In this issue....

- President’s Message
- Membership Committee Update
- Student Profile
- What’s New: New Books from ADEC Members
- Members’ Corner
- Contact Connects

President’s Message

Hello everyone,

As I prepare to head to Minneapolis for the mid-year Board meeting (mid-year!) I alternate between reflecting with satisfaction on the progress we have made with respect to our goals for the year and feeling acutely aware of what else I want to see happen before we meet in April. You might say my thinking is in line with the dual process model of bereavement; I oscillate between a sense of achievement and a feeling that I am standing still while everything around me zooms ahead. Maybe it’s my age. I know I’m not the only one who feels the acceleration of time that comes with the passing years.

With the passage of time, inevitably, comes loss, and one of the things I’ve been aware of lately is the number of bereaved clients from years ago who are coming back to talk about subsequent losses. A client whose mother died fifteen years ago, who returned five years later after the death of her sister, is back again after having spent the past two years caring for her terminally ill husband. This latest loss evokes earlier ones, and our work together touches on common themes related to her history and her ways of coping. But there are also profound differences in her response to each loss, and we would expect this to be the case. Each time we grieve, we are grieving something in particular. Every grief is embedded with memories and meaning that are unique to the bereaved’s relationship with the deceased. To help someone who has suffered a loss, we must first understand what it is that has been lost. In this way our understanding of a long-time client, and their understanding of themselves, continues to deepen.

Do you find yourself seeing clients from years past? What is it like for you to have recurring, long term relationships with clients? I feel very fortunate to have known some of my clients for upwards of twenty years – I’ve watched them grow up, get married, have children. I have a number of first-time grandmothers (those of you who know me know that this is my own greatest remaining ambition, and I try
to keep my counter transference in check). In other words, I am a witness to all of life’s losses, but also to many of life’s joys. This is the part of my work that I have to explain to people when they say (always) – “oh – you help people who are grieving. That must be so depressing.”

This month’s issue of Connects includes a report from Brenda Atkinson, Chair of the Membership Committee. We’re aiming to include more of these reports, so that you are kept up to date on the work of the committees, which I can tell you, is substantial. This year’s renewal form includes a statement regarding the manner in which members are expected to treat one another at all ADEC gatherings, and steps to be taken when someone experiences a breach of these standards. This may seem like unnecessary policing to some of you, but unfortunately, we like many professional associations and academic institutions, are facing the reality that such a policy is necessary. Deep appreciation to Rebecca Morse for taking the lead on getting this statement done in time for membership renewal.

By the time you receive this, Thanksgiving will be around the corner. On the list of ADEC related things for which I am grateful, I must include the members of your Board of Directors, our Committee Chairs, and every one of the individuals whose commitment to ADEC sustains us. I am grateful to Isaiah Allen, multiple ball juggler supreme. Thanksgiving is a perfect time to remember absent friends and family: by now you will have received word of a newly launched “Remembrance Blog” that Isaiah helped me launch, and it would mean a lot to me to have you check it out.

And of course, I’m grateful for all of you. Membership renewal is in full swing, and I thank you from my heart for your continued support of, and engagement with, our Association.

Talk to you soon,
Phyllis

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**Membership Committee Update**

You may have noticed, we’re in the midst of the ADEC membership renewal season. We have a pretty long renewal period. Beginning October 1, an ADEC member can renew membership for the entire upcoming calendar year. This provides you and all our busy members with ample time to renew and avoid a lapse in benefits. It also enables members to renew their membership at the same time they register for the Annual Conference. (This is your reminder to register now!)

Every year we hear from members that they forgot to renew or missed the renewal reminder. We know that the pace of life and work is always accelerating, so we want to make sure you don’t zoom past your ADEC renewal. As a committee we’ve been working with our staff to make sure you receive clear and timely renewal reminders. Our new website and database have made membership renewal easier than ever. You should have already received a few email reminders with a link to the online renewal. We also know that we’re all looking for ways to reduce the number of emails we receive; the easiest way to stop those reminder emails is to renew!

After just one week, 160 of your fellow members have already renewed. It is exciting to see the incredible commitment to ADEC our members have and the valuable resource ADEC is to our members.

As a Committee we’re excited to share that in September ADEC’s Board of Directors approved a new membership type. The membership type is called “New Member.” Sometimes simplicity is best, that’s what we thought in this case. As a Committee we were concerned that the current membership fee
structure created an unintended disincentive for new people to join ADEC between March 31 and October 1. Because ADEC’s membership cycle is tied to the calendar year, prospective members were choosing not to join part way into the year because they felt like they were not receiving value. So, what we recommended to the Board is the creation of this “New Member” membership type. The membership fee for “New Members” will be prorated based on the date they join and the number of remaining days in the current calendar year. This way a “New Member” can join knowing that they are getting a great value in their membership. Only individuals who have never been ADEC members are eligible for this member type. At the conclusion of the calendar year in which they join, New Members will become Individual Members and their membership will adjust to follow the same calendar year as all other ADEC members.

It’s our hope that now when someone “discovers” ADEC in May or August, they will feel that ADEC is a welcoming organization not just because of its incredible members, but because there is a path into membership created just for them.

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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*

My name is Greta Jankauskaite and I am currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology at the University of Maryland, College Park under the mentorship of Dr. Karen O’Brien. I completed my B.A. in Psychology at Rutgers University and M.A. in Psychology in Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. My current research work at UMD includes projects that assess grief counseling skills among University counseling center therapists and potential interventions to improve knowledge and skills in grief counseling among psychologists. I am also working on examining the effects of end-of-life caregiving on women, and end of life communication and training among health care professionals.

I’ve been involved with ADEC since 2015 and consider it my professional home!

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

I have to thank my mentor, Dr. Wendy Lichtenthal, and a dear friend and colleague, Dr. Kailey Roberts, for introducing me to the ADEC world back in 2015. At that time, I was simultaneously completing my M.A. degree and working as a research assistant at the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center on a number of large-scale bereavement research projects. I was already very interested in the topics of death and dying at that time, but their mentorship and support helped me focus my research interests and dedication to this field. Further, I feel incredibly grateful and privileged to continue my graduate studies at the University of Maryland under the great mentorship of Dr. Karen O’Brien. Working with her on various Thanatology related projects has been a true gift and I am forever grateful for her constant inspiration and support.

When reflecting on the reasons why I chose to study Thanatology, no one easy answer comes to mind. If I am honest, I think there were an array of signs in my own personal life history that slowly guided me to this field. Yet, what keeps me dedicated is the constant reminder of how absolutely needed the work of Thanatology researchers and practitioners is.

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

I am a big believer that the best work comes from people who find true meaning in their projects. That being said, this does not mean that the work always comes easy or that there are no setbacks.
Nonetheless, the best advice I can garner is to identify something that you believe in, what aligns with your values and what you feel passionate about, and then try to pursue it. The right people will show up as needed, and the ADEC community is always there to support you.

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

I believe that the field of Thanatology has come a long way, yet there is still so much to do. I think that we have to continue to stay committed to normalizing conversations about death and dying in order to reduce the taboo that surrounds it. Further, I think that it is imperative to increase commitment to multiculturalism and social justice advocacy within the field of Thanatology (e.g., in research, clinical practice, and professional issues and representation). Last but not least, I also believe that we need to do better in training and educating our future mental health and medical professionals about how to communicate and help their patients with end of life and grief issues.

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**What’s New:**

**New Books from ADEC Members**

**Attention All ADEC Authors!**

*What’s New* is a column that has been included in ADEC publications since 1996. It is currently included in each issue of *ADEC Connects* and previously in *The ADEC Forum*. It is mostly focused on books, but has also included other items such as video and even a grief board-game.

*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.

To have your contribution included, please ask your publisher to send a copy (*not just an announcement*) of recent material (2016 to present) to:

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Daniel has drawn from her Doctor of Ministry dissertation regarding how toxic theology can contribute to complicated bereavement to offer a book for both grievers and bereavement professionals. Defining toxic theology as any faith approach or community “in which legitimate human experience and responses are shamed by religious institutions and systems” (p. 22), her seven chapters cover a range of common religious topics that will encourage readers to examine theological assumptions within their faith traditions to gain new perspectives and attain healing in grief. She includes vignettes from grievers encountered in her work which effectively illustrate her critique of toxic theology. Additionally, copious “Endnotes” introduce readers to a wide range of other literature. This book offers an important understanding that a fundamental task of religion is to offer comfort and healing, especially to those broken by grief.


Gilbert offers an engaging book to help grievers operationalize the concept of continuing bonds with our deceased loved ones. The concept of continued bonds received wide acceptance following its introduction to the professional literature in 1996. However, while the concept resonated with many grievers and clinicians, there have not been accessible resources about how to actually achieve and sustain meaningful bonds. This book imaginatively illustrates how those bonds can be lived, expressed, and put into daily life. Its five chapters offer tangible and creative ways (referred to as “Forget Me Nots”) to remember and stay connected to those we have lost to death, including concepts drawn from other countries and cultures. Bereavement counselors, as well as grievers, will find much of value in this book which can be useful at any time in the course of the grief journey.

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**Member's Corner**

*To keep the ADEC community up-do-date on its members’ activities!*
Companion Press announces the publication of a new book entitled *First Aid for Broken Hearts* by grief educator, Dr. Alan Wolfelt. Life is both wonderful and devastating. It graces us with joy, and it breaks our hearts. If your heart is broken, this book is for you. Whether the reader is struggling with a death, break-up, illness, unwanted life change, or loss of any kind, this book will help them understand their predicament as well as figure out what to do about it. Loss may be an unavoidable part of human life, but it doesn't have to prevent anyone from living well. Actually, if the reader adopts this guide’s basic principles, revealed and tested by one of the world’s most beloved grief counselors, they will even go on to thrive. This powerful book is the perfect gift book for funeral homes and hospices to give to the families they serve. Author, educator, and grief counselor Dr. Alan Wolfelt serves as Director of the Center for Loss and Life Transition in Fort Collins, Colorado. The author of *Grief One Day at a Time, Understanding Your Grief*, and many other books for grief caregivers and mourners, Dr. Wolfelt is committed to helping people mourn well so they can live well and love well. *First Aid for Broken Hearts* is available in both softcover and e-book formats. To order and to learn more about Dr. Wolfelt’s books on grief and loss, visit [centerforloss.com](http://centerforloss.com) or call (970) 226 6050.

### Training on Educating Others about Grief

The Center for Loss and Life Transition announces two upcoming training sessions in Fort Collins, Colorado for those interested in becoming effective grief educators: July 20-23, 2020 and June 28-July 1, 2021. Entitled "Becoming an Effective Grief Educator" the four day trainings, facilitated by grief educator, Dr. Alan Wolfelt, will enhance participants’ capacity to artfully educate others on grief and mourning. Whether the participant is interested in training others in their organization, speaking publicly in their community, or just wish to feel more confident in passing along information to clients, colleagues, or friends, this workshop will both inspire them and prepare them to be effective grief advocates. Using the “Ten Touchstones” of his book, *Understanding Your Grief*, as a framework, Dr. Wolfelt will step participants through messaging and methods for educating others about the basics of grief, mourning, and healing. Dr. Wolfelt will also share practical insider tips on topics such as event formats, engaging audiences, creating teaching objectives, building relationships with potential sponsors, and more. Included in the training materials is *Understanding Your Grief*, written by Dr. Wolfelt. A past recipient of the Association for Death Education and Counseling's Death Educator Award, Dr. Wolfelt serves on the faculty at the University of Colorado Medical School in the Department of Family Medicine. To reserve a seat in the training or to view a complete list of Dr. Alan Wolfelt’s educational seminars for bereavement caregivers, visit [centerforloss.com](http://centerforloss.com).

**Members’ Corner** is open for contributions from all ADEC members. To have your article included, please send it to Amanda Brace or Beverly Rollins.

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### 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 December 2019 issue of Connects please submit your ideas/content by **November 30, 2019**.

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