ve realized, as I’ve been introduced to many of you, is your strong connection to ADEC as your professional home. I’ve already felt it in the congeniality of colleagues, the comfort of a community that understands and appreciates each other, and in the dedication and commitment of members working together to attain ADEC’s vision. Thank you for the warm welcome into your community and your home!

It has been exciting to dive right in, meeting many of you virtually through committee, council, and board meetings. **You have been so generous in helping me navigate all the nuances and operations of ADEC.**

Participating in the [ADEC Connections Virtual Workshop](#) was also incredibly beneficial in gaining perspective about the profession and hearing directly about the critical issues you are addressing. It was such a pleasure to be able to see so many faces during the closing Connections Hour, and to hear how you truly valued the opportunity to reconnect and share with each other again. If you weren’t able to participate in this event, we have posted President Rebecca Morse’s [ADEC Midyear Report](#), featuring all the latest accomplishments and new initiatives underway. Make sure to check it out! It is simply remarkable all the pivots and new approaches that have emerged from this difficult year, you have so much to celebrate.

**The entire MHQ team and I are looking forward to continuing to partner with you and build on your successes into 2021.** If you haven’t already, I’m sure there is no question that you’ll continue to support your community and **renew your membership** for the coming year. We look forward to a record number of members engaging.

We are also thrilled to be working with the Conference Planning Committee to develop a fabulous [Virtual Conference](#) in April! We’ll be incorporating best practices and lessons learned this year to enhance your experience. Watch for more details coming soon, this will be an ADEC event you won’t want to miss!

**Thank you again for providing me this opportunity to serve your community.** I’ve appreciated hearing your suggestions and recommendations, so please continue to reach out and share your insights; I’d love to hear from you. Here’s to a spectacular ADEC 2021!

Michelle Bjerkness  
ADEC Executive Director  
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Association Management provided by [Management HQ](#)
Member Profile

Connects is featuring stories on selected individuals so that the ADEC community can get to know its members.

Vicki Jay
CEO, National Alliance for Grieving Children

Vicki Jay serves as CEO for the National Alliance for Grieving Children. Ms. Jay was founding director of Rays of Hope Children’s Grief Center in Midland, Texas. Her nineteen year hospice career included End of Life Community Education Director and ten years as Founder and Executive Director of Rays of Hope Children’s Grief Center.

She is recognized for her role in children’s advocacy and for her strengths in public speaking and community education.

Jay has received many awards and recognitions for her work with nonprofits and in the field of bereavement, including the National Jefferson Award for Community Service, a prestigious national recognition honoring community and public voluntarism in America. Recipients are “ordinary people who do extraordinary things without expectation of recognition.”

A graduate of Texas Tech University, Ms. Jay currently resides in Lubbock, Texas. In addition to her professional and community roles, she cherishes her role of wife, mother, friend and recently “Nana.”

Do you have a mentor/role model who has significantly affected your career path in thanatology? Tell us why you chose this career path.

My career and passion has always been to support children with special and unique needs. I started my career as an educator for children with special needs and although I am no longer in the education field, I still feel that I am serving children with special needs – the needs related to loss. In my work in education, it was apparent that children have many experiences outside the classroom that affect their ability to learn. It was also apparent that those emotional experiences and resulting needs were often overlooked.

When asked about my mentors, my first thought goes to children. I am honored to learn from children on a regular basis. Children are the most natural grieveres. They are amazing at asking questions, expressing thoughts and exploring feelings – until we, as adults, get in the way. I felt led to the field in an effort to discover and implement ways we can support children using their natural tools of expression.

What advice would you offer a more junior professional in the field on growing their career or keeping their work fresh?

Seek to know tomorrow, more than you do today. Enter every conversation as a learner.

Surround yourself with experienced professionals through organizations such as ADEC and the National Alliance for Grieving Children. The field of childhood bereavement is a
fairly new field and has grown through a network of clinicians, program providers, researchers, educators, funders, and others who have formed an alliance to develop best practices and standards of services. Seek opportunities to connect with others.

**What do you think the future holds for your work and that of others like you? How will that impact what you do?**

“Future” is such an ambiguous word in the world we find ourselves in amid COVID. What we do know is bereavement needs are growing while delivery methods are being forced to change. I believe that virtual bereavement support will be something we take forward from this time in our history. There is much work to be done to establish best practices to create healthy and meaningful virtual tools and programs.

In relation to childhood bereavement, my hope is that we can continue to raise awareness that children do indeed grieve and need our support through the process. In many ways, we have traditionally taken the approach that children are resilient and may be “immune” to grief. They continually let us know that is not the case. My hope is for more and more support systems and programs, based on research and clinical theory, to be developed for children who face loss throughout their young lives. The ultimate goal is that no child grieves alone.

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**Student Profile**

*So that the ADEC community can get to know its students, Connects is featuring stories on individuals who are ADEC scholarship recipients.*

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**Jen Chaisson**  
MS, BScN, RN

Hello! My name is Jen Chaisson and I live in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada with my husband and four children. I work as a registered nurse on a Mother/Baby Unit caring for postpartum families and I recently completed my master’s degree in Thanatology through Marian University.

My passion is supporting families who experience a pregnancy or infant loss: I volunteer with the Pregnancy and Infant Loss Network in Ontario as a Peer Support Volunteer and I hope to someday take on a leadership role in nursing to educate healthcare professionals on perinatal bereavement care. My Capstone Project explored nurses’ experience with perinatal loss, their grief and how this can inform nursing policy, education and practice.

**Do you have a mentor/role model who has significantly affected your career path in Thanatology? Tell us why you chose this career path.**

My inspiration for studying Thanatology is my son, Barrett, who died when I was 37 weeks pregnant of a cord accident – next to his twin brother who was born alive and healthy in 2012. This loss was life altering for me, and despite being a nurse who encountered death and dying professionally, I was unprepared to deal with the depth of my personal grief, isolation, and heartache that accompanied this unsuspected tragedy. The world no longer made sense to me, and the only way I could make sense of it was to learn about grief. Studying Thanatology has been an enlightening and applicable journey that will help me...
connect my personal experience with my professional background to support bereaved families and nurses.

**What advice would you offer a more junior professional in the field on growing their career or keeping their work fresh?**

My advice to others just entering the field is to maintain a connection with the people you are trying to help and support — their journey can inform your practice. It is easy to get caught up in the theory and research; however, we can learn so much by simply listening, and being with bereaved individuals, families, and communities.

**What do you think the future holds for your work and that of others like you? How will that impact what you do?**

I think the future for nurses working with perinatal loss families is looking positive. There is a growing body of research helping us understand the nurses’ experience with grief and how this influences their ability to care for families. We are learning that nurses require more education, training, and peer support to adequately care for and support bereaved families, themselves, and their colleagues. Grief and loss education is minimal in nursing degrees, but highly applicable to nursing practice; therefore, I anticipate that there will be ample opportunity for me moving forward to use my Thanatology degree, my profession, and personal experience to educate nurses providing perinatal bereavement care.

**ADEC Committees: Finance Committee**

*To keep members abreast of what is happening within the ADEC committees, Connects is featuring articles discussing their latest activities.*

The Finance Committee is one of the eight standing committees of ADEC. It is principally charged with oversight of all financial aspects of the association, including monitoring revenues and expenditures, overseeing cash management, creating the annual budget, proposing financial strategies, investing ADEC’s cash reserves in income producing securities, assisting in the preparation of the annual audit and U.S. income tax reports, fund raising, and soliciting sponsors for various ADEC activities. The Committee’s policies and procedures are defined in the Financial Procedures document that was developed and approved by the board of directors earlier this year.

ADEC Treasurer, Worth Kilcrease, MBA, MA, LPC, FT (*pictured above*), is the Committee Chair and Board of Director Liaison. Starting this year, each Committee member has a
specific responsibility: some are liaisons to the major revenue/expense committees, some help raise monies for ADEC, and one, Vandyln Pine, is the Committee’s historian. After the entire Committee has reviewed the monthly financial statements for ADEC and they are approved by the Board, each liaison reviews the monthly financial results of his/her particular committee with the Chair of that committee. The liaisons also review their committee’s upcoming programs and assist the Chair in the development of the annual budget, another important role of the Finance Committee. This year’s liaisons are: Rick Forest, Credentialing Council; Rosemary Gravelle, Communications; Tim Copeland, Membership; Bill Hoy, Conference Planning; and Worth Kilcrease, Professional Development. Jodi Swan is responsible for philanthropic fund raising and Andy McNiel acquires sponsors for the annual conference, workshops, webinars, etc.

**Update Your ADEC Member Profile**

To ensure that your ADEC profile is up to date, please login to the ADEC website.

Once you are logged in, if you are not redirected automatically, simply click on the “My Profile” button in the top navigation panel.

Make sure to review your professional and personal information and edit with the “Edit” link in the headers. Additional contact details as well as your education and experiences will be a helpful resource for your colleagues when searching the Membership Directory.

[Click here to update your profile!]

**ADEC’s Certification/Recertification Process Moves to a Seamless On-Line System**

This new web based system ensures that all things “Credential” can be found in one place on ADEC’s website. This change also makes the application process more user friendly. **Click the button below to access all things new including information and forms.**
Renew Your Membership

In the midst of unprecedented circumstances, ADEC has striven to remain strong and relevant for you, the ADEC membership community. There are not promises that the challenges we’re currently facing will relent anytime soon, but if anyone knows a thing or two about resilience, its ADEC members.

In the midst of the current uncertainty ADEC invites you to look ahead and support your professional home by renewing your membership for 2021.

**ADEC strives to serve you. And needs you to keep ADEC strong. Please renew your membership today.**

[Click here to renew your membership today]

As a reminder, **your ADEC membership username is: @@username@@; your membership will expire on Thursday, December 31 if you do not renew.**

If you need any assistance with your membership renewal, email us at adec@adec.org or by phone at (612) 337-1808 on January 4.

**Why Join?**

ADEC offers substantial membership benefits including:
Don’t Forget About the Children

Written by Jillian Blueford, Ph.D.
Chair, ADEC Student and New Professionals (SANP) Committee

During a time of uncertainty, chaos, and loss, recognizing and honoring one’s grief has become paramount for helping professionals and educators. This past November marked Children’s Grief Awareness Month, observing the millions of bereaved children, adolescents, and teens grappling with the loss of an individual significant to them. With 1 in 14 children (Judi’s House/JAG Institute, 2020), experiencing a death-related loss before the age of 18, recognizing younger individuals as grievers is a must. At times, children and adolescents may be overlooked as grievers because they are not expressing their grief in a way familiar to us. What may be playtime to us, children are seeing ways to express their grief. What we think of as disruptive behaviors and outbursts, children can be trying to find a way to tell us what they need.

Bring in development, cultural backgrounds and identities, and support systems and you will
have a holistic griever who need an empathic person to address their questions, curiosities, and worries.

So, the next time you engage with a grieving child, adolescent, or teen, ask yourself the following:

- Am I recognizing the full capacity of their grief?
- Do I understand their cultural identities well enough to have conversations regard the influence their culture has on their grief expressions?
- Do they understand loss and the grieving process in a developmentally appropriated way?
- What is informing my work and approaches?
- What support do their family systems have?

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**First Annual ADEC Workshop Provides Successful New Learning Opportunities**

**Written by Melanie Wright, MSW, FT**
Chair, ACEC Professional Development Committee

In the face of a continuously changing COVID landscape, we thank all who participated in our recent workshop: “ADEC Connections: Life, Death, and Healing During Difficult Times.” These are three essential aspects of the shared human condition and highlight our unity, journeying together as one.

“Life” thrives on reflection, affirmation, and community. “Death” is often represented in how practitioners, patients, and loved ones adapt to a new transition.
“Healing” reveals the bonds that connect us to both ourselves and identify the similarities that link us to one another. This workshop aimed to emphasize the importance of remaining joined as professionals and provide an opportunity to acquire additional perspectives on familiar topics, to broaden our respective skill sets.

We discussed the value of meaning-making and resilience in the African American community, referencing the current situation of ongoing racial injustice, with calling attention to the impact of religion and spirituality. This segued into underlining the significant impact the COVID climate has had on hospice professionals and associated fields, with a focus on how to maintain hope in such difficult times. Lastly, we reflected on how to create and maintain continuing bonds with those we have lost, but how this form of healing is also largely related to restructuring what we “once knew to be normal.” This workshop was such a wonderful way to connect with our fellow ADEC members and colleagues.

The Professional Development Committee looks forward to offering many more educational experiences and is always open for insight and feedback.

Special thanks to our moderators and presenters:

Moderators: Dr. Jennifer Matthews, PhD, LPC, NCC, ACS; Dr. Joy Berger, DMA, FT, BCC, MT-BC; Melanie Wright, MSW, FT

Presenters: Nicole Alston, JSW; Reverend Darryl Owens, MDiv, BCC, CT, CPLC; Dr. Patti Anewalt, PhD, LPC, FT; Dr. Theresa Lynn, PhD, RN, LMSW, CT; Dr. Don Benjamin, PhD; Dr. Jane Milman, PhD

Special thanks to our sponsors:

What’s New: New Books from ADEC Members

What’s New celebrates our members’ considerable contribution to the Thanatological literature by offering a brief review of books and other educational materials written or produced by ADEC members. Each review is run once to provide an opportunity for our membership across the world to be aware of resources in the dying, death and bereavement field. It is mostly focused on books but has also included other items such as video and even a grief board-game.
Doka examines the common but often controversial phenomenon of pre death premonitions, near death experiences, and post death communication in this accessible but thoroughly researched book. Reports of these death related experiences occur across all cultures and are noted in the earliest existent documents of human history and continue to the present day. While some writers and researchers debunk any reports as unreliable or lacking empirical evidence there are others who uncritically embrace all such accounts. Doka finds the middle ground, offering readers clear information, examples, and lucid distinctions among the range of extraordinary end of life phenomena. His ten chapters include helpful perspectives for grievers and bereavement professionals, as well as credible insights for pursuit in academic and research settings. It concludes with a substantial bibliography to enable readers to further examine this important topic.

Woodbury, MN
Softcover, 202 pages.

Wolfelt looks at the complex reality of anticipatory grief which impacts incalculable persons and families at any given moment in time. He enumerates six situations that typically cause anticipatory grief responses: life threatening illness, dementia, aging, divorce, and pending serious medical procedures or emerging life transitions. He notes that anticipatory grief includes both the process of living through a change over time and the capacity to project ourselves forward in time. While the human capacity to project is helpful to plan for an emerging future, it can also lead to exaggerated worry and catastrophic imagination. This booklet, another in Wolfelt’s expansive “Words of Healing and Hope” series, will be useful for many to reduce distorted worry but prepare effectively for pending loss and grief.
Expected Loss COPING with ANTICIPATORY GRIEF

Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.

Words of Hope and Healing

Ft. Collins, CO
Softcover, 50 pages

Want to have your publication included in Connects?
Have your publisher send a copy (not just an announcement) of recent material (2016 - present) to:

The Rev. Paul A. Metzler, D.Min., Editor
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Members' Corner

ADEC Members' Corner is a regular column in ADEC Connects that highlights one or more members’ activity as an ADEC professional. Members’ Corner is open for contributions from all ADEC members; to be included, please send your article to Amanda Brace or Beverly Rollins.
Jamie Boshears, CT, GC-C reports that because Arkansas Hospice could not hold in person Services of Remembrance with its families due to COVID 19, staff produced a virtual service that they are very proud of and want to share with ADEC members. It is available on the Hospice’s website and the link will be available for an extended period of time. An invitation to view the link was sent to all the families that received bereavement support from Arkansas Hospice for the past thirteen months. The virtual service can be seen here: https://www.arkansashospice.org/remembrance/

Oindrila Dutta, CT, recently earned her doctorate degree in Psychology at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. Her thesis offers an in depth understanding of the lived experience of parents who are bereaved by the death of their child due to a chronic life threatening illness. The thesis further discusses the development and pilot trial of a novel internet based narrative writing intervention for improving psycho socio spiritual well being of parents who are caring for their child with a chronic life-threatening illness. The study encourages researchers and clinicians to explore meaning focused approaches of coping with anticipatory grief among parents grieving the impending mortality of their child – to help them to rise above the challenges imposed by their child’s illness to live and celebrate life as fully and meaningfully as possible. You can read Oindrila’s thesis here or check out the journal articles resulting from her Ph.D. study: Dutta et al., 2018; Dutta et al., 2019; Ho et al., 2019; Ho et al., 2020

Emily Mroz is a Dissertation Fellow and Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Psychology at the University of Florida. One of her current projects examines the role of place of death in bereaved widow and widower memories of the very last time they saw their spouse. Emily has collected quantitative and narrative data from over 60 older adult widows and widowers. She hypothesizes that place of death will predict whether these memories are recalled with affective themes of redemption or contamination, and that this will have implications for long-term positive and negative grief outcomes. She expects this work to hold translational value across clinical and bereavement support settings.

Jeanette M. Potts, MS, CT was one of five individuals from the Fox Cities nominated and selected for “Nominate a Star” presented by Kimberly Clark, Fox Cities P.A.C., and Broadway Across America. Ms. Potts was nominated because she facilitates the support groups for survivors of suicide loss for Prevent Suicide Fox Cities and has kept close contact with survivors through the Pandemic, offering virtual support groups and one on one conversations when needed. More information can be found here: “Nominate a Star” Nominees from the Fox Cities, presented by Kimberly-Clark, Fox Cities P.A.C. and Broadway Across America - Fox Cities.

"Becoming Grief-Informed: A Call to Action," written by ADEC members Dr. Donna Schuurman and Dr. Monique Mitchell, Dougy Center’s Senior Director of Advocacy and Training and Director of Training and Translational Research respectively, is more than a position paper: It’s a Call to Action. With Pandemic related deaths increasing, at more than 1.6 million deaths worldwide, and over 300,000 in the U.S., we believe it is time, now more than ever, to understand what it means to be grief informed. Mainstream media and social media are exploding with suggestions for coping with grief, and when we have a new normal, the pent-up grief will overflow in long-awaited memorial services, funerals, life celebrations and requests from professionals for help in understanding and coping with these losses. It is time to take a stand and acknowledge grief for what it truly is: a natural and normal response to loss that is interwoven into a sociocultural context. Grief is not an experience that needs to be “silenced,” “treated,” or “pathologized.” Grief, and all the many complications it imposes on the grievers, is an experience that needs and deserves understanding, support, and community.

Mary Alice Varga, Tashel C. Bordere, and Matthew D. Varga recently published their study, "The Holistic Grief Effects of Bereaved Black Female College Students" in Omega— the Journal of Death and Dying. The abstract of that study can be found here: The Holistic Grief Effects of Bereaved Black Female College Students - Mary Alice Varga, Tashel C. Bordere, Matthew D. Varga, 2020 (sagepub.com).

Dr. Alan Wolfelt was honored to write and narrate the National Funeral Directors
Association’s annual Remembrance Service for its annual convention. The Remembrance Service aired on October 22 during the final day of the convention. It was filmed on the grounds of the Center for Loss & Life Transition. Dr. Wolfelt is a past recipient of the ADEC Death Educator Award.

Contact Connects

Connects is interested in your thoughts and work. Please reach out to us with content submissions, suggestions or ideas.

For consideration in the February 2021 issue of Connects please submit your ideas/content by Friday, January 31, 2021.

Contact Us
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