

Wings
A Grief Education Ministry

Winter 2018

25
Anniversary

Honoring the Past and
Rebuilding the Future

www.wingsgrief.org

Published by Nan Zastrow

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Please read our ELetter and pass it on!

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REMODEL

by Ben Wolfe, Trainer and Consultant

Ben Wolfe is the speaker for our 2018 Spring Seminar. Mark your calendar for an outstanding experience. April 19-20, 2018. This article is a reprint from Grief Notes, 2008.

Have you ever done any "remodeling?" Changing something from what it was, before, to something different? When I think of the individuals and families I've counseled over the years, I've heard a great deal of talk about "remodeling." How do we "remodel?" How do we alter something...knowing once something is changed it will never be the same as it once was? When I think of "remodeling" I think of change. Of altering what is now to something different. Of taking chances.

Think of your home, your apartment or your cabin, and ripping it apart to enhance the joy you get from living there. At the beginning of most remodeling jobs, we generally ask if we really want to do this. Will the outcome be worth the change? How much will it truly cost us? Changes, remodeling can be pretty messy, pretty untidy in the beginning. Walls torn down. Ceilings torn down. Maybe new windows or new doors. Maybe a new kitchen or bathroom. To change from how it was to enhance its beauty or functionality does not for many come easy. For many of us we've talked about it for years but

for whatever reasons have put-off moving forward with change.

My wife Barry, and I are not yet ready to retire, however, this past summer was time to add onto our cabin in the woods. The major struggle we had was, should we cut down a few of the trees next to the existing cabin, and if we did, how would we get them sawed into timbers and used within the new addition? Even though we heated our home in Duluth for over 25 years with wood, cutting down a dozen trees near the cabin was a MAJOR decision. Also, how much will all of this cost, financially, and can we, at this time in our lives, afford it? The question also had a flip side...how can we NOT do this now, knowing that life is short and who knows what tomorrow will bring!

We applied for and received the building permit, hired a young man to cut the trees (Barry KNEW, due to the location of the trees, I would cut a tree and it would most likely fall directly onto the existing cabin!!), and then found a sawmill that would cut the trees into timbers, and after they dried we could use them to build the addition. Twenty-five years ago when we bought the cabin the first thing we did was replace some windows...Barry was

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REMODEL...

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not real excited about it at that time when I took out the chainsaw to make room for the windows (I have since learned to measure twice and cut once with a “real saw”!!).

“Remodeling” doesn’t happen only on the outside or in physical sense of “remodeling,” it also happens within us.

After a death, or after any type of loss, how do we move from coping and surviving to being transformed and thriving? How do we “remodel” who we are on the inside and in turn, live life as fully as we can? Our lives, like roots on a tree, spread far beyond what we and those around us can see! And like the roots on a tree, where do/will you get your nourishment?

My two week vacation was spent at the cabin with three others adding onto the old cabin with the new timbers. A colleague of Barry’s stated, “Now that you have used the timbers within the cabin, you have made them immortal!” Interesting comment about “recycling.” “Remodeling,” reconstruction within ourselves is about changing from who we were to someone different. It does not mean it is “bad,” but rather, it is a fact.



As Tom Attig in his book *Re-Learning Our World* states, “We relearn our surroundings and our relationship with others. We relearn ourselves. We relearn our future and our spiritual world.” Others can help you as you “remodel,” but

no one else can relearn your world except you. Good luck in your growth! Good luck in your changes! And, good luck in your remodeling!

How to Connect with Wings:

- Email: nanwings1@gmail.com • Postal: P.O. Box 1051, Wausau, WI 54401 • Ph: 715.845.4159
- Follow the EVENTS calendar posted at the website wingsgrief.org
- Subscribe to the free online ELetter sent quarterly.
- Order a Free copy of Grief Digest at www.centeringcorp.com
- Visit Wings on Facebook





THE LEGACY OF WINGS AN UNEXPECTED GIFT OF GRIEF.

NAN ZASTROW
Co-Founder,
Wings – A Grief Education Ministry

Hard to believe, this Spring Wings-a Grief Education Ministry will be celebrating its 25th year providing grief education and as a non-profit organization. It's a milestone for us and one I never would have dreamed would happen.

When our son, Chad Zastrow, died at the age of 21, as a result of suicide, we both were truly stunned. This type of death was totally inconsistent with his beliefs, his values and his life history. When his fiancé also completed suicide just 10 weeks later, our world was again turned upside down with disbelief. In time, after patching together their story, we can say with confidence that the death was the result of a relationship that collapsed leaving loss of hope.

Gary and I are often asked questions about why we started the Wings organization and how we managed some of the obstacles on our grief journey. I thought I would take time to answer those most often asked questions, as well as those questions some people were afraid to ask (but really wondered about!) Much of what I am about to write has not been put in writing before, so bear with my ramblings as this is totally unrehearsed.

How many of your memories about the event still exist since it has been so long?

Gary and I have been asked, on occasion, if we still remember how it was 25 years ago when our loss occurred. We don't think one ever forgets the trauma, the news, and the days and months following devastating loss in your life. We can remember how we received the news. It was like watching a TV show and thinking, "This couldn't happen to us." We remember the call from Chad's friend—"Mrs. Zastrow, I think Chad is dead." We remember holding on the phone line with the Sheriff's department for confirmation as they dispatched an officer to the scene. We remember much later when the officer knocked on our door to confirm the news no parent ever wants to hear. We remember the hundreds of people who paid their respect at the funeral. We remember the honor guard and several National Guard officers who told us about their experiences with Chad, and encouraged us that he was okay just weeks before during training event. That calmed our hidden fears.

We remember the April blizzard, the cherry tree coated with ice and its plastic Easter eggs blowing in the wind. We remember this bizarre scene that mocked Chad's death. (Article: The Memory of a Darkest Moment Can Change a Life). If we choose, we can remember it all in an instance.

Yes, the initial shock and agony fade, but the shadow of the life experience hovers over you. The moments can

vividly be recalled; but, gratefully not relived (that comes through peace and healing). The impossible belief that this happened to us has consistently reminded us that tragedy can happen to anyone. God doesn't single out a family or a person for any particular reason. We recall: Realistic and unrealistic expectations of going through grief. We remember people you expected to support you and those who didn't support you as expected. We remember remarkable and unremarkable actions of a few, words said or left unsaid. And, our own needs met and unmet remain as very clear snapshots of this time in our life. These kind of memories, when activated, bring back the event. This said, it is not with bitterness or despair that we can recall these. They are reminders of how we survived the trauma and worked to turn it into triumph over grief. They are reminders of how we have grown, together, after devastating loss.

Were you angry that you son took his own life?

Most people wouldn't ask this, but I know everyone wonders about it. Initially, we were both shaken, furious, and mystified how we could have missed something so "awful" in Chad's life that suicide seemed like the only way out. We talked to him the day he died, and he was upbeat and fine. He was making plans to move home; and we were making arrangements for his arrival. He paid his taxes and bought his fiancé roses within 2 days of his death.

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THE LEGACY OF WINGS

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He put a fishing pole on layaway at a department store. He was seeking placement on the volunteer fire department in a new community since he couldn't serve on the one he was at, if he moved. He scheduled a "makeup" drill at his Army National Guards so he could attend a jaws of life demonstration for his EMT class at a local college. He was perfectly "himself" that morning. He spent the day with his friend fishing and playing with his friend's baby. Then he proceeded to go home, grabbed a pizza, and even left his paycheck in his car.

Within a matter of a few hours, he died. These actions before his death are not those of a person who is suicidal.

How did you respond to his choice to take his life?

Through our years of learning about suicide, we have come to understand that suicide is just death by another name. And the rap we give it and the taboo we make out of it, are not worthy of the energy it takes to try to justify his death to someone else. Death is death, no matter how it occurs. In the end, the family and friends grieve like anyone else long after the cause of death is forgotten. We developed unique coping skills to deal with society and our own feelings of disbelief. Twenty five years ago, suicide was so forbidden, that it was not discussed. It took us awhile, but we weren't going to let that happen anymore. Suicide, like today's deaths by drugs, needed to be understood and prevented.

We believe there are two contributing factors to death by suicide... Fear and the absence of hope. When an individual is confronted with fear, whether real or imagined, it overrides the choice to die and all common sense. Therefore, it

self-justifies the act. Loss of hope is the final blow when nothing seems possible to change the course of one's path or future.

As the years passed and we understood loss more, we were at peace with Chad's death. We know it occurred in a moment of anger. He never meant for it to hurt us, his parents. I believe that God accepted him into His kingdom, and we will meet him there again someday.

How did you explain Chad's death to family and friends initially?

We didn't. We could barely say the word "suicide" ourselves. Those who knew his story passed it on with and without the facts. Gossip and "hearsay" were the common authors of his story. We didn't explain because there is nothing that can be said with credibility. Our true family and friends didn't need to know the details in order to stand with us through our grief.

How did you respond to your feeling of "Why?"

We soon discovered that "Why" didn't matter. Initially, we were consumed with the reason for "Why?" but we soon realized we would probably never know the answer; and no one else could answer those questions either. When there are no answers to satisfy us, or the answers are contradictory to what we perceive, we feel resentment. By obsessing over "why", we were forgetting about who Chad was, as a person, as our son. We were putting aside the good things he did in his life and raising doubt about his intentions. We accepted that knowing wouldn't change a thing. We have beautiful memories to sustain us through the tough times. Our faith has given us a

firm religious foundation. Our spirituality comforts us in the quiet moments by knowing that "Chad is okay." With this new perspective, we felt ready to face the possibilities of "what's next?" And our intuitive self whispers, If you really discovered the answer "Why" would it change anything?

What is the major lesson you learned from your son's death?

That's an easy one. DON'T JUDGE! Not only in his case, but for many people in many different situations, we don't know the whole story. We only have opinions, perhaps one-side observations, and belief statements of what we value as right or wrong. If I had "walked in his shoes", what choice would I have made? I don't know. Therefore, I can't judge his choice.

What helped you survive all these years after devastating loss?

Probably the bond between man and wife as mother and father of a son we adored. Within the first day, we vowed to never allow this to "destroy our life." Though our faith felt challenged initially, it is also the firm foundation throughout our life that sustained us. God wasn't finished with us yet. We grieved and we mourned. But ultimately, it was learning about loss, associating with positive people, and choosing to help others that helped us survive. We had several mentors who encouraged us along the way.

People who learn about the services of Wings often ask: "Why didn't I ever know about Wings before?"

Our most common explanation is: "You didn't need to know about us (Wings) before. People often find us after they

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have experienced a significant loss and are looking for hope.”

What did you feel you wanted to accomplish when you started the non-profit organization?

Our main focus was on sharing what we learned and helping other people at a very fragile, terrible time in their lives. We started out by writing a newsletter in 1993 that shared real life stories, inspiration, articles about grief from professionals, poetry/verse, and tips for dealing with loss. People craved this kind of resource which led us to start holiday grief programs, seminars with professional speakers, presentations, and education/support groups. These programs started in 1997 and continue today.

How specific to “suicide” were your intentions when you began your non-profit?

Actually, our mission was never based on suicide death. In fact, for the first three years, I could barely admit that Chad’s death was due to suicide. I still felt shame and humiliation. The basis of our organization was grief education, in general. Twenty five years ago, there was little available for bereaved families. As mentioned, the Web was fairly new and lacked a lot of resources for education. Gary and I floundered with the grief we were feeling, and couldn’t seem to get beyond its hold on our lives. When we learned, we felt more in control of our grief; and we just wanted to pass it on. That was our primary intention. It wasn’t until about 12 years after Chad’s death that we began to volunteer for the Marathon County suicide prevention task force.

Who were the people that helped you achieve your goals?

Gary and I struggled to “get the word out” about the programs of Wings. People don’t typically like to talk about loss. Our first support came from three local funeral homes: Brainard Funeral Home, Helke Funeral Home, and Peterson/Kraemer Funeral Home who believed in our printed (hardcopy) newsletter (later a magazine) and mailed the quarterly issues to their families. Shortly after, Aspirus Wausau Hospital’s hospice services joined with us to help sponsor our events. The recognition from these four sources gave us credibility in the community. Also, the donations of individuals, sponsors, businesses, and memorial gifts have kept us operating over the years. Donations made to Wings are charitable tax deductions and provide the means for our services. We would not have survived without these sources of support.

What motivated you in your organization to continue your efforts when it would have been so easy to just “forget” and move on?

It was a couple things. The first was a meeting with a funeral director, Tom Kramer, whose funeral home provided services for Chad’s fiancé. We had never met him before, but went to ask him his opinion about the newsletter we began producing shortly after Chad’s death. We wanted to know how if he thought it would help people. He asked us if we knew what a thanatologist was. We didn’t. He told us to figure it out and then come back to him. A few weeks later, we returned with the answer. He then asked us if we had ever met Dr. Alan Wolfelt. We told him we had not. Tom

suggested that we go to Appleton, WI where Dr. Wolfelt would be presenting a seminar and talk to him. We did that. We gave Dr. Wolfelt our newsletter, told him what we were trying to do, and asked him what he thought about our efforts. He met with us after his seminar. I’ll never forget how gracious and sincere he was when he told us. “Continue doing what you are doing. There isn’t enough of this kind of information available. You are doing a good thing.” That same year, we began our studies at the Center for Loss and Life Transition in Fort Collins under the direction of Dr. Wolfelt. It took us eight years, but we were finally certified there as grief educators. We brought Dr. Wolfelt to Wausau five times to speak, and we continue a close friendship with him. We credit him with our desire and our learned skills to help others.

Why don’t you have a paid staff? What do your volunteers get out of their service?

Wings has never paid anyone on their staff a salary. This is an all-volunteer organization. Volunteers serve because they believe in the mission of Wings and are like-minded (as the Founders) to help other people through their loss experience.

How do you continue to keep your skills honed over the years?

From day one, we sought any kind of learning experience we could find to teach us more. It was like the thirsty person in the desert seeking water. We drove miles; attended any seminar/speaker on grief; visited with spiritual people, read lots of books, and attended

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classes. Then we began doing our own programs and speaking at invited events to share our thoughts. We still learn from our speakers at our Spring Seminar, and we keep in touch with most of them who are always willing to give us feedback! And we still continue to learn through a variety of sources.

Nan, how does your writing reflect upon your own personal experiences and belief about loss?

At one time, I wanted to be a journalist. I always claimed that I always wanted to write but never had anything to write about. As a young teen, I wrote poetry, submitted articles to magazines

and the newspaper, and kept a journal of “stories” and verse. God answered my prayers (in a way I never expected) when he gave me this loss. He gave me something to write about, and I could never complain about that again. I can write the things I cannot say without tearing up and showing my intense emotions. I share my loss in stories and words. Almost every experience in my life can be woven into a lesson about grief (as you will see in many of my writings). I live with my loss and continue to heal it through my writing.

What do you hope your legacy will be for the Wings organization someday?

I hope that Wings lives on and my writings still float around the Internet. I hope someone reading them will say, “Wow, I like her perspective.” I hope people who were part of our lives (through our grief organization, our support groups, and our presentations) know how much they taught us by sharing their story with us. So many times, Gary and I would say that we wouldn’t trade our story for theirs. I hope that in some small ways we inspired people to “live again” after their loss. Someday Wings will sunset (but we have no plans for that yet), and when it does I hope that God knows we did the best that we could do with one of the greatest challenges in our lives!

FIND NAN’S ARTICLES ON THE INTERNET

Wings feels honored that websites have chosen to share the articles Nan has written. Thank you for passing on our messages of hope. Here is this month’s selection of a few you can find surfing the net.

Topic: Change:

A Different Kind of Grief (published by Your Tribute)

<http://blog.yourtribute.com/grief/a-different-kind-of-grief/>

Topic Loss:

Memory of the Darkest Moment Can Change a Life

www.prokowall.com/DBpdfs/Newsletter/20.pdf

Topic: Finding Hope

Just Keep Swimming Around, Nan Zastrow, Vol VII, #1

<https://centering.org/bookstores-and-conferences/newsroom.html/article/2017/03/07/just-keep-swimming-around>

Can a Horse Really Fly? Finding Hope, Vol. IV, #1

<https://thegriefftoolbox.com/article/can-horse-really-fly-possible-dream-lesson-hope>

ON A WING AND A PRAYER

A column reserved for inspiration. These stories demonstrate the inner spirit that survives through difficult circumstances. Often these are real life parables. This story was found on the Internet and published in the Wings magazine in 2002

Mom's Last Laugh by Robin Lee Shope

Consumed by my loss, I didn't notice the hardness of the pew where I sat. I was at the funeral of my dearest friend — my mother. She finally had lost her long battle with cancer. The hurt was so intense, I found it hard to breathe at times.

Always supportive, mother clapped loudest at my school plays, held a box of tissues while listening to my first heartbreak, comforted me at my father's death, encouraged me in college, and prayed for me my entire life.

When mother's illness was diagnosed, my sister had a new baby and my brother had recently married his childhood sweetheart, so it fell on me, the 27-year-old middle child without entanglements, to take care of her. I counted it an honor.

"What now, Lord?" I asked sitting in church. My life stretched out before me as an empty abyss. My brother sat stoically with his face toward the cross while clutching his wife's hand.

My sister sat slumped against her husband's shoulder, his arms around her as she cradled their child. All so deeply grieving, no one noticed I sat alone. My place had been with our mother, preparing her meals, helping her walk, taking her to the doctor, seeing to her medication, reading the Bible together. Now she was with the Lord. My work was finished and I was alone.

I heard a door open and slam shut at the back of the church. Quick footsteps hurried along the carpeted floor. An

exasperated young man looked around briefly and then sat next to me. He folded his hands and placed them on his lap. His eyes were brimming with tears.

He began to sniffle. "I'm late," he explained, though no explanation was necessary. After several eulogies, he leaned over and commented, "Why do they keep calling Mary by the name of 'Margaret'?"

"Oh" "Because that was her name, Margaret. Never Mary. No one called her 'Mary,' I whispered. I wondered why this person couldn't have sat on the other side of the church. He interrupted my grieving with his tears and fidgeting. Who was this stranger anyway?

"No, that isn't correct," he insisted, as several people glanced over at us whispering, "Her name is Mary, Mary Peters."

"That isn't who this is, I replied.."

"Isn't this the Lutheran church?"

"No, the Lutheran church is across the street."

"Oh."

"I believe you're at the wrong funeral, Sir."

The solemnness of the occasion mixed with the realization of the man's mistake bubbled up inside me and came out as laughter.

I cupped my hands over my face, hoping it would be interpreted as sobs.

The creaking pew gave me away. Sharp looks from other mourners only made the situation seem more hilarious. I peeked at the bewildered, misguided man seated beside me. He was laughing, too, as he glanced around, deciding it was too late for an uneventful exit.

I imagined mother laughing.

At the final "Amen," we darted out a door and into the parking lot. "I do believe we'll be the talk of the town," he smiled. He said his name was Rick and since he had missed his aunt's funeral, asked me out for a cup of coffee.

That afternoon began a lifelong journey for me with this man who attended the wrong funeral, but was in the right place.

A year after our meeting, we were married at a country church where he was the assistant pastor. This time we both arrived at the same church, right on time. In my time of sorrow, God gave me laughter. In place of loneliness, God gave me love. This past June we celebrated our twenty-second wedding anniversary. Whenever anyone asks us how we met, Rick tells them, "Her mother and my Aunt Mary introduced us, and it's truly a match made in heaven."

*Published on the Internet.
Reprinted in Wings 2002.*

I BELIEVE HOPE IS FOUND

From the book: Hitch Your Hope to a Star, by Nan Zastrow

I believe hope is found in:

- saying yes instead of no;
- loving the concept of living; dying can wait.
- turning the sad memories, to stories of the living soul;
- forgiving the unforgivable, not planning for revenge;
 - counting your blessings; not your challenges;
 - mending relationships instead of replacing them;
- saying, “I’ll always remember”, not “I’ll never stop missing you;”
 - getting up, instead of laying down;
 - giving in gracefully, when you have nothing to gain;
 - letting go, when you can’t change the outcome;
- looking for the miracle; not just waiting for it to happen;
- strengthening your spiritual self, not being angry at God for your lack of faith;
 - counting your steps forward; not the ones that sometimes drift back;
 - saying, “what next?” instead of “why me?”

Hope begins your journey. Believe in it. Trust in it. Imagine it. Feel the energy.



*Notification to our
Facebook Friends*

Wings-a Grief Education Ministry

now has a public group page on Facebook which is primarily for posting the quarterly ELetter, Education Events, Support Group dates, and public speaking events. We recommend you join this group for appropriate announcements to stay in touch. Additionally, our regular Wings-a Grief Education FB page continues.

Look for Wings-Grief Education Events & Eletter on Facebook—and join the group!

Wings Grief Tip:

BE GOOD TO YOURSELF
A self-care tip from Wings, Spring 2000

Running Away:

When you feel like running away, allow yourself to feel scared for just a moment. It's normal to feel overwhelmed after loss. Know that the solution is not to move to another city, another job, or another relationship. First you must heal the inner self... or your problems will just move with you. Seek help in the present form from someone you can trust and begin putting your fear to rest.



**KEEP
CALM
AND
WRITE
POETRY**

*Would you like to share
your story or poem?*

If you would like to submit a short story, poem, or article, we welcome it. The material does not need to be original, but if it isn't, please include the author or credits that can be printed along with the material. We are looking for articles that inspire the bereaved, teach, and offer hope which is the focus of our ministry of Wings-a Grief Education Ministry. Poems or material may be submitted In memory of your special loved one.

Calendar of Events

*These are the events currently scheduled for 2018 for Wings-a Grief Education Ministry.
Please check our website or follow us on Facebook for events as they are finalized.*

GOOD GRIEF, BAD GRIEF. GETTING BACK TO LIFE AFTER LOSS PART 1

(Education and Support Group)

A six-week series: Education and Support for Grief, Loss and Transition. Grief is not an event that begins and ends. It becomes part of your life. It is an active, ongoing process of turning your sadness in to a meaningful life again. Our group is not about changing you, but rather about offering you a space for healing and understanding where change can take place.

Meets: Tuesdays: 6:00-7:30 pm Tuesdays: January 9,16, 23, 30 and February 6, 13

Conference Room A-1, Quality Services department, Aspirus Wausau Hospital

Fall Series 2017: NEW GROUP with new content (to be announced)

Meets: 6:00-7:30 pm. Meets September and October (please check for dates)

21st ANNUAL UNDERSTANDING GRIEF SPRING CONFERENCE

BEN WOLFE Professional CEUs available for both seminars.

Holiday Inn & Suites,1000 Imperial Avenue, Rothschild, WI 54474

Thursday Evening: April 19, 2018 7:00-9:00 pm | Community program. No charge.

Friday Morning: April 20, 2018 9:00—Noon | Community and Caregiver Program. \$50

FINDING THE OTHER SIDE OF SADNESS | LIVING THE NEW NORMAL AFTER LOSS PART 2

(Education and Support Group)

This 4-week series is a follow-up to Part 1 and is also designed for those who have done some grief work and are ready to move forward. You may find that your old life doesn't fit you anymore because you are a different person now. Learn how to begin a new chapter in your life by remembering the past and moving forward without regrets.

Meets: Tuesdays, | 6:00 –8:00 pm May 22, 29, and June 5, 12

Conference Room A-1, Quality Services Department, Aspirus Wausau Hospital

22nd ANNUAL HOLIDAY WHEN THE HOLIDAY HURTS—PROGRAMS

LIVING RIVER CONCERT Celebrating healing and peace through the gift of music

Saturday, December 1, 2018, The Plaza Hotel & Suites

WHEN THE HOLIDAYS HURT

When the Holidays Hurt: A workshop sharing ideas for dealing with loss during the holidays

Aspirus Wausau Hospital, Medallion room, Thursday, Dec. 6, 2018

Reader Feedback



WHAT DO YOU THINK? WINTER, 1999

THESE ARE A FEW OF THE RESPONSES PUBLISHED IN 1999 IN THE WINGS MAGAZINE. PERMISSION TO PRINT AND REPRINT EACH RESPONSE WAS RECEIVED FROM EACH INDIVIDUAL.

ALMOST ANYONE WHO HAS LOST SOMEONE LOVED HAS A STORY TO TELL. SOMEONE OR SOMETHING HAS COME INTO OUR LIVES AND GIVEN US THE STRENGTH AND COURAGE TO MOVE FORWARD. THIS "POWER" OF SPIRITUALITY MAY TAKE DIFFERENT FORMS SUCH AS THE POWER OF PRAYER, A GIFT OF ANGELS, FAITH, A MESSAGE FROM A LOVED ONE OR A FEELING OF THE PRESENCE OF A GOD-FORCE OR HOLY SPIRIT. HERE ARE STORIES THAT BEAR WITNESS TO THE EXTRAORDINARY EXPERIENCES THAT GIVE THE BEREAVED THE STRENGTH TO CARRY ON.

Bluebirds bring peace

My husband, Jeff Draeger, died suddenly on Jan. 6, 1999. We were married just 71/2 years and had renewed our wedding vows on August 10, 1998. Jeff's death hit me hard. The impact of loss ran deep into my heart and soul. At times, I felt like I couldn't go on without him.

On Saturday, May 22, 1999, Jeff's ashes were scattered in his favorite place. His mother and two sisters were along with my parents, my sister and myself. When we arrived at the site, we all saw one yellow flower below us off an incline. It was symbolic to all of us and we considered it "our flower".

Moments later, a baby bluebird appeared several feet away from us on a branch. It looked right at us and started to sing. We felt it was a sign to us. A gentle peace settled into my heart that day. The next day, my parents, sister and I stopped at the site again, and the bluebird appeared again. He sang a few tunes and then flew away. Not to say good-bye, but to let us know that Jeff would always be with us. This happened to me several times after that day. There is no doubt in my mind that the bluebird was a sign or a message from God to bring me peace.

Kimberly
Topeka, KS

Daddy's gentle touch

I am my Daddy's one and only girl. The thought of him dying terrified me all my life. In July, I gave birth to his long awaited, cherished granddaughter. In August, he got sick and after five months died.

The following May, I had a wonderful dream early in the morning. I dreamed my Daddy was collecting the trash. He appeared about twenty years younger, in my dream. He was coming around the corner from my baby daughter's bedroom into mine when he hit his knuckles on the doorway and swore in his native southern drawl. This immediately drew my attention. He came to me and sat down next to me and held my hand. I tried to tell him how much I loved him and missed him, but nothing I said made sense. I started to awaken and could hear myself making funny noises, but I could still feel the pressure of him holding my hand.

I truly believe that my Dad came to see me. Holding my hand symbolized the fact that I held his hand during those long months of illness and hoping before he died.

Susan
Mosinee, WI

Gift of the rose

A strange thing happened to me at the cemetery. Lori loved the mountains and her headstone faces a beautiful mountain named Pagosa peak. Lori's father and stepfather spread ashes in front of her headstone. When we were getting ready to leave the cemetery, I put a red rose on her ashes. Two days later we returned to the cemetery and found that the stem of the rose was gone. The ground was muddy from the rain. I looked for footprints, thinking an animal had picked up the rose.

The bud to the rose had turned dark. We left the cemetery and returned the next day. The bud was gone; and there were no footprints. I believe that this experience was Lori's way of telling me she was OK. That gave me a sense of peace.

Carolyn
Madison, AL

By thy grace

When my son, Jeffrey, died in a car accident with four of his friends on Oct. 31, 1998, we were devastated. The only thing that held me together was my faith and the belief that there is life after death. One day driving home from work, I was very sad and started to cry. I pulled over to the

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WHAT DO YOU THINK...

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side of the road and sobbed uncontrollable. It was then a peacefulness surrounded me and these words came to me: "To the end, that by thy grace, we may come to everlasting life through Jesus Christ our Lord". I know I learned those words in catechism many years before, but I was never good at memorizing things and can't explain how I remembered them. Yet the statement was very close. I printed those words and read them every day. I know that I will see Jeff in heaven again someday.

Nancy
Aniwa, WI

A hug

My son, Ray, died on July 4, 1998. About a week after his death, I came home to a very warm house (about 95 degrees. I

didn't have the air conditioning on.) I was standing by the stove when I felt a cold brush of air go from my feet up the left side of my body. It stopped at my back and went to my right shoulder. Then I felt a squeeze like it was hugging me. I have had the feeling since when I am down and thinking about my son. I believe this was a message from my son letting me know that he is all right and that he is with me.

Diane
East Haven, CT

Healing gift

After our dear Jody died at the age of 13. We have received many spiritual gifts of healing that others say were coincidental. After a surgery, I received a beautiful floral bouquet from friends. On the side

of it was a red and black butterfly. On the other side was a plastic dinosaur. It was standing on yellow, red and blue letters that said "Get Well Soon." I called our friends to thank them for the flowers and the neat idea of putting the dinosaur in the bouquet because they knew I would give it to Andy. "But we didn't tell the florist to put a dinosaur in the bouquet," they responded. Jodie came to my mind. She loved Andy and liked to take care of him. I believe it was a message. Others may call it a coincidence.

Joanne
Wausau WI

Articles on our Website... www.wingsgrief.org

These articles in the archives may be of great interest to you. They are posted on the Wings website as well as many are floating throughout the Internet.

We recommend the following:

The Stories of Love are Stronger than Death, Nan Zastrow, Wings, Vol. X, #3

Finding the Courage to Grieve, Nan Zastrow, Vol. IX, #3

The Lion Within Me Still Roars, Nan Zastrow, Vol VIII, #2

What is the Color Blue? Finding Hope, Nan Zastrow, Vol. VIII, #1

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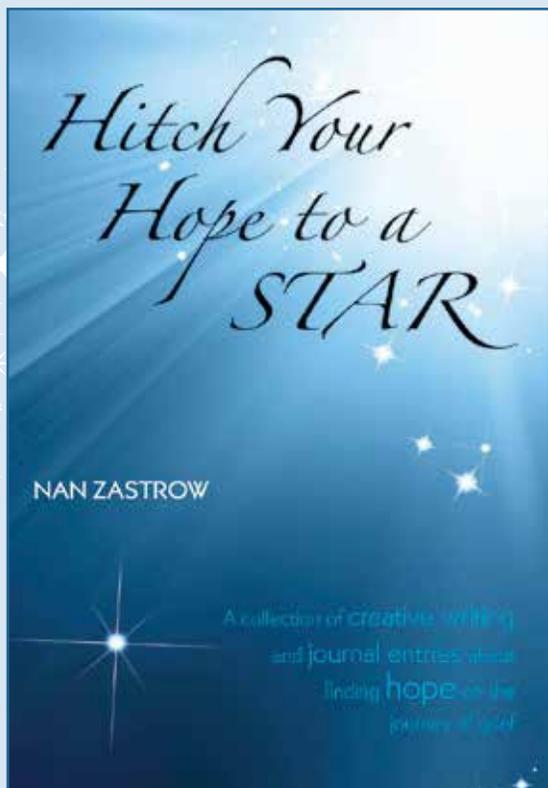
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These donations were made over the past few months as a gift to Wings for Events.

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- *What is the color blue?*
- *In Grief and In Joy...telling your story*
- *Can a horse really fly?-a lesson in hope*
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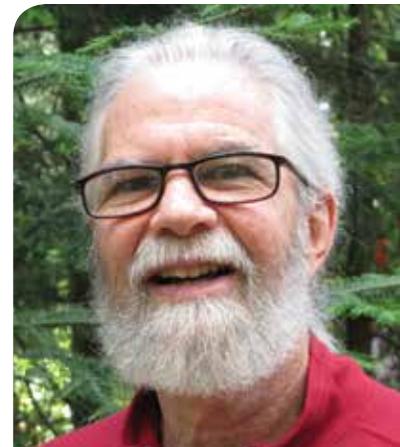
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Understanding Grief Spring Seminar 2018

Ben Wolfe, M.Ed., L.I.C.S.W., Fellow in Thanatology (Seminar Presenter)

Ben Wolfe is a grief, loss and trauma trainer and consultant. He served for 28 years as the founder, program manager and grief therapist for St. Mary's Medical Center's Grief Support Center in Duluth, Minnesota. Ben provided life-threatening illness and bereavement counseling for people from pre-school to senior citizens. He has given over 2,000 presentations at the regional, state, national and international levels, taught university graduate courses for over 25 years, and a course on life-threatening illness at the University of Minnesota, Duluth School of Medicine for 23 years.

Ben is former president of the international Association for Death Education and Counseling (ADEC) and for 24 years served as chair of the 300 member Minnesota Coalition for Death Education and Support. In addition to chapters in books, he has authored numerous articles related to grief and loss and received numerous awards for his service.



SEMINAR ONE

Hanging On or Letting Go? Rebalancing Our World after Death or Loss

A community seminar for grieving families

Thursday, April 19, 2018 | 7:00 – 9:00 pm

Free of charge and open to the public

How do individuals and their families “rebalance their lives” after a loss, be it a death, traumatic event, or any crisis? And, how can one live with a “Yes I can” attitude...not only helping themselves, but in turn, also others. This program will provide strategies and interventions to help individuals, their families and friends trying to cope with the opportunities and struggles on the “loss journey,” and examine how individuals live their lives, *Hanging On or Letting Go?*

Both seminars will be held at:

Holiday Inn & Suites – Cedar Creek
1000 Imperial Avenue, Rothschild, WI

For more information or a program brochure contact:

Wings—a Grief Education Ministry
Nan or Gary Zastrow 715.845.4159 or nanwings1@gmail.com

Or Aspirus Comfort Care and Hospice Services
Amy Kitsemel 715.847.2703

Professional CEU's available for both programs.

Presented by Wings™-a Grief Education Ministry who partners with Aspirus Comfort Care & Hospice Services to provide these seminars as a community service. Other major sponsors include Brainard Funeral Home, Helke Funeral Home, and Peterson/Kraemer Funeral Homes & Crematory. For a complete list of sponsors, visit www.wingsgrief.org

SEMINAR TWO

Helping Individuals and Families Move from Coping and Surviving, to being Transformed and Thriving

A seminar for clergy, hospice, and others who care for the bereaved

Friday, April 20, 2018 | 9:00 am – Noon | Fee: \$50

Open to the public

Situations concerning loss of any type, are a part of life and occur on a regular basis in the lives of individuals and their families. However, how is it that one can “grow” after a devastating and life-changing crisis or traumatic event? How can one in their “new normal” at some point see the world as still a bright place to live? And, what is the difference between persons who move from coping and surviving, to being transformed and thriving? This workshop will provide strategies and clinical interventions to help individuals and families trying to cope with the opportunities and struggles on the “loss journey.”

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