



Nan & Gary Zastrow
Grief Educators, Bereavement Consultants, and
Founders of Wings

In 1993, Nan and Gary's journey through grief began....creating a legacy that is stronger today than it was in its earliest years. Originally, we named our non-profit organization ©Roots and Wings, Ltd. The name was derived from a needlepoint picture that hung on our wall with the verse:

Two things we give our children
One is roots, and the other is wings.

Our initial mission was to publish a newsletter to help those who experienced the death of a significant loved one and wanted support. The articles, poems, and information we published in a newsletter were educational and supportive, The newsletter was purchased by funeral homes for their families and also available through individual subscription. The newsletter was named Wings™, and the organization was familiarly referred to by the same name.

Wings felt appropriate to us....we felt that we had given our son, Chad, a strong, healthy, and loving family foundation for success. He was 21 years-old at the time of his death, and had already begun exercising the freedom of a young adult. We had given him his "wings" to fly, you might say.

As our grief began to heal, so did our organization...and our outreach became stronger and bigger in the community. In 1997, we began sponsoring workshops, seminars, and support groups. We worked closely with local funeral homes and comfort care and hospice services to promote and carry out the many programs we offered.

In 2003, we officially changed the name of our organization to **Wings-a Grief Education Ministry** which described our evolving mission. Our slogan: "**Honoring the past and rebuilding the future**" defined our philosophy for healing grief.

The early years of grief

On April 16, 1993, our son, Chad Zastrow, died as the result of suicide. Ten weeks later Chad's fiancée took her life. Chad was 21 years of age and loved life. This senseless death to this day causes us to wonder "why?"

We found that grief from significant loss is a life changing event—and sometimes people in our communities and even in our own families don't understand why we grieve the way we do. Nor do they understand why grief can last so long. Within a few short months after our son's death, we decided not to let this loss destroy our lives. This was our saving grace. We wanted to help others live through loss. In 1993, resources were not as prevalent as they are today,

Though the trauma and numbness of those early years have passed, we still have fleeting thoughts of what life might have been if Chad were living today.

We admit that we grieved differently, as most parents do. This allowed us to recognize the uniqueness of grief and open our lives and our experiences to others by facilitating grief support groups and education series.

"I always wanted to write, but I didn't have anything to write about," is how I (Nan) described my passion for expressing my thoughts that became a part of the legacy of Wings. It was often easier to write it than to say it. In my writing, I was able to explore my deepest thoughts and feelings about life and death. I began writing the Editor's Journal in the original Wings newsletter in 1993. From 1993 until 2003, we published a magazine by the name of *Wings™* that was mailed through the United States and Canada, available by subscription. In 2003, I began writing for Grief Digest—a national magazine and product of the Centering Corporation. As a regular columnist for this magazine, my articles have been forwarded and shared, read and re-read, and circulated through cyberspace.



In addition to scores of articles I have published several books, including:

- Blessed Are They That Mourn—an observation about what hurts, what helps, and what heals.
 - Ask Me—30 Things I Want you to Know about being a survivor of suicide
 - How a Fortune Cookie Heals Grief—a lesson of hope
- Coming soon: Hitch your Hope to a Star (a gift book and collection of writings about hope)

Gary and I are also known in our community for the theme-based Holiday programs that we present every December. The program is sponsored by local funeral homes and hospice. Since 1997, we have helped newly bereaved understand the stress of facing the holidays; and we give them simple suggestions for coping with their concerns. Many families come to the program year after year for support. Some of our themes have been published in program guides available through this website.

- The Legend of the Ebber

- One is Silver and the Other Gold
- Coping with the Holiday Blues
- Something Old, Something New, Something Just to Get you Through

Today, we continue to be active in grief education and our ministry. We are involved in facilitating grief support groups; offering workshops and seminars; and giving public presentations. We are also hospice volunteers. We were certified as grief educators through the Center for Loss and Life Transition and founder, Dr. Alan D. Wolfelt. It is important to us to continue our personal grief training on a regular basis. Some of our most noteworthy presentations include:



2009 National Bereaved Parents Association, New York-Keynote Speaker

2005 World Gathering on Bereavement in Vancouver, British Columbia (workshop presentations)

Various community programs –see the tab Education and Support

In addition to our busy lives with grief education, we hold full time careers in the community. Both of us hold a WI Realtors License, and Nan works at a local hospital. We socialize with family and friends regularly and pursue personal hobbies. Life is busy, and life is good!

To learn more about them and their organization, you may visit them at their website: www.wingsgrief.org or visit them on Facebook.
