

My Dragonfly Story

by Julie Gebhardt



April 1, 1993 was one of the happiest days of my life. It was the day our family was finally going to be complete. After years of suffering through infertility and three unsuccessful attempts at adoption, this was a day I wasn't sure would ever come to be. But on that day, my

husband Rick and I were completely overjoyed—and totally overwhelmed—that we were now the proud parents of not one but two beautiful children; biological siblings! Our son Brendon was 22 months old and our daughter Nikki was six months old. Talk about a shock to the system!! I remember looking at Rick that very first day and saying to him, “I have absolutely NO IDEA what they eat!” Yet, we were thrilled beyond belief and so were their grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins who all welcomed them into this loving family with open arms.

Our two children could not have been more different in personality. While Brendon was a bit more quiet and inquisitive, Nikki, with her beautiful big blue eyes was our smart, spunky, sassy and very chatty girl who was full of energy. She was like a magnet that others were drawn to. Nikki excelled at school and in sports, particularly soccer and hockey, even earning a Varsity letter as the high school hockey goalie when she was just a seventh grader.

STORY CONTINUES ON PAGE 4

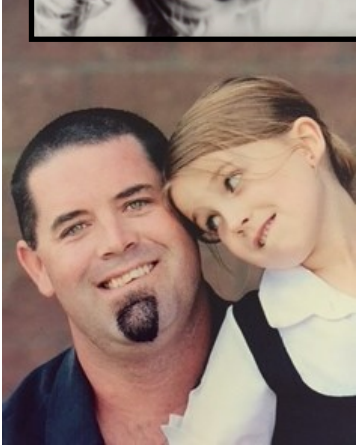
A Vase Full of Memories

by Janet Shea

My son Matthew passed away September 27, 2010. He was 33 years old and a disabled vet. He left a daughter behind; she is now 12. His death was a complete and total shock. I am now and will forever grieve my boy, but a few months after he died I received a Dragonfly card and keychain in the mail. It arrived on a day when I wasn't sure I could or wanted to go on. It was then and still is a lifeline for me.



Matthew loved pottery and was going back to school to teach art and history when he died. A few months after he died we went to pick up all of this belongings. It took several months for me to look through his things, but one night I was alone and opened a box. Inside the box was a vase he had made. It had a dragonfly on it. The glaze on the vase was beautiful, it



was green and blue. The dragonfly looked like a shadow on the vase. Inside the vase was a seashell and a plastic ladybug. Seashells and ladybugs were very important to Matt and his daughter. When I saw the dragonfly vase and found its contents I fell apart. I knew he was sending me a message. Dragonflies play a very important part in my life now. I see them every summer; I have them scattered around my house and yard. When we see one, my granddaughter always says, " There's my dad." Thank you for your thoughtful work.

Executive Director's Corner : Influencing Someone's Journey

By Pete Bonde

I am excited about my new role as Executive Director. One of the rewards of my role is to make connections. I am very thrilled to share one of those connections that happened recently.

In September of last year, Shara Hanley from Dallas, Texas contacted us via our website. She wrote:

"I would love to discuss the opportunity to use your charity as my company's business 11th project. Please google Chavez for charity and review the 11th project. I have been looking for a nonprofit company to use. I received one of your cards Christmas Day [in 2015]. My son had passed away from a drug overdose in August. He was 23. It really touched my heart and I truly appreciated it. After much deliberation, at the dinner table last night we were discussing what to do for a friend of ours whose 10-year-old passed away. I told my family I wanted to have one of these cards sent. My daughter said 'Mom! That should be your charity'."

So I called her and found out she had actually received two cards from us on Christmas Day. One from Amy Lindgren and one from Peggy Mills – both adopt-a-state volunteers. You see, Shara had recently moved from Oklahoma to Dallas, so she put the obits in both papers and both volunteers picked it up.



So we did the paperwork to get TDP linked to Chavez for Charity and they sent Shara some bracelets. She now has a display in her store.

In February, we got our first check from Chavez for Charity. Soon after, we got another check from Shara; she was going to match their donations! A few weeks later, we got a link to her store on Etsy. You can find that link on our website (www.dragonflyproject.org/our-mission-partners - BelPriJewelry on Etsy) if you are interested in one of her bracelets.

Lastly, I want to thank all of you for your numerous ways you support The Dragonfly Project. Thanks to our many volunteers who help to keep our mission alive.

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

Celebrating 15 Years!

March 25, 2017

By Julie Bonde

It's amazing how much The Dragonfly Project has grown in 15 years. It is hard to believe that this all started with a mother and daughter at their kitchen table. That was 2002. Since then we've sent out over 89,000 packets and have reached people in every state of the union and even beyond. We have a group of dedicated volunteers, approximately 90 of them, who make it possible to keep the message of hope spreading.

We had a lot to celebrate this year at our annual celebration and many loved ones to remember. We were blessed with the musical talents of a woodwind trio with Gracyn Delaune on flute, Alice Grooms on bassoon and Krisiti Tharp on clarinet. We also enjoyed the delightful sounds of The Lost Golden Toads band.

Part of what keeps us going is the sharing of stories and this year we had some great ones. Julie Gebhardt shared her receiving the dragonfly packet after her daughter died. (You can read more of her story on the front page). I had the privilege of sharing the wonderful story of how the Dragonfly Project got started. Katie Schmalz, board chair, shared the details of our growth (see more on page 5). Executive director, Pete Bonde, shared a special story of connection.

Following our program we had a silent auction and reception. I was struck by how hopeful grief becomes when the community comes together to share their stories and support each other.

We are especially thankful this year for Paula and Dan McQuillen's gift of matching donations up to \$1,500. Between their gift, other donations, the silent auction and other sales, we raised over \$5,600 this year! Wow!

We are grateful to everyone who offers us financial support as well as those 90 plus volunteers who keep all the details going. We couldn't do it without you.

And so, hope continues....

The Fifteenth Annual

Dragonfly Project Celebration & Remembrance Event

Saturday, March 25, 2017



Julie Gebhardt



Julie Bonde



Katie Schmalz



Dan & Paula McQuillen



Woodwind Trio

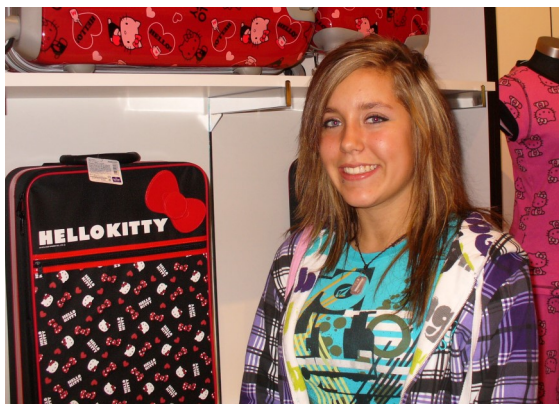


The Lost Golden Toads



“My Dragonfly Story” continued from page 1

But while some things came SO very easy to her, Nikki also struggled deeply with mental health issues which became particularly apparent in her adolescent years. Despite our efforts to get the best therapists treatment centers, medications and therapy techniques, Nikki’s struggles continued until a snowy night in January of 2011 when Nikki took her life. Our beautiful 18-year-old daughter, who had her entire life ahead of her, was gone. Our deep love for her was not enough to save her, and we were devastated!



Dragonfly Project—right at the very same time.

Not only did the dragonfly keychains and notecards we received after Nikki died become SO VERY meaningful to Rick and I, the dragonfly symbol itself has taken on a whole new meaning in my life. It’s a symbol that is found throughout our home, from wall art to garden

lights and coffee mugs—even the dragonfly tattoo on my shoulder—they are all special reminders of our Nikki.

I remember back when Nikki was younger, she used to get a subscription to *Seventeen* magazine. She and I had both read an article about a local girl named Anne who had started this thing called the Dragonfly Project, and we talked about what a cool thing it was. (Nikki was a big fan of dragonflies!!) I remember telling Nikki that I knew this girl’s mom, Valerie Marquardt, as she and I are both rehabilitation therapists and Nikki thought that was pretty neat. But NEVER in my wildest dreams would I have ever imagined the Dragonfly Project would come to mean so much to me personally. I guess it started on the day of Nikki’s funeral and if I had been looking for it, I would have realized this was my daughter sending me a sign. As I made a quick stop in the ladies room here at Nativity before her memorial service was to begin, who did I run into but Valerie! She asked if I was here for the service, then was shocked to learn that the memorial service was in fact for our daughter. And Valerie was here that day to work on the

What has the Dragonfly Project meant to me? It’s a reminder of rebirth and renewal, a re-affirmation of God’s promise of everlasting life. It reminds me that NIKKI IS ALWAYS WITH US. Now, Nikki was never a very subtle young woman, and even after her death Nikki sends us reminders of her presence in very powerful ways. Like the way her favorite number 4 keeps appearing at special times, or when her favorite songs come on, just when we are feeling our lowest. And when dragonflies appear as a way to say, “Look, mom, I’m right here with you!”

I want to say THANK YOU to everyone involved with the Dragonfly Project. Please don’t ever forget the comfort and peace it brings to people like Rick and me—people who miss their precious loved ones so dearly. And to Nikki, keep sending us dragonflies!

WE LOVE YOU AND WE MISS YOU!

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I order cards? Go to <http://www.dragonflyproject.org/online-store> Please note that volunteers are doing this work. It sometimes takes a week or more to receive your order.

When do I send a card? It is our experience and our suggestion that the day you decide to send a dragonfly card is the right day. Don’t worry about how long it is been. The Dragonfly Project waits 3 to 6 months to send the cards.

How can I volunteer? Go to http://www.dragonflyproject.org/get_involved and click on the “Volunteer Application” button or the “Host an Event” button and fill out the form.

How Far We've Come

By Katie Schmalz

Looking back, it is incredible to think how far The Dragonfly Project has come in the past 15 years. Since 2002, we have sent out over 89,000 dragonfly packets, each representing a grieving family touched by our message of hope. In 2016 alone, we sent out over 9,000 packets to people in Australia, Great Britain, Canada, and 46 states.

What is so incredible about all of this is the fact that The Dragonfly Project started in 2002 with a 11-year-old girl and her family in Minneapolis, MN. These two maps depict it well. When we first formed, our support base was limited to friends, family, and neighbors in the Minnesota area. Today, The Dragonfly Project has grown into a national non-profit, spreading a message of hope to those who are grieving across the nation and the world. That neighbor from Minneapolis may have become an Adopt-a-State volunteer, and sent out packets to strangers in Montana, who bought packets for their friends and family across the West Coast. It is all a chain reaction. The Dragonfly Project, and the span of its outreach would not be possible without volunteers, donors, and packet recipients sending out dragonfly packets and sharing a message of hope.



Dollars Raised by Zip Code (Donations & Packets)

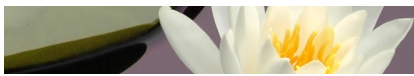


A Family Connection *by Stefanie VanWyck*



Corrie Schumaker and her husband received a Dragonfly Project packet after the death of their only child, Madelyn, at the age of eight from a brain tumor. She said that they “appreciated the card, and were comforted by the poem.” At the time, she did not notice the name of the author of “The Dragonfly Story” that was printed inside the card.

Then Corrie spoke to her uncle, Mark McDaniel, and he pointed out the family connection. Mark McDaniel is the grandson of Walter Dudley Calvert, the author of “The Dragonfly Story.” Corrie Shumaker is the great-granddaughter of Walter Dudley Calvert, Madelyn was his great-great-granddaughter. So now Calvert’s gift has come full circle as the words of his story comforted his own flesh and blood long after he was gone.



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 Dwelton D. Anderson Given by Beryl Anderson	In Memory of Peter Hillesheim Given by P. J. Heidelberg	In Memory of Mel Ostwald Given by Sharon Ostwald
In Memory of Benjamin & Jacob Baalson Given by Kay & Roger Baalson	In Memory of Timothy Michael Hodanbosi Given by Barbars Hodanbosi	In Memory of Thomas C Pfeifle Given by Jane Pfeifle
In Memory of Trevor Ball Given by Eric Ball	In Memory of Brianna Lyn Ingval Given by Mary Jane Ingval	In Memory of Joseph Plant Given by Vicki Plant
In Memory of Wes Bauer Given by Mark & Jana Bauer	In Memory of Wesley J. Johnson Given by Carolyn Hatcher	In Memory of James Poole Given by Janet Poole
In Memory of Matthew Becker Given by Anne Spangler	In Memory of Kailee Joy Given by Marcia Scherbenske	In Memory of Jacob "Jake" Rebecsek Given by Sandi Rebecsek
In Memory of Hans Bonde Given by Gerald & Denise Bonde Given by Chris & Dwight Dyrud Given by Thrivent Financial Foundation	In Memory of Paul Christian Keller Given by PCK Foundation	In Memory of Bruce Reimann Given by Kathy W Reimann
In Memory of Nancy Bonde Given by Sue & Tom Trnka	In Memory of Taylor Kentfield Given by Melinda Kentfield	In Memory of Amanda Roos Given by Joyce Kirchner
In Memory of Mark & Dennis Boro Given by Maureen & Dennis Boro	In Memory of George Petrich & Jake Laber Given by Mary Rah	In Memory of Kathleen Rudser Given by Nora Lehti
In Memory of Lovey Strelow Brudwick Given by Teresa Valentine	In Memory of Jay Lechler Given by Jack & Jermaine Lechler	In Memory of Jason Schaeper Given by Terri Schaeper
In Memory of Tessa Brueni, Our Beloved Daughter Given by Cindy Brueni	In Memory of Ben Lenaen, Jr. Given by Rebecca Trangsrud	In Memory of Sara Schewe Given by Ruth Schewe
In Memory of Matt Burg Given by Laurie Burg Given by Rita Kruger	In Memory of Richard Lord Given by Patti White	In Memory of Alex D. Schlieff Given by Judith Schlieff
In Memory of James S Carpenter, VI Given by Nancy Carpenter	In Memory of Marge Given by Cary Tate	In Memory of Bonnie Schweikert Given by Sunshine Club Fund
In Memory of Stacy Dorsch Given by Sharon Dorsch	In Memory of Wally Marquardt Given by Marcy Marquardt Given by Valerie Marquardt & Greg Brooker	In Memory of Tom Sessody Given by Jo Ann Sessody
In Memory of Jessie Fahlstedt Given by Beth Fahlstedt	In Memory of K. Martinez Family Given by Trudy Simonson	In Memory of Sonny & Jason Skar Given by Bonnie Skar
In Memory of Howard Family Given by Ann Elizabeth Howard	In Memory of Dawn Massmann Given by Colleen Kiffmeyer	In Memory of Jason Smolken Given by Katherine Baclis
In Memory of Jeremy M. Funston Given by Kimberly Vuckovich	In Memory of Zachery Scott Matschiner Given by Kathy Matschiner	In Memory of Robert Sontag, Our Sweet Son Given by Lisa Sontag
In Memory of Charles Geurts Given by Mary Geurts	In Memory of Kirtk Mattson Given by Gail Marquardt & Steve Wolniakowski	In Memory of Merle Spieler Given by Linda Spieler
In Memory of Marjorie Glennon Given by Charlotte Brooker & Gene Mammenga	In Memory of Jake Nelson Given by Kay Cafferty	In Memory of Tom Stamborski Given by Katherine Stamborski
In Memory of Kendra Guthrie Given by J. J. Guthrie	In Memory of Andy McNamara Given by Nancy McNamara	In Memory of Barbara Thompson Given by Betty Bordwell
In Memory of Joe Heaston Given by Mary Dahl	In Memory of Maggi O'Leary Given by Sue Weber	In Memory of Kevin Tureson Given by Jean Tureson
In Memory of Jack Heckelman Given by Linda Bergh	In Memory of Richard Odeen Given by Julie LeRud	In Memory of Adam Vant Hof Given by Gene & Becky Vant Hof
		In Memory of Kay VonRuden Given by Sue & Tom Trnka
		In Memory of Jeffrey Wagenlander, Son Given by Margaret Wagenlander

DONATIONS CONTINUE ON NEXT PAGE

DONATIONS

continued

In Memory of Frank Weber
Given by Mary Weber

In Memory of Jean M Weiss
Given by Robert Weiss

In Memory of Alberta Whitaker
Given by Norman Whitaker

In Memory of Darlene, Mother & Wife
Given by Harbert Perry

In Memory of Pat Wolf
Given by Janet Otten

In Memory of Julie Woltzen
Given by Joyce Woltzen

Honorariums

In Honor of Patty Keenan Johnson
Given by Julie Wylie

In Honor of Dee & Dale Waddell
Given by J. J. Guthrie

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Amazon Smile Foundation
Bel Pri Jewelry & Gifts
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Grace Lutheran Church in Andover
Intuit
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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 2016 we received \$978 in donations. These following members have designated dollars to The Dragonfly Project:

Sara Bauer
Julie Bonde
Pete Bonde
Sandra Bruce
Jennifer De Bruin

Barbara Fagerberg
Cynthia Kaske
Lisa Kajer
Linda Kappell
Bonnie Kranzusch

Michael Kranzusch
Susan Meisner
Ruth Schewe
James Smith
Bruce Tjossem



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 <http://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 2017. The Dragonfly Buzzette team consists of Julie Bonde, Peter Bonde, Patsy Kahmann, Valerie Marquardt, Jan Stanton, Stefanie VanWyck and Sara Weingartner.

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.