



The Dragonfly Buzzette

Newsletter for The Dragonfly Project

Volume 36

Fall 2023

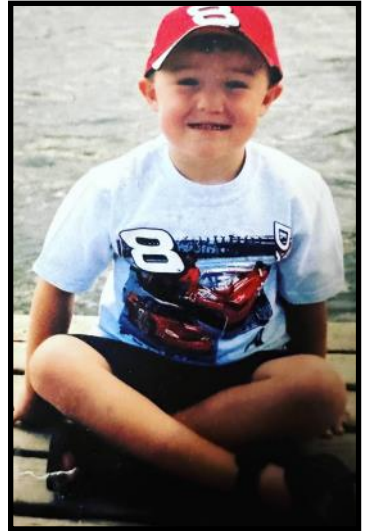
Dragonflies Circling Around

by Denise Sodergren

In May of 2004 I lost my 5-year-old son Nicholas in a car accident. We received an outpouring of gifts, but I distinctly remember receiving the card with the dragonfly keychain. That summer I was asked to go with a friend to her cabin. I was sitting on a beach chair reading, and I bet over 100 dragonflies surrounded me. My friend was walking down the hill with a glass of iced tea and was just in shock. She said in all the years she had owned the cabin; she had never seen anything like it.

I walk a lot and continue to notice dragonflies circle around me. I spend time in my friend's swimming pool in the summers and we see them circle around us or land on our arm while we're talking. I always take great comfort and sometimes will say "Hi Nick." I am very thankful to the Dragonfly Project for sending that card and keychain as a part of my lifelong grief process.

As a result, I reached out to the Dragonfly Project and offered to do some volunteer work. I have found through my grief journey that connecting with others who are walking the same path has helped me and makes me feel like I can make a difference.



Nick Sodergren

Taking Hope on the Road: The Compassionate Friends Conference

By Peter & Julie Bonde

July 7-9, 2023, we (Peter & Julie) attended the 46th Annual National Compassionate Friends conference in Denver, Colorado. The conference was a mix of large group gatherings with keynote speakers and live music and many breakout sessions and workshops to attend.



There were 'sharing' sessions where people told about their loss of a child, sibling, or grandchild. There were sessions related to the death of a troubled child, death due to substance abuse, death due to suicide, death of an LGBTQ+ child, loss due to homicide, infant and toddler loss, loss of only or all children, sudden death from car accident, sudden death, sessions for siblings, sessions for grandparents, loss of a step child, loss of multiple people, and many other sessions on different aspects of dealing with grief and loss. The conference itself was an amazing source of grief support for everyone.

At a session that we both attended, called "How Volunteering Has Helped My Grief, from a seasoned Griever", we were

STORY CONTINUES ON PAGE 3



Executive Director's Corner: Supporting A Growing Dragonfly Project

By Pete Bonde

Happy fall! I hope you had a wonderful summer.

The Dragonfly Project's mission is to provide a message of hope to those who are grieving. We do this in a small way by sending out cards with The Dragonfly story and a dragonfly keychain. We also send out this newsletter twice a year and have an annual celebration and remembrance event.

One way that we distribute our cards and keychains is through hospice organizations. We have partnered with a number of them over the years. This year, we will be providing 400 cards to Seasons Hospice in Rochester MN for their annual gala and for their organization.

We don't do a deep dive into providing grief support. We do recommend The Compassionate Friends (TCF) as an organization that does provide a lot of grief support. There are hundreds of local chapters across the United States that meet weekly to help people with their grief. They do this mainly by letting people share their grief story and supporting them. In July this year, Julie and I attended TCF's national annual conference in Denver. See page one for a summary of that trip.

We have a goal this year of sending out 14,000

dragonfly packets to those who are grieving. This is an ambitious goal. We are currently running short of our goal. You can help us by getting some packets (cards with keychains and dragonfly story) 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 volunteers to find recipients to send a message of hope to in Illinois, Kentucky, Missouri, and Virginia.

In addition, I have decided to step down from my role as Executive Director for The Dragonfly Project (TDP). I will be retiring from that role as of May 31, 2024. It has been a pleasure to lead TDP these past eight years. If you are interested in applying for Executive Director for TDP, contact our Chair, Karen Bonde, at <mailto:karenb@dragonflyproject.org>.

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](#). To volunteer for our Adopt-a-State program, fill out the form at www.dragonflyproject.org/get_involved

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

~ Pete



The mission of The Compassionate Friends—When a child dies, at any age, the family suffers intense pain and may feel hopeless and isolated. The Compassionate Friends provides highly personal comfort, hope, and support to every family experiencing the death of a son or a daughter, a brother or a sister, or a grandchild, and helps others better assist the grieving family.

To learn more about The Compassionate Friends go to their website: <https://www.compassionatefriends.org>

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 2024. 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. 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

The Compassionate Friends continued



blessed with a special connection between The Dragonfly Project and The Compassionate Friends. During the session, Pete shared how volunteers, especially speakers at our annual meeting, for The Dragonfly Project found hope, purpose, and a positive feeling on their grief journey while volunteering for us. Immediately, a woman shouted out, “The Dragonfly Project saved my life by leading me to The Compassionate Friends (TCF)!” Her child had died in February of 2020. We had sent her a packet, which she probably received in April or May. That was appreciated and she went to our website and found TCF. During the early pandemic, she could not find a counselor to talk to, but she found a local TCF chapter and it helped her immensely in her grief journey.

Our favorite session was “Sibling Panel for Parents: To Better Understand Surviving Siblings”. About 7-8 panelists shared how they coped with the death of their sibling and answered questions from parents. One of their most unfavorable questions was “How’s your mom?” No one ever asked how they were.

Here is a quote from that session:

When you lose a parent, you lose the past.
When you lose a spouse, you lose the present.
When you lose a child, you lose the future.
When you lose a sibling, you lose the past, present,
and future.

We also made personal contact with several other participants as we participated, including TCF members who were from Minnesota.

There were four keynote speakers.

- Donna Goodrich spoke on the gifts of grief
- Bob Baugher, a certified death educator, spoke about the conference – What did you bring, what will you take with you, what will you leave at the conference?
- Nathan Peterson, a musician, told the story of their



The Walk to Remember in Denver

daughter who while in the womb was discovered to have a body that was ‘incompatible with life’. This was really hard to listen to as the daughter kept dying and then reliving.

- Sadria Strong told how the kidnapping and murder of her daughter and her fiancé led to “Briana’s Heart of Gold” – kidney and heart donors.

On Sunday, the last day of the conference, we did a “Walk to Remember” through downtown Denver. About 400 of us walked to the capital building and held signs with sayings and pictures of our kids, siblings, or grandchildren. It was a lovely way to honor our grief.

About 825 people attended the conference. Before the last keynote session, Pete asked a TCF staff person what they did with the other 275 packets we sent them. They had them in a store room. We asked if we could put them out for people to take. So before and after the last session, they were put on tables outside the main room. An announcement was made that they were available for taking. We went to another sharing session after the main keynote, and after that session, all the packets were gone.

The Compassionate Friends has about 500 chapters all over the United States. They do a great job of providing leadership for forming grief support groups. This is a wonderful connection for The Dragonfly Project! We are so grateful and hope to keep this connection going.

In Memory of June Shashura, Adopt a State Volunteer

by Karen Bonde

One thing the Dragonfly Project has always been grateful for is our volunteers. A large portion of our volunteers belong to our Adopt-a-State program which gathers obituaries from newspapers or internet sources to send Dragonfly cards with a dragonfly keychain to those who have lost loved ones. Many times, the recipient of the Dragonfly card will share their stories about encounters with dragonflies in their daily lives after the loss of a loved one. The following story is about one of our Adopt-a-State volunteers who sent many cards of hope to those in need, her name is June Shashura.



**June & Mick
Shashura**

I didn't receive a card when my husband passed because he was over 40, but I ordered one instead. Me and my daughter's story about the dragonfly is a special story as well. When my husband (Mick) died, my daughter kept seeing many dragonflies around her. A teal colored one was the one that was the most prolific one she saw. We live in North Carolina, so dragonflies are usually here all year long. We couldn't understand the reason we kept seeing this specific one so often, so I decided to do some detective work and started Googling the teal dragonfly. I learned that its diet consisted mostly of mosquitoes and so it was nicknamed "Skeeter". My heart soared and I cried. The day my daughter was born, my husband called her his little "Skeeter" and he called her that until he passed. He visits us all the time, so we know he is ok. Thank you for this wonderful project to tell the story of the dragonfly. I am proud to be a volunteer to send the beautiful card and key chain to loved ones who have lost a precious soul.

~ from June Shashura, 12/17/2021

After reading this story, the Dragonfly Project emailed June for permission to print her story in this Fall Newsletter with some pictures and some additional detail. The following is a reply from her daughter.

This is Yvonne, June's daughter. I am sorry to inform you that my dear mother passed on 7/22/23. She is now flying high with her own set of beautiful wings.



**June's Pendant
"Until I see you again"**

I found this dragonfly pendant in my mom's wallet on the day she passed. It was her last message to me. A few weeks after her death, I was blessed to know that she was back with my dad. I was sitting in my car one morning before going to cardiac rehab; as two dragonflies flew over the front of my car in tandem. At one time I thought they were coming inside my car. This occurred for a week and then they disappeared. I believe that they stopped by to let me know that they were reunited.

I know my mom enjoyed sending out the Dragonfly cards. She spoke about it several times to me and my husband. Thank you for giving her the opportunity to do so.

~ from Yvonne Shashura, 9/20/2023



Yvonne & June

Thank you, Yvonne, for your willingness to contribute to this story in honor of your mother and father. We are always grateful to hear about the miracle of the dragonflies bringing us hope in amazing ways continues.



**Give to the Max Day 2023 is Thursday,
November 16, 2023 to the end of the year!
Go to this website to donate:**

<https://www.givemn.org/organization/The-Dragonfly-Project>

The Dragonfly Project



Save the Date — May 4, 2024

Join us in honoring loved ones and celebrating The Dragonfly Project
with Music, Dragonfly Stories, and Candle-Lighting Memorial
In-person (Minneapolis, MN) & Live Streamed

To learn more, check out our website celebration page
<https://www.dragonflyproject.org/2024-celebration>

22nd Annual Celebration

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/online-store](https://www.dragonflyproject.org/online-store)





More Recipient Comments

This is such a beautiful expression of sympathy. I received one of your cards when my husband passed away. I immediately put the dragonfly key chain on my car key chain. ~ Vicki S.



I just wanted to reach out and say thank you for the card. We lost our son Kane the day he was born and it's definitely been hard. Around this time last year my Aunt Jill passed away as well. Her favorite thing was always dragonflies. Your card just came so perfectly and felt like a blessing from heaven. Almost as if Aunt Jill wanted us to know that she has Kane in her arms. Thank you so much and I love what your foundation is doing! ~ Irene

I received one a few months after my Mom died, I was having such a hard time, missing her so much. I received this card, it was like a message from her. I keep the dragonfly on my keychain always. I want to do the same for my friends. ~ Vicki B.

I just wanted to thank you for your card I received. very unexpected, but more appreciated than you know. ~ Lizzie

Thank you so much for the card and key chain. It was a welcome surprise to my day. A moment to be still and remember my children. I have 2 adult children who have passed. My only daughter in 2012 and my Son Tim in August. There is nothing more painful. My days are filled with sorrow and pain. Everyday is so difficult to keep going. Thank you for thinking of me and my kids. ~ Linda

Thank you so much for the thoughtful card and dragonfly ~ Ashley



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 2023

In Memory of Christopher, my son
Given by Ann Atkinson

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

In Memory of Linda Berglund
Given by Ginger Collyard

In Memory of Hans Bonde
Given by Bill and Barb Bonde
Given by Chris and Dwight Dyrud

In Memory of Harold Bonde
Given by Anne Bonde

In Memory of Ann Keller Burtis
Given by Steve & Gloria Keller

In Memory of Joe Castaldo
Given by Geri Lyn Fortune

In Memory of Julie Dunn
Given by Antoinette Potrzebowski

In Memory of Gary & Tyler Fahlstedt
Given by Beth Fahlstedt

In Memory of Dan Fink
Given by Eileen Fink

In Memory of Cole Hammond, our son
Given by Gayle Hammond

In Memory of My son, Matthew Ines
Given by Michele Geis

In Memory of Paul Keller
Given by Steve & Gloria Keller

In Memory of Carol LaFreniere
Given by Ladonna Kiefat

In Memory of Jay Lechler
Given by Jack and Jermaine Lechler

In Memory of Cousin Lee
Given by Georgia Savat

In Memory of Sean McQuillen
Given by Paula and Dan McQuillen

In Memory of Jacob Moe
Given by Steve and Mary K Moe

In Memory of Gayle
"My Sunshine" Nereson
Given by Gary Nereson

In Memory of Marge Brooker Nolan
Given by Charlotte Brooker
& Gene Mammenga

In Memory of Darlyne Pape
Given by Connie Kirchner

In Memory of Brad Poissant
Given by Shari Poissant

In Memory of Kory Poissant
Given by Shari Poissant

In Memory of Elijah Reardon
Given by Ladonna Kiefat

In Memory of Mercedes, my Daughter
Given by Annemarie Salerno

In Memory of Vivian Samlaska
Given by Heidi Haugen

In Memory of Sara Schewe
Given by Ruth Schewe

In Memory of Charles Simi
Given by Alice Simi

In Memory of Sally Jo Blackmer
Tammes
Given by Janet Otten

In Memory of Husband, Bill
Given by P.J. Tombarge

In Memory of Sandy Vanstone
Given by Michele Moskwa

In Memory of Alberta Whitaker
Given by Amy Hennen
Given by Norman Whitaker

In Memory of Marge Zugschwert
Given by Jennifer McCann

Honorariums— March thru August 2023

In Honor of Pete & Julie Bonde
Given by Valerie Marquardt
& Greg Brooker

In Honor of Margarette & Don Brooker
Given by Jana M Bauer

In Honor of Helen Trombley
Given by Donors of the
Schwab Charitable Fund
Designated by Diane & John Tapper

In Honor of Leland Selvey, Jr.
devoted husband
Given by Margaret Righeimer

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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 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.