

A Volunteer Team Brings Hope to Thousands

by Amy Lindgren, Margarette Brooker

In the beginning, Anne Brooker, her friend Anna, and her parents did all the work finding people to send cards to. As the project grew so did the time needed to do this task. That's when Amy Lindgren stepped in to help look up addresses for people they found in the obituaries. Not long after, Anne's grandma, Margaret Brooker, offered to help by cutting the obituaries out of the local papers in the Twin Cities area. Ever since, these two have been a team with Margaret cutting obits and Amy finding addresses. And what a team they have been! Together they have made it possible for thousands of families to receive the dragonfly packet with a card, the story and a dragonfly key chain. We invited them to each share a bit of their stories.

STORY CONTINUES ON PAGE 6



Margarette Brooker and Amy Lindgren in 2006

In Time of Deepest Need: A Dragonfly

by Dianne Sparks



Dianne Sparks

My name is Dianne Sparks and I first discovered The Dragonfly Project in 2006 while trying to find speakers for our St. Anthony Kiwanis weekly meetings. I found information about The Dragonfly Project in the Nativity Lutheran church bulletin. The Project intrigued me so much I asked founder Anne Brooker to speak at one of our meetings. She and her father came. I, along with everyone in our group, was truly touched by how this project started and the love this child had for Hans Bonde, who

had passed years ago. I then asked Anne to speak to our Kiwanis Key Club high school group. My hope was this group of teens would be touched enough by Anne's story to volunteer to help assemble the Dragonfly card packets. They were, and they did!

STORY CONTINUES ON PAGE 5

The Rocks, The Candle, The Dragonfly and the Rose

by Glenn Seefeldt

It was 4 pm Easter Sunday afternoon when the police knocked on our door. Our daughter Kristin had died by suicide and in 5 minutes our world melted into shocked numbness and after the insulating numbness, the raw brokenness of life crushed and dreams shattered. It was as if large **rocks rolled over us**.

Those first months were a blur and eventually the sharp, ice-pick-like stabbing pain in our hearts became more like a headache of the heart. We longed to know Kristin was ok and two reassuring signs came.

The first, a **cardinal** which sang an unusual song outside our bedroom window at 2 am that first evening upon knowing her



The rocks, candle & rose that Glenn shared with us.

STORY CONTINUES ON PAGE 5

Executive Director's Corner: *The Power of Youth*

By Pete Bonde

We have a program at The Dragonfly Project we call *Taking Hope on the Road*. The purpose of the program is to take our message of hope and packet making events outside of the greater Twin Cities area. We pack up our car with supplies and bring our message to nonlocal communities: focusing on areas, where we have volunteers.



Youth at work in Blue Earth

In December of last year, we took a trip to visit St. Peter and St. Paul's Catholic Church youth group in Blue Earth, Minnesota. We were greeted by a roomfull of 55 teenagers and their teachers. They shared a meal with us and then Julie shared her *Miracle that Came in the Mail* story. This story tells of the beginnings of The Dragonfly Project – Anne Brooker and her mom Valerie Marquardt sending a dragonfly bracelet and the dragonfly story to us after the death of our son Hans. That Christmas, Julie then shared in her Christmas letter how the dragonfly story dramatically changed her grief journey. Anne, after seeing Julie's response, decided to do this for other people. She started The Dragonfly Project by sending out the dragonfly story and dragonfly necklaces to strangers related to entries found in the local obituaries.

We then shared how The Dragonfly Project has grown and explained the variety of condolence cards we have available. We have currently sent out more than 110,000 packets to grieving families.

The confirmation class was very attentive and receptive, listening to this story of someone their age who started a nonprofit. Then they got to work helping us make our packets, which consist of a card with the dragonfly story and a dragonfly keychain. Along with other tasks, they made over 1,300 packets. The confirmation teachers were impressed with their students' involvement, commenting to us how focused the teens were on helping us provide a message of hope for those who are grieving. As with many events of this type, we hear about people who have dealt with a close death and understand how this outreach can impact a person. It always feels right to share this message with youth. We are grateful for the work that the kids at St. Peter and St. Paul's did for us.

I recently retired from my long career at Thrivent Financial. I expect this will allow me to do more *Taking Hope on the Road* trips. If you are interested in hosting a packet event in your local community in the future, please let us know. We do plan to take the message of hope that The Dragonfly Project provides from coast to coast.

Thank you, students, for your contributions to The Dragonfly Project!

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

Thanks, Pete

A NEW card design! The Heidi Leppala card

This card was introduced at our Annual Celebration on March 9, 2019. Leppala's design was first seen a year ago as it was the design for last year's celebration cover. Heidi has cleverly embedded the words, "hope, love, faith, & family" in the wings adding extra meaning to this hopeful symbol.

The Leppala card is now available in our online store where you can order it or any of our other card designs.

<https://www.dragonflyproject.org/online-store>



The Dragonfly Buzzette is the official newsletter of The Dragonfly Project and is published twice a year. The next issue comes out in Fall 2019. The Dragonfly Buzzette team consists of Julie Bonde, Karen Bonde, Peter Bonde, Valerie Marquardt, Patsy Kahmann, Jan Stanton.

If you would like to share your dragonfly story with us, please fill out the form online at this page:

<http://www.dragonflyproject.org/blog>.

Salam Jumpa!

by Winda Roets

My name is Winda Roets and I am a new Board Member of The Dragonfly Project since spring 2018. I was born and raised in Indonesia and when I was 16 years old, I decided to continue my education in Canada and then the U.S. two years later. “Salam Jumpa!” is an Indonesian phrase that has the same meaning as “Nice to meet you!”

My first encounter with The Dragonfly Project was with Pete Bonde, our Executive Director, at a Thrivent work event in spring of 2017. It was a Thrivent Volunteer Champions Program Fair that showcased a few selected organizations for Thrivent employees to become involved. I still remember that day. There was this one long row of tables put together in the lobby area. On the other side of the tables, the representatives were either standing or sitting. I started from one end and intended to reach the other end as if I was making my way through a buffet, selecting what I wanted and nodding off to the next. When I arrived at The Dragonfly Project table, there was Pete with a smile across his face offering me his friendly voice. I asked him the same question I did to the other organizations, “Oh and what does your organization do?” thinking that it would be a good enough conversation starter. It was when Pete let me read the Dragonfly story written on one of the cards that it won my heart.



Jeremy & Winda

A simple yet profound story that echoes deep in the hearts of those who have experienced the pain of losing someone to death. As I was reading it, I started remembering my grieving experiences. I remembered my grieving for Nabby, my good friend who passed only five months before graduating college. You see, both Nabby and I were International students studying at Luther College (Iowa). We started at the same time and were in the same classes as we both majored in Accounting. We would share to each other our ambitions and dreams. He was a brother to me. I heard the news that he was found dead on the campus on the day after New

Year's Day in 2011. My everyday life since then was marked with sudden cries. Sometimes, uncontrollably. By the time I graduated, people almost completely stopped talking about him. Later on, I would question myself if Nabby was a real existence or if he perhaps was just a character I made up in my mind. But every now and then I would see pictures of him and I would feel better, as it validated that Nabby was once truly alive. I grieved and grieved for years by myself. Having to keep everything to myself, I was left with bitterness.

I was still standing there “talking” to Pete. My mind was in chaos of trying to listen to what Pete was saying and pushing back all the flashbacks to the very back and bottom of my thoughts so that I would not cry. I needed to re-focus. I had to get myself together because, for heaven's sake, I was still at work! I thanked Pete for the information and left.

They said that I would be okay again eventually after Nabby's death but it had been years and I was still not okay. I was still bitter every time I thought of it. Gosh! I wished someone had sent me a Dragonfly card. I wished that someone had let me know that I was not grieving alone. I wanted for someone to do something good to me. Then I realized that I could be that person, I was wishing for, to someone else. It was a no-brainer. So, I signed up to be an Adopt-a-State volunteer and also used my Thrivent Action Team member benefit to host Dragonfly Project volunteer events at work. About a year later, Pete reached out to me about becoming a board member of The Dragonfly Project. It is truly an honor to serve on the board of The Dragonfly Project. By helping others with a simple gesture, I am helping myself through my on-going grieving process.



Winda with Nabby and other college friends.

A winter snow storm interfered with attendance at our annual celebration this year. We are sorry for all those who weren't able to join us due to the inclement weather. Even so, for those who came, it was a heartfelt celebration filled with hope. From Freda Myhrwold's singing to stories shared to young Carmina Stensland playing guitar for us, hope was expressed, as always.

This year during the program, we were honored to have Valerie Marquardt (Anne's mother) read the dragonfly story and to hear stories from Dianne Sparks, donor and Culvert's owner, and from Pastor Glenn Seefeldt. Dianne met Anne Brooker when Anne was quite young and was inspired to bring The Dragonfly Project to other young people. We are grateful for her support over the years. Glenn shared how the Dragonfly Project was like a candle in the darkness. As usual, the stories and reports were followed by a candle-lighting ceremony while Carmina, age 10, played some exquisite classical guitar for us. From the beginning of the project in 2002 to now, the children and youth have been part of this work of bringing hope to those who are grieving. I pray they never lose their hope. The program ended appropriately with Freda singing "Light a Candle."

Afterwards we enjoyed meeting one another during the reception and silent auction time. There was a challenge match offered in honor of this year's event. As a result we were able to collect \$1859.00 which was matched dollar for dollar by a group of supporters. A special thanks to Karen Bonde and P.J. Tombarge for coordinating this year's event and to all those whose work made it possible!

By Julie A. Bonde

A CANDLE IN THE DARKNESS

17th Annual Celebration and Remembrance Event

March 9, 2019



Dianne Sparks



Freda Myhrwold



Valerie Marquardt



Carmina Stensland



Cheryl & Glenn Seefeldt



James Smith, Georgia Savat, Greg Brooker
Wonderful Reception Hosts



Silent Auction Items



In Time of Deepest Need: A Dragonfly continued

Little did I know how important the story and this group would be to my family one year later. We lost my father-in-law very suddenly in September of 2007. It was a great loss to us all but especially to my daughter who had been very close to him. My daughter was the first grandchild and was “spoiled” by all the love grandparents give to the firstborn. While setting up for her wedding at our family lake home in Nisswa we found a dragonfly that seemed to decide it needed to be a part of what we were doing. We would find ourselves saying: *Ok, Dad or Grandpa, we see you and it appears you don't agree with how we are doing things.* When it was time for the reception my mother-in-law went to her preassigned seat and there on her chairback sat the dragonfly! It was as though he was there with her, marrying off their first grandchild and letting her know he was sharing it with her. It was a profound moment for us.

My second story involves one of our best couple friends. Kevin was diagnosed with myeloma and we watched as his life slowly was taken from him. I can tell you that I do not know of any of our friends who had a love that was as strong as this couple. They were so devoted to each other and enjoyed each other in every way possible. When Kevin passed away I thought his wife (my girlfriend) would never recover. As we got into the second and third year of his passing it seemed she

was still so distraught that most of us just did not know what to say to try to help her. It seemed like she was getting through everyday processes but was not “living” life. I happened to stumble on a packet of dragonfly cards in my drawer one day and decided to send her one. I got a call from her about a week later and she wanted to know if she could come to Minnesota to visit us for a few days (she lives in Wisconsin). When she got

here she looked at me and my husband and told us she felt this card had made her feel she could live again and she now knew that Kevin was all around her. She said two days after she got the card she was down on the waterfront of her home and was preparing to go for a kayak ride. All of a sudden a dragonfly landed on her shirt. She immediately felt Kevin was by her side and watching over her. The dragonfly stayed on her shirt during her ride and flew away as she landed the kayak back at her home. She felt it was his way of saying to her that he was always there, but he was giving her permission to go on living life.

I so appreciate The Dragonfly Project and am forever thankful that this young lady decided that the dragonfly story was worth giving to a set of parents who had to say goodbye to their young son way too early. I know I am not alone when I say I hope everyone has a dragonfly come to them in their deepest time of need.

The Rocks, The Candle, The Dragonfly and the Rose continued

death. The second was a **dragonfly**, which came and sat for hours on the rope which hung next to our sliding door to our deck, a place loved by us and Kristin. With the dragonfly came fragile reassurance similar to a **dimly burning candle**—fragile, small, but burning and with it we saw fragility, uncertainty but also possibility—possibility of finding life restored, living into a new normal without her.

Weeks turned into months and the first year passed, the pain changed but oh still such a heartache. I remember wanting to fight against the grief, pushing it away, trying to bend it to my will. It was not working, and then one day a profound insight came: **Accept what each day brings, God will provide.**



Kristin Seefeldt

As I look back, some days it seemed as if the loss never happened and on those days God was giving respite from the pain. Some days all I could do is hold down the couch, keeping it from flying off into the universe. I would say, on those days God gave permission to just be. On other days, I felt the pain in every cell of my being and God gave the energy I needed to deal with the grief full on. Then comes the day when you feel joy again and guilt for feeling joyful, but with joy comes hope, **like a Rose**, beautiful and inviting but also prickly and forbidding. We long to be restored but we do not want to forget our loved one.

I have come to trust that God will give me what I need each day, the challenge is for me to trust it. Dragonflies help me to trust it. Dragonflies are God's messengers of hope, reassuring us that our loved ones are not forgotten and we will find joy again.



A Volunteer Team Brings Hope to Thousands continued

AMY LINDGREN: I started volunteering for The Dragonfly Project in 2005 after seeing the opportunity in the bulletin at Nativity Lutheran Church. Margarette Brooker sends me a monthly package of obituaries that she cuts from the newspaper in the Twin Cities area. In general, the obituaries are for people less than 40 years old. At the time I started volunteering, I lived in Minneapolis. In 2010, I moved to Texas and started also including the Dallas/Ft. Worth area. Interestingly, the Ft. Worth area has medical examiner (ME) information on a public website which is where the majority of names come from, rather than obituaries. In January 2019, I moved “home” to Iowa. I continue to get obituaries from Margarette, use the public ME website in Ft. Worth, and am now including the Iowa City/ Cedar Rapids and Des Moines areas.



Amy Lindgren , 2019

My assignment is to find an address where a dragonfly packet can be sent. Sometimes it's as easy as using the online white pages. Often times, though, it requires more “detective” work. I use public property records and have even seen stories on TV in front of a victim's home and then used Google maps to identify the address. I have also addressed envelopes for national tragedies such as school shootings and the Las Vegas massacre. I have encountered a hurdle in that the online white pages limits the number of address look-ups I can do in a certain period of time. I address about 100 envelopes a month and send them back to Minneapolis to be stuffed by volunteers who sign the cards and assemble the key chains.

I really enjoy this volunteer position because the packets are appreciated by the recipients, I can do it on my own time from home, and love the challenge of finding an address.

MARGARETTE BROOKER: My name is Margarette Brooker and I am the grandmother of The Dragonfly Project founder, Anne Brooker. Since Anne started this project at the age of 11, I have watched her mature into a young women with a mission to provide comfort for those who are experiencing grief over a loss of a loved one.

Approximately 13 years ago I started cutting out death notices/obituaries in the Minneapolis Star Tribune newspaper of persons who were 40 years and younger at the time of their death. Once a month I then mailed these death notices to Amy Lindgren, another volunteer who lives out of state. For numerous years, my granddaughter, Anne, wrote the personal messages inside the cards. Once Anne headed off to college, The Dragonfly Project then had multiple volunteers sign the cards.

I too, have faced grief when my husband Don passed away from multiple myeloma in 1994. I can understand the comfort this story would have provided me after losing my husband.

I have personally received thoughtful letters from some of the recipients of the Dragonfly story thanking me for the comfort and hope that the story has given them in their time of grief. Being an adopt-a-state volunteer for The Dragonfly Project at the age of 89 has, and still is, a wonderful experience and a pleasure to bring a sense of hope for those who are in mourning.



Anne Brooker & her grandma in 2018

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—September 2018 through February 2019

In Memory of Bob & Shirley Artz
Given by Susan Meisner

In Memory of Benjamin & Jacob Baalson
Given by Kay & Roger Baalson

In Memory of Trevor Ball
Given by Eric Ball

In Memory of Mattie Becker
Given by Anne Spangler

In Memory of Jesse Beckius
Given by Wendy Beckius

In Memory of Andrew Michael Beddor
Given by Bobi Murray

In Memory of Jean & Joe Boerner
Given by Sue Lang

In Memory of Hans Bonde
Given by Charlotte Bonde

In Memory of Hans Bonde
Given by Chris & Dwight Dyrud

In Memory of Iunia Boyce, Wife & Mother
Given by Liv Norderhaug

In Memory of My Monkey Boy, Jake
Given by Kay Cafferty

In Memory of Dorothy Claypoole
Given by John Claypoole



In Memory of Cody S Collin
Given by Machele Pepple
In Memory of Nathan Crowe
Given by Lisa Hanneman
In Memory of Rosy DePatto
Given by Marie Hasty
In Memory of George Docken
Given by Nancy Docken
In Memory of Barbara C. Egan
Given by Joseph Egan
In Memory of Jessie Fahlstedt
Given by Beth Fahlstedt
In Memory of Maelie Fahrion
Given by Charlotte Brooker
& Gene Mammenga
In Memory of Jeremy Funston
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Given by Charlotte & Paul Englund
In Memory of Charlie Geurts
Given by Mary Geurts
In Memory of Cole, Our Beloved Son
Given by Gayle Hammond
In Memory of Jesse Hand
Given by Shelley Hand
In Memory of Shane Heuer
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In Memory of Peter Hillesheim
Given by P. J. Heidelberg
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In Memory of Wally Marquardt
Given by Valerie Marquardt
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Given by Ruth Schewe
In Memory of Thomas Schneider
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Given by Kathy Matschiner
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Given by Judith Schlieff
In Memory of Jason Smolken
Given by Katherine Bacalis
In Memory of our sweet son Bobby
Given by Lisa Sontag
In Memory of Janet 'Jean' Stark
Given by Roxanne Orth
In Memory of Janet Stegink
Given by Nancy Larson

In Memory of Sara Studer
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In Memory of Miles M. Sudbeck, our son
Given by Nancee Sudbeck
In Memory of Juanita Thornton
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In Memory of Jillian Rose Vinas
Given by Rose Dillon
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Given by Margaret Wagenlander
In Memory of Jessica Wallgren
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In Memory of Charlotte Wasiluk
Given by Charlotte Brooker
& Gene Mammenga
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Given by Mary Weber
In Memory of Madeline May Wegner
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In Memory of Alberta Whitaker
Given by Norman Whitaker
In Memory of Julie Woltzen
Given by Joyce Woltzen
In Memory of John Zimny
Given by Jo Zimny
In Memory of Dominic Zunis
Given by Terri Zunis

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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 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.