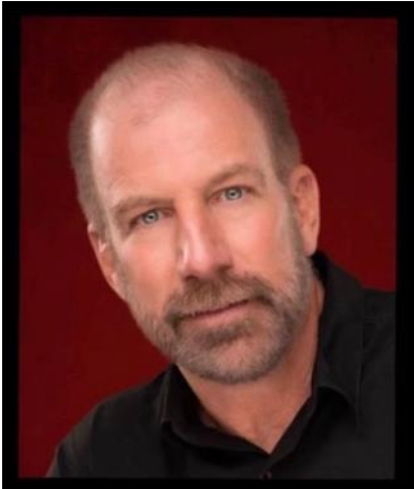


The Skin of the Dragonfly

by John Rivett

The Dragonfly is about transformation and dreams about insights. If we are open, both can be conduits of deeper meaning.

My immediate and extended family had never been touched by suicide. After my brother Jim's suicide in August 2018, my family received the consoling dragonfly message and key chain from my friend Valerie at The Dragonfly Project. Little did we know that was the opening and start of receiving further messages of hope.



Jim Rivett

My brother's suicide changed my perspective on the mental health shift needed at the cultural and personal levels. It has forever changed my belief in what matters in life's journey. That dragonfly key chain was repurposed as a trinket for my hiking stick and serves as an important reminder when I'm hiking.

America's obsession with the pursuit of happiness might be interpreted to include taking one's life. Having an incurable disease, I can understand this kind of decision. But with trauma or emotional suffering, which can't often be seen plainly, it appears as their only exhausted option for too many. We certainly cannot control anyone's behavior or whether one chooses to end their life. However, I suggest we not let this fall entirely on the individual. Each suicide, to some degree, can be a mirror of our own cultural dysfunction.

If materialism were an indicator of happiness, we should be one of the happiest people on Earth. Yet, we suffer high levels of anxiety, stress, depression, and loneliness. Coming out of the

STORY CONTINUES ON PAGE 4

Grief Recovery

By Maggie Bauer

First and foremost, I'm Maggie Bauer, Chris' little sister. My brother Chris died by suicide in August of 2012. He was a tall, lean, handsome, buff guy who when he loved you, he loved fully. He deeply enjoyed nearly anything in the great outdoors; fishing, hunting with his bird dog Charlie, and grilling.

We were typical midwestern sibling kids who played hard, loved hard and sometimes fought hard. Chris was always building stuff—a nativity scene with all my stuffed animals, bike jumps, a koi pond, even a putt-putt golf course around the house. He helped my grandfather build at the cabin which nurtured his career as a carpenter. The cabin was a wonderful place for us where we would explore the lake shoreline and talk about the different dragonflies we found—the blue iridescent ones, the ones with black dots on their wings, the beefier orangish yellow ones. He was a loving brother, son, friend, and father.

His death changed the whole trajectory of my life. I had just been accepted into grad school for social work but didn't feel

ready to take on the workload, so I found the Grief Recovery Method and later the Grief Educator program and became certified in both. I lived in North Dakota for another year after Chris passed.



Chris Bauer

Several months after Chris died, my mom mailed me a card that included a dragonfly keychain from The Dragonfly Project. I couldn't believe it! Complete strangers were thinking of me and my family during our hardest time. This gave me hope and comfort.

STORY CONTINUES ON PAGE 5



Executive Director's Corner: *The Journey Continues*

By Pete Bonde

On March 24, 2001, our family received a card from Valerie Marquardt and her daughter Anne Brooker. Our son Hans had died from brain cancer on September 28, 2000, and the card arrived on his birthday. In the card was The Dragonfly Story and a purple bracelet with a dragonfly charm on it. It had been a hard day for Julie, and the story of how this card arrived became what she calls "The Miracle that Came in the Mail." This card and the dragonfly story totally changed Julie's grief journey.

Nine months later Julie wrote about the transformation of her grief journey that resulted from that card and dragonfly pendant in our annual New Year's letter. We also included a page of pictures and memories of Hans. We of course sent this letter to Valerie and Anne's house.

In February of 2002, Anne Brooker realized how this story impacted our lives and she wanted to do more. She asked her mom if she could send the story to other people. Her mom wisely said yes. Soon, Anne and her family were finding obituaries in the paper and sending The Dragonfly Story and dragonfly pendants to people who had lost loved ones. Then they started getting responses and thank yous which encouraged them! So, Anne got other friends and the community involved in helping them, including Julie and me. In the fall of 2003, The Dragonfly Project (TDP) was incorporated in the state of Minnesota. Later, TDP became an official 501(c)(3) non-profit with the IRS.

Then in May of 2004, the Minneapolis Star Tribune featured a story in the Metro/State section about Anne and how she started The Dragonfly Project as well as how it helped Julie and me with our grief. She received a lot of attention from that article and received

invitations to speak about TDP around the Twin Cities area. By the end of 2004, the number of cards and dragonfly pendants sent out by TDP quadrupled from 2003.

With The Dragonfly Project growing, in May of 2005, a board of directors was formed. The original members were Anne Brooker, Valerie Marquardt, John Adams, Pete Bonde, Anna Bablitch, Cheryl Seefeldt, and Darolyn Gray. Their first order of business was hiring Darolyn Gray as executive director. The first volume of the Buzzette newsletter was published in August of 2005. By the end of 2005, 2,713 cards and keychains were distributed to grieving people who needed a message of hope, more than double of what was sent the year before.

In June of 2016, I was hired by the board of directors to become the Executive Director. In this role, I became more involved in the day to day operations of TDP. I have worked with the Board of Directors to set and implement goals and policies. I have been the main liaison to new groups and people reaching out to The Dragonfly Project. And TDP continues to grow. As of April 2024, we have sent out 169,000 cards and keychains to people who are grieving!

And now, as of May 31, 2024, I am no longer the Executive Director for TDP. I have been wanting to cut back on my Dragonfly Project hours for many months, and now is the time. This will allow me to spend more time with family and work on personal projects. I will continue to be involved with TDP, mainly managing the computer software and hardware and the inventory in our 'warehouse.' In addition, I will be involved in some of the financial management. The Board of Directors has been involved in a search for a new Executive Director and that process is moving along.

We have a goal this year of sending out 13,750 dragonfly packets to those who are grieving. You can help us by getting

some packets (cards with keychains and dragonfly story) from our website ([Condolence Cards](#)) and sending them to people 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 in Arkansas, Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, Maryland, Missouri, New Jersey, and Washington to send TDP Project cards to.

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

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

It has been an honor to serve as the Executive Director for The Dragonfly Project. I have enjoyed it and have learned a lot. Thank you for all of your support of me and The Dragonfly Project!
~ Pete

The Dragonfly Story

In the bottom of an old pond lived some grubs who could not understand why none of their groups ever came back after crawling up the stems of the lilies to the top of the water. They promised each other that the next one who was called to make the upward climb would return and tell what happened to him. Soon one of them felt an urgent impulse to seek the surface; he rested himself on the top of a lily pad and went through a glorious transformation which made him a dragonfly with beautiful wings. In vain he tried to keep his promise. Flying back and forth over the pond, he peered down at his friends below. Then he realized that even if they could see him they would not recognize such a radiant creature as one of their number.

-WalterDudleyCavert



22nd Annual Celebration & Remembrance Event



May 4, 2024

by Julie Bonde



Our Speakers

John Rivett and Maggie Bauer

On May 4, 2024 The Dragonfly Project celebrated 22 years of spreading our mission of hope. We are grateful to Nativity Lutheran Church in St. Anthony, Minnesota for providing space for our event and continuing partner to with us in this mission of hope. Also a big thank you to all the volunteers who have continued giving their time and talents every year to continue our mission. We couldn't do it without you.

We are deeply grateful to John Rivett and Maggie Bauer for sharing their amazing stories of loss and hope. Both had lost brothers to suicide. Suicide is a subject we often avoid in our culture. Both John and Maggie brought honor and healing to the this painful experience of losing a loved one to suicide. There was a healing sigh in the room when John said, "I didn't lose my brother to suicide. I lost him to anxiety and depression." Then Maggie shared her own hard-earned wisdom, "We are all on our own personal healing journeys and will have to figure out what works best for us." Their stories are very moving and are included in this Newsletter. Then the music shared by Annie Schlaefer, Luke Bonde and Geralyn Sorensen wove a thread of additional healing comfort around those stories. It was truly such a wonderful theme of healing for mental health issues, including our grief. How appropriate that May is National Mental Health Awareness Month!



Annie Schlaefer & Luke Bonde



Candle Lighting Ceremony

Another big thank you goes to Monica Cleve for offering a matching grant of \$3,000 during our celebration this year. We were able to raise \$4,577 in donations! Along with our auction and sales, that takes our total celebration fundraising to over \$8,400. This money goes mostly to cover our event and cost of materials and sending cards out to those who are grieving. Thanks for adding more hope!

After our speakers, we had time to remember our loved ones with our annual Memorial Photo Montage and candle lighting. Following the program we enjoyed some delightful conversations at our reception. Thanks again to all who participated. We hope even more can join us next year.



Our Reception Hosts
Winda Roets, Greg Brooker,
Georgia Savat



Geralyn Sorensen

Videos of the annual celebration and the photo montage are available on our website as well as a PDF of the program that has more information.

Go to <https://www.dragonflyproject.org/2024celebrationvideos>

The Skin of the Dragonfly

Continued from page 1

pandemic has made this blatantly obvious. Suicide is one of the leading causes of death in the US. I see these as symptoms of an unhealthy culture with questionable values--we glorify greed, idolize money, worship youth, chase fame, exalt competition, compare ourselves, poison nature, and exploit people and creatures. Our technology and social media downgrade our humanity. All of this contributes to our collective mental health crisis.

Before his suicide, my brother Jim told me numerous times that those values compounded his anxiety and depression. My purpose is not to point fingers but to shed light on these cultural illusions so we may transform. For someone struggling, these junk values can add more static to an overburdened mind. Our most brilliant, creative, sensitive, and marginalized individuals often surrender with heavy hearts of despair in this context. Sure, we can say people should have thicker skins. Thick skins may win the day, but they don't make the world kinder or better.



Numerous dragonfly encounters after my brother's death served as beacons of hope. A dragonfly landed on my shoulder and I sensed my brother was okay. It didn't just land there and leave; it stayed on my shoulder for nearly 30 minutes—something I've never experienced. I thought I would walk down to the river, which was nearby. The dragonfly accompanied me as I wandered by the river and eventually sat on a bench. After a few minutes, I wanted to take a selfie with the dragonfly. At that point, he flew off. My brother hated selfies. There were several other dragonfly encounters.

On his death anniversary, I had a profound dream of a

school bus that contained my departed brother and many who had taken their lives. They were adults dressed in costume but carrying on with youthful vigor and playfulness. The messages I received in that dream from that bus were a beacon of how we could live differently--connected with more empathy, compassion, understanding, and forgiveness so that we all may thrive.



If we shed our thick skins and old beliefs, we could transform into a higher state of being.



The Dragonfly Project Board of Directors

Karen Bonde *Chair*
Janelle Stanton Soderberg *Vice Chair*
Brianna Walvoort *Secretary*
Winda Roets *Treasurer*
Jennifer DeBruin *Member at Large*
Emma DeBruin *Member at Large*

Executive Director Pete Bonde (ends 5/31/24)

Founder Anne Marquardt Brooker

The Dragonfly Buzzette is the official newsletter of The Dragonfly Project and is published twice a year. The next issue will be published in Fall 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

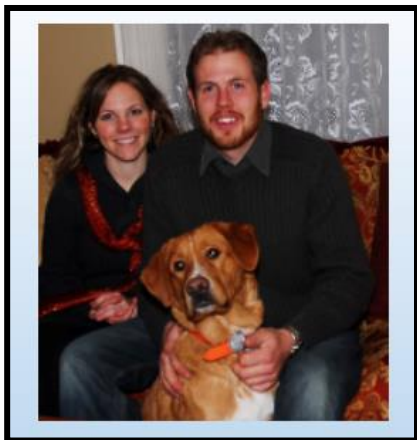
Grief Recovery

continued from page 1

Thank you to those compassionate people who showed they cared without knowing us. I still wear the dragonfly charm often.

In September of 2021, my partner and I purchased a 32-acre farm near Taylors Falls. This was another piece of my healing process. I started a business serving people in grief.

I help educate people about grief and give them a safe place to feel heard and validated. I also incorporate nature and the horses in the experience. I've learned that grief recovery means feeling better. We are all on our own personal healing journeys and will have to figure out what works best for us. Here are some examples that helped me: being out in nature; walking or hiking; cooking and eating nutritious food; and spending time with horses. Listening to music that reminded me of Chris or music that helped express how I felt was also helpful. What will work for you? Keep Trying!! What changes in your life can you make to feel better? Think... right now... What changes can I make to feel better? I don't have all the answers, but I am committed in this lifetime to never stop looking. We are all forever healing if we choose to.



Maggie Bauer pictured with her brother Chris.



**Maggie Bauer: Grief Recovery Specialist®
Grief Educator®
Equine Expert**

Maggie Bauer can be reached via her website:
<http://www.grievingtreeconsulting.com>

The Dragonfly and its Symbolisms

Excerpts from Randy Jones (Learnaboutnature.com)

The dragonfly has been a subject of intrigue in every single continent it is found in, and with each civilization, has developed a unique meaning to it, its behavior and its lifestyle.

Maturity and a Depth of Character

The dragonfly, in almost every part of the world symbolizes change and change in the perspective of self-realization; and the kind of change that has its source in mental and emotional maturity and the understanding of the deeper meaning of life. The traditional association of Dragonflies with water also gives rise to this meaning to this amazing insect. The Dragonfly's scurrying flight across water represents an act of going beyond what's on the surface and looking into the deeper implications and aspects of life.

Power and Poise

The dragonfly's agile flight and its ability to move in all six directions exude a sense of power and poise-something that comes only with age and maturity. The dragonfly can move at an amazing 45 miles an hour, hover like a helicopter, fly backwards like a hummingbird, fly straight up, down and on either side. What is mind blowing is the fact that it can do this while flapping its wings a mere 30 times a minute while mosquitoes and houseflies need to flap their wings 600 and 1000 times a minute respectively.

Focus on Living 'IN' the Moment!

The dragonfly normally lives most of its life as a nymph or larval stage. It flies only for a fraction of its life and usually not more than a few months. This adult dragonfly does it all in these few months and leaves nothing to be desired. This style of life symbolizes and exemplifies the virtue of living **IN** the moment and living life to the fullest.

The Opening of One's Eyes

The eyes of the dragonfly are one of the most amazing and awe-inspiring sights. Given almost 80% of the insect's brain-power is dedicated to its sight and the fact that it can see in all 360 degrees around it, it symbolizes the uninhibited vision of the mind and the ability to see beyond the limitations of the human self.

To the Japanese, it symbolizes summer and autumn and is admired and respected all over, so much so that the Samurai use it as a symbol of power, agility and best of all, Victory. In China, people associate the dragonfly with prosperity, harmony and as a good luck charm.

Amongst Native Americans, it is a sign of happiness, speed and purity. Purity because the dragonfly eats from the wind itself.



Recipient Responses from Facebook

My parents just received a card from one of your volunteers in regard to my brother's death in January. We are in Maine and had never heard of your organization before. It meant so much to them, to us. What a great idea! Thank you SO very much for remembering him and thinking of our family.

~ Kristi Shawn

I received a card from one of your volunteers and it meant a lot to me. It was my son who died thank you so much. I am also from Maine. ~ Vivian R Carpentier

I received a dragonfly card yesterday in memory of my son and it touched me more than I can express with words. When I read the envelope I expected it was an attempt to profit from my family's loss. I was amazed to learn it was a simple act of kindness. Thank you so much. ~ Jon Beck

I received a card and dragonfly today in remembrance of our son, Adam Erickson. I can't tell you how meaningful this was, especially right after Christmas. What a beautiful thing to do for grieving families. With grateful hearts thank you so so much. ~ Pam Binder Higgins

I don't know how you heard of my daughter's passing but I received the sweetest card and keychain today in her memory. Out of nowhere at that moment I so very much needed it. I appreciate it. It was signed "Eileen." Thank you, my dear, thank you! ~ Adriana's grieving momma (Shannon Lynn McBain)

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 has 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. It felt almost as if Aunt Jill wanted us to know that she had Kane in her arms. Thank you so much and I love what your foundation is doing! ~ Becca Montoya

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 2023 we received \$1544 in donations. These following members have designated dollars to The Dragonfly Project:

Audrey Parochka
Bonnie Kranzusch
Brian Macho
Cynthia Kaske
Debra A Stang
Diane K Wisker
Gary Miller
Harold Wisker
Jennifer DeBruin

Julie Bonde
LaDonna Lexvold
Lisa A Kajer
Michael J Kranzusch
Patricia Ann Walberg
Pete Bonde
Rachel Bly
Robert E Walberg
Vera Miller

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 2.3 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.



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 2023 thru February 2024

In Memory of Roger, Benjamin,
& Jacob Baalson
Given by Kay Baalson
In Memory of Trevor Ball
Given by Eric Ball
In Memory of Lee Barthel
Given by Charlotte Brooker
& Gene Mammenga
In Memory of Michael Blesi
Given by Carolyn Blesi
In Memory of Earl Bonde
Given by Kris Bonde
Given by Karen Bonde
In Memory of Hans Peter Bonde
Given by Julie & Pete Bonde
Given by Kris Bonde
Given by Karen Bonde
Given by Steve Stensrud
In Memory of Harold Bonde
Given by Helen & Dick Lodmill
In Memory of Terry Bosch
Given by Kathy Matschiner
In Memory of Jacob Brisbois
Given by Donna Brisbois
In Memory of Honey Brooker
Given by Michelle Brooker
In Memory of Dan Buehner
Given by Dee Buehner
In Memory of Dorothy Joyce Calicchio
Given by Janet Otten
In Memory of Bernard Wesley
Check Sr.
Given by Eleanor Laviolette
In Memory of Jesse Ebbert
Given by Doug Ebbert
In Memory of my Mother, Verna Mae
Given by Gwen Enzler
In Memory of Angela Westby Fiol
Given by Paula & Dan McQuillen
In Memory of Mother Joan
Given by Kristin Forsythe

In Memory of Chandler Garcia
Given by Michael Veglia
In Memory of Benjamin Preston Heller
Given by Hope Heller
In Memory of Jesse Jacob Heller
Given by Dawn Heller
In Memory of Tony Hessom
Given by Kris Bonde
Given by Karen Bonde
In Memory of Peter Hillesheim
Given by P. J. Heidelberg
In Memory of David Hobbs
Given by Sheryl Hobbs
In Memory of & Andrew Holter
& Arlen Holter
Given by Elizabeth Holter
In Memory of Nancy Homan
Given by Anonymous
In Memory of cousin Doug Jensen
Given by Jeanne Skoog
In Memory of Wayne Johnson
Given by Anonymous
In Memory of Dale Juenemann
Given by Patrick & Janet Juenemann
In Memory of Aaron Kolander
Given by Daniel A Kolander
In Memory of Elizabeth Lasley
Given by Duncan Lasley
In Memory of Jared Scott Lingen
Given by Vicky Vander Woude
In Memory of Mr Man
Given by Marcia Kurtz
In Memory of Dawn Massmann
Given by Bill Kiffmeyer
In Memory of Zachary Scott
Matschiner
Given by Kathy Matschiner
In Memory of my son, Dan
& my father, Harlan
Given by Julie McClellan
In Memory of Gail's mother
Given by Gail Holmes

In Memory of Jim Poole
Given by Diane Netzloff
In Memory of Grace Scheller
Given by Amy Scheller
In Memory of Sara Schewe
Given by Ruth Schewe
In Memory of Sarah
Given by Derek Shonrock
In Memory of Bobby Sontag
Given by Lisa Sontag
In Memory of Gladys Spenny
Given by Ed Spenny
In Memory of Marcia Sternig
Given by Janet Otten
In Memory of Miles Sudbeck
Given by Nancee Sudbeck
In Memory of Dusty Lindell Taber
Given by Jennifer Downs
In Memory of parents John & Cora
Tabis
Given by Shirley Tabis
In Memory of Alex Trainor
Given by Ladonna Kiefat
In Memory of My Scotty
Given by Kathi Vaughn
In Memory of Alberta Whitaker
Given by Norman Whitaker
In Memory of Darrell & Sue Wiemeier
Given by Darolyn Gray
In Memory of Zachary Wise
Given by Christa Andersen
In Memory of Julie
Given by Joyce Woltzen

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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 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) 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.