



CENTER FOR  
CONSCIOUS LIVING & DYING

*A Heart-Centered Community  
Where Love Walks You Home*

INAUGURAL ANNUAL REPORT

2022-2023

## LEADERSHIP TEAM

### **Aditi Sethi**

*Founder and Executive Director*

### **Courtney Smith**

*Director of Operations*

### **Hannah Fowler,**

*Director of Education*

### **Sheri Kay**

*Director of Resident & Volunteer Services*

### **David Case**

*Abundance Magician (Angel Benefactor)*

### **Greg Lathrop**

*Elder Council (Volunteer donating time)*

### **Prema Sheerin**

*Elder Council (Volunteer donating time)*

### **Leah Jean**

*Development Advisor*

### **Melissa Seligman**

*Training - Education Consultant & Trauma Specialist*



## OUR VISION

We nurture a community that celebrates the sacred wholeness of the human spirit, honors diversity in all forms, and embraces the final season of life.

## OUR MISSION

The mission of CCLD is to create a community that embodies living a meaningful life through inner exploration and growth, service, and community-supported end-of-life care.



# LETTER TO YOU FROM DR. ADITI SETHI

Dear CCLD Community,

I am honored to share with you our progress this past year in upholding our vision for community end-of-life care, a journey we embarked on together with unwavering faith and conviction.



When I left my full-time palliative care medical career in 2021, I stepped into the unknown with a profound sense of purpose: to reimagine death care within a supportive community framework. Your incredible encouragement and support have been the driving force behind our progress, for which we are deeply grateful.

Over my 15 years of Hospice service, I saw the need for a more personal and reciprocal connection between individuals and their families. We set out to address this need, and thanks to your support, our volunteer teams have supported this vision in extraordinary ways.

We value our collaborative leadership model, emphasizing inclusivity, transparency, and community. This alignment is communicated through a thorough onboarding process for new volunteers, fostering transparent communication in leadership, consensus-based decision-making, empowerment, and sustainable volunteerism.

The work is intense, yet we remain driven by the collective strength of CCLD's volunteers and supporters, who catalyze the paradigm shift in end-of-life care. Together, we are building an intergenerational village where families, elders, and those at the end of life can find care, community, and dignity.

CCLD's rapid growth and the enthusiasm of volunteers and donors are both humbling and a testament to the timeliness of our vision. Your contributions this year have laid a strong foundation for a lasting cultural shift in end-of-life care. Together, we ensure that no one faces this journey alone. Our residents are surrounded by a loving community and receive loving, high-quality care.

Your belief in this cause and your continued support of CCLD are invaluable. We are deeply grateful for your steadfast commitment to creating a community that embodies living a meaningful life enriched by inner exploration, service, and community-supported end-of-life care.

Thank you for being on this journey with us.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Aditi Sethi".

Aditi Sethi Brown  
Founder & Executive Director



INSIDE CCLD:  
*Coherence, Collaboration, Connection*

Conscious dying is the heart and soul of the Center for Conscious Living and Dying (CCLD). This community provides comprehensive care, hosts extended family members in Airbnb rooms, and engages 300+ volunteers.

**The Volunteer Community**

Sheri Kay, Director of Resident and Volunteer Services, leads the Volunteer Hearth team, which matches volunteers with needed service on 25 teams through a comprehensive onboarding and immersion process. Enriched by a strong sense of community, volunteers enjoy showing up, working together, and forming deep, multi-generational, cross-cultural friendships.

**Light House Activities**

The adjacent Light House hosts events, training sessions, and performances to involve volunteers in conscious living. Monday evenings feature a member choir led by artist-in-residence Joel Karabo Elliot, alternating with a Presence Practice group led by Sheri Kay. Wednesdays are dedicated to Spirited Improv with Jessica Chilton, a volunteer from the expressive arts team who helps participants explore the human condition through play and performance.

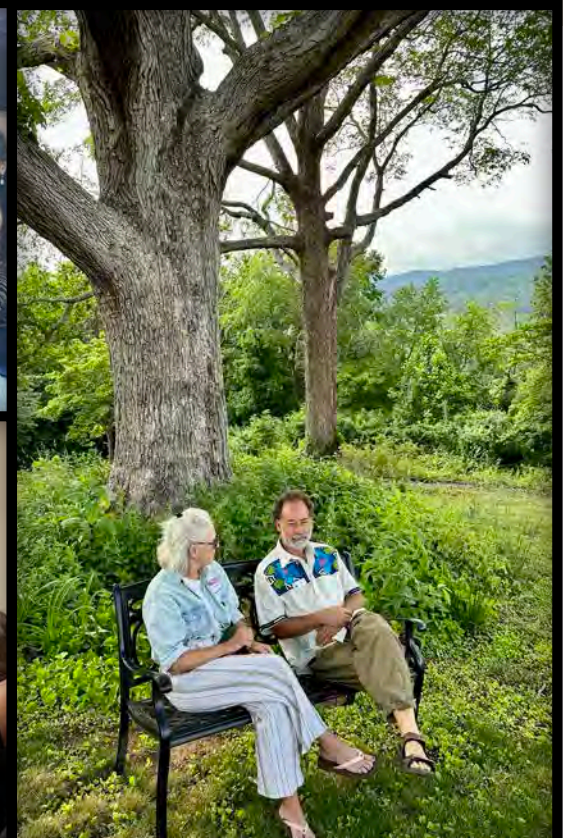
Additional monthly activities include workshops on end-of-life care, community-focused death care, grief support, and end-of-life planning. Volunteers maintain the common spaces, create grief gardens, support families by the fire, and plan Elder Ceremonies to honor the wisdom of aging.

**Weekend Immersions and Music**

Special workshops offer weekend enrichment experiences on grief, death literacy, memoir writing, poetry, and medicine stories. Volunteers are invited to simulate their final three months, work on impermanence, participate in leadership experiences, or attend breath workshops. Music is an integral part of the CCLD experience, with regular performances by professional and amateur musicians on and off campus.

*“There is an intimate relationship between grief and aliveness. Some sacred exchange between what seems unbearable and what is exquisitely alive.”*

– Francis Weller



## Care Circles Provide Coherence and Support

CCLD's care circles foster deeper, heart-centered interactions as individuals share their feelings and witness those of others. Transformative healing and connection are available for those open to the experience. Care circles encourage participation by offering listening and shared understanding rather than fixing or placating.

Monthly Wisdom Circles address aging topics, while Volunteer Circles explore current personal experiences. Direct care workers, Culture Guides, and community leaders all have their own Care Circles to share feelings and deepen relationships.

CCLD nurtures a community of dedicated volunteers and multifaceted programs. Through its diverse activities—from care circles and workshops to music and performances – CCLD cultivates profound healing, connection, and a supportive environment for both living and dying.



## LET THE WIND CARRY YOUR WORDS

*This CCLD Wind Phone provides emotional relief and connection. It just sits waiting to carry words on the wind to lost loved ones. Silenced by grief, those left behind find their voice and speak private, heartfelt messages to those who have passed.*


*The original Wind Phone is a beautiful shrine mindfully created from a salvaged phone booth by Itaru Sasaki. It is located on a windy hill overlooking the Pacific Ocean. The strategic location is near Otsuchi, a town in Japan where 30-foot waves killed thousands in the 2011 tsunami. Sasaki was one of the survivors.*

*Mourners were encouraged to visit his phone booth and make calls to their friends and relatives lost in the great tsunami, hoping they would find a connection to cope with their inconsolable grief.*

*The grief practice grew, and now Wind Phones can be found worldwide. Locations are maintained in a registry provided by Amy Dawson, who has mapped and researched 222 as of May 2024. CCLD's wind phone is registered and sits on the porch near the front door.*

*(This significant pathway for grief support, the Phone of Wind, was created by Clare Duplace, Grief Team Lead)*





# *Creating a Sustainable Parking Solution for CCLD*

As a family-care home, the Sanctuary emphasizes a home-like atmosphere rather than an institutional feel, yet the thriving community has rapidly outgrown available parking space.

Volunteer carpooling and collaborating with nearby venues for overflow parking have alleviated some special event congestion. However, a more substantial solution is imperative for daily demands.

Direct care volunteers, directors, firekeepers, family members, and regular Airbnb guests occupy the ten paved spaces on any given day. Additional volunteer activities, meetings, home funerals, or evening concerts stress the capacity of the narrow, one-lane road, often forcing guests to park in makeshift spots around the property or along the drive. Sadly, vehicle wear and tear impacts the maple-lined drive and grassy areas. Additionally, vehicles are unknowingly parking on the neighbor's property.

The escalating challenge has led to engineering consultations, expert advice, and proposals. With a focus on sustainability and responsible land stewardship, CCLD proposes constructing a new driveway access road from New Salem Road, east of the property. This project will create a private entrance, ease the intrusion on neighboring property, and add parking accommodations for over 40 vehicles.

To make this vision a reality, The Parking Project is initiating a fundraising effort to raise \$250,000 and hopes to begin construction in 2025. We kindly ask for your generous donations to support this essential initiative. Your contribution will help maintain The Sanctuary's integrity while accommodating our growing community.





## RESIDENT REFLECTIONS

# *I Remember Love and Presence*

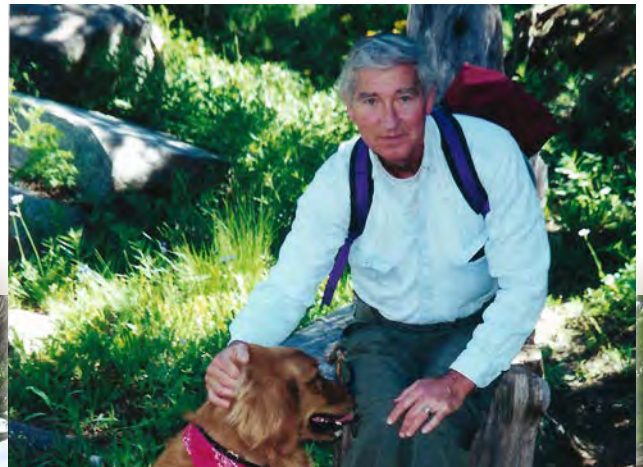
David Solomon chose CCLD for his end-of-life journey, drawn by the natural beauty surrounding it and the profound sense of peace and calm he felt as he stepped through its doors. Linda Solomon was by his side during the two weeks he spent at CCLD, providing comfort and support.

After David's passing, Linda became an active volunteer at CCLD, contributing to the community that had supported her and David. At a ceremony honoring the residents of 2023, Linda shared her heartfelt remembrances.

*"I remember Sheri Kay's open arms and warm welcome, one of many gifts during those two weeks. She was so present for me and held me up when I needed it. Courtney offered support, foot rubs, kind and gentle words, and snuggles with her therapy dog, Benny. Hannah's hugs and Aditi's presence, expertise, and kindness helped us navigate David's progression. Greg hosted an opening fire for David, with volunteers sharing a blessing, song, or wise words of comfort."*

*"I remember each bedside volunteer talking to David directly, describing what was happening and why; touching him respectfully and gently; softly reminding me to leave the room and eat or go for a walk, and at the end, wishing him well on his journey."*

*"I will always remember the unconditional acceptance, kindness, love, and presence of each person. Everyone generously gave their time and expertise to treat us as though we were long-lost friends, not strangers, who were in much need of some care and attention. There is no greater gift you could have given me and, most importantly, David."*





LynaDawn

*"I have met so many heart-centered people, who have so many gifts to offer from healing hands, working the land, tending the inside spaces, sitting vigil with someone near their death, and tenderly anointing a body ready to lay in honor for a home funeral. As a culture guide, I get to encourage them to see death in a different way - not only processing their own grief, but also seeing the joy that can happen in those last days with family gathered." – LynaDawn*



*"What continues to inspire me to show up at CCLD in service are the vast opportunities to grow heart coherence and expand the ONE consciousness with myself, the sacred land, fellow members, our residents, the local community nestled in these ancient mountains, and the world beyond."*

– Walela Dowroski



Walela



Wanda

*"CCLD is a beautiful, multi-generational blending of people from all backgrounds that have come together for one purpose. This community goes beyond communities I have experienced in truly striving to live consciously." – Wanda*

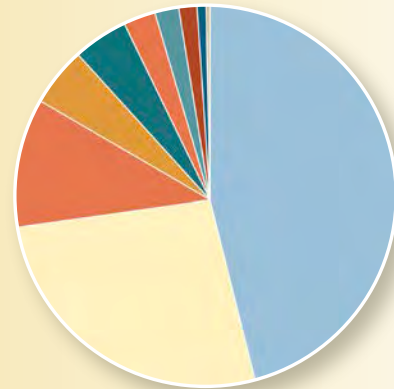
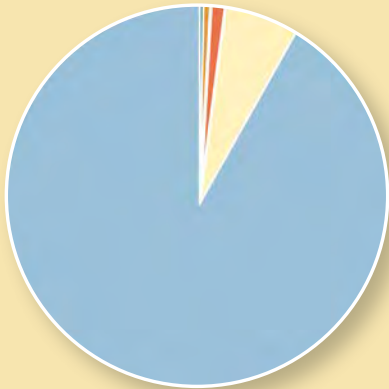




## 2023 FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Aligned with our strategic plan, the CFO, finance committee, leadership team, and board are committed to transparency, accountability, and fiscal responsibility. Your donations are crucial, as CCLD relies on individual donations, corporate sponsorship, and foundation grants for most of its funding. If you share our volunteers' passion for this work, you can match their gifts. Thank you for joining us.

CENTER FOR CONSCIOUS LIVING & DYING	
Consolidated Statements of Activities - Annual Report	
<b>2023</b>	
Revenues, gains, and other support:	
Contributions	\$ 593,641
Program Revenue	\$ 7,687
Grant Funding	\$ 39,110
Investment activity	\$ 3,767
Total revenues, gains, and other support	\$ 644,206
Expenses:	
Marketing & Fundraising	\$ 7,009
Professional & Business	\$ 72,735
Facilities & Operational	\$ 32,116
Administration & General	\$ 141,074
Taxes & Insurance	\$ 11,988
Total expenses	\$ 264,921



<span style="color: #0070C0;">■</span> .3%	In Kind Donation	\$ 1,992
<span style="color: #FF9900;">■</span> .6%	Investments	\$ 3,767
<span style="color: #E67E22;">■</span> 1.2%	Income from workshops	\$ 7,687
<span style="color: #F1C40F;">■</span> 6%	Grants	\$ 39,110
<span style="color: #5DADE2;">■</span> 92%	Individual/Family Donations	\$ 591,650

<span style="color: #A67C52;">■</span> .3%	Education & Training	\$ 840
<span style="color: #0070C0;">■</span> 1%	Business & Equipment	\$ 1,992
<span style="color: #8B4513;">■</span> 1.5%	Facilities & Equipment	\$ 3,989
<span style="color: #76923C;">■</span> 2%	Travel & Convenings	\$ 5,253
<span style="color: #FF9900;">■</span> 2.6%	Marketing & Fundraising	\$ 7,009
<span style="color: #0070C0;">■</span> 4.5%	Taxes & Insurance	\$ 11,988
<span style="color: #FFC000;">■</span> 4.9%	Fiduciary Agent Expenses	\$ 12,904
<span style="color: #E67E22;">■</span> 10.6%	Total Operational	\$ 28,127
<span style="color: #F1C40F;">■</span> 26.7%	Professional Services	\$ 70,744
<span style="color: #5DADE2;">■</span> 46.1%	Payroll	\$ 122,076



# *Enhancing Comfort and Connection: A Florida Room at the Sanctuary*

The Sanctuary Suites at CCLD is excited to announce the addition of a Florida Room, fulfilling a vision from the original renovation plans. This new space will offer numerous benefits and create a more welcoming and versatile environment for residents and their families.



**Increased Living Space for Residents** Currently, each resident's room seats only two people. The new Florida Room will provide a spacious area for residents and visitors to gather comfortably. This space will serve as a living room, dining area, and social space for family visitors, suitable for puzzles, board games, or conversation circles.

**Seamless Integration with The Sanctuary** The addition will be customized to match the Sanctuary's architectural style, ensuring it feels like an integral part of the original home. This design will meet CCLD's preferences while providing a valuable new space for residents and their families.

**Year-Round Outdoor Views and Natural Light** The Florida Room will enclose the existing cement patio with floor-to-ceiling window panels. This heated and cooled space will feature glass walls on two sides, allowing ample natural light and plenty of outdoor views. Residents and their families will find solace, regardless of the weather. Indoor greenery and a water feature will enhance the peaceful and relaxing retreat space.

**How You Can Help** To bring this vision to life, we are launching a fundraising initiative to raise \$75,000. Your generous contributions will help us build this room, making our Sanctuary Suites a true home away from home. By donating, you will help create a comfortable, versatile space that blends the indoors with the outdoors.

**A Gathering Place for Family and Friends** The Florida Room will include comfy furniture and a daybed for naps. It will be a spot for quiet contemplation, grieving, or celebratory family gatherings, providing a welcoming environment without needing to use the upstairs living room, which can feel removed from their loved one.





## *Saving Utilities and Building Community*

Paul Rollins and David Case have been friends and collaborators for 45 years, sharing a vision for intentional communities. Their paths crossed again when they brought their expertise and dedication to CCLD.

Paul had long urged David to embark on a community project, and when David was ready, he chose Tucson, a larger city, to begin the venture. Paul spent considerable time there, collaborating with Ram Dass and teaching yoga and meditation at Danbury Federal Prison.

Now, nearly half a century later, they are once again working together to support CCLD's intentional community. Paul describes himself as someone who chips away at things until they are done, and his tenacity was evident when David sought his help to fix the solar panels. The property housed a small array of inefficient solar panels in need of repair.

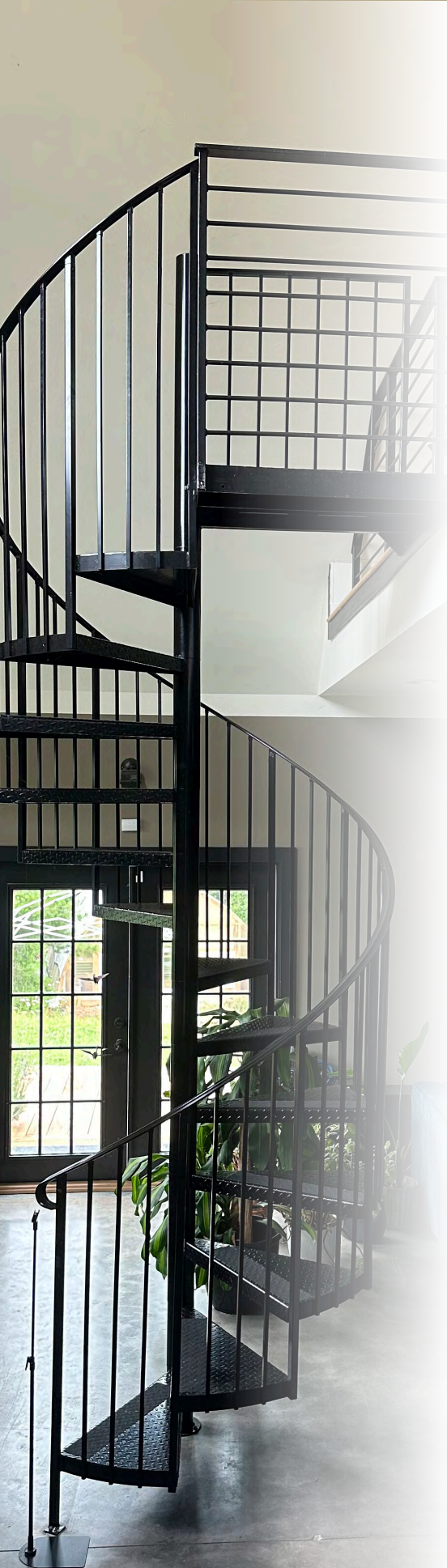
With a keen eye for solutions, Paul took the lead. The initial repair bid for the solar panels was \$80,000, but through persistent negotiation with Sugar Hollow Solar, Paul secured a significantly lower price. This initiative was crucial for CCLD's commitment to sustainability and financial responsibility.

At the CCLD volunteer fair, the community celebrated the successful activation of the newly repaired solar panels. Paul, David, and Aditi, the driving forces behind the project, proudly flipped the switch, marking a significant milestone in CCLD's sustainability journey.

These panels now generate enough power to run the entire Sanctuary house on sunny days and provide about half the needed power on cloudy days. Additionally, the surplus energy is sold back to the power company, resulting in credits that further reduce utility costs.

Thank you, Paul, for your leadership and problem-solving skills, David for your dedication and expertise, and Aditi for your support and enthusiasm. Your innovative and collaborative efforts not only saved on utilities but also reinforced CCLD's commitment to environmental stewardship.





## *Elevating Accessibility for the Community*

A spiral staircase, with its aesthetic beauty and charm, can hinder accessibility in a multi-generational, inclusive community. Recognizing this barrier, CCLD launched the Mobility and Accessibility initiative in late 2023 to ensure everyone can comfortably access the upstairs event space in the Light House.

### **The Campaign and Its Success**

The initiative began with a heartfelt boost: an anonymous donor pledged \$25,000 in matching funds. This generous act of support provided the momentum for additional contributions, including \$15,000 from Dogwood Health Trust and \$5,000 from the Community Foundation of WNC. Combined with individual donations, over \$50,000 was raised to purchase and install the new lift. We are deeply grateful to our donors, who have made this vital improvement possible.

### **Improved Accessibility and Future Improvements**

The new lift, scheduled for installation in fall 2024, will accommodate three people or one person attending a wheelchair, ensuring ADA compliance. Ramps, bars, and walkways were also updated to enhance navigation throughout the facilities. In early 2024, a new concrete walkway was added to better access the lower-level Sanctuary Suites.

An ADA consultant will assist with future projects to ensure accessibility. Additional improvements, such as remodeling the Light House kitchen, are planned to create a more functional and accessible space.

These enhancements reflect CCLD's commitment to creating a welcoming environment for everyone in our community.



## RESIDENT REFLECTIONS

# Remembering CCLD's First Resident

Mary Goure, wife of Jay Goure recently shared her experience on the anniversary of Jay's death..

Jay was the son of Jim Goure, who started the Light Center in Black Mountain in 1970. Jay and I lived in the family home on the hill above the dome and led workshops and hosted events. In fact, we hosted Dr. Aditi and Greg in a community-centered deathcare group called Arches. Fourteen years later, Jay came here as the very first resident!

Jay was a spiritual teacher and learner his whole life; he was really tuned into that at CCLD. He believed that there was no death, just a continuation of spirit. He was pure love, expressing and extending that love to all he met, encouraging everyone to become their authentic selves. Jay returned to a childlike innocence here—he was funny, playful, serene, and quiet. He trusted because he and I knew he was loved and cared for.

### **Q: What surprised you about your time here?**

The extent of what you are doing here surprised me. Any spiritual, mental, and physical needs were addressed for Jay, me, his children, and his family.

What I experienced most was the change in myself. I came in anxious, wanting to handle every little detail of Jay's care. What I witnessed was the intentional presence of every caregiver, and that helped me release my grip and begin to let go— first of controlling his environment, and then eventually the process of letting go of him. I started to trust that everything here was unfolding in divine order. I was able to surrender to the process fully. That loving care has continued throughout my grief journey in the year following his death.

### **Q: What would you want future residents to know about CCLD?**

Your experience here will be life-changing. When you come, you can relax into just loving the person you have brought here for their last days. There is a welcome here and an acceptance at the core of your being. You will be allowed to be yourself and express any emotions that come up. It is a sacred, safe haven to experience and express whatever feelings, questions, or grief that come from this process of letting go. You will be honored for just who you are and your love for the person you are here to walk home.





## *Community and the Significance of Fire in End-of-Life Care*

In the heart of the community at CCLD, the fire holds a special place, symbolizing more than just warmth and light. As Greg Lathrop, the lead firekeeper, eloquently shared,

*“The fire for me is medicine. It’s ancestral. Imagine any person in humanity who hasn’t come to the fire.” The fire, for Greg and many others, serves as a conduit to remembrance and connection.*

Greg describes the fire as a space where individuals can step out of the constraints of time and space, entering a realm where they remember who they truly are.

*“We come to the fire to remember,” he says. “And the way that we remember is we step out of space and time. For some reason, when we move into a place with a literal elemental fire, it creates the opportunity to remember who we really are.”*

### **Creating a Culture of Healing and Remembrance**

At CCLD, there is a concerted effort to cultivate a culture that honors these ancient practices and integrates them into a modern approach to end-of-life care. Greg’s words resonate deeply with this mission:



*“What we are creating here in the culture is what is fundamental to this culture. And that’s the part I bring – that fire is medicine.”*

While the healthcare system has made incredible strides, it has also, at times, moved away from the simple, essential elements of care. Greg reflects,

*“In my experience in health care, there are a lot of great things that have happened in our ability to care for each other. Except there are some things that it feels like we laid down that we didn’t need to lay down.”*

At CCLD, the focus is on reviving these fundamental aspects, such as communal, familial, and deeply human ways of being together and supporting each other during transitions.

### **The Power of Community**

“Community is the remembering that I’m not alone. That’s really the power of community,” Greg explains. This sense of belonging and mutual support is vital, especially in the context of end-of-life care.

Learning to be in a sacred community, as Greg describes, involves acknowledging the sacredness in life, which in turn creates the potential for great beauty. This sacredness, this unity of purpose, is at the core of CCLD’s mission. It’s about coming together in times of transition and providing the simple, profound support that has been part of human existence for millennia.

Greg’s insights into the meaning of fire and the essence of community highlight the profound impact of these elements on CCLD’s approach to end-of-life care. Together, they create a space where individuals remember, connect, and support each other in the most fundamental ways.





“Community” was central to Dr. Aditi’s vision for reimagining death care. How do you build a community that embodies this focus? What operational structure is needed? What services are provided?

The decision to embrace conscious living and conscious dying became the foundation for the culture at the Center for Conscious Living and Dying (CCLD).

*“Becoming a culture guide was an extension of my experience with Ethan Sisser. Nothing has been the same since. It’s allowed me to embody the mission and step into leadership. I hold myself to higher standards and see where my gifts can fill gaps or needs in the community experience.” – Brent Skidmore, Culture Guide*



From its inception, CCLD has embarked on an intentional journey of development. Decision-making is collaborative. The inaugural team agreed that shared values, along with a collective mission and vision, would establish the expectations and commitments for all new members. These “culture guides” laid the groundwork for the community’s development.

CCLD represents and embraces a variety of beliefs about death and after-death care, actively supporting a diverse range of spiritual and religious practices. The unifying factor, however, is apparent: every volunteer shares the belief that holding death close makes each moment of life more vibrant. This awareness of life’s final breath unites the community and transcends individual differences in beliefs.

The first group of 30 volunteers, dubbed CCLD Culture Guides, was the team willing to learn alongside one another and then teach others. They served as the first bedside caregivers, participated in strategic planning sessions, led teams, and now train direct care volunteers as well as serve as faculty in the doula program.





## EQUALITY AND AUTONOMY:

# *The Flat Organizational Structure at CCLD*

At CCLD, a flat organizational structure underscores our commitment to equality and community. This approach fosters an environment where everyone is equal, and self-management is the norm, optimizing the potential of our diverse volunteer base.

As CCLD expands, the flat organizational structure will remain a cornerstone of operations, reflecting our values of respect, collaboration, and empowerment. This ensures we remain agile and responsive to the needs of our community.

A flat organization promotes a casual, people-first approach. Without hierarchical dictates, volunteers & staff are empowered to take charge of their contributions and actively participate in decision-making.



## Advantages for CCLD and Our Volunteer Community

- 1. Enhanced Autonomy and Decision-Making** Volunteers can join projects that resonate with their passions and skills, fostering ownership and intrinsic motivation in our mission-driven environment.
- 2. Reduced Operational Costs** With fewer managerial levels, funds are redirected towards community programs, end-of-life care, and educational initiatives, ensuring resources directly benefit those we serve.
- 3. Minimized Micromanagement** Volunteers are trusted to exercise creativity and efficiency, knowing they have the support to make impactful decisions, enhancing satisfaction and driving innovation.
- 4. Streamlined Communication** Direct communication accelerates decision-making and reduces miscommunication, allowing volunteers and staff to connect with leaders without intermediaries.

## Sustaining Growth with a Flat Structure

The benefits of flat structures are compelling, and CCLD will retain this model as it grows. By fostering equality, autonomy, and efficient communication, we can scale our approach and continue to serve our community effectively.





THE ORIGIN STORY

# *Aditi's Role in The Last Ecstatic Days – Realizing Her Vision*

In March 2021, Dr. Aditi Sethi, a hospice and palliative care physician, met Ethan Sisser, a terminally ill patient alone in a hospital bed with only weeks to live. At thirty-six, Ethan yearned for a more meaningful end-of-life experience. He reached out online, seeking support from a community, and expressed a distinct desire to film his entire process. This marked the beginning of a transformative journey for both Ethan and Aditi.

## **A Transition From Hospice Doctor to Death Doula**

Aditi initially cared for Ethan as his hospice doctor. Seeing his deep desire for a community-supported death, she stepped away from her medical role to become his death doula. This transition allowed Aditi to honor Ethan's vision, gather a community of strangers to care for him in his final days and document the journey.

## **Ethan's Last Ecstatic Days: A Model for Re-imagining End-of-Life Care**

This real-time film, *The Last Ecstatic Days*\*, highlighted Aditi's journey with Ethan and community involvement's powerful impact on end-of-life care. Ethan's brave choice to invite the entire world to his death inspired many and demonstrated the ultimate teaching power of death. Beautifully edited, the film captures Ethan's final two weeks.

Inspired by her experience with Ethan, Aditi founded the Center for Conscious Living & Dying (CCLD) only a year later. This nonprofit organization is dedicated to nurturing a community that celebrates the sacredness and creativity of the human spirit while dignifying the final stages of life. CCLD offers community-supported end-of-life care free of charge, along with educational programs to shift societal perspectives on death, dying, and grief.

## **An Emerging Voice: Aditi's Influence and Advocacy**

Aditi has since emerged as a significant voice in transforming cultural understanding of dying and bereavement. Her recent talk at TEDx Asheville, titled "The Art of Dying Before You Die," reflects her commitment to this cause. Aditi advocates for the return to dying in community, as cultures have always done, where the end-of-life experience is a collective, loving, and transformative process.

By supporting CCLD, you can help ensure that everyone has the opportunity to experience a loving death surrounded by community and compassion. Join us in creating a world where all are granted a dignified and loving end-of-life experience.



\*Film directed and produced by Scott Kirschenbaum, Executive Producers David Seidler, Tommy Pollada, and Gail Harris. For screening information, [www.thelastecstaticdaysmovie.com/screenings](http://www.thelastecstaticdaysmovie.com/screenings)



## Celebrating CCLD's First Doula Class

Hannah Fowler, Director of Education, expressed overwhelming gratitude as the premier class of 24 End-of-Life Doula students completed the program in June 2024. This pioneering group embraced the comprehensive CCLD curriculum, which integrates online and in-person coursework.



*"This program was life-changing. I thought I was coming to learn to be an end-of-life doula... What I discovered is that I came here to learn to live fully."*

– Jennifer Vail, Graduate

Several aspects of CCLD's program are unique compared to other offerings. The most tangible difference is the week-long apprenticeship, where doulas learn at the bedside in the Sanctuary with a program mentor. Working turns alongside the bedside care team, students gain a hands-on understanding of the many facets of compassionate care.

They observe and/or participate in the after-death care ritual, healing arts support, expressive arts, musical experiences, and grief tending. Daily debriefing circles provide collaboration and understanding of conscious death and how to hold the space for a sacred end-of-life journey lovingly. With a three-day retreat along with the apprenticeship, doula students have a lived experience within the extraordinary community culture that sets CCLD apart.

Rather than focusing on the business details of a doula career, students are surrounded by real-time experiences and meaningful conversations. The class hosted 28 students, with 24 from out of the area. Students traveled from as far away as Alaska, Wyoming, Arizona, Colorado and Canada.

The end-of-life Doula profession, a new and evolving field, promises to be a powerful outreach for CCLD's cultural shift toward changing how we die. Our Doula training is consistent with CCLD's community-centered structure and offers the student a felt experience of the doula's impact on changing the dying culture. Students bring back this model for end-of-life care to their communities, supporting the ripple effect of this movement.



## VOLUNTEERS

*"In the US, we do death so horribly. CCLD is pointing to another way. In the future, I see CCLD as a nationally recognized leader in conscious deathcare with our model of volunteer onboarding and care for the dying and their loved ones."*



– Gary Ross Reynolds,  
Direct Care Team

*"I am continually inspired by a community of folks who have all come to be at CCLD for a myriad of reasons. I see people open up, grow, be humbled, find their healing and grief journey mirrored, navigate all the seen and unseen realms of their own hearts, and still show up, fully present. It is so important to be witnessed in the places that are calling for transformation and to be of service in all of the ways we are another immense gift. That's what I feel at CCLD."*



– Clare Duplace,  
Grief Tending Team Lead



## *Transforming Visions into Reality: David Case's Gift to CCLD*

When you walk into a gathering at CCLD, you'll likely see David Case, a tall man with a broad smile, engaging warmly with others. David, a lifelong advocate of community development, previously spearheaded the creation of Civano, a prominent, intentional community in Arizona.

David's journey took a pivotal turn when he met Aditi Sethi and learned about her vision for community-centered death care. Inspired and compelled by her mission, David knew he had to support the project. "There have only been two times in my life when I've jumped in with my whole heart, not knowing if things would work out but knowing that I had to ignore risk and act. Civano was the first, and the Sanctuary for CCLD was an even stronger knowing," he recalls.

In August 2020, David purchased the six-acre tract of land in the Swannanoa Valley for \$2.1 million. Demonstrating extraordinary generosity, he provided CCLD with a four-year, rent-free lease, allowing the organization to establish itself and raise the necessary funds to purchase the property for \$1.1 million.

David's remarkable contribution didn't stop there; his future donation of \$1 million will come to us when we purchase the property. This future investment enabled the transformation to move forward for the home's lower level into the Sanctuary Transition Suites, a three-bedroom facility and North Carolina's only Omega Home.

David Case's unwavering support and contributions have given CCLD a beautiful home and the resources to fulfill a vital community need.



## *Airbnb Rooms Sustain and Support CCLD*



The Airbnb rooms at The Sanctuary are a vital source of comfort for residents' family members and outside guests, as well as revenue for ongoing house maintenance and expenses. These thoughtfully designed private bedrooms with baths enhance the overall experience for our guests, allowing them to enjoy the six-acre estate in a tranquil retreat style.

### **A Strategic and Serene Design**

The Sanctuary's lower level serves as a dedicated hospice home facility, providing a peaceful and supportive environment for end-of-life care. This area is thoughtfully separated from the upper levels, which feature oversized windows and stunning views of the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Swannanoa Valley. Upstairs there are three Airbnb rooms, three director offices, and a meditation room.

### **Comfort and Privacy, Inside and Out**

Guests can access shared indoor spaces, including a fully equipped kitchen, spacious dining area, cozy living and family rooms, and a quiet library or parlor. The Sanctuary's grounds are designed for enjoyment with expansive decks, porches, and the shade of the magnificent Grandmother Oak tree, creating an idyllic setting for relaxation and contemplation.

### **A Desirable Getaway within a Loving Community**

The inclusion of Airbnb rooms has proven to be an effective strategy for CCLD. These rooms generate modest revenue while enhancing the sense of community and connection that The Sanctuary is known for. By offering a beautiful and peaceful environment for our guests, we ensure that The Sanctuary remains a cherished retreat for all who visit.

Dogwood Room



Magnolia Room



Mountain Laurel Room





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We want to thank all our donors for your generous support through December 2023.

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**Monthly Giving:** These sustaining donors provide consistent monthly funding, allowing us to plan ahead and ensure necessary supplies and resources. Your contributions reduce financial stress and enable economical purchases. Thank you for your crucial support. In 2023, over 80 monthly donors gave a combined annual contribution of \$32,000.

**Legacy Giving:** By including CCLD in your will or estate plans, you help ensure our vital facilities and services continue long into the future. Legacy donors play a crucial role in creating an enduring heritage of conscious living and dying, leaving a lasting impact that supports our community for generations to come.

**One-Time Gifts:** Every gift, no matter the amount, makes a significant difference in the lives of those we serve. Your contributions, whether random or project-specific, provide daily gratitude and affirmation to our dedicated volunteers and supporters. These donations are a vote of confidence in our tireless efforts, and we are profoundly grateful for your generosity. Thank you for making a meaningful impact with your contributions.

**Elemental Donors:** We deeply appreciate our Elemental Donors who contribute \$5,000 or more annually. Your trust and support provides not only financial resources but also the motivation to overcome daily challenges and stay focused on our mission. Your commitment is fundamental to our success. Thank you for being integral to our journey.

**Donor Members:** In 2023, everyone who contributed \$300 or more annually was additionally recognized as a Donor Member. Your support benefits the community in numerous ways. Donor Members of CCLD are people whose contribution comes in the form of financial support. We cannot do this essential work without our donors. Thank you for your partnership and commitment, both in time and monetary donations.

We invite you to join these caring donors and give the gift of conscious living and dying. Your support makes our important work possible. Together, we can create a more compassionate world.

For information about making a gift or a legacy commitment, or if we have mistakenly left your name off this list, please contact CCLD's Development Advisor, Leah Jean, at 360-780-3058 or [giving@cclcd.community](mailto:giving@cclcd.community).

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We'd like to thank the following people for stepping up and helping us dream, think, plan and breathe life into the Center for Conscious Living & Dying in our first 18 Months. We could not have grown toward our opening without the support of the following organizations:

### **End-of-Life Organizations:**

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A Legacy donor names CCLD in their will, trust, retirement account, or insurance policy. Thank you for including CCLD in your estate plans.

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## Thank You

*We are deeply grateful to all our donors for making the accelerated launch of the Center for Conscious Living & Dying possible. Your unwavering generosity and belief in our mission have been the foundation of our success, allowing us to establish The Sanctuary, where end-of-life care is provided with compassion and dignity.*

*Through your support, the adjacent Light House building can offer education on conscious living and dying, helping individuals and families approach this profound transition with understanding and grace. Additionally, your contributions enable us to extend vital support to those who are grieving, ensuring they are not alone during their time of loss.*

*Thank you for being part of this important work and for your commitment to creating this community where every life is honored, and every death is embraced with love and respect. Your involvement has made a genuine difference; we look forward to continuing this journey together, fostering a more compassionate and conscious approach to the end-of-life.*

Picture yourself sitting on a deck looking out over a vista  
of the majestic Blue Ridge Mountains.  
To your left is a towering Grandmother Oak  
with arms outstretched and welcoming.  
At the base of her trunk are benches, and a swing moves lazily with the breeze.  
You take a deep breath in and feel  
how these mountains, some of the oldest in the world, hold so many stories.  
As you close your eyes,  
you can imagine all the way back to the Cherokee people  
who roamed and hunted on this land, the early settlers,  
perhaps even your own ancestors, who called these mountains home.  
And now, YOU are here, witnessing the final journey of your beloved -  
your mother, father, sister, or friend - who is about to take their last breath.

Your chest expands and catches, feeling all the elements of grief -  
the loss that will soon be a part of your first waking moments each morning,  
the love that encompasses the facets of your life together,  
and the joys that memories capture of time with them.  
You sit for a moment longer and breathe deeply,  
centering yourself into your heart.  
You take in all the beauty and the sorrow of this moment.

When you walk back inside, the kitchen is bustling.  
Someone is cooking breakfast.  
Laughter comes from the foyer as friends are greeted and welcomed.  
There are flowers on an altar.  
A stranger pauses, makes eye contact with you, and asks,  
“What do you need in this moment?”

You realize that what you need IS this moment.  
Volunteers who feel like friends are washing your loved one  
and turning her so she's more comfortable.  
The nurse will be here later to check on you and your family.  
Friends and family eat together, and others look at photos of your beloved,  
remembering all the years of their life.

You wander out onto the front porch and down the walk.  
There is a fire being tended by Fire Keepers and you feel the pull of it.  
As you approach, they stand up and embrace you.  
No one speaks much.  
They offer you a pinch of tobacco to whisper a prayer into  
and sprinkle over the flames. You sit and stare into the coals.  
These Fire tenders are tending not just these flames, but you,  
and your family and the one who is on his last journey.  
The fire will burn until your beloved takes their last breath.  
So you sit and let the calm of it fill you.  
You remember what it is to be fully human and alive.  
And you practice, again and again, letting go.

- Courtney Smith

# UNSTOPPABLE PROGRESS + UNWAVERING FAITH



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Embrace as One Family*



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