



NICK SIMONITE | ABJ

As outreach coordinator for Hospice Austin, David Zuniga was tasked with designing a curriculum about end-of-life.

TALKING LIFE AND DEATH

Zuniga's seminars on dying based in science and spirit

LAUREN CHURCHIN | CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Even as research shows people are living longer as new medical treatments are introduced, cultural attitudes toward illness and dying remain barriers to decisions regarding end-of-life care that could profoundly impact patient treatment and mental wellness.

The Rev. David Zuniga is making strides in breaking down such barriers through an educational program offered at Hospice Austin called On Our Own Terms: Open Conversations about the End of Life.

On Our Own Terms enables Central Texans to understand and openly discuss their health care options through a series of free, culturally aware seminars grounded in the latest medical and psychological research.

Topics discussed during the program's seminars include the differences between curative, palliative and hospice care; the potential burdens and benefits of life-sustaining treatments; and helping children cope with advanced illness.

The program's "train the trainer" model maximizes outreach by teaching participants to share their knowledge and promoting open communication among communities.

As outreach coordinator for Hospice Austin, Zuniga used his extensive education in clinical psychology and experience as an interfaith health care chaplain to design the On Our Own Terms program, which is spiritually and scientifically based.

"Rev. Zuniga is actively transforming the way people approach and experience the last phase of their lives, and is instilling participants

with a newfound sense of equanimity," said Marjorie Mulanax, executive director of Hospice Austin.

Zuniga is also a writer, award-winning high school teacher and sought-after expert on Latino health care needs and end-of-life care. And he was the medical ethicist in KLRU-TV, Austin PBS's Critical Condition: Central Texas community forum.

EDUCATOR



DAVID ZUNIGA
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