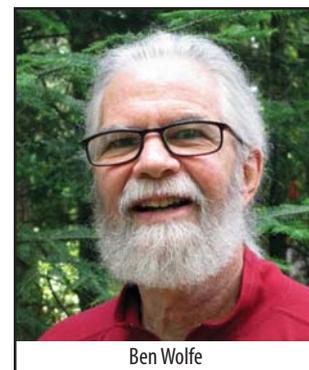


From the Chair ... “Where is MCDES today as an organization... and where are you in your times of transition?”

By Ben Wolfe, MCDES Chair

Like people and plants, organizations have a life cycle. They have a green and supple youth, a time of flourishing strengths, and a gnarled old age. – John W. Gardner



Ben Wolfe

MCDES newsletters over this past year have given you a chance to read about the formation of MCDES and its evolution to where it is today. Started in 1977 and known then as the Minnesota Coalition for Terminal Care (MCTC), the focus was to support individuals dealing with a terminal illness and their caregivers. Through its efforts, the organization helped form the original Minnesota Hospice Organization (now known as the Minnesota Network of Hospice and Palliative Care). Today, MCDES is a volunteer organization whose purpose is to promote and provide education, opportunities for networking, and support to individuals and groups involved with the care of persons confronting death and their families and friends, and those who are bereaved, regardless of the cause of death.

Organizations have their own “developmental stages,” (and NO, I am not going to talk about the “old days” of Kubler Ross and her stage theory). Organizations go from “Start-Up” to “Growing” (sometimes called the “Adolescent” stage) to “Mature,” and sometimes to a stage of “Stagnation” or “Decline.”

Forty-one years after MCDES began, we are today an organization thriving and strong. Our membership waxes and wanes, but is usually around the 250 to 300 member mark. We continue to see very high attendance at our Spring and Fall conferences, many of those having been “sold out.” Our treasury is sound. We

are financially in a VERY good place, and due to our conferences and donations we are able to keep our membership dues at \$25 for regular members, and only \$20 for students and seniors. And, we have not raised conference registration fees for years (which include CEUs, continental breakfast, lunch, and handout materials). Additionally, to help those who are in need of scholarships to attend our conferences, we can proudly say...thanks to members like you, we can give scholarships for each of our conferences.

MCDES, your organization, has “followed those developmental stages.” In 1994 MCDES was at that “Stagnation” stage and almost died. Today, and for many years now, we have been in the “Mature” stage...with a board of directors making sure we continue to reassess who we are as an organization, and how to not only maintain our “Mature” status, but in fact, to THRIVE.

Like any organization that goes through its “developmental stages,” we as individuals go through our own times of reflection. We too need to assess where we have come from and where do we want to go? How will we deal with, as William Bridges shares in his book, *Transitions, Making Sense of Life’s Changes*, moving from endings to new beginnings? Many of you I am sure are well aware of Bridges’ book and the challenges of dealing with the neutral zone, that time between endings and new beginnings. That time of potential distress and disorganization. Bridges talks about

taking time to discover what you really want in life? What would be un-lived in your life if it ended today? He states, “*Dying, the neutral zone, and rebirth, are not ideas that we bring to life; they are phenomena that we find in life.*” He goes on to state, “*Change is situational. Transition, on the other hand, is psychological. It is not those events, but rather the inner reorientation or self-redefinition that you have to go through in order to incorporate any of those changes into your life. Without a transition, a change is just a rearrangement of the furniture. Unless transition happens, the change won’t work, because it doesn’t take.*”

Your MCDES board not only discusses issues via technology, but meets regularly in person to make sure the organization maintains that “Mature” stage, and in turn, continues to reinvent itself as needed to meet the challenges of changing times. Each of us, the board, you and myself, need to remind ourselves, as Bridges writes, “*Every transition is an ending that prepares the ground for new growth and new activities.*” **Thanks for your support and membership in MCDES, and all the best in your life transitions!**

To exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly.

– Henri Bergson