



The Dragonfly Buzzette

Newsletter for The Dragonfly Project

Volume 35

Spring 2023

My Dragonfly Messengers

by Nancy Proulx

I feel compelled to share my story with you. In 2020, when our country was in lockdown from the Covid outbreak, I lost my two oldest sons and my sister.

Ken, my oldest, fell while walking his dog and after emergency surgery they couldn't stop the bleeding on his brain. He passed away on June 8th. Four months later, in October, my son Randy passed away from a massive heart attack.

Four months after that my sister Virginia died from Covid.



Randy Proulx
2/21/1962
10/14/2020

Ken Proulx
8/6/1960
6/5/2020.

After Ken died, a friend of his sent me a card with the dragonfly story. I was comforted by the story and felt he was still with me. Because of the virus lockdown, I decided to have a memorial service for the three of them in June of 2021, with close family and friends. I planned a graveside celebration of their lives. As I sat on my deck that beautiful summer day before the family arrived, I was thinking about what to say at the service. I remembered the card with the dragonfly story. I got the card out and read the story over. As I finished reading the story a dragonfly flew by me. (They are not common in our area.) I thought to myself, "Okay, that's what you want me to do."

Our family gathered together at the cemetery, a small group of 20 to 25 of us. We formed a circle around the plot to share stories about my loved ones. I started with the Lord's Prayer, then read the dragonfly Story. When I finished reading, a dragonfly flew through the center of all of us. We couldn't believe our eyes. None of us will ever forget it.

After everyone left and I was alone again, I was sitting on my deck with my legs crossed and a dragonfly landed on my ankle.

STORY CONTINUES ON PAGE 7

We Are All Cherishable

By Julie Wylie

The first time I heard the dragonfly story was thanks to Anne Marquardt Brooker in 2004 reciting it word for word on stage in front of a crowd. She had beautifully memorized the story and captured everyone's heart at Janae Bower's Inspired Women's Retreat. That was the first time I ever heard the dragonfly story. My life was forever changed by the symbolism of the dragonfly thanks to Anne and The Dragonfly Project.



Julie Wylie with her mother

My mom was touched by the dragonfly story and said if she died, she would try to reach me through signs like a dragonfly. Four years later in 2008, my mom died. The dragonfly story was delivered at her funeral, and it was the beginning of a common language for grief and comfort within her loved ones. We had a dragonfly etched into her grave marker. I've gotten through many challenging, grief-filled times relying on signs and symbols rooted in the belief of the dragonfly story.

In 2021, I published my book *Cherishable* about mom's cancer journey, hospice, death, and legacy. My mom was a model of how to handle end of life with grace and openness. The many ways she did that are captured in my book.

Now, God's working through me to bring the topic of grief into more of our everyday conversations. Processing our grief and being proactive in our planning are good for the world and our hearts.

Here's one of my favorite quotes in *Cherishable*, "The dragonfly concept sparks the

STORY CONTINUES ON PAGE 7

Executive Director's Corner: *How It All Began*

By Pete Bonde

In November of 2009, Julie and Pete Bonde met with artist Annie Young. The Bondes had seen an orange painting with a black dragonfly called 'Luck Visits' and wanted to meet the artist. We bonded immediately and Annie told us how she had been an artist and then lost her eyesight in her late 30's. (Annie has a hereditary form of rod-cone dystrophy). She had thrown away all of her art supplies, but a friend convinced Annie that she needed to get back into art. This was the beginning of a long, continued friendship.

Annie's artwork became a card for The Dragonfly Project and was available on our website in April of 2012. Annie, as an Air Force and MN Air National Guard Veteran, started involving veterans in assembling the cards and dragonfly keychains into what we call packets. This involved making the dragonfly keychains, and inserting the cards and keychains into envelopes. Annie was also a board member for our organization in 2014.



Annie Young

Annie kept promoting The Dragonfly Project and her card at veteran events. In 2016, Annie and photographer, Bill Mitchell, a friend and fellow MN Air National Guard Veteran, designed two new cards specifically for government workers and veterans. We started making them available on our website in March of 2017. Annie then promoted the 'permission to soar' and '...of the brave' cards to the

Veterans Administration (VA) hospital in Minneapolis. The VA in Minneapolis started using them for their clients' families and friends in 2017.

Then all of a sudden in February of this year, I got questions about our cards from four different VA hospitals across the country. After filling out vendor forms and going through the process of ordering cards, three of them eventually received some cards to use in their clinics and hospitals. Apparently, the Vets Health Administration has charged each local hospital with creating a POSTVENTION group. During a national call, a man from another VA said that he uses our cards and told the story behind it to others on the call. We hope that this is a beginning of a broader outreach with the VA hospitals. If you know of someone at a VA hospital, please share our mission with him or her. You can see more of Annie Young's art at annieyoungarts.com



**Permission to Soar
by Annie Young &
Bill Mitchell**

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](http://Make-a-donation-to-The-Dragonfly-Project). To volunteer for our Adopt-a-State program, fill out the form at dragonflyproject.org/get_involved.

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

~ Pete

More Recipient Responses

I just wanted you to know that I was a recipient of a dragonfly card and I wanted to let you know how uplifted I was!

Losing my daughter in a plane crash was no easy thing, but the outpouring of support keeps me in gratitude. Thank you!
~ Carol

Thank you so much for the card and keychain. 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. Every day is so difficult to keep going. Thank you for thinking of me and my kids. 🙏
~Linda



21st Annual Celebration & Remembrance Event

March 11, 2023

by Karen Bonde



On March 11th, 2023, The Dragonfly Project celebrated 21 years of spreading our mission of hope. The event was held at Nativity Lutheran Church in St. Anthony, Minnesota. A big thank you to all the volunteers who have continued to give their time and talents every year to continue our mission. This year we also celebrated sending out our 150,000th Dragonfly packet since the Project began in 2002.

154,000
packets sent out!



(L to R) Julie Wylie, Nancy Proulx, Valerie Marquardt & Karen Bonde

We would especially like to thank Nancy Proulx and Julie Wylie for sharing their own Dragonfly stories with everyone. Nancy lost two sons and her sister within one year's time. Julie lost her mother and has written a book on planning for the last phase of life. Their stories are very moving and are included in this Newsletter. [SEE FRONT PAGE]

Each year, we do a little fundraising during our celebration. We are very grateful to Dan and Paula McQuillen (long time friends/volunteers of The Dragonfly Project) and Pete and Julie Bonde for offering a matching grant to all monies donated during our celebration week. Thanks to them, we were able to raise \$3,000. Nearly all donated funds go toward supplies and sending cards out.

Memorial Photo Montage. Thank you to our music performers Carmina Stensland for wonderful guitar music, and Luke Bonde and Annie Schlaefer who provided a sweet piano and singing duet. We concluded the celebration with a candle lighting memorial honoring those loved ones who have been lost.



Annie Schlaefer & Luke Bonde

After our speakers, we had time to remember our loved ones through pictures and words, with our annual

This year was the first time since COVID that masks were not required and we were able to enjoy refreshments, snacks and of course cake! This also allowed us to enjoy fellowship with friends and loved ones after the service. We hope to see you all again next year!



Dan & Paula McQuillen

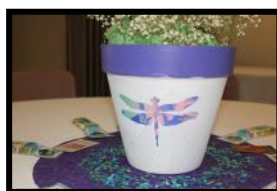


Table Centerpieces by Volunteer, Donna Brandell



Candle Lighting Ceremony

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/2023celebrationvideos>



Student Volunteers Finding and Sending Hope *by Emma DeBruin*

In November 2022, over 30 students from the University of Wisconsin Madison School of Business teamed up to help support The Dragonfly Project. We had 23 student volunteers on Friday and 31 on Saturday of the event. Students learned about the history of the impactful organization by first watching a video, then groups worked together to assemble keychains and create card packets. Each packet had a card with the dragonfly story and a dragonfly keychain with it. Finally, they sorted over 425 card packets by zip codes. It's amazing to think of how many people touched different stages of each card that will bring hope to someone grieving after losing a loved one. A whole community of love is being sent with each card.



Volunteers Signing Cards



Stuffing Envelopes



Sorting Zip Codes for Mailing

This service project was a really great way to introduce a new organization to many young students. Several of them expressed how passionate they were about The Dragonfly Project’s mission and that they wanted to get more involved in the future. The gift of hope given by the volunteers was also received in their own hearts.



Finished Packets

The Dragonfly Project Board of Directors

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

Executive Director **Pete Bonde**

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 2023. 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



Offering Comfort to Uvalde Families *by Valerie Marquardt*

On May 24, 2022, a mass shooting occurred at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, during which nineteen students and two teachers were fatally shot. In response, The Dragonfly Project’s school outreach program put together cards and books to send to families of the victims. In November 2022, we sent out 22 packages.

One package was sent to the school district and the other 21 packages were mailed out to family members who lost a loved one. Each family was gifted 20 condolence cards and a *Dragonfly Door* book. The school district was sent 70 cards.

Jennifer DeBruin located the addresses for the 21 families who lost a loved one. When I was unable to gather a significant group of people to sign the 490 condolence cards, Denise Jubert stepped up to the plate. She picked up boxes and boxes of materials from my house. She had friends sign the cards and then she put them into envelopes along with the keychains. This was a great deal of work. We had even more additional help with this particular outreach. Kristen Nold wrote the inscription in all of the cards. This was time consuming work since 21 first and last names were written out in 70 of the cards that were sent to the school staff. and then individual names were written out in 420 cards. There were about 6 to 8 people at Courage Kenny rehab at Mercy Hospital who signed all of the cards. In addition, we are grateful to all of the volunteers who ordered the condolence cards that we used and we thank those volunteers who made the keychains.



What a good feeling that we can bring a small message of hope to these families whose hearts are breaking from this tragedy. We are so grateful for all the volunteers who were able to help us make this happen.

Thank you so much everybody, Valerie



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 2022 we received \$1744 in donations. These following members have designated dollars to The Dragonfly Project:

Audrey C Parochka
Barbara J Fagerberg
Bonnie Kranzusch
Cynthia Sue Kaske
Donn Bruce Satrom
Douglas Dallmann
Gary N Miller
Janell Spelbrink

Jennifer DeBruin
Joan M Ruetten
Julie Bonde
LaDonna C Lexvold
Michael Kranzusch
Monica L Kleve
Patricia Ann Walberg
Peter Bonde

Rachel Bly
Robert E Walberg
Robert Spelbrink
Roger Kaska
Roxanne Dallmann
Vera L 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 2022 thru February 2023

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| In Memory of Amanda
Given by Linda Rohlman | In Memory of Charlotte D Englund
Given by Karen Wendel | In Memory of Wally Marquardt
Given by Marcy Marquardt |
| In Memory of James Arrell
Given by Pat Miller | In Memory of Richard Fahlstedt
Given by Kaylen White | In Memory of Dawn Massmann
Given by Colleen Kiffmeyer |
| In Memory of Benjamin Baalson
Given by Kay Baalson | In Memory of Steve Fischer
Given by Beth Fischer | In Memory of Joseph A Miller
Given by Cindi Miller |
| In Memory of Jacob Baalson
Given by Kay Baalson | In Memory of Edward Fitzsimons
Given by Raymond Fitzsimons | In Memory of Our dragonfly, Gail Moon
Given by Brittany Moon |
| In Memory of Roger Baalson
Given by Kay Baalson | In Memory of Betty Gee
Given by Janell & Bob Spelbrink | In Memory of Jason Timothy Murphy
Given by Ladonna Kiefat |
| In Memory of Tony Berger
Given by Teresa Berger | In Memory of Charlie Geurts
Given by Chuck & Mary Geurts | In Memory of Nana
Given by Caeleigh Stuart |
| In Memory of Mike Betterton
Given by Jodie Betterton | In Memory of Jesse Heller
Given by Dawn Heller | In Memory of Dr. James F. Napoli
Given by Ginger Collyard |
| In Memory of Angie Bibeau
Given by Sue Kovarik | In Memory of Peter Hillesheim
Given by P. J. Heidelberg | In Memory of Our Dear Neighbor
Given by Leland Selvey |
| In Memory of Mark Bjerkebek
Given by Beverly Bjerkebek | In Memory of David Hobbs
Given by Sheryl Hobbs | In Memory of Jim Poole
Given by Diane Netzloff |
| In Memory of Jean Boerner
Given by Anonymous | In Memory of Benjamin T Jansen
Given by Christine Jansen | In Memory of Verna Mae Renslow,
loving Mother
Given by Gwen Enzler |
| In Memory of Hans Bonde
Given by Julie & Pete Bonde
Given by Chris & Dwight Dyrud | In Memory of Jay
Given by Sheryl Muscat | In Memory of Marjee Righaimer
Given by Leland Selvey |
| In Memory of Harold Bonde
Given by Sue & Tom Trmka | In Memory of Dale Jeenemann
Given by Patrick & Janet Juenemann | Given by David A Bales |
| In Memory of Nancy Bonde
Given by Sue & Tom Trmka | In Memory of George Kagawa
Given by Antoinette Potrzebowski | Given by Anne Marie Tofil |
| In Memory of Derik Braswell
Given by Veronica Jones-Braswell | In Memory of Bonnie Kinney
Given by Dennis Kinney | In Memory of Amanda Roos
Given by Joyce Kirchner |
| In Memory of Kerim Zack Broadbent
Given by Janan Broadbent | In Memory of Vaughn Kispert
Given by Jeanette Kispert | In Memory of Sara Schewe
Given by Ruth Schewe |
| In Memory of Austin Bruce
Given by Anonymous | In Memory of Aaron Kolander
Given by Daniel A Kolander | In Memory of Alex David Schlieff
Given by Judith Schlieff |
| In Memory of Tessa Brueni
Given by Cindy Brueni | In Memory of Carolyn Kotval
Given by Teresa Berger | In Memory of Eva Schrank
Given by Debra Tokheim |
| In Memory of Ann Keller Burtis
Given by Gail Keller | In Memory of Gloria Kumferman
Given by Valerie Marquardt
& Greg Brooker | In Memory of Rachel Schreiner
Given by Palmer & Lois Ruschke |
| In Memory of Mary Camp's husband
Given by Deborah Kusnetz | Given by Marcy Marquardt | In Memory of Merle Spieler
Given by Linda Spieler |
| In Memory of Ann Marie Czech
Given by Mitch Czech | In Memory of Bob "Mr. Man" Kurtz
Given by Marcia Kurtz | In Memory of Dusty Taber
Given by James Taber |
| In Memory of Cory Daniels
Given by Robin Holland | In Memory of Jay Helmuth Lechler
Given by Jack & Jermaine Lechler | In Memory of Sarah Tilman
Given by Catherine Tilman |
| In Memory of James R Doering
Given by Marie Doering | In Memory of Bo Lehman
Given by Meta Krueger | In Memory of Jeremy Weinberg
Given by Thrivent Choice
Designated by Patricia & Robert Walberg |
| | In Memory of Leslie Lawrence Lindquist
Given by Ladonna Kiefat | In Memory of John Weist
Given by Jennifer Weist |

In Memory of Alberta Whitaker
Given by Norman Whitaker
In Memory of Sue Wolkin
Given by Charlotte Brooker
& Gene Mammenga

Honorariums

In Honor of Annette Bibeiu
Given by Sue Kovarik
In Honor of Rose Vinas Dillon
Given by Rose Dillon
In Honor of Larry Haugland
Given by Shanna Haugland

In Honor of Marjee Righeimer
Given by Gale Edinger
In Honor of Tiana Suarez
& her family & friends
Given by Elizabeth Kearns
In Honor of Kevin Daniel Valdz
Given by Alan Valdz



My Dragonfly Messengers

Continued from page 1

It turned itself to face me, moving its head side-to-side, then flew away.

I don't believe my loved ones are dragonflies, but I think they sent a message to let me know they have been resurrected and will always be with me and just because I can't see them, they do not cease to exist.

I try to share my story whenever I can and many people have told me that they have had similar experiences with birds, owls, bluejays, and cardinals. They have felt these were messages from their loved ones.



Nancy Proulx (center), pictured with sons, Ted Proulx (left) and Jon Proulx (right), celebrate the lives of her two sons lost in 2020, Ken Proulx and Randy Proulx.

We Are All Cherishable

continued from page 1

beginnings of new hellos, because you are recognizing a presence alive in our lives today. The hellos feel so comforting, reassuring, and encouraging, as they remind us we are not in this alone.”

A BIG thanks to The Dragonfly Project for providing an outlet to share our grief journeys together. Let's support The Dragonfly Project today for millions of other stories to be told in the future..

We are all Cherishable!



Julie Wylie shared her book *Cherishable* with people who came to the annual celebration.

You can learn more about Julie Wylie here:

<https://www.juliejwylie.com/>

Her book can be found on Amazon and Amazon.Kindle



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dragonflyproject.org

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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.