

## Michelangelo, Stitch, and the Dragonfly

by Pamela Crosby

On October 11, 2015, we lost our amazing son, Nicholas. This was, I thought at the time, the worst day of my life. I struggled through each and every day, trying to find my way through the pain. I was so grateful to have my daughter to talk to and share and remember his life.

About three months after he passed we received a Dragonfly card in the mail. We didn't know the sender but we are thankful for her thoughtfulness. The story and thought behind the card touched me and came at just the right time. It helped pull me up a little and get through another day. I was so moved by this gesture that I came to your website and checked it out. I decided to send a card and key chain to my daughter, and one to my cousin who lost her mom.

When my daughter got her card, she mentioned it to me, and we talked about how our loved ones are always with us, even when we can't see

STORY CONTINUES ON PAGE 4



Nicholas, Cassie & her son, Oliver

## Stepping Up to Hope

by Karen Bonde, New Board Member

Hello, my name is Karen Bonde and I joined The Dragonfly Project Board in March 2018. To my surprise I'm currently holding the position of Vice Chair on the Board. I'm excited about my new role and hope to contribute to the great ministry that The Dragonfly Project has so successfully preformed.



As many of you know, this organization started when Anne Brooker and her mother sent the Dragonfly story to the family of Hans Bonde months after he passed away from a brain tumor. Hans was my nephew, who was years beyond his age in relating to people. At only ten years

STORY CONTINUES ON PAGE 3

## Hope Amid the Pain

by Alex Howard

You guys are my heroes and saints.

My beautiful 27-year-old daughter, Brittany Christine, passed away on August 20, 2016. She was my oldest child and was a very good, intelligent girl. As anyone who knows, losing a child is something that changes you forever.

While still having the pain of losing Brittany, I felt my life leave me when a police officer in the late hours knocked on my door and informed me that my rock of a son 26-year-old, Joshua Alex, had died in a car accident on January 17, 2018. Joshua was my go-to



Brittany & Joshua

STORY CONTINUES ON PAGE 3

## Executive Director's Corner: *A Second Packet Making Hub*

By Pete Bonde



The Dragonfly Project started in Minneapolis and it grew to affect the Twin Cities area. Our mission is to provide a message of hope and we do that by putting together cards with the dragonfly story by Walter Dudley Cavert and a key chain. We call these packets. Over the first decade of our organization, these packets were generally put together in the Twin Cities area. It always

seemed that when we got low in our supply of packets, an organization or person would reach out to us and ask if they could do a volunteer event to help us put together packets. Business, churches, schools, and individuals would get a group of people together and our packet coordinator would bring the supplies. Together they would make hundreds of packets. In the early years, Valerie Marquardt and our founder Anne Brooker were the packet coordinators. In the most recent years, Julie Bonde has held that position.

One of our consistent partners in putting together packets was Thrivent Financial in Minneapolis. That is where I work. There was an employee volunteer committee that was always looking for opportunities for nonprofits to come to Thrivent and give Thrivent employee opportunities to work as volunteers. Our initial Thrivent packet event in 2007 was a very successful event. We have been doing events there since. One of the great things about doing packet events at Thrivent was that the cost of our supplies was paid for by Thrivent and the employee volunteer committee.

In April of 2013, Jennifer DeBruin contacted us about getting more involved with The Dragonfly Project. Jennifer worked at Thrivent Financial also, but she worked in Appleton, WI where Thrivent's operation center was located. Jennifer quickly got involved. She learned the speech that Julie gave at packet events. With the help of two

great volunteers from Kiel, WI, Jack and Jermaine Lechler, Jennifer organized a packet event in July of 2013 in Appleton. Julie and I later came to Appleton in November that same year and did some packet events there. It was a pleasure to meet Jennifer in person.

Since those beginnings, Jennifer has supported The Dragonfly Project at Thrivent and the Appleton area in many ways. Her actions have spread the mission of The Dragonfly Project throughout the area. Jennifer has hosted and supported many packet events. I believe her events have made over 3,000 packets. Her customer service area purchased the special pliers needed for assembling key chains. She will loan them out to people who do packet events on their own in the Appleton area. She often tells the story of The Dragonfly Project to the group that is assembling packets.

Jennifer is a manager in the call center. When calls get low, she allows her employees to take 'volunteer time off' to put together our key chains. I did a quick count from my files, and her area has made over 15,000 key chains over the years. Wow! She has also purchased packets for her area. If a staff member has a call with a member and they feel it is appropriate, they will send the member a packet. They have received a number of responses back from people.



Jennifer DeBruin

Thank you Jennifer for all that you have done to support The Dragonfly Project and making Appleton a second hub of packet and key chain assembly.

Please contact me at [execdirector@dragonflyproject.org](mailto:execdirector@dragonflyproject.org) if you have any questions or comments about The Dragonfly Project. ~Thanks, Pete

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



### ***“Hope Amid the Pain” continued***



person for almost everything. He was such a good man that I truly aspired to be more like him. He was a great father and husband. He had a son, Cooper, and his wife, Keisha, was pregnant with their second child. Riley was born May 12, 2018.

I received a Dragonfly card in the mail, about a month after Joshua's death. It was signed by Peggy and Alex Mills. That card saved my life. With such deep grief, I didn't want to feel that level of pain any more. I opened the envelope and read it. It gave me hope and a sense that I am going to be okay. That is one thing that Josh always did for me, made me feel like everything is going to be okay.



I miss them so terribly. It still hurts, but knowing there are people out there like you guys gives me more hope than you know. I keep the card and key chain in my car. I have not removed the key chain from the card. I love it and just read it when I can't get out of the pain rut.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Regards, Alex Howard

### ***“Stepping Up to Hope” continued***



young, he could easily make conversations with grandma and grandpa, his parents, family, friends and girls. Yes, he was a natural at conversation and was very comfortable hanging out with his female cousins at family functions. I think he talked with more girls at ten than his two older brothers combined. Something about his character made people comfortable around him. As an aunt to twelve nieces and nephews, I was looking forward to Hans being the popular boy throughout school and being the first to get married.

Of course this was not the case; I was with him when he peacefully passed away at age 11. Seeing the strength of my brother Pete and his wife Julie was beyond comprehension. They spent a little over a year making life as normal as possible for their four boys while Hans was sick. Even though family and friends were there to offer help and support it wasn't enough to fill the lost intimacy with their son. So when Anne sent the Dragonfly story months later, it was a perfect gift of hope and the sense of Hans' presence.

I have been involved in The Dragonfly Project since the beginning, not in an active way, but more of a supportive matter. I'd come to the Annual Celebrations and make donations in honor of Hans, I volunteered to take pictures and have helped in making dragonfly packets. But when I was asked to be on the board that was a step up to being involved in the ministry.



It has been a honor to be on the board, reading so many stories of heartbreak that have been comforted in receiving the Dragonfly story. It has been eighteen years since Pete and Julie received the Dragonfly story from Anne Brooker and now I'm proud to be a part of the healing process for others that are grieving.





## **“Michelangelo, Stitch, and the Dragonfly” continued**

them. We talked about the different signs our family members had received and felt it was Nicholas, and she shared the different signs she got from him as well. I told her I just didn't feel anything, and it broke my heart to not be able to really feel him around me. Then she pointed out all the random things I had mentioned to her, like the annual flowers that were just magically growing around the flower beds. She said to me, “How could that not be Nick? You know we always killed your plants when you and Dad went on vacation and left us in charge!!” And she was right; those kids always killed off my flowers. Apparently, they never knew that the hose they used to spray each other with could also be used to water plants. She really appreciated the card and key chain and we talked about that a lot. She knew how much it meant to me and that it brought me comfort.

Eight months later, June 30, 2016, my world came crashing down on me. Our beautiful baby girl, Cassandra Rose passed away. I was in shock. I could not understand how this could happen to one family. At the time, I had to remain strong. Cassandra had come home for a visit, and I had to take care of my grandson, Oliver. I had to call her husband and tell him his wife was gone. I had so much to do, and I was so angry that I already knew what had to be done because I

just went through this eight months ago. Somehow, again, I made it through a funeral for my child. Now all I have left is my grandson. I feel so empty, sad, guilty and lost.

When Cassie first arrived at home, we were sitting out by our pond. There was a really neat black and white striped dragonfly that kept hanging around. Every time we would go out, there he would be. We figured it was Nicholas listening in on our conversations, and we were okay with that.

After the funeral, Cassie's husband and friends went back home to North Carolina. Soon I got a picture from her friend Samantha. Cassie had shared the Dragonfly story with her so Samantha understood how much it meant to Cassie. While Samantha was visiting with Cassie's other dear friend, they decided to go outside for a smoke. While they were out there, a dragonfly showed up! It stayed there the whole time the girls were outside, just chillin' and enjoying the company.

On the second birthday after her passing, Cassie's husband Aaron and her friend Samantha came to spend her birthday with us. We were outside playing with the kids, celebrating Cassie's life. All of a sudden, Samantha says, “What's that on your arm? Is that a dragonfly?” I looked and sure

enough, it was! But, even more amazing was where it landed. I have a tattoo on my arm in honor of my children. It's Michelangelo, the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle that was Nick's favorite, and Stitch, who Cassie loved. She landed right on Stitch! I cannot explain the comfort and peace that gave me. I felt my baby right there with me, and I knew she was with us, celebrating her birthday.

Please know that what you are doing makes a difference. It helps those who are going through the most difficult times in their lives and gives them a bit of hope.

Thank you!!



### **The Dragonfly Project Board of Directors**

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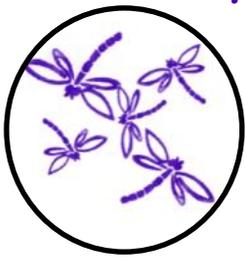
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## 'Twas the Night Before Christmas' For Bereaved Parents

By Faye McCord - TCF, Jackson, MS

(the following poem is submitted in loving memory of my son,  
Lane McCord (1965-1998)  
and is dedicated to all bereaved parents)

'Twas the month before Christmas and I dreaded the days,  
That I knew I was facing - the holiday craze.  
The stores were all filled with holiday lights,  
In hopes of drawing customers by day and by night.

As others were making their holiday plans,  
My heart was breaking - I couldn't understand.  
I had lost my dear child a few years before,  
And I knew what my holiday had in store.

When out of nowhere, there arose such a sound,  
I sprang to my feet and was looking around,  
Away to the window I flew like a flash,  
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash

The sight that I saw took my breath away,  
And my tears turned to smiles in the light of the day.  
When what to my wondering eyes should appear,  
But a cluster of dragonflies fluttering near.  
With beauty and grace, they performed a dance,  
I knew in a moment this wasn't by chance.

The hope that they gave me was a sign from above,  
That my child was still near me and that I was loved.  
The message they brought was my holiday gift,  
And I cried when I saw them in spite of myself.

As I knelt closer to get a better view,  
One allowed me to pet it - as if it knew -  
That I needed the touch of its fragile wings,  
To help me get through the holiday scene.

In the days that followed I carried the thought,  
Of the message the dragonflies left in my heart,  
That no matter what happens or what days lie ahead,  
Our children are with us - they're not really dead.  
Yes, the message of the dragonflies still rings in my ears,  
A message of hope - a message so dear.

And I imagined they sang as they flew out of sight,  
"To all bereaved parents - We love you tonight!"

## The Blue Dragonfly

By Mary Kay Adamson

My son Brian died  
of suicide in  
September of 2014.  
It was three days  
before his 36th  
birthday. Needless  
to say it was the  
worst day of my life.  
The grief and loss is  
present every day.



After his death I was  
constantly looking for some sort of sign from him  
to let me know he was ok. Months went by with  
nothing.

In his memory I planted a small "Brian Garden" in  
my back yard. His favorite color was sky blue, for  
his favorite soccer team, Manchester City. I planted  
hydrangeas and fertilized them to bloom blue. One  
afternoon I was watering the plants and a dragonfly  
landed on one of the hydrangeas. It was blue. I had  
never seen a dragonfly out there before. It stayed  
on a leaf for a long time. I asked "Brian, is that  
you?" And it moved its wings. I asked if he was ok  
and it moved its wings. I told him how much I  
missed him and that I loved him. And again it  
moved its wings. I sat down and just watched the  
dragonfly. After awhile it took off from the plant  
and started to fly by me. It flew right in front of me  
circled around and flew off. I told Brian goodbye.

That night I looked up the symbolism of a  
dragonfly. I found out that it symbolized change on  
an emotional level and a deeper understanding of  
living life to the fullest, as well as other meanings.  
As I was surfing the Internet I came across the  
website for The Dragonfly Project. And that it was  
a site for grieving. I could not believe that I  
stumbled across this website. I would have never  
found it if it was not for seeing the dragonfly. I  
bought several of the cards and have used a couple.  
The recipients have called me to tell me how  
beautiful they are and how much they meant to  
them. And how special the dragonfly story was to  
them.

I have not seen another dragonfly since the one.  
But I know in my heart that it was Brian and that  
he led me to this website for a reason.



## 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 2018 through August 2018

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| In Memory of Adam<br>Given by Douglas Gilbertson   | In Memory of Robert Hallack<br>Given by Gwen Hallack               | In Memory of Amy Picchiotti<br>Given by Eleanor Masin               |
| In Memory of Andy Assell<br>Given by Julie and Pete Bonde                                | In Memory of Cole Hammond<br>Given by Gayle Hammond                | In Memory of Lloyd Piehl<br>Given by Kris Piehl                     |
| In Memory of Benjamin<br>& Jacob Baalson<br>Given by Kay and Roger Baalson               | In Memory of Jesse Heller<br>Given by Dawn Heller                  | In Memory of Joseph "Joey" Plant<br>Given by Vicki Plant            |
| In Memory of Marvin Bartlett<br>Given by Jeanne Bartlett                                 | In Memory of Joyce Hill<br>Given by Ladonna Kiefat                 | In Memory of Jon Radle<br>Given by Diane Radle                      |
| In Memory of Bill Beaulieu<br>Given by Sheri Cox   | In Memory of Edna Hines<br>Given by Jan Johnson                    | In Memory of Ken Rugh<br>Given by Mary Berzak                       |
| In Memory of Bobby Joe Bebles, Jr.<br>Beloved Son<br>Given by Johnnie Talley             | In Memory of Cheryl Iademaro<br>Given by Ann Marie Woulfe          | In Memory of Tom Rupert<br>Given by Meg Wally                       |
| In Memory of Delores Bolen<br>Given by Ladonna Kiefat                                    | In Memory of Brianna Lyn Ingvall<br>Given by Mary Jane Ingvall     | In Memory of Sara Schewe<br>Given by Ruth Schewe                    |
| In Memory of Earl Bonde<br>Given by Bill and Barb Bonde<br>Given by Julie and Pete Bonde | In Memory of Nola Janicki<br>Given by Lisa Grant                   | In Memory of Iris Seefeldt<br>Given by Jan Peel                     |
| In Memory of Hans Bonde<br>Given by Karen Bonde<br>Given by Julie and Pete Bonde         | In Memory of Camilla Johnson<br>Given by Julie and Pete Bonde      | In Memory of my son<br>Given by Don Sevre                           |
| In Memory of Nancy Bonde<br>Given by Julie and Pete Bonde                                | In Memory of Jean Keys<br>Given by Judi and Mike Salkas            | In Memory of Michael Lee Sheffels<br>Given by Ladonna Kiefat        |
| In Memory of Jacob Bopp<br>Given by Lori Bopp  | In Memory of Mom, Myrna Lage<br>Given by Roxanne Dallmann          | In Memory of Austin Shimon<br>Given by Lois Shimon                  |
| In Memory of Kerim Broadbent<br>Given by J Broadbent                                     | In Memory of Bruce Lublin<br>Given by Edward Mattei                | In Memory of Bobby Sontag,<br>our Sweet Son<br>Given by Lisa Sontag |
| In Memory of Charles Brown<br>Given by Sharon Thielke                                    | In Memory of Ryan Wade Martinez<br>Given by Joann Hawks-Peters     | In Memory of Tara<br>Given by Diane Christensen                     |
| In Memory of Tessa Brueni<br>Given by Cindy Brueni                                       | In Memory of Jonathan Masin<br>Given by Eleanor Masin              | In Memory of Beloved Son<br>Given by Johnnie Talley                 |
| In Memory of My Amazing Son, Jake<br>Given by Kay Cafferty                               | In Memory of Zachary Scott Matschiner<br>Given by Kathy Matschiner | In Memory of Tom Thaney<br>Given by Janet Otten                     |
| In Memory of Jay Carpenter<br>Given by Nancy Carpenter                                   | In Memory of Lowell McCarthy<br>Given by Kris Piehl                | In Memory of Sarah Tilman<br>Given by Catherine Tilman              |
| In Memory of Jayden Ecker<br>Given by Justin Bussler                                     | In Memory of Tara McNulty<br>Given by Amber Maricle                | In Memory of Blaze Unruh<br>Given by Kim Meier                      |
| In Memory of Barbara C Egan<br>Given by Joseph Egan                                      | In Memory of Sean McQuillen<br>Given by Paula and Dan McQuillen    | In Memory of Alberta Whitaker<br>Given by Norman Whitaker           |
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|  | In Memory of Zoraida Parmelee<br>Given by Edward Mattei            | In Memory of Phil<br>Given by Thrivent Financial                    |
|  | In Memory of Francis Paskewitz<br>Given by Lindsay Paskewitz       | Foundation, designated by Karin Vukich                              |



Thrivent Action Team  
 Packet Making Events  
 Nativity Lutheran Church, St. Anthony, MN  
 June 20 & September 10, 2018

**A Huge Thank You!**  
**To Nativity Volunteers**  
**And all others from near and far who have helped assemble hundreds of key chains and stuff envelopes! Your work makes our mission possible!**



**Save the Date! ~ You Are Invited!**



*17<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL  
 DRAGONFLY PROJECT  
 CELEBRATION & REMEMBRANCE  
 EVENT*

Join us in honoring loved ones  
 and celebrating The Dragonfly Project at:

NATIVITY LUTHERAN CHURCH  
 3312 SILVER LAKE ROAD  
 MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55418

To let us know if you are coming, please see our website:  
[www.dragonflyproject.org/annual-celebration](http://www.dragonflyproject.org/annual-celebration)

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](mailto:julieb@dragonflyproject.org) with "photo montage" in the subject line. Please include the name and date. You may also include a comment or some words to honor them (up to 10 words)—due by Feb. 15, 2019



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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 an 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 and order a card to be shipped to you. Then you can sign and send the card on 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.