

# Aurora House News

*The light of a new day...*



**Summer 2021**  
**Newsletter Volume 14 Issue 2**

## The Blessing of Care

JoAnne Ganser moved to the Aurora House on February 16, 2021. Stage four cancer was racking the body of a woman who had endured many hardships and always came through adversities a little stronger and always with a positive attitude. They made sure her pain was managed and she enjoyed telling the staff about her sons. She loved the staff and was always appreciative of the care she received. JoAnne started her life as the first child of rural North Dakota Farmers, Jim and Laura Gemar. Born in the small farming community of Oakes, North Dakota. JoAnne, who was always called Jo, was born with hydro cephalitis which almost killed her mother in the birthing process. From that anxious time to her years as a hard-working farmer's daughter, Jo was always resilient and focused. Jo tended to the needs of her four other siblings and worked tirelessly for her mom and dad. She was pulled out of her classes as a sixth grader to work full time on the farm. Her dreams were lost of being a teacher. Jo moved to Fargo, North Dakota when she was 14. Soon she fell in love and married and had her first son when she was 15. All that glitters is not gold, and she learned that an abusive husband was impossible to live with. Now, 16 years old, a new baby and working in a restaurant was a daunting challenge. Jo then fell in love with Dennis Heiden from LaMoure, North Dakota and they ultimately married and had 5 more children: Dennis, Tammy, Ronald, Marty, Daryl and Milo. Jo's husband Dennis was in the Air Force, so moving around the United States for the next 19 years from Illinois, Denver, Texas, Mississippi, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Seattle, was to be the norm. A husband who was stationed in Libya, the Philippines and Alaska left JoAnne alone to tend to the needs of a large family.



JoAnne was no stranger to tragedy, her only daughter died from complications of Spina Bifida when she was five years old. Not too long after, after moving the family to West Germany with her husband, tragedy struck again. Three months shy of his 20th year in the Air Force, JoAnne's husband, was electrocuted and died in the family housing unit. Jo, now 28, was widowed with 6 boys. She moved her family back from Germany to North Dakota to move in with her mother-in-law in a two-bedroom 900 square feet house in LaMoure, North Dakota. JoAnne knew she would need help raising her family and ultimately dated and married Max Ganser in 1972. Another son was added to the family the following year, making JoAnne's family complete with seven boys. Jo filled up her life by raising boys, a big task, and finding time to garden, can her own vegetables, raise Chihuahuas, join a bowling league, sew, cook and learn her favorite craft of ceramics. She also had an incredible passion for coffee and cigarettes. The latter would ultimately claim her life.

Patient and families served: 1,140

Age Range: 6 wks - 103yrs

Average Length of Stay: 35 days

Students #: 3,855

**2646 W. 18th Street P.O.Box 976 Weslaco, Texas 956.973.9690 [www.AuroraHouse.org](http://www.AuroraHouse.org)**

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JoAnne spend her adult life tending to her family and finally in 1995, she and Max moved to the Rio Grande Valley to retire. She really didn't retire. She and Max became involved with the American Legion where they prepared food, cooked and cleaned every weekend and holidays for the Veterans of Foreign Wars in McAllen, Texas for the next 20 years. She added knitting and crocheting to her hobby list and tirelessly made fireproof cooking pads and many other items. During the last several years of her life she fell in love with collecting Beanie Babies, Roosters and tending to the needs of her dogs. She never grew weary of baking incredible cakes and cookies for the Holidays. She was especially fond of her Shitzu, Alfie and her last Chihuahua: Chica. JoAnne's greatest asset was her common sense approach to life. She was very easy to talk to, slow to anger, a great listener and was always available to talk...day or night. Shocking to all of her family was how interested she got into sports the last few years of her life. .

She paid close attention to the Texans and the Cowboys, the Olympics, Animal Planet and never missed the nightly news. She loved and laughed a lot in her time. She loved life and never grew weary of trying to do things for others. A big heart born out of a lot of hard work, pain, living and loving.

At the end, her life in Weslaco, at the Aurora House was difficult for her, but the staff at Aurora House provided that quality care, respect, dignity and comfort she deserved. Our connections with patients are always powerful and intimate. At the end of life, the simple act of being present — holding hands, listening to stories, looking at old photos, sharing music — is a profound gift, not just for the patient, but for Aurora House staff. Over the years, our patients have taught us a new kind of love. JoAnne became part of our Aurora House family and never shied away from offering her opinions on anything, but her heart was always in the right place. She knew her work on earth was almost over, but she didn't worry about herself. She asked daily how the love of her life, Max Ganser, was doing. She always wanted to know what was "new" and we believe she is at the right-hand side of her Heavenly Father asking questions in the only way JoAnne knew, with honesty and sincerity. She passed away on her 83rd birthday, May 4, 2021. She has seven surviving sons: Gene, Dennis, Ronald, Marty, Daryl, Milo and Marc; 17 grandchildren and 18 great grandchildren. JoAnne will be remembered by her family and friends as amazingly generous with her time, talents and resources. A no nonsense approach to life, and a never quit attitude.

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## Help Us Make A Difference

Thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor, a matching gift of up to \$150,000 will be donated to Aurora House to help us continue to provide compassionate care for those in our community who need it most.

They will match up to \$150,000 donations from individual donors. We are challenging our friends, family, and supporters, to help us do something amazing and reach our goal! We cherish every donation\* and work hard to ensure every dollar is put to work providing compassionate care to our residents. But we need your help!

It all begins TODAY! ( Matching ends December 2021) Every dollar you donate will be matched dollar-for-dollar, doubling your donation and doing twice as much good! If you donate \$10 your donation instantly becomes \$20! If you donate \$500 your donation will become \$1,000!!

**Your commitment through monthly or annual giving is vital to Aurora House's ability to continue to serve our community and ensures that our residents spend their last days surrounded by compassion, dignity, comfort, and peace.**

### Give Online

- Visit [www.aurorahouse.org/donations](http://www.aurorahouse.org/donations) and click on MONTHLY with your credit or debit card. One time donations are greatly appreciated.

### Donate by Check

- You can also write a check to Aurora House and specify Annual Giving in the memo line. Check can be mailed to P.O. Box 976, Weslaco, Texas 78599

\*Did you know? The CARES Act allows for up to \$300 per taxpayer (\$600 for a married couple) in an above-the-line deduction for charitable gifts made in 2020 and claimed on taxes in 2021 and each year thereafter (this is not limited to only 2020). Please talk with your accountant to learn more.

## Spiritual Comfort at End of Life



Steve Gonzalez, M. Div  
Spiritual Counselor, A Healing Touch

It has been a privilege to come alongside Aurora House Foundation. Here the people truly have a heart of Gold. My name is Steve Gonzalez M.Div. I am the Chaplain for A Healing Touch Home Health and Hospice Team. I say a team because we come alongside this Foundation and help meet their goals, to give holistic care from physical, emotional, social, and spiritual care. As a Chaplain, I am not only able to go into our patient's room but also into the patient and family member's hearts and help find their answers to their "Why" questions.

A Chaplain is a theologically educated, pastoral experienced, and clinically trained minister certified by a professional chaplaincy organization and serves as an integral member of the healthcare team. The chaplain's primary role is to provide Spiritual/Pastoral Care to patients/residents, their family members, and the medical staff.

I stated that the workers here have a heart of Gold because the patients are not charged for their stay, and Aurora House does not receive money from the government or insurance, and resources can be limited at times. The Home relies on the generosity of its residents and their families, the community, and charitable support organizations, but above all the Home put their trust in God and a cheerful giver ( 2 Corinthians 9:6-7).

## 80's Retro Glow Run 2021



Bring on the in-person road races! After a year of virtual 5Ks, Community runners and walkers from all over the Rio Grande Valley had a great time at our 5th Annual 80's Retro Glow Run in May. The rain did not stop the more than 300 people who registered between the 5K and the 1 Mile races from coming out dressed in their best 80's costumes and support Aurora House.

Our Presenting Sponsor, RGV ACO Health Providers, LLC, along with our other community sponsors and race coordinator, RGV Theme Runs, helped raise over \$30,000 for individuals and families who need our home at end of life.

*Thank you to our Sponsors*



Legacy Home Health

Texas Regional Bank

Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory

Kindred Hospice

Knapp Medial Center

DHR Health

Advantage Health Consulting, INC.

Donna Medical Clinic

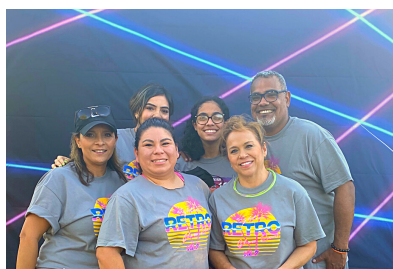
Magic Valley Electric Cooperative

RGV Adult & Internal Medicine

RJ Garza & Co.

Valerie Reyna Farmers Insurance

Rodeo Dental



# Aurora House News

## Memorials & Honorariums

### *In Loving Memory*



- Al Smith**  
Anna Smith
- Alfredo Castaneda**  
David Castaneda, SR
- Amelia Gonzalez**  
Rosalinda Hinojosa
- Aurora E. Perez**  
Melida Gonzalez
- Billy Kenon**  
Esther Kenon
- Carolyn Hufford**  
Eugene Hufford
- Cornelia Masso**  
Melanie Riley
- Delia De Leon**  
Roselinda G. Flores
- Dr. Thomas Yancey**  
Craig Wiegand
- Edward "Abby" Simcic**  
Joann Streiff
- Felipe Garcia**  
Mr. Faustino Villanueva Jr.
- Francisco Manzano, Sr.**  
Frank Manzano Jr,
- Gene Henry**  
Sheryl L. Henry
- Glenn Gardner**  
Lois Trygggestad
- Glenn Green**  
Jo Summers
- Horace (Hank) Edgley**  
Jeannette Edgley
- Howard Roman**  
John & Ellen Allen
- J.R Wade**  
Margaret Barnes
- Jack Bruemmer**  
John Knox Village/  
Patio Homes IV Ladies
- Jack Dyer**  
James and Linda Williams

- Jane Ault**  
Brian Humpherys
- Janice Hauge**  
Lois Trygggestad
- Janis Ramsey**  
Bryan Humpherys
- Jessica Billings**  
Alfred Dirks
- Joyce Ferguson**  
Lois Trygggestad
- Juan Carlos Hernandez**  
Elvia & Jose Hernandez
- Judy Lackey**  
Brian Humphreys
- Lloyd D. May**  
Deborah May
- Lucio Tovar Sr.**  
Frances Tovar
- Lynda Todd**  
Raymond Todd
- Maria Delia Reyna**  
Mitty Reyna
- Maria Ninfa Salinas Guerra**  
Belinda Anzaldua
- MaryAnn Hanson**  
Lois Trygggestad
- Mayor Joe V. Sanchez**  
Ramon Montalvo
- Minnie Zamora**  
Velma Granados
- Peter Vos**  
Betty Vos
- Pragedis Samudio**  
Felix & Maria S. Hernandez
- Rob Peterson**  
Brian Humphreys
- Roger Child**  
Craig Wiegand  
Brian Humphreys
- Sue Morgan**  
Beverly Madden

- Ruth Ann Kennedy**  
Kris Thompson  
Charles & Christy Kudy  
Kathy & Steve Quamme
- Sue Peterson**  
Brian Humphreys
- Ted Long**  
Patricia Long
- Truman Olson**  
B. W. & Ingelise Jones  
John Knox Village/ Patio  
Homes IV Ladies
- Vangie Martinez**  
Atanacio Jr. Hinojosa

**Maria Ninfa Salinas Guerra**  
Belinda Anzaldua

**Minnie Zamora**  
Velma Granados

## February 2021 - May 2021

### *In Honor of*

**Ruth Kennedy**  
Brad & June Kennedy

**Jose M. Quiroz**  
Yolanda Quiroz

### *In Kind*

**Ruth Kennedy**  
Brad & June Kennedy

### *In Kind*

**Bill Kenon**  
Esther Kenon

**Juan Carlos Hernandez**  
Elvia & Jose Hernandez

### *Paver*

**Hortencia H. Vasquez**  
Pedro Vasquez

On June 24, 2021 Knights of Columbus - Council 3098 honored the memory Eugene "Gene" Damalas with a beautiful bench in our memorial garden. Thank you to Father Solis from St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church for the blessing of the bench. Gene was an amazing supporter of Aurora House, and his wife Kathy continues his legacy.



## Memorial Gifts

Friends and family members of a hospice patient remember a loved one in various ways: sometimes with flowers, a card, and sometimes it is with a more lasting tribute in the form of a memorial gift.

Through memorial gift-giving you remember your loved one in a very meaningful way and at the same time you help other hospice patients in need.

To make a donation visit <https://aurorahouse.org/donations/> or use the envelope provided with the newsletter.

# Aurora House News

## Donations

### *Donations*

ADL Services  
Albert Lee Long  
Americo De La Paz III  
Andrew Hernandez  
Anthony (Ryan) & Jode Vaughan  
Arlene Crawford  
Audrey Eoff  
Benton & Melissa Beckwith  
Beth Berube  
Betty Lou Vitek  
Brenda Mercier  
Carol Hicks  
Catholic Daughters of the Americas  
Chris Fries  
Christopher & Minerva St. John  
CIMA Hospice  
Clarice A. Fodness Nystrup  
Community Foundation Lyster Family  
Foundation Fund  
David D. & Sandra Norlin  
David W Steiner  
Dawn Addington  
Denise Reina Santiago  
Diane Macdonald  
Doctors Hospital at Renaissance  
Donna Medical Clinic  
Elizabeth & Subram Gopal Krishnan, MD  
Elizabeth Eckles  
Erasmus & Esther Torres  
Fanny & Buddy Ross  
Felix & Maria S. Hernandez  
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
Gerald Gieseke  
Geraldine Shields  
Harrell & Tommie Sue Hicks  
Hollon Oil Company c/o Steve Wilson  
J & E Mc Connell  
Jackie Moreno  
Jacqueline Galloway  
James Whitney  
Jean Adams  
Jean M. Wilken  
Jesus Esparza  
Jim & Beth Staton  
John & Doris Jacobson  
Johnathan Crane  
Johnny Broshears  
Jolynnda Guevara  
Josefa Garza  
Joseph Woellhof  
Juan Dominguez  
Juan Hernandez  
Karen Smith  
Karen Torres  
Kindred Hospice (Curo)  
Knights of Columbus Council 3098  
Laura Zuniga  
Legacy Home Health Agency, Inc  
Leisure World Chapel

Life Giving Outreach Ministries/Crossroads  
Literary Review Club  
Llano Grande Lake Park Church  
Loretta Barbee  
Magic Valley Electric Coop  
Marco A. & Norma R. Martinez  
Maria Calderon  
Marie Taylor  
Mark Williams  
McAfee Insurance Agency  
Melissa Alejandro  
Mr. & Mrs. Rhonda & Robert Garza  
Mr. & Mrs. Ronald D & Carmen Hicks  
Ms. Jeanne M. Creasy  
Mutiat Adeoye  
Nancy Aldrich  
Nancy DeLeon-Sanchez  
Nancy Swartz  
NancyLeticia DeLeon  
Norma Linda Palacios-Zuniga  
Norma Martinez  
Norman L. Wessel  
Oralia Tafolla  
Panfilo Hernandez  
Patricia & Alan E. Bortnem  
Patricia Alexander  
Patricia Barrera  
Patricia Leon  
Pete & Jo Peters  
Phillis Machen  
Rafael Rodriguez  
Ramon Montalvo  
Raymond Todd  
Rex & Linda Kirchhoff  
RGV ACO Health Providers, LLC  
Rhut Olivarez  
Richard Vaughan  
RJ Garza Investments, LLC DBA RJ Garza &  
Company  
Robert & Mary Ester Losoya  
Robert David Scott  
Rodeo Weslaco Dental & Orthodontics  
Ronald & Bradley Kelemen  
Rosa Palacios-Zuniga  
Rosemary De Leon  
Sally Ross  
Sheryl L. Henry  
Shirley Knutson-Nelson  
Siesta Village Worship Hour  
Southern Comfort Chapel  
Southern Comfort R.V. Park Residents  
Stephen R & Dawn M Jones  
Sulema Cuellar  
Thomas and Sharon Newcomer  
Tom Dougherty  
Tony & Alma Rosa Antonacci  
United Way of Metropolitan Dallas, Inc,  
Valerie Reyna Farmers Insurance  
Verda Nelson  
William E. & Betty Locke  
William Gillum  
Yolanda Salinas

**February 2021 - May 2021**

### *In Kind*

Alma Garza  
Amabeli  
Araceli Cantu  
Becky Contreras  
Bertha Herrera  
Betty  
Bill Britt  
Brenda Kennedy  
Catholic Daughters of the Americas  
Celina Gonzalez  
Church of Living Word  
Community Development Institute Headstart  
David D. & Sandra Norlin  
Dr. Myra Garcia  
Eloy Gonzales & Marisela Gonzalez  
Esther Mens  
First Baptist Church  
H.E.B.  
Janie Jourdan  
Jennifer Rodriguez  
John Knox Village of the Rio Grande Valley, Inc.  
John Knox Village Residents  
Kathy Damalas  
Kaylee Luna  
Knapp Medical Center  
Knights of Columbus Council 3098  
Leslie Moya  
Love of Christ Lutheran Church  
Lydia Gonzalez  
Manny Portillo  
Maria Estrada  
Mark McCaleb  
Marty  
Monterrey Cafe  
Mt. Sinai Hospice  
Norma Robledo  
RGV ACO Health Providers, LLC  
Ronald & Bradley Kelemen  
T Ghost BBQ  
Teddy BBQ  
United Hospice Care Services, LLC  
Valley Nature Center  
Weslaco High School NHS  
Weslaco Lions Club

*Thank you!*

# Aurora House Events

*Thank you*

TO OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Dr. Rafael Rodriguez, MD**



**Sandra L. Charlton, CPA**  
Weslaco, Texas



Please support those who support our community.

## Upcoming Events\*



A Celebration Under The Tuscan Sun VIP Preview Party & Luncheon  
Preview Party August 10th 6:30-9:30pm  
August 11 & 12th, 2021 11:30am-1:30pm  
Celebrate with us!

Location: Knapp Conference Center, 1401 E 8th St, Weslaco, TX 78596

All proceeds benefit Aurora House Foundation  
Sponsorships Available! Contact Mari for more information, 956- 973-9690

To Celebrate your amazing staff members who are continuing to serve your customers in whatever capacity possible, some are working even harder than ever. To Celebrate our longtime supporters and donors, such as yourself. To Celebrate our privilege to continue to serve one another, in this unique, thriving, close-knit Valley, that we call home.

\*Please note that Due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) some events may be rescheduled or cancelled.

*Thank you!*  
**Weslaco Rotary Club**  
&  
**Knapp Medical Center**

On behalf of the Aurora House Foundation Board of Directors, staff, and volunteers we would like to extend a heart-felt THANK YOU for your generosity continued support truly makes a difference for those in our care.



## Aurora House Foundation Board of Directors

**Mark McCaleb**  
President

**Melanie Riley**  
Vice President

**Stephen Charlton**  
Treasurer

**Rhonda Garza**  
Secretary

**Yoli Salinas**  
**Mitty Reyna**

**Dr. Rafael Rodriguez**

**Edwin Estévez**

**Lincoln Talbert**

**Kevin Bloomquist**

**Oralia Tafola**

**Annette Rios- Barrera**

**Laura Lopez**

**Marisela Gonzalez**  
Executive Director

**Diana Gonzalez**  
Administrative Assistant/  
Volunteer Coordinator

**Becky Contreras**  
House and Grounds Supervisor

**Araceli Cantu**  
Caregiver Supervisor

**Alma Garza**  
**Jessica Aguiniga**  
**Celina Gonzalez**  
**Jolynn Rosales**  
**Cynthia Vasconcelos**  
**Melissa Calderon**

Caregivers

## OUR MISSION

Aurora House recognizes dying as part of the normal process of living and focuses on respect and compassion in preparation for death. Our mission is to provide care for persons in the last phase of incurable disease, so they can approach death with dignity, comfort and peace.

