



Volume 29

Spring 2020

## ***My Gentle Giant, My Son***

*by Bertha Steele, Adopt-a-State Volunteer*

Kind, funny, loving and generous with a heart of gold is how I would describe my son Aaron. He was truly a gift from God because at the age of 33, I was told that I would never have children and was blessed with two beautiful children, Aaron and Ashley.

Aaron was a great role model for his sister Ashley. He was quick to show her how to do things, and he protected her. He was my confidant, friend and biggest supporter. Aaron had a great love for children, and they loved him in return. We often talked about him having his own children someday in the future. Everyone who came in contact with him remembered his beautiful trademark smile that he readily displayed. It was infectious.

There were so many hopes and dreams that we shared as a family but on May 8th, 2007, those dreams were shattered into millions of pieces when Aaron was tragically killed, just 23-years-old with his whole life ahead of him. This was the darkest day of my life. I felt like my whole world was at a standstill and slowly collapsing around me. A huge piece

of my heart had been snatched out leaving a gaping hole that could never again be filled. One day rolled into another and I was consumed with grief, sadness and anger. I just couldn't understand why this had to happen to my child. I'm sure that many of you have asked this same question. How would I ever get past this devastating blow to my life? I would never again hear him call me mommy, listen for his keys in the door or check for his jacket on the stair post leading to his room. How will I go on? How would I be able to face tomorrow? This was not easy, in fact it was the hardest thing that I have ever had to do in my life.

I give thanks for my unshakeable faith in God, my family and friends that quickly rallied around me, and a very special little



**Aaron Steele**

*My Gentle Giant CONTINUES ON PAGE 3*

## ***2019 Business Update***

*By Pete Bonde*

The Dragonfly Project (TDP) is now 18 years old. Since we started in 2002, we have sent out over 118,000 dragonfly packets, each representing an individual or family touched by our mission. In 2019, we sent out over 9,000 packets. More than half of these went through our online store, and almost a third of these were sent from obituaries taken from newspapers by our volunteers as part of the Adopt-a-State program. Our Adopt-a-State volunteers grew from 41 to 57 in 2019. The number of states impacted by this program increased from 35 to 39. We sent out 430 packets and 240 Dragonfly Door books to 6 different schools, as part of our School Outreach program. In this type of outreach, we send out packets to families and staff after the loss of a student, and provide copies of *The Dragonfly Door* book. We gave an additional 269 books as part of our *Dragonfly Door* outreach. This included 80 books distributed to Acoustics for Angels, an event in South Dakota that focuses on supporting those who have lost newborns. We also sent 29 books to the Twin Cities' chapters of The Compassionate Friends, a national organization that supports families experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild.

Financially, The Dragonfly Project continues to do well. Our Gross Profit was around \$59,000, a 4% decrease from the previous year. Our expenses remained about the same at about \$37,500. Our Net Income was approximately \$21,500, a 3% increase from 2018.

*Business Update CONTINUES ON PAGE 3*

## Executive Director's Corner: *Expanding our Outreach*

By Pete Bonde

The Dragonfly Project's mission is to provide a message of hope to those who are grieving. Initially, we provided that hope by sending out the dragonfly story by Walter Dudley Cavert and a dragonfly keychain. This has continued to be our basic mode of outreach. Over the years, we developed other ways to provide that hope. More recently, we have put words and order to those forms of outreach. Here are our five programs in order of priority to provide that message of hope:

1. **Packet Program** - Send out and provide packets with the dragonfly story and a dragonfly keychain
2. **Newsletter Program** – Send out a biannual newsletter with stories of hope
3. **Packet Event Program** – Gather groups together to learn about The Dragonfly Project and have them volunteer to assemble packets (the dragonfly story card and keychain)
4. **Books and Music Program** – Provide *The Dragonfly Door* to schools and organizations where it is used to help children understand the loss of a loved one and the grief that follows. This program also includes a music CD with the reading of the dragonfly story and a special Dragonfly Moments song.
5. **Annual Celebration Program** – A gathering of recipients and volunteers who share stories of how The Dragonfly Project has impacted their life and brought a message of hope, along with a candlelight ceremony and montage, remembering those they've lost. A short reception follows.

This year The Dragonfly Project will be focusing on reaching out to more people through our Packet and Newsletter Programs. We plan to recruit more Adopt-a-State volunteers who find addresses of people who have lost a loved one by researching obituaries throughout the United States. We are also investigating the possibility of expanding this program to include other countries. If you are interested in the Adopt-a-State program or want to learn more, fill out our volunteer form found on our website - [https://www.dragonflyproject.org/get\\_involved](https://www.dragonflyproject.org/get_involved). We are also investigating other ways we may share packets with other organizations with similar missions to ours.



Our Newsletter Program will be expanding as we start to send out our newsletter via email. This will add a few hundred more people to our outreach. If you are interested in getting an email newsletter instead of a hard copy newsletter, let us know by contacting us at [BuzzetteEditor@dragonflyproject.org](mailto:BuzzetteEditor@dragonflyproject.org).

A hard and emotional discussion led to our cancelling our annual celebration and remembrance event in March due to the coronavirus. In lieu of the event, we have included articles that were in our annual program. In addition, we have a wonderful story from Bertha Steele about her son Aaron. I hope you will enjoy this Spring's issue.

If you have any questions or comments about The Dragonfly Project, please contact me at [execdirector@dragonflyproject.org](mailto:execdirector@dragonflyproject.org).

Thanks, Pete

*The Dragonfly Buzzette* is the official newsletter of The Dragonfly Project and is published twice a year. It is available either in print or via email. You can also find it on our website. The next issue comes out in Fall 2020. The Dragonfly Buzzette team consists of Julie Bonde, Karen Bonde, Peter Bonde, Valerie Marquardt, Patsy Kahmann, Jan Stanton, P.J. Tombarge.

If you would like to share your dragonfly story with us, please fill out the form online at this page: [dragonflyproject.org/share-your-story](https://dragonflyproject.org/share-your-story)

## ***My Gentle Giant, My Boy continued***

bright yellow envelope that arrived at my church with a return address that read 'The Dragonfly Project.' I couldn't imagine what this could be or how someone even knew what Church I attended. When I got home, I went out to sit on my back steps so that I could feel the sun on my face. The sun always made me feel better and somehow brightened my spirit. I opened the card carefully and looked at the beautiful dragonfly pictured on the front. I began to read it, holding on to each word in each line of the card. Tears slowly began to run down my face. At that very moment I began to realize that even though I could no longer see, hear or touch Aaron in his familiar physical state, it didn't mean that he was no longer in my presence. My spirit began to lift as I reflected on those beautiful words over and over again.

The feeling that I got after reading the dragonfly card is unexplainable. Every time I talked to someone, I found myself telling them about the beautiful card that a Dragonfly Project volunteer had taken the time to send me. My loss was shared by someone that I didn't even know. I'll never forget the peace of mind that this tiny card brought me. These were feelings that I hoped everyone who had lost someone and was grieving should be able to experience.



**Bertha, Ashley, and Aaron Steele**

That day I knew that I had to become a part of the Dragonfly Project volunteer program. I had to help spread that news to other individuals grieving. The next week I was able to meet with a local volunteer and began volunteering the very next month. To date, I have been working as a volunteer for 13 years! I have also been able to persuade a friend, Shirley Gilliam, to become a faithful volunteer. We have often talked about retiring from the Dragonfly Project but we both decided that it is much too important to discontinue. Many thanks to the Dragonfly Project!

## ***2019 Business Update continued***

### **HERE ARE SOME OTHER HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2019:**

- Nativity Lutheran Church and its members were involved in six packet events where volunteers assembled 2,325 packets. Nativity supports The Dragonfly Project in many ways including lending space for events and board meetings, and promoting our mission.
- Thrivent Financial and its members were involved in six events where they assembled 1,287 packets and many extra keychains. Thrivent Financial is our #1 financial supporter through their many different programs.
- The Dragonfly Project is working on forming a relationship with The Compassionate Friends organization. We visited its three chapters in the Twin Cities and provided them with packets and *The Dragonfly Door* books.
- The Dragonfly Project is now doing payroll! Pete Bonde is our first official employee for The Dragonfly Project. He works part-time as Executive Director, computer support and grant support.
- The Dragonfly Project collaborated with the National Funeral Directors Association on a project to create a Remembering A Life Self-Care Box. The dragonfly story with a dragonfly keychain is one of eight items in a box to help provide comfort for a family during a difficult time of grieving after the death of a loved one.
- We welcomed Janell Stanton Soderberg as a new Dragonfly Project board member. Janell came to us with a wealth of experience, including her work in the legal field.
- Julie and Pete Bonde went to Hastings MN and participated in a 'Grief Chat' radio talk show on KDWA. We shared our personal story and told the Dragonfly Project story. We also gave suggestions for how to help those in grief to make it through the holidays.



## Recipient Responses

*Thank you so much for the beautiful card and message. I too believe there's an afterlife which no one can explain. My son was a brilliant medical physicist who worked with oncology teams to treat cancer patients. Above all, he was humble, loving, giving, and kind. Thank you again and bless you all.* ~ Jeanie

*I am 6 years out from receiving my dragonfly card and have never forgotten it. It has been a constant afterthought throughout my grief process after losing my young husband and father of three. Thank you so much for doing this! It has been a part of my dedication and purpose to help others who have physically lost loved ones.*

~ Kelly

*Thank you for the card we received today. Made my husband tear up a bit. We lost our son back in September just days before his 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday to an accidental drug overdose. The grief has been agonizing, but we are hanging in there. Just wanted to let you know this card really made our day! You're all amazing for taking the time to fill these out and send to people in their time of grief. THANK YOU.*

~ Rachel & Pete

*I lost my 27-year-old son a little over a year ago. A Dragonfly card came to my mother's address and she waited about six months to give it to me. It brought me so much comfort. I leave work and there is a dragonfly flying around my car almost every day. There was one in my kitchen as well. No idea how it got in, but I believe in signs. This has helped bring peace and comfort, which I'll carry with me in the future. I cannot express my gratitude enough to the one that sent this to me.*

~ Sandy

*Thank you for the card and keychain after my brother's passing. I recognized the card as it brought many tears when you remembered us when our son passed away. God bless you for your kindness and comfort you bring to so many.*

~ Lisa

*What a day brightener it was to receive your card and dragonfly! Our daughter was and is still a very special sister, wife and mom. Coincidentally, dragonflies were her signature and she had a beautiful scene with them tattooed on her entire back. Sunflowers were also very special to her, and our garden is filled with them in her honor. She would have loved your mission and I will spread the word about your organization. Thank you so much for your card, the dragonfly and the message it brings will be cherished.*

~ Nancy

## THANKS TO ALL OUR 2019 VOLUNTEERS!

Jeanne Bartlett  
Bill Bonde  
Julie Bonde  
Karen Bonde  
Luke Bonde  
Pete Bonde  
Brian Buck  
Donna Brandell  
Anne Brooker  
Greg Brooker  
Margarette Brooker  
Donna Campbell  
Dawn Dahlberg

Ann Danko  
Jennifer DeBruin  
Michelle Dehn  
Carmella Deilke  
Gena Doyscher  
Denise Finley  
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Sue Fritz  
Kelly Gleonde  
Kim Goodsell  
Shara Hanley  
Patsy Kahmann  
Sally Kramer

Marcia Kurtz  
Tina Langhans  
Duncan Lasley  
Michelle Lease  
Jack Lechler  
Jermaine Lechler  
Kate Lemke  
Heidi Leppala  
Erika Leraaen  
Megan MacLeod  
Sharee Marcus  
Marcy Marquardt  
Valerie Marquardt  
Paula McQuillen  
Tammy Messina

Kristen Nold  
Judy Parizek  
Amy Parnell  
Bob Parrott  
Kris Petersen  
Winda Roets  
Melissa Sandry  
Georgia Savat  
Katie Schmalz  
Jamie Scovronski  
Cheryl Seefeldt  
James Smith  
Michon Smith  
Stacy Smith  
Jan Stanton

Janell Stanton Soderberg  
Cher Starkel  
Katy Swimelar  
PJ Tombarge  
Brianna Walvoort  
Karen Weiberg  
Sara Weingartner  
Tina Wyffels  
Annie Young

GROUPS  
Courage Kenny Rehab  
St. Joan of Arc Youth



## **Adopt-a-State Volunteers in 2019**

These volunteers pick a city or state and research obituaries and addresses where our cards can be sent.

To learn more, contact our Adopt a Sate Coordinator, Tina Langhans at [tinal@dragonflyproject.org](mailto:tinal@dragonflyproject.org).

Misty Allmond	Diane Feeny	Brianna Jones	Amy Lindgren	Dawn Roggenkamp
Carol Andersen	Pamela Fields	Gloria Keller	Jill Lorber	Julie Rolfsen
Kristen Andrick	Eileen Fink	Julie Kimball	Valerie Loutsch	Holly Schott
Tracy Andriski	Caitlyn Fitzchowen	Joanne Kintop	Patricia McLain	Denise Sodergren
Rachel Beliveau	Shirley Gilliam	Teresa Kohman	Vera Miller	Cher Starkel
Beverly Brennan	Sheri Gittinger	Sally Kramer	Peggy Mills	Bertha Steele
Julie Briggs	Cindy Glover	Lisa Kretsch	Angela Moss	Katy Swimelar
Sue Camilleri	Judi Good	Michelle Kubiak	Michaela Ohlemann	Meg Swimelar
Donna Campbell	Lisa Hanneman	Nicole Kunza	Alison Overstreet	Roxanne Topham
Mara Christiansen	Faith Haesy	Becky Laney	Michele Plover	Michelle Vomund
Natasha Cronsell	Michelle Haygood	Erika Leraaen	Kristin Ratliff	Judy Wilson
Jennifer De Bruin	Amy Hennen	Jack Lechler	Tanya Renner	Kristin Zigan
Carmella Deilke	Laura Hulback	Susan Lewis	Winda Roets	

## **Packet Assembly Groups in 2019**

At a packet event, people assemble keychains, stuff envelopes and hear inspiring dragonfly stories. By the time any given card has reached its destination, 10 to 15 people have touched it with their hands and their hearts. We are grateful to all who have given their time! To learn more, contact our Packet Assembly Coordinator, Julie Bonde at [julieb@dragonflyproject.org](mailto:julieb@dragonflyproject.org).

- 2019 Dragonfly Project Celebration Volunteers
- EmpowerME Conference, University of Minnesota
- Intertwine Northeast Group
- Nativity Lutheran Church
  - General Volunteers—Mission Partner Weekend
  - Thrivent Action Teams—Thanks to Freda Myhrwold, Beth Schumann
  - Women in Action
- The Dragonfly Project Board of Directors
- Thrivent Financial in Minneapolis, MN
- Winda Roets & friends, Thrivent Action Team
- Women of the ELCA (WELCA) Convention
- Women on Wednesday, Grace Lutheran Church, Anoka
- WoMN Strong, Anoka, MN

A special thanks to the following people for the thousands of keychains they assembled for us in 2019.

- Jennifer DeBruin & The Call Center at Thrivent Financial in Appleton, WI
- Emma DeBruin in Appleton, WI
- Jack & Germaine Lechler in Kiel, WI

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

**Karen Bonde**  
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*Vice Chair*

**Brianna Walvoort**  
*Secretary*

**James Smith**  
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**Winda Roets**  
*Member at Large*

**P.J. Tombarge**  
*Member at Large*

**Executive Director**  
**Pete Bonde**

**Founder**  
**Anne Marquardt Brooker**



## 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 its message of hope only because of your generosity! Memorials and honorariums are listed below and on the next page.

## Memorials—September 2019 through February 2020

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| In Memory of Trevor Ball<br>Given by Eric Ball                             | In Memory of Mr. David Klinefelter<br>Given by Carol Dmytryszyn              | In Memory of Joann Peters<br>Given by Karen Gissin                            |
| In Memory of Mattie Becker<br>Given by Anne Spangler                       | In Memory of Kevin Robert Kocur<br>Given by Judy Resler                      | In Memory of Amy Picchiotti<br>Given by Eleanor Masin                         |
| In Memory of Earl Bonde<br>Given by Bill and Barb Bonde                    | In Memory of Patrick<br>Given by Judy Kornder                                | In Memory of Jim Pilger<br>Given by Lois Shimon                               |
| In Memory of Hans & Earl Bonde<br>Given by Helen and Dick Lodmill          | In Memory of Bob Kurtz<br>Given by Marcia Kurtz                              | In Memory of Joseph 'Joey' Plant<br>Given by Vicki Plant                      |
| In Memory of Hans & Earl Bonde<br>Given by Gerald and Denise Bonde         | In Memory of Jim LaFreniere<br>Given by Ladonna Kiefert                      | In Memory of Ronald<br>Given by Antoinette Potrzebowski                       |
| In Memory of Hans Bonde<br>Given by Bill and Barb Bonde                    | In Memory of Don & Myrna Lage<br>Given by Roxanne Dallmann                   | In Memory of Our Precious Son Jake<br>Given by Sandi Rebecok                  |
| In Memory of Hans Bonde<br>Given by Julie and Pete Bonde                   | In Memory of Beth Lamprich<br>Given by Greg Lamprich                         | In Memory of Mark A Reilly<br>Given by Judith Schlieff                        |
| In Memory of Hans Bonde<br>Given by Chris and Dwight Dyrud                 | In Memory of Jay Helmuth Lechler<br>Given by Jack and Jermaine Lechler       | In Memory of Sarah C. Richardson<br>Given by Diane Feeney                     |
| In Memory of Tad Bradach<br>Given by Ladonna Kiefert                       | In Memory of Colleen Mader<br>Given by C. L. Ferris                          | In Memory of Amanda Roos<br>Given by Joyce Kirchner                           |
| In Memory of Todd Brandell<br>Given by Valerie Marquardt<br>& Greg Brooker | In Memory of Robert Manson<br>Given by Kristen Maples                        | In Memory of Jason Schaeper<br>Given by Terri Schaeper                        |
| In Memory of Nathan Crowe<br>Given by Lisa Hanneman                        | In Memory of Wally Marquardt<br>Given by Valerie Marquardt<br>& Greg Brooker | In Memory of Sara Schewe<br>Given by Ruth Schewe                              |
| In Memory of Ann Czech<br>Given by Mitch Czech                             | In Memory of Marcy Marquardt   | In Memory of Adam Schwoerer<br>Given by Catherine Schwoerer                   |
| In Memory of Cory Daniels<br>Given by Robin Holland                        | In Memory of Jonathan Masin<br>Given by Eleanor Masin                        | In Memory of Rachel Schreiner<br>Given by Valerie Marquardt<br>& Greg Brooker |
| In Memory of Daniel Fink<br>Given by Eileen Fink                           | In Memory of Zachery Scott Matschiner<br>Given by Kathy Matschiner           | Given by Palmer and Lois Ruschke  |
| In Memory of Lynn Granstrom<br>Given by Sandra Smith                       | In Memory of Theresa Miklausich<br>Given by Ladonna Kiefert                  | In Memory of Sue Seitz<br>Given by Janet Otten                                |
| In Memory of Dorothy Hallack<br>Given by Ginger Collyard                   | In Memory of Sharon Miller<br>Given by Sam Miller                            | In Memory of Bob Skaff<br>Given by Beth Skaff                                 |
| In Memory of David Hanlon Family<br>Given by Annette Meyers                | In Memory of Sheila Caldwell   | In Memory of Lynn Smith<br>Given by Marie Hasty                               |
| In Memory of Molly Hanson<br>Given by Marie Hasty                          | In Memory of Jacob Moe<br>Given by Steve and Mary K Moe                      | In Memory of Grandson, Jason Smolken<br>Given by Katherine Bacalis            |
| In Memory of Lloyd Hildebrand, Brother<br>Given by Joann Johnson           | In Memory of Teresa Moffo<br>Given by Mary Beth Sanford                      | In Memory of Fran Snyder<br>Given by Carol Harris                             |
| In Memory of David Benjamin Hobbs<br>Given by Sheryl Hobbs                 | In Memory of Gabriel Murn, my Son<br>Given by Jacqueline Crocker             | In Memory of Logan Snyder<br>Given by Carol Harris                            |
| In Memory of Carl Hoffman<br>Given by Marie Hasty                          | In Memory of Glen Oveson<br>Given by Carolyn Stritesky                       | In Memory of Our Sweet Son, Bobby<br>Given by Lisa Sontag                     |
| In Memory of Paul Christian Keller<br>Given by Gloria and Steve Keller     | In Memory of Cassandra Payne<br>Given by Patricia Stevens                    | In Memory of Jeff Steike<br>Given by Pamela Oberg                             |
| In Memory of Taylor Kentfield<br>Given by Melinda Kentfield                |  |   |



In Memory of Nick Stevens  
 Given by Patricia Stevens  
 In Memory of Bruce Stuhr, Husband  
 Given by Jacqueline Stuhr  
 In Memory of Dusty Lindell Taber  
 Given by James Taber  
 In Memory of Adam Van't Hof  
 Given by Gene and Becky Van't Hof  
 In Memory of Arlo Vesey

Given by Carol Harris  
 In Memory of Jeffrey C. Wagenlander  
 Given by Margaret Wagenlander  
 In Memory of Alberta Whitaker  
 Given by Norman Whitaker  
 In Memory of My Sister and Brother  
 Given by Patti White  
 In Memory of Julie Woltzen  
 Given by Joyce Woltzen

In Memory of Susette Yennie  
 Given by Lesley Leger

## Honorariums

In Honor of PJ Tombarge's 70th bday  
 Given by Karen Weiberg

## Support The Dragonfly Project with Thrivent Choice Dollars

Thrivent Choice is a member-advised charitable grant program of Thrivent Financial in which members help Thrivent effectively distribute program funds among eligible organizations. The Dragonfly Project is one such organization and in 2019 we received \$1,615 in donations. These following members have designated dollars to The Dragonfly Project:

Audrey Parochka	Karen Webb
Barbara Fagerberg	Ladonna Sievert
Bonnie Kranzusch	Lisa Kajer
Cynthia Kaske	Michael Kranzusch
Jennifer DeBruin	Peter Bonde
Joan Ruetten	Ruth Schewe
Julie Bonde	Sara L Bauer

Thanks to everyone above who has made it possible for The Dragonfly Project to receive additional donations through the Thrivent Choice program. If you are a Thrivent Financial member, please visit <https://www.thrivent.com/thriventchoice> to find out how you can donate Choice Dollars to The Dragonfly Project.

*Thrivent Financial is a financial services organization that helps Christians be wise with money and live generously. They offer a broad range of products and services –including life insurance, annuities and mutual funds –along with guidance from financial representatives nationwide. For more than a century, they have helped nearly 2.4 million member-owners make wise money choices that reflect their values. In addition, they provide opportunities for them to be even more generous where they live, work and worship.*



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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 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 keychain.

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](http://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.