



Wonders & Worries

Professional support for children  
through a parent's illness.

We will, together.



in partnership with CBCST and START

**PRESS RELEASE**  
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## **How Would You Tell Your Child That You Have Cancer? Or Explain Why Dad Can't Give Piggyback Rides Anymore?**

*Three Texas organizations partner to open San Antonio's first Wonders & Worries – a therapeutic space where children ages 2-18 whose parent is suffering a serious illness, can receive support to help them cope*

**San Antonio, Texas** – July 14, 2017 – San Antonio physician Jeff Hallett knows a thing or two about talking to patients about illness. But when his wife, Robin, was diagnosed with breast cancer, they felt at a loss for how to tell their daughter, Rachel, aged 10.

“It doesn't matter your background or experience,” **Jeff Hallett**, MD, said. “When you have to tell your child this kind of news, you want to do it the right way. And we didn't know how. So we called Wonders & Worries.”

Wonders & Worries is an Austin-based nonprofit that teaches parents how to parent and kids how to cope during a parent's serious illness. It's the only program of its kind in the US, and first in San Antonio. It is the fifth office for the organization.

For the Halletts, they now have specialized support in their own backyard. “We have found Wonders & Worries to be a tremendous resource for us at a time when help is sorely needed,” said Jeff Hallett, MD. “Robin and I can see that it has helped Rachel to cope with her mother's illness.”

Since its inception in 2001, Wonders & Worries has served more than 6,500 family members in central Texas, and expects to reach about 100 San Antonio families in its first year. Services are offered free of charge and available in English and Spanish.

“The partnership between the START Center for Cancer Care, the Children's Bereavement Center of South Texas, and Wonders & Worries meets a growing need,” said **Pam Sparks**, director of physician integration at the START Center. “Nearly 3 million children in the US are living with a parent who is battling or has survived cancer.”

Executive director of Wonders & Worries, **Alex Gabbi**, agreed. “Austin doesn't have a monopoly on sick parents.” Gabbi is not only the executive director, but also received services from Wonders & Worries when his late wife, Heather, was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. “I look at my three kids and know that our program works. My children are well-adjusted and thriving because of what they learned from Wonders & Worries.”

Rounding out this innovative venture is the Children's Bereavement Center of South Texas. "We are honored to partner with two premier organizations that have a vision of healing and understand the impact that it has on children," said **Marian Sokol**, PhD, executive director for the Center.

Wonders & Worries co-founder, **Meredith Cooper**, praised the initiative for executing the vision she's had for the organization from the beginning. "This is another step towards all children and teenagers being able to reach their full potential despite a parent's illness," Cooper said.

Counseling and support groups are offered at the START Cancer Center location in the San Antonio Medical Center area. Referrals are welcome from physicians and families facing cancer, ALS, Parkinson's disease, MS and other serious diagnoses. For more information or to schedule an appointment, visit [www.wondersandworries.org](http://www.wondersandworries.org) or call 210-736-4847, ext. 247.

#### **About Wonders & Worries**

Wonders & Worries is a nonprofit that ensures children and teens can reach their full potential despite a parent's serious illness. Since 2001, Wonders & Worries has provided professional support to more than 6,5000 family members during a parent's illness. Programs are offered at no cost to families in English and Spanish. Wonders & Worries is the only organization of its kind in the US. For more information, contact Nicole Halder at [nicole@wondersandworries.org](mailto:nicole@wondersandworries.org) or (512) 329-5757 Ext. 206

#### **About Children's Bereavement Center of South Texas**

Established in 1997, the mission of the Children's Bereavement Center of South Texas is to foster healing for grieving children and youth, their families, and the community. The Center annually serves over 1,600 children and caregivers, and delivers more than 15,000 mental health service hours at no cost. For more information, contact Leslie Wood at [lwood@cbcst.org](mailto:lwood@cbcst.org) or 210-736-4847, ext. 247.

#### **About the START Center for Cancer Care**

The START Center for Cancer Care provides the highest-quality care for people with cancer, and helps accelerate the development of new treatments to improve patients' quality of life and give real hope against cancer. The START Center has one of the world's largest and most active Phase I clinical trial programs, and has helped bring 19 promising anticancer drugs to market. For more information call 210-843-9900.

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