



CENTER FOR
-CONSCIOUS-
LIVING & DYING

2024
*ANNUAL
REPORT*





Dearest Friends,

There is a silence that follows sacred sounds — a space where the vibration of the music dissolves into stillness, and what remains is presence, love, and possibility. That silence is how I *feel* about us. This community has always been about tending the threshold, sitting with one another in moments of loss, transition, and becoming. In 2024, I lived this deeply in the most personal ways.

In July my father died following a fall that caused a brain injury. Just weeks later, my dear friend and college roommate died suddenly of a brain bleed — and I was the one who found her. Even with years of hospice and end-of-life work preparing me for death, I experienced the full weight of grief these losses carried. Yet I was held in the embrace of this community — through your prayers, your presence, and the love that reached me across the miles.

Earlier in May 2024, we had officially opened the Sanctuary. Residents arrived, volunteers gathered with devotion, and together we created a home where those dying could be met with music, ritual, compassion, and love. After being in the depths of my grief that summer, momentum began to return — a shared recognition that what we were doing was old and timeless, and also alive for this moment in our evolution as human beings.

Then came September. Hurricane Helene devastated our towns and neighborhoods. Volunteers were displaced, grieving their own losses. A founding director stepped down, and several Board members departed. At times, it felt as if the foundation we had built with so much vision and passion was unraveling. Even in this storm, seeds of resilience were planted.

Courage, adaptability, and resourcefulness became our guides. Our remaining Board members stepped forward with strength and resolve, helping carry this vision because they knew it was bigger than any one of us. Together, we stood with Ethan Sisser's mantra in our hearts: "I am embodied. I am empowered. I am ecstatic."

In one of Ethan's most tender recordings, when he was uncertain and afraid, he said: "What's going to happen next... is that I am going to keep a smile in my heart." His words have been my compass. Even in grief, even in uncertainty, I too am keeping a smile in my heart.

As we move into 2025, momentum is slowly returning. Volunteers are coming together

again. The community is remembering that what sustains us is not only what we do — it is how we are with one another: with loving presence, deep listening, respect, and compassion.

This vision has never let us go. It is here for those dying, to ensure those final days are sacred, precious, and fully experienced. It is here for the living, to remind us that even in disaster, even in loss, we can embrace the unknown, and choose love and courage.

I am humbled and grateful for each of you who have stayed committed through heartache and disruption. Your courage and devotion are the fertile soil in which this vision grows.

With love and gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aditi". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'A' and a trailing flourish at the end.

P.S.

Each time I look to Grandmother Oak or sit by the Crossing Fire, I am reminded that the desire to shift the modern culture around dying lives in all of us. This work belongs to our whole human family.

MARKETING REBIRTH

VISION, MISSION, & VALUES

In 2022, the Center for Conscious Living and Dying was born out of a vision rooted in love, presence, and service. The mission and values that carried us forward in those early days were exactly what we needed, and that original culture was lovingly shaped by the founding Directors and volunteers who modeled the way we companion the dying, support one another, and gather in community.

And then 2024 brought about a season of change. The CCLD community as a whole felt the impact of Hurricane Helene. As a result, the decision was made by leadership to pause providing care in the Sanctuary Suites, and to use the time for deep reflection on how to evolve, grow and respond to reverberating cultural shifts.



**Every day we
practice ways to
embrace death and
support one another
with loving presence.**

This intentional pause created the spaciousness for a new framework to emerge and led to a Rebirth. The last quarter of 2024 was a time of intentional listening, co-creation, and contemplation. By the beginning of 2025, the new Mission, Vision and Values began to take shape.

In the coming months and years, the CCLD Community will continue to see the Rebirth framework come to life in tangible ways as Directors and Members practice loving ways of embodying our values through shared practice.

A NEW CHAPTER OF LEADERSHIP

As 2024 came to a close, a year of deep challenge and renewal, CCLD stepped into 2025 with a refreshed leadership team guided by Executive Director, Dr. Aditi Sethi. In the months following Hurricane Helene, our community showed extraordinary resilience and heart. Out of that time of rebuilding emerged a team whose shared strength and compassion now guide the next phase of our evolution.

Each of these new directors brings something essential: steadiness, creativity, structure, and care. Together, they embody the values at the center of our mission, love in action, curiosity, and mutual accountability, holding space for transformation in both life and leadership.

A Reflection from Aditi

"This new leadership collective is part of the natural unfolding," Aditi shares. "Each person carries deep integrity and heart. Together, they remind us that leadership isn't about control—it's about trust, deep listening, and moving forward in love."

**WE'RE HONORED TO INTRODUCE
THE TEAM GUIDING CCLD INTO
ITS NEXT CHAPTER.**





INTRODUCING LEE SHEPARD

Director of Operations

With more than two decades of leadership in nonprofit management, program design, and clinical social work, Lee Shepard brings both structure and heart to her role as Director of Operations at CCLD. Her background spans executive leadership, strategic planning, and trauma-informed care—always grounded in compassion and community well-being.

Lee is completing her Master of Social Work at the University of Georgia and holds certifications in end-of-life care, gerontology, and suicide prevention.

Lee's life's work centers on helping individuals and organizations navigate transition with courage and clarity. At CCLD, she blends practical systems thinking with empathy, ensuring that love remains at the foundation of every policy and plan. Her calm, thoughtful leadership style fosters confidence and collaboration, creating a sense of steadiness in times of change.

Lee's Reflections

"I've spent much of my career supporting people and organizations through transformation," Lee shares. "At CCLD, that experience feels beautifully full circle—this work is about living fully, even in the face of impermanence. What I love most is the way this community moves together—with gentleness, creativity, and intention. Here, love isn't just a value—it's how we operate."



INTRODUCING HAYDEN LILIEN

Chief Financial Officer

Hayden Lilien brings a rare blend of financial expertise, legal insight, and heart-centered communication to her role at CCLD. With 15 years of experience leading finance, human resources, and operations for nonprofit organizations, she approaches every system she builds with compassion, precision, and care. An attorney and certified mediator, Hayden helps individuals and couples navigate conflict with honesty and grace.

Her work is guided by a belief that understanding, even in times of disagreement, can create deeper connection and trust. At CCLD, that principle comes alive in everyday practice: transparency, shared responsibility, and love as the foundation for community.

Hayden's Reflections

"My work has always centered on bridging differences," Hayden shares. "At CCLD, I see that same principle at play every day—in how we listen, make decisions, and hold one another through change. This community reminds me that structure and heart can coexist beautifully. When we align both, we create the conditions for trust and transformation."



INTRODUCING JENNA LINDBO

Director Of Volunteer Engagement

Jenna Lindbo brings a wealth of creativity and heart to her role as Director of Volunteer Engagement at CCLD. A seasoned musician, facilitator, and community builder, Jenna has spent her career inspiring connection through music, storytelling, and transformative retreats. Her journey—from touring artist to co-facilitator of creative gatherings—has uniquely prepared her to engage volunteers in meaningful and authentic ways.

With her blend of artistry and grounded presence, Jenna fosters the spirit of belonging that defines CCLD. She listens deeply, celebrates people's gifts, and creates spaces where learning and service flow naturally into friendship and joy. A colleague describes her best: "Jenna connects with people with genuineness and joy. She is thoughtful, intentional, compassionate—and dare I say—a truly magical human being."

Jenna's Reflections

"One of my favorite things about this role is witnessing the vibrancy of life and the healing nature of death work in community," Jenna shares. "I love hearing people's stories and am continually awed by their brilliance, authenticity, and heart. It's an honor to journey together and to be part of a community that reminds me, again and again, to pause, breathe, and come home to love."



INTRODUCING MEGAN ANDERSON-KELLY

Sanctuary Suites Coordinator

Megan Anderson-Kelly first joined CCLD as a volunteer before stepping into leadership as Sanctuary Suites Coordinator. Her involvement across the Direct Care, Healing Arts, and After Death Care teams weaves a compassionate thread through the Sanctuary, meeting the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of each resident. A proponent of holistic and inclusive care, Megan embodies CCLD's principle of meeting every person with love and presence.

When she stepped into this role in early 2025, CCLD was still recovering from the effects of Hurricane Helene. Leadership transitions and the temporary pause in resident care brought uncertainty yet also deepened Megan's commitment to rebuilding from the heart. She is focusing on strengthening mentorship, refining volunteer education, and reestablishing the rhythms of daily care with steadiness and grace.

Megan's Reflections

"What I found," Megan shares, "was that those who kept showing up in Direct Care did so out of love—love for this work, for one another, and for the movement CCLD represents. My hope is to continue building that momentum, empowering every person to bring presence and peace to the dying experience."



INTRODUCING TERRY FINDER

Director Of Marketing & Communications

Terry Finder brings decades of creative and strategic expertise to her role as Director of Marketing & Communications at CCLD. Over the course of her career, she led an in-house advertising agency and later founded her own firm, producing hundreds of radio and television commercials and pioneering early digital marketing projects—including website development as far back as 1994.

After retiring in 2016 to care for her late husband, David, Terry's experience of love, loss, and caregiving transformed the direction of her life and work. Her exploration into the mysteries of dying and grief ultimately led her to CCLD, where she now channels her storytelling and design acumen into sharing the heart of this movement. Through her work, she helps reveal the beauty of conscious living and dying—illuminating how compassion, connection, and creativity shape community.

Terry's Reflections

"The mission of CCLD aligns perfectly with my passions," Terry shares. "It's a joy to contribute my skills to a movement that redefines how we live, die, and grieve together. This work continually reminds me that conscious dying begins with conscious living."



INTRODUCING CHELSEA TRINKA

Systems Manager

Chelsea Trinkka brings clarity, creativity, and calm to her role as Operations and Systems Manager at CCLD. After fifteen years as founder and CEO of a technology company that supported hundreds of small businesses, Chelsea now channels her expertise in systems design, organization, and process optimization into a mission grounded in love and community.

Known for her ability to bring order to complexity, Chelsea ensures that CCLD's daily operations flow with ease and efficiency. A yoga instructor, mindfulness guide, and lifelong student of presence, she bridges the worlds of strategy and spirit—approaching every spreadsheet and schedule as part of a greater rhythm of care. Her work helps transform the unseen details of administration into acts of service and devotion.

Chelsea's Reflections

"After years in the business world, I was ready for my work to reflect what truly matters," Chelsea says. "Joining CCLD feels like aligning purpose with passion. I love that our systems serve something deeper—a culture of care. Here, every process supports love in action, and that makes this work deeply fulfilling."

RESILIENCE IN THE WAKE OF HELENE IMPACT ON DIRECT CARE



When Hurricane Helene's rains converged in the rivers and barreled through the valley, CCLD was caring for two residents, Sharon and Chris. Staff and volunteers on site responded with extraordinary creativity and calm, ensuring residents' safety amid the loss of power, water, and communication.

With guidance from Lee Shepard, our new Director of Operations, and the support of skilled volunteers, we have since strengthened our emergency readiness. A detailed protocol and robust preparedness kit are now in place, and our water system has been upgraded to switch seamlessly between well and public sources as needed. By the end of 2025, CCLD will have back up power from solar panels, ensuring the Sanctuary will be functional even in the midst of a weather event and resulting power outage.

When we reopened after a long pause, nearly half of our Direct Care volunteers were unable to return. The following months became a time of renewal—rebuilding our team and introducing mentorship-based training that provides both guidance and community. The response has been deeply positive.

Today, CCLD is again fully operational, caring for three residents simultaneously—a milestone that reflects our community's resilience and unwavering commitment to love in action.

*Called to respond with
Creativity and calm, our
community rose to the
Challenge—proving once
again that love and service are
stronger than any storm.*



HELENE IMPACT ON VOLUNTEERS

We are beyond grateful that Hurricane Helene spared the Sanctuary from major harm. With the creativity and dedication of our volunteers, the Center quickly transformed into a relief hub in the days that followed. Once residents were safely evacuated, our focus shifted to community care—tending to volunteers and neighbors who had been directly impacted by the storm.

These were challenging days: total power outages, no running water, both in-terstates shut down, and no

cellular connectivity. Across the region, neighbors turned to neighbors, embodying the very spirit of mutual care that defines CCLD.

Many of our volunteers were deeply affected—picking up the pieces of their own lives while checking on others, assisting with recovery efforts, and supporting loved ones. The ecosystem of our volunteer community changed dramatically. In the months that followed, we heard from many who longed to return but could not, their lives altered by loss.

When Jenna Lindbo stepped into her role as Director of Volunteer Engagement, she began by reaching out—listening to where people were and what they could give. At the same time, she welcomed new volunteers through CCLD's Discovery and Immersion programs, rebuilding our Direct Care team and reweaving the many working groups vital to our operations. Her leadership has helped the volunteer community not only recover but grow stronger—rooted once again in love, service, and resilience.



HELENE IMPACT ON EDUCATION

The day the storm hit, nearly thirty end-of-life doula students were scheduled to arrive from across the continent for their retreat at the Center. As the hurricane grounded flights and closed roads, most never made

it to Asheville. A few participants had arrived early for a program that never began. Faculty, unable to reach the Center, feared for the students' safety.

Thankfully, they were safe—though deeply heartbroken. Their online training through CCLD had prepared them to stay grounded, centered, and connected, even amid chaos. Together, they tended to one another as they processed both the devastation of the storm and the abrupt pause in their journey. When they reunited for make-up training in 2025, they returned stronger and closer—a living testament to what it means to walk with death, loss, and transformation in community.

DIRECT CARE TRAINING STUDENTS IN 2024

60 in total

DOULA STUDENTS IN 2024

58 doula graduates in total

ART OF DYING RETREAT PARTICIPANTS

11 participants

HELENE FINANCIAL IMPACT & RESILIENCE

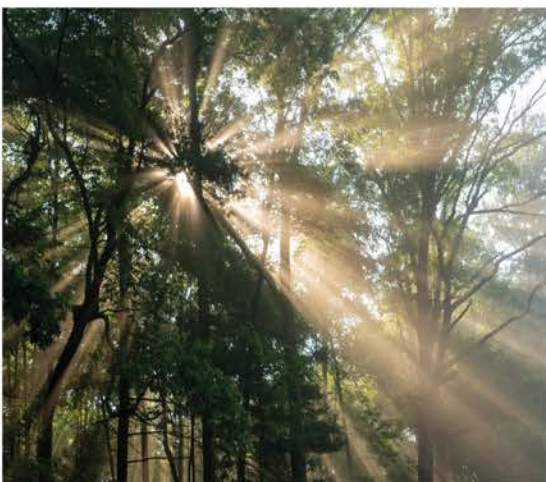
When Hurricane Helene tore through the valley, its impact reached far beyond downed trees and washed-out roads—it disrupted the financial foundation of our first full year open to the public. In the storm's aftermath, CCLD temporarily suspended its core operations and transformed the Sanctuary into a community comfort station, offering hot meals, showers, and laundry to neighbors in crisis. This shift in mission—though deeply aligned with our values—came with unplanned expenses and weeks of lost donations.

Wind and rain damage required emergency repairs and revealed the urgent need for a backup power plan. At the same time, more than half of our trained volunteers were unable to return, leaving us without the capacity to safely care for residents. For six months, our Sanctuary Suites were closed—eliminating

both mission delivery and the “pay-it-forward” donations that typically sustain 30% of our operating budget.

Helene's timing also halted our fall death doula training, cancelled all Airbnb reservations from October through January, and delayed completion of the long-anticipated elevator project—funded in part through a generous private investment—now scheduled for 2025.

Taken together, these intersecting disruptions created a \$277,000 budget shortfall as we entered 2025. Yet amid these challenges, our community demonstrated extraordinary resilience. Volunteers, donors, and neighbors alike stepped forward with creativity and care—reminding us that even in financial uncertainty, generosity remains our most reliable foundation.





THE HOUSE THAT HELD HER:

Pk's Final Dance at CCLD



When Hurricane Helene hit North Carolina, Pk Kiely (63) had already been living with terminal breast cancer for several years. Displaced from her West Asheville home and facing her final months, she sought a safe, peaceful place to spend her remaining time. Though CCLD was closed to residents due to storm damage, Pk found sanctuary by renting the Airbnb room on the main floor. Supported by a network of caregivers, dance friends, and CCLD's loving community, she spent the last five months of her life held in care and compassion.

"One of Pk's biggest requests was not to sleep alone in the house. I couldn't promise that, but we found someone to stay overnight with her for more than 150 nights," shared Emily, Pk's end-of-life coordinator and friend. "Some companions barely knew her, but CCLD creates a culture where everyone is treated like family. That was true for Pk."

INTERGENERATIONAL CARE

Pk had no partner, siblings, or children, yet she was far from alone. A lifelong swing and fusion dancer, her closest relationships



were with younger members of Asheville's dance community—people who became her chosen family.

"Most of us were in our thirties and had never cared for a dying friend," said Gracie, a caregiver and dance friend. "At times it was awkward or foreign, but we figured it out together and laughed through it all. That's what Pk wanted."

Her care team also included older volunteers from CCLD, like Stephen Houpis, who often visited Pk in the living room or on the porch. "She loved Avgolemono soup, so I made her my family recipe," Stephen recalled. "For a while, it was the only thing she could keep down. Her requests awakened my compassionate, loving self."

GREEN BURIAL

"Pk wanted to be laid bare in the earth wearing only the dress she chose—no shroud, no coffin," said Emily. "She picked the people who would dig her grave, brush her hair, and carry her body in a wicker basket to her final resting place. Whatever she asked for that we could do with love, we did. We covered her body in flowers before the earth returned to her. I've never seen anything so beautiful."

"The green burial was so perfect," added Mira, another caregiver. "The togetherness helped me move through my grief. I want that for myself someday."

Gracie reflected, "I was struck by how love was present in every gesture—from the hands that opened the earth for her to the circle that released her back into it."



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REIMAGINING MEMBERSHIP THROUGH CONSCIOUS GIVING

As 2024—the year of storms, resilience, and deep reflection—came to a close, we found ourselves re-examining what it truly means to belong. Our former membership structure, shaped around levels of financial contribution, no longer reflected our core values of Respect for All Beings and Wholehearted Acceptance.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, when community became our greatest currency, we recognized that connection, and contribution, was what truly sustained us. So we began reimagining membership as an open circle rather than a tiered system.

The result was Conscious Giving, a new model that welcomes all forms of participation—time, creativity, care, and money—as equal expressions of generosity. In 2025, membership at CCLD invites each person to give consciously in the way they are most able, affirming that true belonging is not measured by amount, but by intention.

Membership starts with a simple registration form. Click [Member Registration Form](#), or visit cclld.community/be-a-member.



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You have been telling people that this is the Eleventh Hour,
Now you must go back and tell the people that this is the Hour.
And there are things to be considered...

Where are you living?
What are you doing?
What are your relationships?
Are you in right relation?
Where is your water?
Know your garden.
It is time to speak your truth.
Create your community.
Be good to each other.
And do not look outside yourself for your leader.

Then he clasped his hands together, smiled, and said...

This could be a good time!
There is a river flowing now very fast.
It is so great and swift that there are those who will be afraid.
They will try to hold on to the shore.
They will feel they are being torn apart and will suffer greatly.
Know the river has its destination.
The elders say we must let go of the shore, push off into the middle of the river,
keep our eyes open, and our heads above the water.
And I say, see who is in there with you and celebrate.
At this time in history, we are to take nothing personally,
least of all ourselves.
For the moment that we do,
Our spiritual growth and journey come to a halt.
The time of the lone wolf is over.
Gather yourselves!
Banish the word 'struggle' from your attitude and your vocabulary.
All that we do now must be done in a sacred manner
And in celebration.
We are the ones we've been waiting for.

*Hopi Elders' Prophecy,
June 8, 2000*



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The Sanctuary 83 Sanctuary Road
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