



Adam & Kim

Adam and the Dragonflies by *Kim Verrecchia*

As a Sunday school teacher, I became familiar with the story of Water Bugs and Dragonflies by Doris Stickney and had used it a few times in past years to help comfort children who had lost a loved one. I had never expected that the story, and dragonflies themselves, would eventually hold a very special place in my own heart.

My son Adam was diagnosed with a brain tumor in 2019 at age 8, and passed away in 2020. Over the span of the 15 months, he was sick, the dragonfly story was in the back of my mind and I thought about how one day I would read it to my other two children to comfort them after Adam passed away. I was shocked though, to receive a clear sign from God one warm summer day that was confirmation to me that dragonflies would be even more important to me than I thought.

On my birthday, Adam had agreed to make the journey outside in his wheelchair to have cake. On the way back inside the house, a dragonfly landed on Adam's shoulder. It was

STORY CONTINUES ON PAGE 4

My Dragonfly Story By *Meg Swimelar*

My name is Meg Swimelar, and I wanted to share my family story and connection with The Dragonfly Project.

I grew up on School Street in Owatonna, MN, a small community of roughly 25,000 in Southern MN. We lived in a neighborhood where we played outside all year round, building snow forts in winter and forts with fallen leaves in the fall. We dressed up in costumes for a neighborhood parade and played games until dark in the summer. We rode bikes across town and walked to the nearby college after school for treats. I feel very fortunate to have lived a very simple life in a great neighborhood. To this day I stay in contact with friends from my childhood.

I was the youngest in our family of four. My sister Julie was just three years older than I. My parents divorced when I was ten and remained in the same community. Our neighbors Vaughn and Jeanette Kispert and their five kids lived just two doors down from us. It seemed like Jeanette was always home giving us rides to school in the cold mornings or baking chocolate chip cookies. She was like a second mom to me. I knew I could borrow a cup of sugar or spend the night if my mom was in Rochester visiting my sister who had a history of kidney disease.



Sisters—Meg Swimelar & Julie Hartle

Julie lived with kidney disease for 30 years and passed away on July 19, 2001. She was like a cat with nine lives!!! She began dialysis in Rochester as a youngster and received her first kidney transplant as a junior in high school. Unfortunately, the

STORY CONTINUES ON PAGE 4

Executive Director's Corner: 150,000 Cards & Keychains!

By Pete Bonde

I hope you enjoy our newsletter this fall.

I am still amazed at how this organization continues to provide a message of hope to those who are grieving. We continue to reach out to the newly bereaved and receive back many notes of appreciation for sending them a card and keychain. Some of the stories are amazing and included in our newsletter.

We have reached a significant milestone this month. Congratulations to Lisa K. from Maple Grove MN for ordering the 150,000th card and keychain distributed by The Dragonfly Project since our beginnings in 2002. Wow, that is a lot of cards!

We have a goal this year of sending out 13,000 dragonfly packets to those who are grieving. This is an ambitious goal. We are currently at 11,262 packets as of mid-November and on track to reach our goal.

You can help us by getting some packets (cards with dragonfly story and keychains) from our website ([Condolence Cards](#)) and sending to someone in need. To provide more impact, sign up to be an Adopt-a-State volunteer ([Volunteer Form](#)) or recruit someone

else. We are especially looking for people to find recipients to send a message of hope to Indiana and North Dakota.

Our Adopt-a-State volunteers research obituaries assigned to them and find people who need a message of hope. Our roughly 60 volunteers represent 48 states and Canada. They address envelopes, sign cards, and mail them back to us to insert dragonfly keychains and assemble them for bulk mailings. Most of these volunteers work on their own and live out of the Twin Cities area, so they don't have much contact with other Dragonfly Project volunteers. We recently had a bi-annual meeting of the Adopt-a-State volunteers via Zoom, and several volunteers attended. They seemed to enjoy meeting other volunteers, sharing their experiences, and learning tips on what others are doing.

If you would like to give a donation to The Dragonfly Project, you can use the included envelope (if you received the hardcopy of this newsletter), or use this link to make an online donation: [Make-a-donation to The Dragonfly Project](#).

Please contact me at execdirector@dragonflyproject.org if you have any questions or comments about The Dragonfly Project.

~ Pete

Thanks for your generosity on Give to the Max Day!

We received \$2,048.00! Thank you so much!

Give to the Max Day 2022 was Thursday, November 17th!

If you missed it, you can still donate via our website.

Click on this link:

<https://www.dragonflyproject.org/make-a-donation>



The Dragonfly Buzzette is the official newsletter of The Dragonfly Project and is published twice a year, in the spring and the fall. The next issue will be published in Spring 2023. The Dragonfly Buzzette team consists of Julie Bonde, Karen Bonde, Peter Bonde, Valerie Marquardt, Patsy Kahmann and P.J. Tombarge.

If you would like to share your dragonfly story with us, please fill out the form by clicking the link on this web page: [dragonflyproject.org/share-your-story](https://www.dragonflyproject.org/share-your-story) . If you would like to volunteer to help us with the newsletter, please fill out the form on this web page: [dragonflyproject.org/get_involved](https://www.dragonflyproject.org/get_involved)



**Save the Date!
You Are Invited!**
**To the 21st ANNUAL
DRAGONFLY PROJECT
CELEBRATION &
REMEMBRANCE EVENT**

1:00 pm, Saturday, March 11, 2023
Join us in honoring loved ones and celebrating The Dragonfly Project with Music, Dragonfly Stories, and a Candle-Lighting Ceremony, followed by a reception.

at

**NATIVITY LUTHERAN CHURCH
3312 SILVER LAKE ROAD, MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55418**

**We are excited to see you!
Please fill out the RSVP form by going to this link
<https://forms.gle/Jwog8psSQRw9yGiz5>**

If you are unable to attend in person, we will be streaming the program live on our website:

<https://www.dragonflyproject.org/2023-celebrationinfo>

**If you have a photo of a loved one that you would like included in our celebration photo montage, send a digital copy to julieb@dragonflyproject.org with "photo montage-23" in the subject line. Please include the name of the person and date of death or birth/death dates. You may also include a comment or some words to honor them (up to 10 words)—
DUE BY FEBRUARY 15, 2023**



Adam and the Dragonflies continued

at that moment I knew that dragonflies would be my sign and connection to Adam after he was no longer physically by my side.

So, a few months later, when I received my card and keychain from the Dragonfly Project, I couldn't believe my eyes! How did they possibly know how special dragonflies are to me!? I immediately went inside and emailed to find out how I could be a part of their incredible mission. Soon after, Pete Bonde, the executive director, was setting me up to complete my first batch of cards and keychain packets.



As time has passed, everyone in my family continues to have amazing interactions with dragonflies; things that never happened before Adam died. Frequently, they land and stay for a few minutes on each of us as we are outside. This past summer, we had one stay with us the whole time we played Adam's favorite board game; landing on our hands and arms, and the game tiles while we played. Dragonflies have become a symbol of comfort and peace for our whole family. Being able to have a small part in the process of sending the Dragonfly Project cards to grieving people, and share with them this symbol of hope, has brought me so much joy. I'm so grateful that the Dragonfly Project found me!



My Dragonfly Story continued

kidney was infected and removed and she returned to dialysis. Julie received her second transplant as a sophomore in college, this kidney would last nearly 20 years. In October 2000, after months of failing health, she received her final transplant that would sustain her life until her passing. Unfortunately, her body rejected the new kidney. Julie lived her life to the fullest, even with multiple weekly trips for dialysis. She took ballroom dancing lessons, worked overtime as an insurance claims adjuster and loved her niece and nephew as her own.

Shortly after Julie passed away, we received a card from the Kisperts that was from The Dragonfly Project. The colorful card, keychain, and story of the dragonfly's transformation was comforting. It has given me hope and comfort knowing that my sister was always with me, even if I couldn't see her. I could use the keyring as a daily reminder of her and share my story with others.



Vaughn & Jeanette Kispert

Weeks after I returned to our home in Washington state, I was caught off guard by a beautiful dragonfly that had attached itself to the siding of our house at eye level as not to miss it. I truly felt Julie was with me in that moment and I continue to watch for signs of her presence every day.



Years later I became a volunteer with the Dragonfly Project. I have personally sent many cards to grieving family and friends. Not long ago, I visited a friend who lost her daughter and I squealed with delight as I saw she had received a card from a friend with The Dragonfly Project. Recently I sent a Dragonfly card to a service worker doing some work for me who had just lost his grandpa and was heartbroken. He later told me that his eyes filled with tears reading the message of hope inside the card.

I'm grateful for the impact the Project has had in my life and I will continue paying it forward to others lost in their grief.

Recipient Comments from our Facebook Page



I just wanted you to know that I was a recipient of a dragonfly and I wanted to let you know how uplifted I was! Losing my daughter in a plane crash was no easy thing, but the outpouring of support keeps me in gratitude. Thank you! ~ Carol

This brought me so much joy when I received my dragonfly. My son passed away in May. ~ Lori

My 37-year-old daughter died March 2021. I am struggling to learn life without her as the void is unbearable. I don't know who or how a card with the dragonfly story and key ring was delivered to us signed by a volunteer, Kirsten, but it came on a particularly difficult moment, especially the words "just because we can't communicate with our loved ones who have gone through the transformation we call death, does not mean they no longer exist." Those words were the ones that have helped me more than any other. Because they do, they exist, they are loved, they are with us, they are worthy of our thoughts and energy. Thank you more than I can express. ~ Gloria

Thank you so much for the special card. It was so thoughtful and brought quite a few tears. I'm Very grateful and thank you again so much. ~ Leddy

I thank you so much for your thoughtfulness, we received our dragonfly and it was such an emotion for me. My son passed away last July, and is missed so everyday, and this came just before his birthday which was even more meaningful. ~ Dar

Hello there! My family received a dragonfly card shortly after our (barely) 20 year-old-son Vincent was killed in a single car accident on November 1, 2017. We wanted to thank the person who sent this to us but there was no return address. I have been sharing the story with the grief support groups that we have been attending. Certainly, this has made my family more appreciative of these flying friends and also the many symbolisms of dragonflies. With appreciation from the bottom of our hearts. ~ The Cooper Family



We are grateful to be able to reach so many who are grieving. We do appreciate hearing from you. You can find us on our Facebook page. If you have a longer story to share with us please fill out the form on this web page: dragonflyproject.org/share-your-story We'd love to hear from you!

DONATIONS

A huge **THANK YOU** to all our faithful supporters. We are so grateful for your generosity with both financial and volunteer support. The Dragonfly Project is able to continue bringing our message of hope only because of your generosity! Memorials and honorariums are listed below and on the next page.

Memorials—March thru August 2022

In Memory of Benjamin Baalson Given by Kay Baalson	In Memory of Paul & Charlotte Englund Given by Lori Lesch	In Memory of Robert J Krieger, Sr Given by Karen Kriegler
In Memory of Jacob Baalson Given by Kay Baalson	In Memory of Daniel Fink Given by Eileen Fink	In Memory of Leland, brother Given by Jan Savat-Lynch
In Memory of Roger Baalson Given by Kay Baalson	In Memory of Andy Fix Given by Antoinette Potrzebowski	In Memory of Stan Liedman Given by Lynn Liedman
In Memory of Bobby & Sara Given Lisa Sontag	In Memory of Michelle Franta Given by Lynn Liedman	In Memory of Adam MacDonald, son Given by Cheryl Morris
In Memory of Earl Bonde Given by Helen and Dick Lodmill	In Memory of Carol Green Given by Julie and Pete Bonde	In Memory of Mary Maguire Given by Julie and Pete Bonde
In Memory of Hans Bonde Given by Julie and Pete Bonde Given by Valerie Marquardt & Greg Brooker	In Memory of Dorothy Hallack Given by Ginger Collyard	In Memory of Wally Marquardt Given by Valerie Marquardt & Greg Brooker
In Memory of Albert Brekke Given by Julie Kimball	In Memory of Our Son, Cole Hammond Given by Gayle Hammond	In Memory of Zachary Scott Matschiner Given by Kathy Matschiner
In Memory of Don Brubaker Given by Vicki DeBoer	In Memory of Officer Nathan Hayden Heidelberg Given by Glendene Heidelberg	In Memory of Dave Mietzner Given by Janell & Bob Spelbrink
In Memory of Ann Czech Given by Mitch Czech	In Memory of John Ingalls Given by Sharon Thielke	In Memory of In loving memory of my dad Given by Kristy Morales
In Memory of Charlotte Englund Given by Brenda Dvorak	In Memory of Jason Kraycer Given by Susan Kraycer	In Memory of Zackery Orrin Given by Heidi Haugen
	In Memory of Robert J Krieger, Jr Given by Karen Kriegler	In Memory of Patricia Peel Given by Cheryl and Glenn Seefeldt

Go to our website and consider making a donation and/or ordering cards to give to your grieving loved ones. These are the current card designs available.

Go to dragonflyproject.org



Memorials—*continued*

In Memory of Jim Poole

Given by Valerie Marquardt & Greg Brooker

In Memory of James B Pirino

Given by Alan Buttler

Given by Harriet Pirino

In Memory of George Riedel

Given by Valerie Marquardt & Greg Brooker

In Memory of Marjee Righeimer

Given by Genette Waldman

Given by Herbert Wilkins

Given by Lynn Feneis

In Memory of Caleb "Bubba" Rogers

Given by Ginger Collyard

In Memory of Rachel Schreiner

Given by Valerie Marquardt & Greg Brooker

In Memory of Doug Spelbrink

Given by Carol Jo Forneris

Given by Scott Hansen

Given by Debra Krause

Given by Carol Lindenfelser

Given by Joanne Spelbrink

Given by Janell & Bob Spelbrink

Given by Jessica Teed

Given by Donna M Theis

Given by Milly Theis

Given by James Wilt

In Memory of Josie Stucker

Given by Karen Waters

In Memory of Miles M Sudbeck

Given by Nancee Sudbeck

In Memory of My son, Owen Taylor

Given by Sarah Taylor

In Memory of Bill Tombarge

Given by P.J. Tombarge

In Memory of Greg Trierweiler

Given by Mary Ann Eichhler

In Memory of Gloria, Valerie's Niece

Given by Deborah Kusnetz

In Memory of Jeffrey C. Wagenlander

Given by Margaret Wagenlander

In Memory of Mary Weber

Given by Paul Weber

In Memory of Alberta Whitaker

Given by Amy Hennen

Given by Norman Whitaker

Honorariums

March thru August 2022

In Honor of Debra Gorczycki

Given by Doug Spelbrink

In Honor of Anne Brooker

Given by Valerie Marquardt &
Greg Brooker



We are grateful to get our dragonfly pendants from:

Contemporary Beads & Castings

Website: <https://www.contempbeads.com/>

Contact: info@contempbeads.com

Address: 82 Park Ln. Unit 2, West Harrison, NY 10604



P.O. Box 19264
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dragonflyproject.org

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

A message
of hope
to those who
are grieving.



What is The Dragonfly Project?

The Dragonfly Project is a registered 501 (c) (3) non-profit that sends condolence cards carrying a message of hope to people who are grieving. Our organization consists of volunteers who look up names in obituaries and help put together and mail packets out to people who are grieving; usually 3 to 6 months after the death has occurred. Each packet contains a condolence card, a copy of the dragonfly story printed on the inside cover and a dragonfly key chain.

Each year, thousands of dragonfly packets are sent throughout the United States and other countries to individuals who are grieving the loss of a loved one. Each dragonfly packet costs \$4.00 to make. The Dragonfly Project is operated by volunteers and a board of directors. Donations are welcome. Your donations are tax deductible.

OUR BEGINNINGS

In 2000, when 11-year-old, Hans Bonde, died from a brain tumor, Anne Marquardt Brooker and her mother later sent his family a story about dragonflies and their significance in the cycle of life and death (written by Walter Dudley Cavert). The small gesture so moved the grieving family with its "message of hope" that it inspired Anne to create a nonprofit corporation that would reach out to others who were grieving the loss of a family member or friend. In 2002, when Anne was 11, she founded The Dragonfly Project to share this message of hope with others.

HOW CAN I GET A PACKET TO SEND TO SOMEONE?

To get a packet sent to you, please go to our website store (dragonflyproject.org/online-store) and order a card to be shipped to you. Then you can sign and send the card to whomever you wish. The cards in our store have room for you to insert your own message. Please allow 2 to 3 weeks to receive your order. It is never too late to tell someone you care about their loss.