



The Dragonfly Buzzette

Newsletter for The Dragonfly Project

Volume 13

Spring 2012

Walking with Dragonflies: A Message of Hope

~Paula McQuillen

It was a beautiful June day—Thursday June 16, 2011, to be exact. I was finding it difficult to concentrate at the office so I decided to go home, change clothes, and spend some time at the University of Minnesota Arboretum. As I approached our driveway, I noticed our neighbor, Deb, working in her yard. Deb and I are much alike in that we fill our schedules with too many projects and not enough time to get them all done—we like to multitask. Unfortunately many times this results in just a quick “Hi, how are you” and then continue on our separate ways. However, this day was different. I walked over, visited and mentioned that I was going for a walk at the Arboretum. Deb immediately responded, “May I come along?” I was delighted to have her company.



You see, it had been less than a week since we celebrated our son Sean’s life with a visitation at the funeral home. Our family was still in shock after a brief 30 days from diagnosis to death from an aggressive form of colon cancer. Just months before, Sean, 34, had been a tri-athlete, a marathon runner, a chef for our Thanksgiving dinner, a broomball goalie, and had been given a “clean” bill of health” with the goal of losing 10 pounds before the summer triathlon season began. He was a loving husband, devoted father of two little girls, ages four and one, a great son

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Delivering Dragonflies and Hope Down Under



~Juanita Carroll

Editor’s note: Juanita Carroll lives in Australia and has been purchasing and giving our packets since 2009. This is her story of how she became involved with The Dragonfly Project.

I was doing research when I first heard of The Dragonfly Project, I was surprised to find that it was as recent as May 2009 that I became aware of your organization. I feel as if I have known of the project for far longer than that! An inspirational Australian lady, Amanda Gore, speaker and leader of the Joy Project, (www.thejoyproject.com) devoted one of her regular Endorphin Newsletters to tell her readers about The Dragonfly Project. Someone had sent Amanda one of your cards at the time of her mother’s passing, a few years prior.

I was carrying a load of grief myself, and knew many people who were walking a similar path. I was immediately interested in finding more information. So began my relationship with Ann Brooker’s wonderful Dragonfly Project. I made a list of those whom I knew had lost loved ones, and after sending the list to your organization I was filled with gratitude when each on my list

Dragonflies Down Under continued on page 5

A Word From Anne Brooker, Founder

As the notes of Luke Bonde's beautiful piano prelude welcomed guests in the sanctuary, I looked back at the filled seats behind me and saw both old and new faces in the crowd. It was a testament to the strength of The Dragonfly Project community, the coming together of diverse peoples around a shared experience, to support one another following the death of someone they love. I felt so thankful to be a part of that community.

The program that followed blended heartfelt, open, and vulnerable stories about loss and grief with hopeful messages that reinforced the central theme underlying The Dragonfly Project's mission: "The fact that we cannot see our friends, or communicate with them after the transformation, which we call death, is no proof that they cease to exist."

For the remembrance portion of the event, we viewed a slideshow

commemorating our loved ones with photos and words, and lit a candle in their memory. The candle lighting ceremony is one of my favorite parts of the events. To me, it represents not only the light of our love for those we are remembering, but our strength and togetherness. It reminds us that we are not alone in our grief.

We cannot thank our volunteers and supporters enough for maintaining and growing The Dragonfly Project over the past decade. We viewed a slideshow highlighting the dedication of our volunteers: our treasurer entering financial information into the computer, the celebration event volunteer coordinator ensuring that all the food was prepared, and kids making key chains in their classrooms. These varied skills and passions come together harmoniously to make the project successful. Thank you!

Beautiful music characterized the

event with songs like the Beatles' *All You Need is Love* to the more recent Florence and the Machine tune, *Cosmic Love*. 7 Days A Cappella of the University of Minnesota helped weave a common thread of hope throughout the event. Luke Bonde helped foster a reflective, yet positive, environment with his prelude and postlude music.

I would, once again, like to reiterate that although The Dragonfly Project has grown and changed a great deal in ten years, from sending 233 packets our first year to almost 7,000 in 2011, what hasn't changed is our mission. We remain committed to the simple idea that one person can positively impact the life of another, making that impact is as simple as sending a card. Thank you for helping us to continue to give a message of hope to those who are grieving.

Anne Brooker



Anne is pictured here with the Board of Directors. Members from left to right are: Back Row: Tom Peterson-Treasurer, Katie Schmaltz-Board member at large, Peter Bonde-Board member at large. Front Row: Anne Brooker-Founder, Valerie Marquardt-Vice chair, Marcia Kurtz-Board member at large, Cheryl Seefeldt-Board chair



**April 14
2012**

Tenth Annual



Dragonfly Project Celebration

and Remembrance Event



Fifty-eight loved ones were remembered during the Memorial Montage of our program.

photographs by Lorrie Roff
www.studio-lphotos.com

My Dragonfly Story: Cindy Kaske



It is unbelievable how one phone call or visit can change your life forever. In October 2008 that happened when we were notified that our son Michael was killed. Michael was serving in the US Navy. I was touched when I received a dragonfly card and keychain in the mail, shortly after the service. It was interesting how the dragonfly made an impact on my life.

The next year we were visited by a group called Tribute to the Troops of about 100 motorcyclists that honor families of fallen military.

We became involved in the group. This last summer I was about to go on my first ride to visit families of fallen. I had some hesitation, not sure if I was emotionally strong enough to do the ride.

The staging site was a motorcycle store parking lot in a suburb of Chicago, not near any water that I knew of. Shortly before we were going to leave I was visited by a dragonfly. It kept flying by me and seemed to linger next to me. I felt that it was Michael telling me this is what I should be doing and he approved of the way I was reaching out to these families.

One day in October changed my life forever. Now I look at every dragonfly with a new outlook. My ongoing project is to visit other Gold Star families and remembering the fallen.

Thank you for everything you do.

Cindy Kaske



Announcing our New Card



Annie shares the touchability of her original painting, Luck Visits, while Sara Weingartner looks on.

We unveiled our newest card design at our Tenth Annual Celebration. The card is an orange background with a black dragonfly. The artwork is based on an acrylic painting, titled *Luck Visits*, by Annie Young. We are excited to offer you this newest card design. The Annie Young card is available along with our six other card designs on our web site.

To see more of Annie's artwork, visit her blog at <http://annieyoungarts.blogspot.com>

Walking with Dragonflies (continued from page 1)

and brother, as well as an admired colleague and friend among his peers. It had been a rollercoaster ride from May 4 to June 4 alternating between devastation and hope with each procedure and prognosis. Sean accepted each door that was opened and then closed as he accepted life—with dignity, with courage and with reality. His final wish was to finish his race at home surrounded by those he loved—his wish was granted.

To continue, before our walk, Deb and I agreed that we would like to check out the newly renovated Green Heron Walk at the Arboretum so we headed down the new boardwalk admiring the flora. Deb, a bronze sculptor, an artist, as well as a photographer, had brought her camera and was excited to see that the Lady Slippers were still in full bloom. As we approached the overlook to the marsh, we could not help but notice the multitude of dragonflies. It was then that I first related the Dragonfly Project story and brought out my new key chain which I had just received from a friend a couple of days before. As

the story unfolded, the dragonflies seemed to draw closer to listen. After a long period of observation accompanied by tears, Deb and I made our way back toward the visitor center; as we were walking and talking, neither of us could ignore the one dragonfly that had followed us up from the marsh and hovered over our shoulders. Deb and I looked at each other and knew it was a sign.

My dragonfly experiences continued throughout the summer and fall on the golf course, in our garden, and on our courtyard fountain. My husband, Dan, and I did not always compare our experiences until one day we each mentioned that we had seen one particular dragonfly with a red tail hanging out above a peony bush on the side of our garage. Sure enough—every time I came up the steps from the garden to enter the garage—there he was. I began to correlate the times when I was most missing Sean with the presence of that dragonfly. I began talking to that dragonfly, looking around to make sure nobody was listening. And then I realized, I could talk

to Sean anytime. I didn't need a telephone or to look at the clock to see if I was interrupting him at work, if he was on the noisy bus ride home, if I was interrupting a dinner or a diaper change. I could talk to him whenever and wherever I needed him.

It is amazing to find that one of God's small creatures—the dragonfly—can deliver such a huge message of hope and bring comfort to those who need to know that their loved ones have found an existence beyond this world.



Delivering Dragonflies Down Under (continued from page 1)

received the healing surprise of one of your cards.

I began to forward donations and organized to have some cards (just a few) on hand so that I always had one available when needed.

I know that I have always had a very positive response from those to whom I have sent the cards. I have, on some occasions, sent a card anonymously when the recipient has been someone I have not known directly (that is, a tragic loss through accident or violence, and I have learned about it from the media. Somehow, it seems even more important if it is a child, or a parent with a young family) I simply feel compelled to send a card with the simple message “thinking of you.”

A friend had the unenviable task of making the decision to put her beloved dog to rest. I sent her a card and she

was extremely grateful.

One man to whom I gave one of your cards in memory of his mate, now wears the dragonfly from the key ring on a chain around his neck. He took great delight in showing it to me!

I have friends who find the dragonfly synonymous with the spirit set free, as I also do now. That though alone is both comforting and healing. I used to think that the whole prospect of death was cold, dark, and totally immersed in grief. I now find, that when attending a funeral, or thinking of someone's passing I keep thinking of the dragonfly story (as included in the cards) a rather wondrous, healing thought.

Thank you for providing comfort and healing in such a beautiful way!

PLANTING SEEDS OF HOPE

Spring is an exciting time. Many of us are busy planning and planting seeds in a flower or vegetable garden.

For 10 years The Dragonfly Project has planted seeds of hope for families who are grieving the loss of a loved one. Our volunteers have assembled and sent almost 7,000 cards and packets this year alone.

Your donations are the seeds of hope that have made this possible and we thank you. We appreciate your continued support of our work.

Now it is possible for you to plant seeds of hope by donating on our website: www.thedragonflyproject.org You can donate by using a credit card, using PayPal or writing a check.

***The Dragonfly Project
has grown in the last 10 years,
thanks to you!***

From 2002 through February 2012,
we have sent out more than 38,000 packets,
mostly to total strangers.

As of February 2012, we have sent packets to all 50
of the states. As of December 2011, we have received
donations from people in all but two states.

In addition packets have been sent to Australia,
Canada, England, & Scotland

Approximately 40 volunteers around the country clip
obituaries, look up addresses and sign cards. Dozens of
others keep the regular operations going. Hundreds of
others, ages 6 to 86, have helped assemble key chains
and stuff envelopes during group volunteer events.

Each packet sent is touched by the love of many
before it reaches its destination.

Thank you for sharing your time, resources and your
heart to bring hope!

Submitting Stories to the Dragonfly Buzzette:

Your stories are important. Through this newsletter,
your wonderful stories about your loved ones and your
experiences with dragonflies have helped countless people
in their time of grieving. We thank you for sharing them
and would encourage you to continue to share your stories.

If you would like to share your story, send an e-mail to:
BuzzetteEditor@dragonflyproject.org.

dragonfly emerging



photographs by Julie Brown
<http://julesofnature.tumblr.com/>

MEMORIALS:
September 2011-
February 2012

In Memory of Bob Ayres
 Given by Alison Overstreet

In Memory of Jacob Baalson
 Given by Kay Baalson

In Memory of Betty Barron
 Given by Delores Sell Wurst

In Memory of Harry Beardsley
 Given by Sue Ortman

In Memory of Grandson Nathan Benson
 Given by Connie O'Dell

In Memory of Mr. Bill
 Given by Bryan Johnson

In Memory of Charles Billmeyer
 Given by Ray Anderson

In Memory of Earl Bonde
 Given by Charlotte Bonde
 Given by Gerald and Denise Bonde

In Memory of Hans Peter Bonde
 Given by Pete and Julie Bonde
 Given by Karen Bonde
 Given by Gerald and Denise Bonde
 Given by Dwight Dyrud

In Memory of Joseph Boyer, Jr
 Given by Colleen Boyer

In Memory of Don Brooker
 Given by Valerie Marquardt

In Memory of Joyce, Hank, Jim Brooker
 Given by Charlotte Brooker

In Memory of Sandra Carlson's Son
 Given by Sandra Carlson

In Memory of Tara Christensen
 Given by Diane Christensen

In Memory of Flora Damaske
 Given by Sandra Pettis

In Memory of Hadley Stuart Davidson
 Given by Sher Unruh-Friesen

In Memory of Ernalee Dawson
 Given by Orajane Kennedy

In Memory of Dr. Delahunty
 Given by Michele Moskwa

In Memory of Madonna DeRouche
 Given by Karen Kuwik

In Memory of Trevor Dexheimer
 Given by Lee Anne Rerick

In Memory of Jane Carol Dixon
 Given by Janet Otten

In Memory of Adam David Djerf
 Given by Steven Djerf

In Memory of Helen Draper
 Given by Diane Thomas

In Memory of Michelle Franta
 Given by Stan Liedman

In Memory of Fern Frey
 Given by Donna Russo

In Memory of Lauretta Gagnon
 Given by Becky (Rebecca) Fillmore

In Memory of Dale Haug
 Given by Amy Hennen

In Memory of Sister Antonio Heaphy's brother
 Given by Realm Consulting Group

In Memory of Sister Rosalie Hennessy
 Given by Realm Consulting Group

In Memory of Peter Hillesheim
 Given by P. J. Heidelberg

In Memory of Nancy Hinrichs
 Given by Michele Moskwa

In Memory of David Benjamin Hobbs
 Given by David Hobbs Music Foundation

In Memory of Kirk W. Holstein
 Given by Kathleen and William Holstein

In Memory of Ward Isaacson's brother Scott
 Given by Realm Consulting Group

In Memory of Sister Ann Kamberger
 Given by Realm Consulting Group

In Memory of Michael Knox
 Given by Stephanie Carlson

In Memory of Linda
 Given by Trendsetter/Essentials Salon

In Memory of Jan Naville Loi
 Given by Betty Tucker

In Memory of Steve Maloney
 Given by Kelly Segnello

In Memory of Irving Marcus
 Given by Elizabeth Lasley

In Memory of Lynn Marie
 Given by Kitty Millen

In Memory of Wally Marquardt
 Given by Valerie Marquardt
 Given by Marcy Marquardt

In Memory of Zachary Scott Matschiner
 Given by Kathy Matschiner

In Memory of Sister Eleanor McDonald
 Given by Realm Consulting Group

In Memory of Andy McNamara
 Given by Lisa McNamara

In Memory of Sean Miller
 Given by Trudy Miller

In Memory of Linda's Mother
 Given by Jackie (Jacalyn) Hanson

In Memory of the life of Jacob Blair Nelson
 Given by Kay Cafferty

In Memory of Bob Nisbet
 Given by Sarah Nisbet

In Memory of Our Sons, Clinton & Brad
 Given by Clinton and Carol Odell

In Memory of Office Joey Plant
 Given by Vicki Plant

In Memory of Jake Rebecsek
 Given by Sandi Rebecsek

In Memory of Marian Rehor
 Given by Michael Subialka

In Memory of Payton Richardson
 Given by Glory B Corner Saloon

In Memory of Amanda and Claire Rohlman
 Given by Alissa Cronauer

In Memory of Candace Giannoni Sanders
 Given by Lucy Crowe

In Memory of Alex D Schlieff, Dad of Sierra
 Given by Judith Schlieff

In Memory of Casey Schuessler
 Given by Barbara and Randy Schuessler

In Memory of Rachel Schreiner's 50th b-day
 Given by Palmer Ruschke

In Memory of Dennis Suida
 Given by Karen Kuwik

In Memory of Kathy Swedberg
 Given by Sandra Pettis

In Memory of Ethan Thang Ngo
 Given by Marlys Bishman

In Memory of Kelly Jeanne Thompson
 Given by Jeanne Walz

In Memory of Adam Vant Hof
 Given by Vant Hof Memorial Fund

In Memory of Harold Walker
 Given by Lois Walker

In Memory of Loren Westenberger
 Given by Patty Woulfe

In Memory of Alberta Whitaker
 Given by Amy Hennen
 Given by Norman Whitaker

In Memory of David White
 Given by Beverly Jenko

In Memory of Tom Willett
 Given by Barbara and Randy Schuessler

In Memory of Julie Woltzen
 Given by Joyce Woltzen

GROUP DONATIONS:

September 2011-
February 2012

Glory B Corner Saloon
www.glorybscornersaloon.com

Nativity Lutheran Church
www.nativitychurch.org

Prudential Insurance
www.prudential.com

Realm Consulting Group
www.realmgroupinc.com

Thrivent Financial
www.thriventfinancial.com

Trendsetter/Essentials Salon

University of Minnesota
www.umn.edu

IN KIND DONATIONS:
September 2011-
February 2012

Nativity Lutheran Church
www.nativitychurch.org

Prudential Insurance
www.prudential.com

Thrivent Financial
www.thriventfinancial.com

Sara Weingartner
www.soulcreations.com

Annie Young
www.annieyoungarts.blogspot.com

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 2012. The Dragonfly Buzzette committee consists of Julie Bonde, Peter Bonde, Anne Marquardt Brooker, Sharon Foss, Valerie Marquardt, Cheryl Seefeldt, and Jan Stanton.

CHANGES? Have you moved or do you no longer want to receive the Dragonfly Buzzette? Please send these changes to Marcia Kurtz at marciak@dragonflyproject.org (put "address changes" as the subject)
 Or The Dragonfly Project, c/o Marcia Kurtz,
 46 North 16th Avenue, Hopkins, MN55343



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

A message
of hope
to those who
are grieving.



What is The Dragonfly Project?

In 2000, when I was 10 years old, our friends' 11-year-old son, Hans Bonde, died of a brain tumor. Shortly thereafter, I decided to send the family a story about dragonflies and their significance in the cycle of life and death. The story, written by Walter Dudley Cavert, ended with the comforting message: "The fact that we cannot see our loved ones or communicate with them after the transformation, which we call death, is no proof that they cease to exist."

This small gesture so moved the grieving family that, in 2002 at age 11, I decided to create my own nonprofit corporation that would reach out to people who were grieving. I decided to send people who had lost a loved one a condolence card, a copy of the dragonfly story and a dragonfly key chain. I incorporated the organization and named it "The Dragonfly Project."

Anne Marquardt Brooker
Founder

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, which contains a condolence card, the dragonfly story and a dragonfly key chain, costs \$4.00 to make and send. The Dragonfly Project is operated by volunteers and a board of directors. Donations are welcome.

To make a tax deductible donation to The Dragonfly Project or to request a dragonfly packet be sent to you or someone you know, visit our web site at www.dragonflyproject.org. The Dragonfly Project is a registered 501 (c) (3) non-profit. Your donations are tax deductible. You can mail us your tax deductible donation or your request by downloading the forms on our web site. Donations can be made "in honor of" or "in memory of" a loved one. Check with your employer to see if they will match your donation.

For further information about The Dragonfly Project's current projects, upcoming events, or ways you can get involved, please visit our web site at www.dragonflyproject.org.