

## From the Chair: Transition Time.....And Thank You!!!

by Ben Wolfe, MCDES Chair

Where were you in 1994? A first-class stamp was 29 cents, a gallon of regular gas was \$1.11, and a dozen eggs were 87 cents. The Dow-Jones hit a record in January, 1994 at 3803.88. Also in 1994 Nancy Kerrigan was attacked by Tonya Hardings's bodyguard, Nelson Mandela was sworn in as South Africa's 1st black president, and Amazon.com was founded in the State of Washington.

It was also in early 1994 when MCDES went through a transformation of its own. A transformation that led five of us, Gail Noller, Paul Johnson, Paula Dicke, Barb Force and myself to see if we could lead MCDES in a new direction. It was also in 1994 that Verla Johansson joined us to help as our MCDES administrative coordinator. We divided up the roles needed to revive the organization and help move it onto a stable foundation. I was asked to serve as chair and that has been a role I have been honored to serve in since that time.

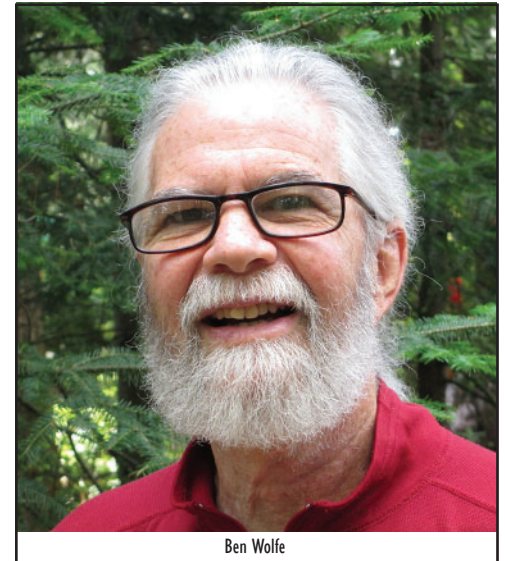
However, it is now transition time. A time for new leadership. A time for New Beginnings. As members, you are fortunate to have a working board that is collaborative, fiscally responsible, and a board that continues to constantly re-evaluate itself, making changes as needed. Amending and Restating the Articles of Incorporation and revising the By-Laws are two examples of the board's dedication to the future of the organization. I have been honored to work over the years with board members "who get it." Who volunteer their time and effort to make sure the MCDES membership receives quality conferences, newsletters, and other

member benefits, including networking among colleagues that is so valuable.

I attended my first MCDES conference in 1980, and became a member at the same time. It did not take long to truly feel I was finding "my home" of kindred spirits. Finding folks who I could learn from, and when appropriate, I could share my thoughts and learned lessons with. A few years later I was voted onto the board.

While serving as chair for the past 25 years I was also fortunate to serve for 28 years, starting in 1985, as the St. Mary's Medical Center's Grief Support Center founder, director and as a grief therapist in Duluth. I was able to teach graduate courses on Death and Dying for 25 years at UMD, and for 23 years a required eight-week course for second year medical students on life-threatening illness at the UMD School of Medicine. And even today, since "retirement" from the medical center, I am fortunate to continue teaching medical students in the summers, and being asked a fair amount to provide trainings, keynotes and presentations throughout the US and overseas. I've also been able to serve on other regional and national committees, on the Northern Minnesota clinical CISM team, and on the national advisory board for TAPS, the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors ...for "Gold Star" families out of Washington, DC.

And yes, I still have a flip phone. I don't text and I don't have a social media account. I even get laughed at by TSA workers if for some reason I have to pull my phone out at an airport! One thing for sure...the current



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MCDES board is far, far, far beyond flip-phones!

To you, MCDES members...thank you for the gift of allowing me to be part of the MCDES journey and trusting me with the role of MCDES chair. And to the current MCDES board, and all those who have served on the board in the past, THANK YOU. A quote I had in my medical center office for many years is by Sam Cook, a friend and local Duluth writer who stated, "Go. Get out there. Feel the wind. Taste the rain. Find the magic." Thank you all for your support, encouragement and friendship, and for allowing me the opportunities over all these years in finding the magic. The magic to realize as professionals in this field of dying, death and bereavement, we are part of a larger collaborative team with opportunities to witness stories of pain and joy, of healing, and transformation. After 25 years as chair, it's time for new adventures...time for finding more magic! As I move off the MCDES board, I am reminded of what my wife and best friend Barry would say, "Thanks for the memories." Again, thanks for a great 25 years!

