

Welcome to these New Members of our Team!

A Love Story *by Sherie Wagner*

My name is Sherie Wagner. I am honored to be one of the Dragonfly Project's new board members. I will try to give you a small glimpse into my past grief journey, the gift of being a mom, the devastation of losing my youngest son Joe to suicide and the pathway to finding my joy again.

Joe's birthday, Angel anniversary and holidays continue to be triggers and tearful. As I reflect on his life and his death, I have nothing but kind, loving memories of Joe. Throughout his life Joe was intelligent, gentle, kind, and a respectable young man. His passion for sports shone whether he was on the court or the field. Joe loved being with family and cherished his siblings. These thoughts make me happy. I am incredibly grateful for the 20+ years that he was alive.



Sherie Wagner

SHERIE'S STORY CONTINUES ON PAGE 4



Joy Akurienne

An Honor to Serve *by Joy Akurienne*

I am a mother of a newly minted teenage boy, the absolute joy of my life! I enjoy traveling, cooking, and serving in any way that I can. I became aware of the Dragonfly project when a former work colleague and outgoing board member Janelle, posted a passionate plea for folks to consider serving on the board of this incredible organization that I had never heard of. I reviewed the website, read the dragonfly story, and I was immediately drawn to serve. I have lost some dear people in my life, and that grief never goes away, it evolves and grows with you through your life journey. I consider it an honor to serve

— *blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted - Matthew 5:4.*

~Thanks, Joy

A Mission Close to My Heart *by Josie Shuster*

Hello! My name is Josie Shuster, and I am so excited to be starting as the Volunteer Coordinator for The Dragonfly Project.

I grew up in the Twin Cities area and am so excited to be back in Minnesota after spending the past six years in Michigan and Chicago! I graduated from Kalamazoo College in Michigan, where I studied psychology. After graduation, I reconnected with my lifelong love of skiing by coaching alpine ski racing for a season. I then spent a summer working on Mackinac Island (the one with no cars!) and most recently I lived in Chicago for a year. In my free time I love to spend time outdoors and close to nature, whether it is skiing, hiking, or camping!

JOSIE'S STORY CONTINUES ON PAGE 4



Josie Shuster

Executive Director's Corner:

Bringing Hope—One Packet, One Volunteer, One Story at a Time

By Tara Morrison

Happy Fall, Dragonfly Project Supporters!

It is hard to believe I've been with The Dragonfly Project for just five months—so much has happened that it feels like much longer! Even as a part-time team member, I've been deeply immersed in our mission: learning our history, understanding how every part of our work connects, and helping to support grieving people.

This summer, I spent some time in Montana helping my daughter, working remotely, and bringing The Dragonfly Project into new communities. I'm grateful to have had the opportunity to temporarily step into the role of recruiting volunteers and to refresh our Adopt-A-State program, which has become one of my favorite parts of this journey.

THOR Events: Taking Hope On the Road



One of the meaningful projects I've been part of is our THOR program—Taking Hope On the Road. THOR brings our packet events beyond the Minneapolis-St. Paul area to communities all over. For example, in Sunburst and Bozeman, Montana, I organized THOR events in local churches. Congregation members and staff gathered to

assemble dragonfly keychains and prepare packets. It was inspiring to see everyone—even the kids—jump in with so much enthusiasm. Despite the sobering subject matter, these events were filled with smiles, hope and kindness.

At the Sunburst event, one participant shared that after losing her husband at a young age, "I loved participating in this project today just to help someone else." Hearing those words reminded me why we do what we do. These moments of connection and compassion truly ripple outward, bringing comfort to those who need it most.



Adopt-A-State Program: Reaching Hearts Nationwide

Our Adopt-A-State program is the heart of The Dragonfly Project. Volunteers are assigned counties within a state, where they monitor funeral home notices and find addresses for survivors who have lost loved ones. We train volunteers step by step—through written guides, "How To" videos, Zoom calls, and phone support—so anyone with a computer and internet can join us from anywhere in the USA.

Once volunteers gather the addresses, they mail signed cards (with "The Dragonfly Story" printed inside) and addressed envelopes back to us. These are brought to packet assembly events, where groups of family, friends, and coworkers glue dragonfly keychains into the cards and prepare them for mailing. By the time recipients get their packet—often 4-6 months or more after their loss—the timing is especially meaningful. It's a moment when support from others may have faded, and a message from a caring stranger can mean the world.

As of October 1, 2025, we have sent a total of **181,000** packets, offering hope to families across the country. One recipient who had lost her young son recently wrote: "Thank you for thinking of our Luke and our family at this time. You are right – as time goes on & life keeps moving, we have this "need" for Lucas to be remembered. Your kind notes and gifts are incredibly appreciated. We are deeply grateful." Stories like this reflect the true impact of your support.

Ready to Make a Difference?

Volunteer With Us—You're Needed! If you want to bring comfort and hope to someone who is grieving,



STORY CONTINUES ON PAGE 3

Bringing Hope—One Packet, One Volunteer, One Story at a Time

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

join our Adopt-A-State program! All you need is a computer and a caring heart—we provide all the training and support. Apply today on our website: [Volunteer Application](#) and start changing lives, one packet at a time.

Did You Know?

“The Dragonfly Story” is available in 8 languages: English, Spanish, Italian, French, Russian, Hmong, Japanese, and Vietnamese. If you’re fluent in another language and would like to help us expand, email Tara at TaraM@dragonflyproject.org!

Our Adopt-A-State volunteers provide coverage in 38 states—help us fill the gaps! As of October 1, 2025, we have sent **181,000** packets to grieving families nationwide.

We’ve increased our social media presence with a new volunteer managing our online community. Watch for us as we provide more news on X, BlueSky, Facebook and Instagram!

Annual Celebration Update

Our Annual Spring Celebration will be postponed for 2026, but we’re exploring new ways to connect! We are looking into having a presence at grief-related events, where people can learn more, pick up a packet, or sign up to volunteer. We are entertaining other ideas as well – do you have one? Email Tara at TaraM@dragonflyproject.org—we’d love to hear from you!

GiveMN and Donations: Help Us Grow Our Impact

We’re gearing up for “Give to the Max” month starting November 1st! Every donation during November enters us into drawings for even bigger gifts. Your support is our lifeline—almost all of our funding comes from donations—big and small—many given in honor or memory of loved ones. Please consider making a gift this month and know that every dollar is used to bring hope and comfort where it’s needed most. Donate Now—your generosity makes everything we do possible!



**Give to the Max Day 2025 is
Thursday, November 20, 2025
to the end of the year!
Go to this website to donate:**

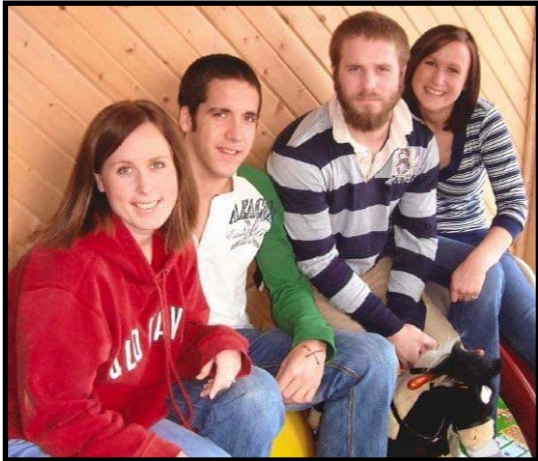
<https://www.givemn.org/organization/The-Dragonfly-Project>

Thank You for Your Support!

Your belief in our mission and your willingness to walk this journey with us means everything. If you have feedback, suggestions, or questions, please reach out—email Tara at TaraM@dragonflyproject.org or call 651-300-9812 and leave a message. Together, we’re making a real difference. Thank you for being part of The Dragonfly Project family!

~ Tara Morrison

A Love Story continued from page 1



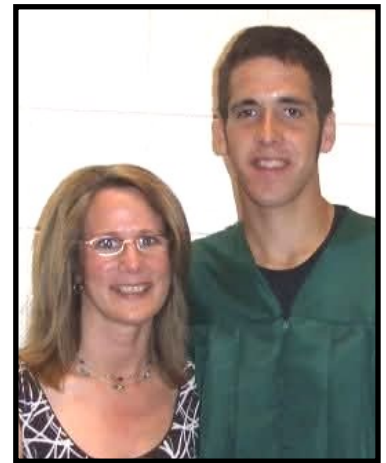
From L to R:
Sarah, Joe, Travis and Hannah
*This is the last picture of my kids
together in February 2009.*

Joe was competitive in everything. In high school he played and lettered in three sports. He was assistant student coach of the girls' tennis team. His junior year his coach asked him to be the captain of the tennis team, his senior year he was voted team captain by his peers. That meant the world to him. Joe had an academic scholarship with hopes of becoming a professional in Tennis Management.

On July 4, 2009 around 6:00 in the evening, Joe called me. That call was the last time that I told him I loved him. The next morning as I was getting ready for church, I received a call from my ex-husband. He was calling to tell me that our son Joe had taken his life. At that very moment, my simple life was gone. My new normal started and I had NO idea what hit me. I called my kids. We were all devastated. My kids were my rock when it came to preparing for Joe's funeral. Joe's girlfriend handed me *The Dragonfly Story*.

Three weeks after Joe's death, I started attending a suicide support group. The people in the support group had all lost loved ones to suicide. It was a safe place. Six months into my grief journey, I was asked to take over the group. I facilitated suicide support groups for 9 ½ years. I was introduced to a book titled *My Son, My Son* by author Iris Bolton. At the end of the book the author states that eventually you will be able to see a gift that your child has given you through their death. My eyes were opened to what Joe has left behind and what I am to do.

I am to be an active listener. I am not to judge, because I do not know their story or the journey that they are on unless they choose to share those feelings or thoughts with me. I am to pray and ask God for his protection and guidance. I am to surround myself with positive non-toxic people. I am to do anything to SAVE A LIFE. I will never apologize for my tears, because Joe lived, he loved, and he made me better. I miss him.



Sherie & her son Joe

A Mission Close to My Heart continued from page 1



Elliot Kent Shuster

I'm currently in the process of applying to graduate programs to become a therapist, a path deeply shaped by personal experiences and a desire to walk alongside others in their healing journeys.

The mission of The Dragonfly Project is incredibly close to my heart. In 2015, I lost my brother to suicide. The story of the dragonfly was read at his funeral, and since then has become a powerful and enduring symbol of comfort and connection in my own grief. To now be part of an organization that brings this same message of hope to others feels both meaningful and full circle.

I'm very excited to join this compassionate community and I look forward to supporting our incredible volunteers as we continue the important work of honoring lives and offering comfort and encouragement.

An Adopt-A-State Volunteer Story by Jeanne Bartlett

In 2005, the very civic-minded company I was working for chose The Dragonfly Project as one of the organizations where the employees could volunteer their time. We did some clerical functions and other odd tasks including packet events in the beginning. The company went out of business in 2009, but I continued to volunteer my time on various projects such as preparing the newsletters for mailing and school outreach when tragedies occurred. When the board of directors decided to expand the organization's impact in 2010, they created the Adopt-A-State program. For a time, I handled the bulk mailing of condolence cards at the Post Office for Adopt-A-State.

I am originally from Montana, so I adopted that as my state. I have been searching on-line obituaries for the 56 counties in Montana ever since, identifying people whose lives were cut short way before their time. I read through the obituaries to find those that meet The Dragonfly Project's criteria and then try to locate an address for the survivors. It can be tricky to identify the correct address, and I am diligent in my process to ensure I've found the right recipient. After I've completed my search, I address envelopes and sign my name on the condolence cards. The cards are sorted by the month of the death and submitted to Julie Bonde, who then sets up a packet event where dragonfly keychains are affixed to the cards and they are prepared for mailing.

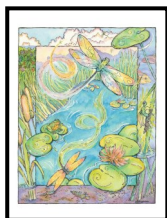


Jeanne Bartlett

This is a volunteer opportunity that I can do at my leisure. It is very rewarding to be able to send a message of hope to people who are grieving the loss of a loved one. It is hard to lose a loved one at any age, but it is especially difficult when the deceased is 50 years old or younger.

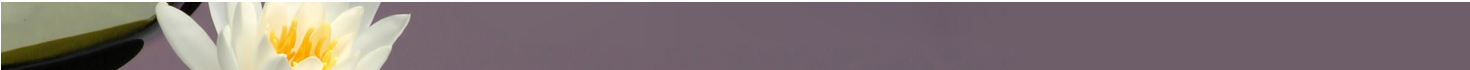
Please go to our website and consider making a donation and/or ordering cards to give to your grieving loved ones. These are the current card designs available.

Go to <https://www.dragonflyproject.org/online-store>



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 2026. The Dragonfly Buzzette team consists of Julie Bonde, Karen Bonde, Peter Bonde, Valerie Marquardt, Patsy Kahmann and Tara Morrison.

If you would like to share your dragonfly story with us, please fill out the form by clicking the link on this web page: www.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: www.dragonflyproject.org/get_involved.



More Recipient Comments 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



My family just received a condolence card in the mail and we just want to express our gratitude for thinking of us. This is a very thoughtful organization and act of kindness. Thank you for what you do! ~ Jennifer



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 return address on 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



All I know is that someone sent me a card from this after my baby son died, and it made my heart so happy . You guys are amazing. ~ Katrina



I just received your card and it meant so much. Thank you and thank you for taking care of everyone's hearts that you touch. The story was very moving. ~ Barbi



I can't begin to tell you all how much it meant to me to receive the postcard and the dragonfly keychain. I lost my brother to a drug overdose in October. Siblings have a whole different grieving process than everyone else and are often the ones that are forgotten about. Thank you so much! It made a huge impact on me. The dragonfly keychain hangs on my rear-view mirror to remind me of my amazing brother. ~ Shelby



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:

<https://www.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. Your generous gift helps The Dragonfly Project continue bringing our message of hope! Memorials and honorariums are listed below.

Memorials—March thru August 2025

In Memory of Beverly's husband Peter

Given by Judy Standl

In Memory of Eric Agnew, her son

Given by Etienne Davis

In Memory of Trevor Ball

Given by Eric Ball

In Memory of Nancy Baumer

Given by Diane Baumer

In Memory of My 5 departed siblings

Given by Kay and Bud Bjorke

In Memory of Hans Bonde

Given by Julie and Pete Bonde

Given by Dan Struckman

In Memory of Ann Keller Burtis

Given by Steve & Gloria Keller

In Memory of Santiago Calderon

Given by Renee & Larry Jordan

In Memory of Butchie Ceglar

Given by Ladonna Kiefat

In Memory of James Patrick Collins

Given by Deborah Loyal

In Memory of Liam John Douglas

Given by Amiee Thoms

In Memory of Dave Duca

Given by Ernestine Duca

In Memory of Erin Enslin

Given by Gail Holmes

In Memory of Dan Fink

Given by Eileen Fink

In Memory of Gary Freniere

Given by Ladonna Kiefat

In Memory of Charlie Geurts

Given by Chuck & Mary Geurts

In Memory of Sara Katherine Gross

Given by Tim Gross

In Memory of Cole Hammond

Given by Gayle Hammond

In Memory of Tony Hessom

Given by Julie Hessom

In Memory of my son

Given by Shari Hunter

In Memory of Michael J. Johansen

Given by Ladonna Kiefat

In Memory of Paul Christian Keller

Given by Steve & Gloria Keller

In Memory of Zachary Scott Matshiner

Given by Kathy Matschiner

In Memory of Billie Jean Moorer

Given by Cynthia Hochhalter

In Memory of Ron & Jeanna Olson

Given by Ladonna Kiefat

In Memory of Anthoni Readus

Given by Christi Readus

In Memory of John Spencer Ronnei

Given by Jean Ronnei

In Memory of Riggien Schaffer

Given by Theresa Alderman

In Memory of Thom Stenehjem

Given by Patricia Miller

In Memory of Mary Ann Voce

Given by Ladonna Kiefat

In Memory of Ed Voce

Given by Ladonna Kiefat

In Memory of Nancy Voce

Given by Ladonna Kiefat

In Memory of Cheryl Wagner

Given by Heather Henry

In Memory of Jimmy Waterhouse

Given by Mary Waterhouse

In Memory of Alberta Whitaker

Given by Amy Hennen

Given by Norman Whitaker

Honorariums— March thru August 2025

In Honor of

Michael T. Lokey and Joseph Kirk

Given by Mona Gayle Lokey

In Honor of Tony Garcia

Given by Mona Gayle Lokey



The Dragonfly Project Board of Directors

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Karen Bonde

Vice Chair

Jennifer DeBruin

Secretary

Pete Bonde

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Joy Akurienne

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Jorgen Lervick

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Sherie Wagner

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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 \$4.50 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 (<https://www.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.