



The Dragonfly Buzzette

Newsletter for The Dragonfly Project

Volume 25

Spring 2018

Hope is a Thing with Feathers

by Heidi Leppala

December 9th, 2016, I lost my best friend, my husband, my partner in everything, a wonderful Dad and Grandpa. A good friend to many, he was a very smart man who was the “go to” guy in our house. There wasn’t anything he couldn’t fix or build. This was a funny, athletic, and talented man; a man of few words who could dress up in a full bunny suit and go to the elementary school that our kids attended to deliver candy to the classrooms or have a “little talk” with some older teenage boys who were picking on our youngest son at the local bowling alley. He didn’t even realize his impact on those around him.

Russ was only 34 years old when we found out he had chronic lymphocytic leukemia. A young father, our kids were only 4, 5, and 7, when he was diagnosed, he took the news in stride, buying a camper the week after his diagnosis so that we could have a good summer with the kids. I don’t recall him ever in the almost twenty years he lived with the disease saying “why me” or feeling sorry for himself. He lived his life with purpose, working hard, fishing with our kids, camping, and making our family his priority.

Haniel Long wrote: *A man’s motive in the small actions of daily life, like resting a moment on his pitchfork in the sun and listening intently, may be the most important thing about that man.* This is how I picture him, staring out over the property he loved, smiling, content.

The Finnish have a term, “SISU,” that stands for Stoic determination, grit, bravery, and resilience. It is a grim, gritty, white knuckle form of courage that is presented in situations where success is against all odds. It is firm resoluteness in the face of adversity. It is what Russ was made of; like the day we were told that he had this incurable disease and the doctor looked at us and said, “It is going to get you, it may be five years, possibly a little longer, but it IS going to get you.” That is when I first saw this man I married become the strongest person

STORY CONTINUES ON PAGE 5

Finding Hope and Peace

by Tina Langhans



Tina with Chelsea

My name is Tina Langhans and I live in Maple Plain, MN. I have a husband of 29 years and three daughters, one of which became an angel in 2015. I work at Cartus Relocation as a relocation consultant, moving people around the world. It is a very fast-paced, high-stress job but I do love it.

I am also the Adopt-a-State Coordinator for The Dragonfly Project. I fortunately found a position that I enjoy, and I am still learning all the processes. Unfortunately, I had to lose one of my beloved children to find this position. I hope to be of help to others as I found hope and peace in the dragonfly symbol and story.

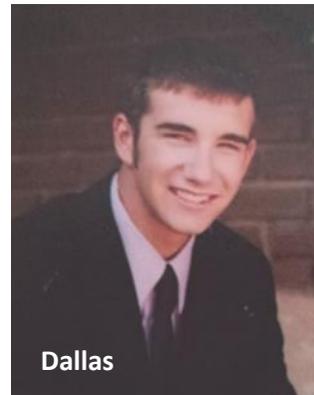
I do not recall the exact moment I received my dragonfly keychain and card in the mail as I had so much going on at

STORY CONTINUES ON PAGE 5

A Beautiful Prize (Bel Pri)

by Shara Hanley

Hi! My name is Shara Hanley. I live in Dallas, Texas and am the owner of Bel Pri Jewelry and Gifts. Bel Pri means “beautiful prize” in Creole which is the native language of Haiti. My vision was to create a business to focus on Fair Trade and socially responsible companies. Bel Pri was created when my daughter, Heather, was a teacher in Haiti. On one of our family visits I fell in love with the jewelry that the Haitian artisan made. The company in Haiti is called Papillon Enterprises. Papillon means butterfly in Creole. Papillon’s mission is to create jobs for orphan



Dallas

STORY CONTINUES ON PAGE 4

Executive Director's Corner: *Celebrating 100,000 Packets!!!*

By Pete Bonde



16th Annual Celebration Reaching Out LIVE!

What could be better than celebrating The Dragonfly Project's sixteenth anniversary? How about sharing it with our volunteers and supporters worldwide? This year we were able to stream our program live so that people who were unable to attend, could tune in and be part of it. We are so grateful to Nativity Lutheran Church for giving us this option. We were even able to reach Juanita in Australia, one of our big supporters on the other side of the world! Once again, we heard dragonfly miracle stories, showing that a little kindness can go a long way towards bringing hope into the world. You can read the stories from our speakers, Heidi Leppala and Shara Hanley, elsewhere in this issue. A third story, written by Chad Forslin, was read at our event. We also enjoyed the soothing sounds of Rainfall, a trio from Nativity Lutheran Church. Heidi also provided the wonderful artwork for this year's program, a painting that reminds us that Faith, Hope, Love and Family are the center of our hearts. If you were unable to attend, you can still watch the program on our website: www.dragonflyproject.org/annual-celebration.

100,000 Packets!

In March of this year we hit an historic landmark—we have now sent out over 100,000 packets since Anne Brooker started sending them in 2002. That first year she sent 250 packets out with hand stamped cards. And now, we have reached people in every state and will continue to reach farther and deeper as we grow. So the miracle of dragonflies and the dragonfly story bringing hope to those who are grieving continues to be shared by many. To honor this occasion, we had a raffle drawing during the program, giving away ten of our packets to the lucky winner.



\$2500 Donation Challenge Match

As part of our fundraising activities, an anonymous couple agreed to match donations given during our celebration and the week after, up to \$2,500 dollars. Although we did not reach our goal, we got close with \$2,217. Thanks to everyone who helped us to reach this amount. After we told the matching donors what we had raised, they decided they would match our goal of \$2,500. What a delightful surprise! And on top of that, an employer of one of the couple matches employee donations to nonprofits, so we will get an additional amount. This brings the grand total of money raised to \$7,217. We are so grateful to them and to all of you for this generosity!

Board of Directors Changes

I would like to give a board of directors update. Last year at our celebration we had three board members, Katie Schmalz, James Smith, and Donna Brandell. Brianna Walvoort joined us in April and Crystal Cullerton-Sen joined us in May. We were happy to have a full board. Then in the last six months, three of our board members moved on to other things. So, we were down to just James and Brianna. But I'm happy to report that we recently got three new board members. PJ Tombarge joined us in February and Karen Bonde and Winda Roets joined us in March. It was a pleasure to have a larger group at our board meeting in March and we look forward to the input from these three new members.

Volunteer Position Changes

I would like to recognize two long-term volunteers who are "retiring" this year. Michelle Lease has been entering our expenses into our financial software since 2005. She has also helped to pull together our 990, the federal nonprofit reporting form to the US government. We are so thankful to Michelle for the many, many hours she 'donated' to The Dragonfly Project. Michelle has been working with Dawn Dahlberg to transition the work to Dawn. Thanks Dawn for taking on this volunteer position.

Secondly, Stan and Lynn Liedman are handing off the coordination of the Adopt-a-State volunteers to Tina Langhans. Stan and Lynn worked together as a team at the beginning of the Adopt-a-State program near the end of 2009. They have consistently mailed supplies to volunteers who were addressing envelopes to people who need a message of hope in cities and states where they were assigned. Stan and Lynn tracked and managed the volunteers, helping them with questions and documenting the process. The transfer of the coordination position to Tina was done well and they got Tina off and running quickly. Please welcome Tina Langhans to this new position. If you are interested in being an Adopt-a-State volunteer, check out our volunteer form on our website or email Tina at TinaL@dragonflyproject.org.

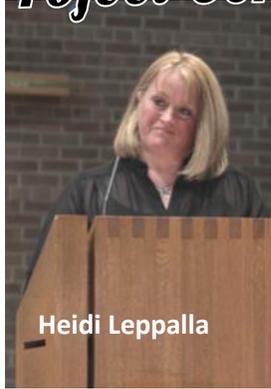
The Sixteenth Annual

Saturday, March 17, 2018

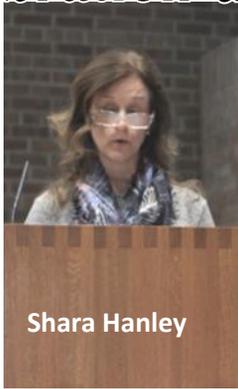
Dragonfly Project Celebration & Remembrance Event



Nick Zeimet



Heidi Leppalla



Shara Hanley



James Smith



Julie Bonde



Candle lighting Ceremony



Rainfall



Shara's Bracelets



Sophia



Chad Forslin



Bringing You a Message of Hope



Kid's Craft Table



Introducing P.J. Tombarge, New Board Member



"Hi everyone! I'm P.J. Tombarge; a new Board Member of The Dragonfly Project (TDP)! I received a Dragonfly Packet back in 2003, shortly after my husband died and I was in the throes of grief. That loving gesture was very comforting and significantly changed the course of my grief journey. I clung to the idea that the love of my life was still with me in some way.

From that moment on I was an advocate of this ministry. I bought dragonfly packets and other dragonfly items for all my family members and friends, and I shared the beautiful dragonfly story with them.

Soon thereafter I volunteered to help at times with TDP efforts of making keyrings, stuffing and addressing envelopes, etc. It felt good knowing I was a part of making a difference in people's grief journeys. At the same time, I also worked with the American Cancer Society (ACS) and pioneered Relay for Life (RFL) events in my community. I organized a RFL event each year for 10 years which raised over \$150,000.00 for cancer research and other cancer patient programs. Then the ACS reorganized and merged some communities' events together, including my community of St. Anthony Village. Since there were other leaders involved, I stepped down. During those years I was also involved with a wonderful ministry at my church called Stephen Ministry, which I stepped away from, as well.

No longer busy with those efforts and while dealing with some health issues, I was praying for guidance in finding a way to feel a sense of purpose with my life. God works in amazing ways! In early 2018 I was invited to become a Board member of TDP and it just felt right! I knew Julie and Pete Bonde through my church and became good friends with Julie in choir. I also got to know Pete and other TDP leaders through my volunteer work with it. I'm proud to be associated with these wonderful people and the amazing Dragonfly Project. I have a blended family of 4 adult children and 10 grandchildren who all know how very special TDP is to me, and they're happy for me that I'm involved with a ministry so close to my heart.

Thank you, Pete, for asking me to be on the Board of TDP! It's keeping that flame burning in my heart to bring comfort to people who are grieving!"

"A Beautiful Prize (Bel Pri)" continued

prevention.

Upon getting the business underway our son, Dallas, had moved to Prescott, Arizona. Dallas had fought a disease for several years. The disease is called "addiction" and it does not discriminate. Dallas had

been sober for a year. On August 11, 2015, Dallas gave into his flesh one last time. He will be forever 23. Our family will never be the same.

Following his death, I dreaded the holidays approaching. On Christmas Eve the mail came. I put it on the counter. On Christmas morning I picked it up. There were two envelopes that I hadn't noticed the day before. One addressed to the family of Dallas Merrick Hanley II and the other addressed to the family of D.J. Hanley. (D.J. was Dallas' nickname.) I opened the first envelope with suspicion, having no idea what could possibly have been addressed to us and opening it on Christmas Day. When I read the beautiful "Dragonfly Story" I felt all kinds of emotions. I needed that cry and the reminder that Dallas is still with us even though we cannot see him or communicate with him. The Dragonfly Project had indeed given me hope and helped me get through that first Christmas. I was so moved, I ordered several cards to send to friends.

The reason I received two cards was because our family had recently moved to Dallas after living in Tulsa, OK for 18 years. We had placed obituaries in both newspapers and both Adopt-a-State volunteers had picked it up.

One of the socially responsible companies that I represent is Chavez for Charity. Chavez for Charity supports their trademark phrase, "Colors for Causes." They have ten colors that represent a distinct case/organization. They are committed to donating 25% of their profit to each color-corresponding organization. As a retailer, Chavez for Charity gave me the opportunity to partner with a non-profit organization of my choice that I could provide for my customers. This is called the 11th project and would include white bracelets.

I was on a mission to find the perfect organization, possibly one that would honor our Dallas' memory and passing. Maybe drug awareness, rehabilitation facility, or prescription drop off-box? But none of these grabbed my passion.

One evening, my husband, my daughter, and myself were discussing how to send a Dragonfly Card to some friends whose daughter had died. At that point, my daughter said



STORY CONTINUES ON PAGE 5



“Hope is a Thing with Feathers” continued

I’ve ever known; someone I looked up to for not only his strength but his wisdom and kind heart. We watched him go through a transplant that cured his disease fifteen years after diagnosis but then suffer from the affects of that transplant for four years afterwards without complaint. Pure SISU!

One time, on a fishing trip early on in our life together, we were at a remote little lake in the woods and a HUGE dragonfly landed on the boat. It was so big, I almost jumped out of the boat. I promptly ordered him to “get it off” the boat and he proceeded to tell me how good dragonflies were and how we should want them around; that they did good things and that they wouldn’t hurt us.

A few weeks after Russ died, I announced to my kids that I was going to get a tattoo in honor of their dad. They all jumped on board and said they had been thinking about doing the same thing. We talked about what we should



get, it seems that we were unanimously in favor of SISU. I told them my plan was to get the word SISU with a dragonfly on my shoulder. They chose their version of SISU and the four of us did it that weekend. The very next week after our trip, I received my dragonfly

card and keychain in the mail. This was not a coincidence to me. I am sure this isn’t a feeling new to anyone that has been on the receiving end of the card. I truly think it is those little things that happen that have such a huge impact on our healing and moving forward.

The Dragonfly Project does something very special for people that are grieving; it gives us comfort and reminds us to have hope. Sometimes we get so overwhelmed with grief that we forget that.

I’d like to thank The Dragonfly Project as it has meant so much to me and my family this last year and as you read all of the recipient responses you’ll see the common thread that is woven through all—that of comfort and hope.

Emily Dickinson wrote: *Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul,*

And sings the tune without the words, And never stops at all.

“A Beautiful Prize (Bel Pri)” continued

“Mom! That should be your charity.”

I sent an email to Pete Bonde, provided the necessary paperwork to get the ball rolling. The bracelets can be purchased on Etsy, as well as the link provided on The Dragonfly Project website.



Thank you to the Adopt-a-State volunteers Amy and Peggy for sending me the Dragonfly cards.

Thank you to all of the volunteers at The Dragonfly Project.

This organization truly gives hope to those who are grieving. Their wings were ready but our hearts were not.

NOTE: You can purchase these 11th Project Bel Pri dragonfly bracelets at either of these links:

“Finding Hope and Peace” continued

that time, but I do remember holding it in my hand, reading the message in the card and thinking what a meaningful way to visualize this transformation.

August 22, 2015, my daughter Chelsea, 25, was on her way to a yoga class, which was one of her passions. She was on Highway 12 in Long Lake and a driver crossed the center line and hit her head on. She died instantly as did the other driver. This happened one day after the news that my husband’s lymphoma had returned and was worse than ever.

We have a very close family and are very close to our children. We were all together when we heard the news of Chelsea’s death. We grabbed on to each other, held each other up, and understood that we would have to be there for each other going forward. We knew we had a long road ahead.

We got involved right away with the Highway 12 Safety Coalition and have remained involved. We worked with the Coalition, State Legislators and MnDot to get the concrete divider on highway 12 so that no other families will have to endure what we did.

I will always think of my daughter and others that have gone before me when I see a dragonfly. The dragonfly is a symbol of hope and peace to me.



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 2016 through February 2017

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| In Memory of David Adams
Given by C. L. Ferris | In Memory of Delphine Mildred "Del"
Given by Roxanne Orth | In Memory of Jonathan Masin
Given by Eleanor Masin |
| In Memory of Colleen Marie Anderson
Given by Margot Kraemer | In Memory of Martha DePodesta
Given by Edward Mattei | In Memory of Dawn Massmann
Given by Colleen Kiffmeyer |
| In Memory of Karen Axeen
Given by Scott Orth | In Memory of James R Doering
Given by Marie Doering | In Memory of Zachary S. Matschiner
Given by Kathy Matschiner |
| In Memory of Benjamin & Jacob Baalson
Given by Kay & Roger Baalson | In Memory of Erik Flom
Given by Cheryl & Glenn Seefeldt | In Memory of Richard & Carol Miller
Given by Paul & Barb Fagerberg |
| In Memory of Noelle Balfour
Given by Ruby Benson | In Memory of Shane Fors
Given by Valerie Marquardt & Greg Brooker | In Memory of Gabriel Murn
Given by Jacqueline Crocker |
| In Memory of Trevor Ball
Given by Eric Ball | In Memory of Lilly Fuglie
Given by Kari Aderhold | In Memory of Peggy Olson
Given by Sara Vukich |
| In Memory of Mattie Becker
Given by Anne Spangler | Given by Robert L Cooper | In Memory of Amy Picchiotti
Given by Eleanor Masin |
| In Memory of Kelsey Bederka
Given by Karen & Vince Noggle | Given by Debbie A Gibson | In Memory of Joseph "Joey" Plant
Given by Vicki Plant |
| In Memory of Tony Berger
Given by Teresa Berger | Given by Heather S Lacke | In Memory of Jacob Rebecok,
Our Precious Son |
| In Memory of Carol Bonde
Given by Jeanette Kispert | Given by Dayna Miller | Given by Sandi Rebecok |
| In Memory of Earl Bonde
Given by Gerald & Denise Bonde | Given by Shannon M Neels | In Memory of Rick
Given by Jennifer Demientieff |
| In Memory of Hans Bonde
Given by Julie & Pete Bonde | Given by Christopher S Reckinger | In Memory of George Riedel
Given by Valerie Marquardt & Greg Brooker |
| Given by Helen & Dick Lodmill | Given by Nicole A Harless | In Memory of Kathleen Rudser
Given by Nora Lehti |
| Given by Chris & Dwight Dyrud | In Memory of Jeremy M. Funston
Given by Kimberly Vuckovich | In Memory of Jeff Ruff
Given by Beth Ruff |
| Given by Gerald & Denise Bonde | In Memory of Harry Gould
Given by Charlotte Brooker
& Gene Mammenga | In Memory of Ruth - mom
Given by Cary Tate |
| Given by Steve Stensrud | In Memory of Robert Groome
Given by Leslie Groome | In Memory of Sara
Given by Ruth Schewe |
| In Memory of Nancy Bonde
Given by Helen & Dick Lodmill | In Memory of Kent & Kendra Guthrie
Given by Jeralyn Guthrie | In Memory of Rachel Ruschke Schreiner
Given by Palmer & Lois Ruschke |
| In Memory of Dennis & Mark Boro
Given by Maureen Boro | In Memory of Dave Heckman
Given by Ginger Collyard | In Memory of Al Seberg
Given by Ladonna Kiefat |
| In Memory of Don Brooker
Given by Margarette Brooker | In Memory of Peter Hillesheim
Given by P. J. Heidelberg | In Memory of Betty Shirkey
Given by Cary Tate |
| In Memory of Connie Casey
Given by Robert & Marcia Kurtz | In Memory of Jake, My Son
Given by Kay Cafferty | In Memory of Howard Silverblatt
Given by Judi & Mike Salkas |
| In Memory of Lauri Centa
Given by Sara Vukich | In Memory of Jordan
Given by Shelley Hand | In Memory of Marion Skildum
Given by Judith Schlieff |
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Given by Machele Pepple | In Memory of Paul Keller
Given by Gloria Keller | In Memory of Jason Smelken
Given by Katherine Bacalis |
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Given by Karen & Vince Noggle | In Memory of Taylor Kentfield
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Given by Ed Spenny |
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Given by Rachael Leonard | |
| In Memory of Florence Debeer
Given by Scott Orth | In Memory of Wally Marquardt
Given by Marcy Marquardt | |
| | Given by Valerie Marquardt & Greg Brooker | |

DONATIONS CONTINUE ON NEXT PAGE

DONATIONS *continued*

In Memory of Joshua Stuhr
Given by Jacqueline Stuhr

In Memory of Christine Swinehart
Given by Ann Marie Woulfe

In Memory of Tara
Given by Diane Christensen

In Memory of LeRoy Thurber
Given by Ladonna Kiefat

In Memory of Sarah Tilman
Given by Catherine Tilman

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

In Memory of Paul Toren
Given by Charlotte Brooker
& Gene Mammenga

In Memory of Adam Van't Hof
Given by Gene & Becky Van't Hof

In Memory of Steve Waters
Given by Elizabeth Waters

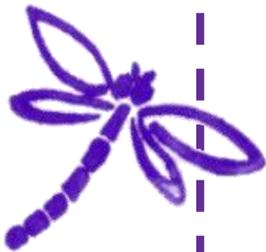
In Memory of Frank Weber
Given by Mary Weber

In Memory of Paul Weber
Given by Edward Mattei

In Memory of Alberta Whitaker
Given by Norman Whitaker

In Memory of Julie Woltzen
Given by Joyce Woltzen

In Honor of Eric
Given by Vicki Speidel



The Dragonfly Project Board of Directors

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P.J. Tombarge
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Winda Roets
Member at Large
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Member at Large



Executive Director
Pete Bonde

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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 2017 we received \$722 in donations. These following members have designated dollars to The Dragonfly Project:

Julie Bonde
Pete Bonde
Jennifer L De Bruin

Bonnie Kranzusch
Michael Kranzusch
Margaret G Layng

Rory Meisner
Susan Meisner
Ruth M Schewe



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.

The Dragonfly Buzzette is the official newsletter of The Dragonfly Project and is published twice a year. The next issue comes out in Fall 2018 The Dragonfly Buzzette team consists of Julie Bonde, Peter Bonde, Patsy Kahmann, Valerie Marquardt, Jan Stanton, Stefanie VanWyck.

If you would like to share your dragonfly story with us, please fill out the form online at this page: <http://www.dragonflyproject.org/blog>



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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 an 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 and order a card to be shipped to you. Then you can sign and send the card on to whomever you wish. The cards in our store have room for you to insert your own message. Please allow 3 to 6 weeks to receive your order.