

Coalition News

Quarterly Newsletter of the Minnesota Coalition for Death Education and Support
P.O. Box 50651 ♦ Minneapolis, MN 55405 ♦ 715-733-0265 ♦ www.mcdes.org ♦ info@mcdes.org

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Since 1977...Education and Support for Those Providing Care to Grieving Persons

March 2022

Mark Your Calendars

March 3–April 7 ♦ *Growing Through Loss*, Spring Grief Series, North Metro Grief Support Coalition. No pre-registration and no fee. Info: 763-354-7828.

March 15 ♦ *Grief, Creativity and Nature in Honoring Those Who Have Passed*, MN Threshold Network. Info, including a Zoom link, is at <https://mnthresholdnetwork.wordpress.com/>.

April 7–8 ♦ *Emerging Voices*, Minnesota Gerontological Society Annual Conference. Info at <https://www.mgsconference.org/>.

April 19–23 ♦ *ADEC 2022 Annual Conference*. Info at https://www.adec.org/page/2022_Conference.

April 28 ♦ *An Evening of Purpose*. A conversation with journalist Richard Lieder, author of “Who Do You Want to Be When You Grow Old,” and Cathy Wurzer, founder of End in Mind. Contact info@endinmindproject.org.

May 6 ♦ MCDES Spring Conference: *Self Compassion: Sustaining the Ability to Care in Challenging Times*. Speaker: Darcy Harris, PhD, FT. See page 1 or www.mcdes.org.

June 6–8 ♦ International Death, Grief and Bereavement Conference: *Individual, Collective and Global Loss: How Do We Best Support the Grieving?* Info at <https://www.uwlax.edu/ex/dgb/>.

In this issue

- ♦ MCDES Spring Conference
- ♦ From The Vice-Chair
- ♦ Navigating COVID-19
- ♦ Bearing Witness
- ♦ Prayer in the ICU
- ♦ Book Review
- ♦ Death and the Arts
- ♦ MCDES Board Openings
- ♦ Sundries

MCDES Spring Virtual Conference

May 6, 2022

Self Compassion: Sustaining the Ability to Care in Challenging Times

Speaker: Darcy Harris, PhD, FT



Darcy Harris, PhD, FT

Clinicians who work with people experiencing loss and grief are often defined by their compassionate nature and ability to care for others in incredibly difficult situations.

The ability to sustain this compassionate stance begins with self-compassion. There is a growing body of evidence supporting the cultivation of compassion-based practices as a buffer to fatigue and burnout that can be readily experienced when working with vulnerable individuals in organizational settings. This workshop will discuss the current research and trends related to compassion in care delivery, and introduce participants to practices to enhance the cultivation of a greater sense of compassion for themselves and those in their care.

Darcy L. Harris, RN, RSW, MEd (Couns.), PhD, FT, is a Professor of Thanatology at King’s University College in London, Canada, where she also maintains a private clinical practice specializing in issues related to change, loss, and transition. She developed the degree program in Thanatology at King’s University College. In addition, she is a faculty member of the Portland Institute for Loss and Transition, dedicated to training in grief therapy leading toward Certification in Meaning Reconstruction in Loss. Dr. Harris has served on the Board of Directors of the Association for Death Education and Counseling and is a current member of the International Work Group on Death, Dying, and Bereavement. She is the series co-editor for Routledge Publishing Company’s Death, Dying, and Bereavement Series and she is an internationally-recognized speaker and author. Her publications include *Counting our Losses: Reflecting on Change, Loss, and Transition in Everyday Life* (Routledge), *Grief and Bereavement in Contemporary Society: Bridging Research and Practice* (Routledge), *Principles and Practice of Grief Counseling* (Springer), *The Handbook of Social Justice in Loss and Grief: Exploring Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion* (Routledge) and *Non-Death Loss and Grief: Context and Clinical Implications* (Routledge). Her upcoming book, *Compassion-Based Approaches to Loss and Grief*, will be published this year.

The conference brochure and registration information will be available by mid-March at www.mcdes.org. CEUs will be available for professionals in Psychology, Marriage and Family Therapy, Social Work, Behavior Health and Therapy, and MN Nurses.

From The Editor: On Stories As Medicine

Stories can be our most reliable medicine.

~ Anne Lamott

Author Anne Lamott reminds us of the value of shared stories. Stories, like good medicine, can comfort and heal. In the midst of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and as we hopefully, tentatively, begin to emerge from a devastating, yet lingering pandemic, and yes, as we reflect on the past two years of immense personal grief and loss, we need to be reminded of our shared resilience, our shared humanity, through storytelling. We are all in the need of healing. What can bring us together? What medicine might be our saving grace in the face of suffering, grieving, and never-ending human sorrow but our shared stories; poetry, verse, and song, which strengthens and binds us, one to another.

Ukrainians and their ongoing stories of struggle for freedom are foremost in my mind as I write this. I am the granddaughter of Ukrainian immigrants who left their small village near Kyiv in the early 1900's to homestead in western North Dakota. My grandfather's surname in Ukraine was Yucavenko, but was shortened, at im-

migration, to "Wenko." I grew up in a rural community, a "Wenko girl," enjoying Ukrainian culture without really appreciating it as anything more than just who my family was. I loved the lively, yet soulful music, savory recipes my aunts made like borscht and varenyky, and yes, the language and stories of our tested, wizened ancestors.

In some sense, in hindsight, I understood the heart of it, born of courage in the face of my ancestors' adversity, but most especially, in the pride of their Ukrainian culture, which my paternal family lovingly perpetrated and preserved. Their cultural pride persisted in the stories my father and his family, shared. They laughed a lot, but in reality, had suffered through brutal winters and many hardships. Like many immigrants, they were poor and hard working. They brought with them to America their much-loved heritage, their struggles, and their pride. I learned, grew, and gained strength in the shadow of their stories. Today, I stand in solidarity and sadness with this distant family of mine, the latest victims of yet another senseless power-grabbing conflict. Their strength lies in their fierce devotion to their history and culture.

In the pages of this *Coalition News*, is healing medicine; wise stories from our own communities' past two years of suffering; our pandemic struggles and hardship. Katherine May, in her book, *Wintering: The Power of Rest and Retreat in Difficult Times*, states, "Wintering brings about some of the most profound

and insightful moments of our human experience and wisdom resides in those who have wintered." In this issue, we share much wisdom and insights from your wintering colleagues and companions.

What a long, bleak, sad stretch of months this pandemic, and now this ongoing conflict in the Ukraine, has become. Peace and democracy seem once again in jeopardy. What can we do to maintain hope? And how can we help, but to strengthen our ties with one another, with our families, and our loved ones, with stories that feel like medicine.

Stories heal. We have all wintered; literally and figuratively, resting, restoring, repairing and yearning for spring, for relief, for renewal. Verla and I are especially proud to bring this latest newsletter to you, filled with impactful, healing stories. Thanks to those who agreed to share their experiences, knowledge, and encouragement. You have our deepest gratitude.

Thanks to Kay Johnson, who offers her reflections on those who've inspired her in her career of caring; many MCDES members among them. And to Alison Spencer, for sharing the story of how her brother, Teddy and her family navigated the pandemic; thank you!!! This "sibling tale" will warm your hearts and speaks to just one of the many loving sacrifices so many made in the face of a worldwide shutdown. Certainly, as I read Alison's story, the phrase, "love conquers all" came to mind; lucky, wise siblings...Teddy and his sister!



Sharon Dardis

Coalition News is published quarterly by the Minnesota Coalition for Death Education and Support. Your submissions are encouraged.

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(covers June, July and August events).

Please send your items to:

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The Minnesota Coalition for Death Education and Support (MCDES) is a nonprofit, 501(c)3 interdisciplinary organization dedicated to providing education, networking opportunities and support to professionals and volunteers who are involved in the care of dying and grieving persons.

From the Vice-Chair

By Kay Johnson, MCDES Vice-Chair

Dear friends,

I hope you are well and finding time to care for yourself. With spring just around the corner, I'd like to share a few MCDES Board updates with you.

1. We are excited to offer the upcoming member only event "Winter's Secret Work" with honored speaker, Andrea Tatley, on March 24th.
2. We are actively seeking candidates for the volunteer Board positions of Treasurer and Newsletter Editor.
3. We are actively seeking candidates for our paid Administrative Coordinator position.
4. Our virtual spring conference with speaker, Darcy Harris, is on May 6.

Some of you who are new MCDES members may not yet recognize the positive influence this organization, as well as working with the death, dying, and bereavement community, may have on your life. Those of you who have been long-term members have undoubtedly experienced the gifts MCDES and its membership can offer.

We often hear how important gratitude is to living a healthy life and how healing it can be. I'm fortunate my own mom instilled this principle in me. It remains a constant in my personal and professional life. A quote from John F. Kennedy, "We must find time to stop and thank the people who make a difference in our lives," rings very true for me.

Early spring cleaning, retirements, and sadly, deaths have caused me to reflect; whom do I wish to thank? Who has been instrumental in my career and personal life? I would be remiss if I did not begin with my dad, who was a U of MN graduate in Mortuary Science. I grew up living in a funeral home and spent summers and college breaks working at our family funeral home. I was the main contact in the front office, immersed in all things death, dying and grief-related. I learned more than I thought capable of learning; more than I wanted to know, at times. Having said that, I am grateful for the early exposure to this meaningful and life-changing work. To my dad: I am grateful for the trust you placed in me at such a young age and for all that I learned. My

dad died in 2016. I realize now that I never said that to him.

I met Music Therapist Dawn Miller while working for a Twin Cities hospital-based hospice program. She and I became friends. She opened my eyes, opened my heart, and filled me with gratitude for the power of music and music therapists. The positive effects of music during end-of-life care provided hope to patients, families and professional caregivers. I am honored to have learned about music therapy from the best teacher. Thank you to my friend, Dawn.

We've all heard that statement about the world being small. This rings true for me. While cleaning out some paperwork, I found a copy of a letter I'd written to Paul Johnson at Bethel College. I was a college senior in Colorado and was inquiring about bereavement positions in funeral homes. I later connected with Paul through MCDES, and worked closely with him, providing hospice bereavement services. Paul stretched my thinking, added greatly to my knowledge base, and was a kind and professional friend throughout the years. Thank you, Paul.

I am incredibly proud to have been a part of the The Family Grief Retreat Weekend that occurred years ago, sponsored by several Twin Cities hospital-based hospice programs. The founders of this retreat were Judy Young, Susan Johnson, Ed Holland, and Gail Noller. They led the planning, coordination and facilitation of this annual event for young widows/widowers and their children/teens. All of these leaders positively impacted my professional work throughout the years and made such a difference. Thank you to each of you for your inspiring leadership!



Kay Johnson, Ed Holland, Judy Young, Paul Johnson ♦ October 7, 2007

Vice-Chair continued on page 5

Navigating COVID-19: The Bonds and the Barriers of Pandemic Living

by Alison Spencer

Having returned to Minnesota in 2018, I'd grown accustomed to seeing my younger brother Teddy a few times a month, most often at sporting events. In the fall, I could count on spending time with him every other Sunday when the Vikings were at home. Come summer, I knew there'd be a handful of baseball games we could attend together. We'd find our seats, watch for a while, snag some food, and then, most importantly catch up on all the sporting news that had occurred since the last game we'd attended. We would note who was injured, who'd been traded, and dive deeply into player stats, as that was always of interest to Teddy. Born with Down Syndrome, he gravitated toward facts, tidbits he could memorize and then share with others.

I loved our periodic get-togethers. They were frequent enough that we remained connected and yet adequately spaced out so that they did not demand too much time or commitment from either of us. Teddy, in particular, was quite busy, with Special Olympics, a job, and a girlfriend. But, thanks to sports, we'd found a routine and it worked.



Teddy and Alison

I never, in my wildest dreams, thought our schedule would change so dramatically. And yet, come mid-March of 2020, not only did we lose our communal sporting events, but we also found ourselves living, once again, under the same roof. We weren't sure how long we would be with our parents, but the virus had locked life down and we felt safer together than apart. In a world of uncertainty, cohabitation seemed like one of, if not the only, aspect of our lives we could control. And so, Teddy and I packed our bags, claimed our rooms, and prepared to find a new normal.

Having previously hung out occasionally, we were now seeing each other daily. Having once connected around sports, which were now not even watchable on TV, we needed a new shared interest. For us, it became meals and movies. We ate every dinner together, occasionally preparing themed meals that allowed us to relive some of the family travel we'd done in years past. The four of us worked our way through the Star Wars series—all nine of them—and every live action Disney movie we could get our hands on. Where we'd once referenced athletes in our conversations, we were now quizzing each other on Luke Skywalker's various relationships, particularly to Darth Vader and Darth Mal. It was stress free, quite entertaining, and, best of all, safe.

We started to hear stories about the virus spreading through group homes and assisted living facilities and felt beyond grateful to have Teddy at home with us. We also opted, and thankfully had the ability, to keep him out of work, prioritizing his wellbeing over his paycheck while doctors and scientists

worked to better understand COVID. This kept him healthy but also meant he had hours upon hours of unstructured time. So, we had to start getting creative about how he spent each day.

My parents took the lead, signing Teddy up for Zoom classes through an organization called eQuality (<https://www.equalityonline.org/>). Most of his chosen sessions focused on fitness, his favorite being the dance parties. The four of us would go on walks every weekend, to stretch our legs and get some fresh air. Dad and Teddy began incorporating these leisurely Saturday strolls into their weekdays, tracking the distance they covered during each outing. The goal became reaching 100 total miles, which they achieved by mid-summer.

Teddy FaceTimed with various friends and family members, a lot. Multiple times a day he could be heard laughing or conversing with someone new. My parents and I couldn't help but smile knowing that he so seamlessly provided his social circle with exactly what everyone craved—continued human connection.

Our quarantine team worked, surprisingly well. The true challenge came not in spending all this time together, but when the world began to re-emerge from lockdown. Entering back into society meant loosening control over each other's actions and subsequently each other's health and safety. We'd been hearing statistics about individuals with Down Syndrome being more at risk and it only served to increase everyone's anxiety.

But we also knew that Teddy thrived on independence, on working and

Teddy continued on page 5

Teddy continued from page 4

socializing. And my parents understood we needed to find a productive balance between affording him the opportunity to reclaim his life and limiting his exposure to a virus that posed an exponential threat to him simply by having Downs. There was so much to consider and the waters through which we navigated were far murkier.

This was when decisions had to be made and reality had to be faced. Having just spent months together and recognizing that our impending actions would affect each of us individually, my parents looped me into the decision-making process. And I began to consider Teddy's health in a way I never had previously.

Conversations centered on employment as the first step. He'd previously worked in grocery stores and office buildings, neither of which felt safe. My parents reached back out to eQuality, along with Opportunity Partners (<https://opportunities.org/>), to discuss other options and eventually found Teddy employment at a farm. Entering the summer months, working outdoors felt like the perfect solution. He'd be engaged throughout the week and surrounded by fresh, likely uninfected air. Teddy also began taking Metro Mobility (<https://metro council.org/Transportation/Services/Metro-Mobility-Home.aspx>) and so we confirmed their COVID policies and frequently checked in with Teddy around his mask wearing. Communication lines were always open, and we reflected often, to ensure the current course of action worked.

It felt like each week and every month brought with it new decisions, ones that carried far more weight than any choice had pre-pandemic. My parents allowed Teddy to move back home to the townhouse in which he lived

with another individual with Downs and a husband and wife who served as supervisors and house parents. As the weather cooled, and working on the farm became more challenging, we had to consider moving toward indoor employment. Because each of these actions increased potential exposure, they required careful thought, necessitated procedures, and, in all honesty, felt exhausting. But with continued conversation and constant re-evaluation, we stumbled our way through.

What surprised me most was the extent to which Teddy and my parents' safety influenced the decisions I made for myself. I saw friends begin to dine out or go to bars. Others hosted gatherings in their homes or hopped on planes to travel around the U.S. I had to choose whether to join or hold off, to fully socialize or maintain some social distance, and found that it was the safety of my family that ultimately dictated my actions. Of course, there were times when I felt left out or as though I was missing out on my life, but the situation extended well beyond my wants and needs. My day-to-day became about a "we" rather than a "me," even after I moved back to my apartment.

Vaccinations certainly helped. But we are not in the clear. The process, while having become easier, continues to this day. And while it is tiring, it has also brought us far closer together!

Editor's Note: Alison Spencer was born and raised in Minnesota. After attending college in Maine, she lived in both San Francisco and New York City working as a primary school teacher. She spent nine years in the classroom before transitioning back home and into the world of travel. Alison first worked as a freelance travel writer and then transitioned to full time employment at a Wayzata-based travel consultancy, where she is a Brand Associate.

Vice-Chair continued from page 3

Ted Bowman is another early influencer in my career path. I have heard Ted present numerous times and have shared his booklet on the loss of dreams countless times in an effort to support others as much as Ted and his words have supported me. Ted, you are one-of-a-kind and I give thanks for your wisdom.

And who can forget the one-and-only Ben Wolfe, incredible practitioner, teacher, MCDES chair for 25 years and kind human being. Thank you always for your enduring encouragement and support.

I am grateful for the experience of working with so many skilled, dedicated, and compassionate grief and loss professionals throughout the years. Most of whom I mention here have been on the MCDES Board of Directors during my time on the board. I offer my deepest gratitude to all who have been a part of my learning throughout the years. I am better because of you.

Last, and most important, I thank the innumerable patients and families I've been privileged to serve. They have been my best teachers. Out of the intense sadness, anxiety, pain, living with uncertainty, loss of independence, grief, quest for peace and comfort for family members, struggling with saying goodbye and letting go...I witnessed strength, love, honesty, forgiveness, people dying in the way they desired, with amazing resiliency. There is HOPE and also many gifts in the work we do. Let us hold onto that.

With deepest gratitude to you for being a MCDES member. Thank you for the goodness you and your career bring to the world.

Bearing Witness: A Collective Story about Nurses in the Pandemic

by Lucy Mathews Heegaard

Editor's Note: Lucy Mathews Heegaard is a multi-disciplinary artist who uses writing, photography, sound, and film to produce stories that bear witness to life. Her work centers on memory, identity, and belonging. In 2021, she was Artist-in-Residence for Audre, a program that envisioned a new model of spiritual care for women with cancer. Currently pursuing a Master of Fine Arts at California Institute of Integral Studies, her newest project is a series of stories called “Collectives,” in which she conducts one-on-one interviews with people around a specific theme, then combines their voices into a collective narrative. The story about nurses is the first in this series. Ms. Heegaard has also produced an immersive, audio-driven, essay film combining individual voices into a collective narrative. It is available at <https://youtu.be/4fzJkaUaIRE>. Ms. Heegaard can be reached at lucy@studiolustories.org and <https://studiolustories.org>.

“I don’t know who I am anymore.” The comment gave me chills. Spoken by a healthcare provider who had faced agonizing, life-and-death decisions about patient care in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, I was hearing the comment quoted in a talk by Cynda Rushton (PhD, MSN, RN, FAAN). A colleague of Dr. Rushton’s had made the remark when confiding feelings of mental and spiritual distress to her. Rushton is Professor of Clinical Ethics in the Berman Institute of Bioethics and the School of Nursing at Johns Hopkins University. Her book, *Moral Resilience: Transforming Moral Suffering in Healthcare*, delves into the moral dilemmas many healthcare professionals face as part of their jobs and the burnout that often results.



Lucy Mathews Heegaard

The talk was part of a year-long program I participated in during 2021, at Upaya Zen Center in Santa Fe, New Mexico. We met twice a month online to hear speakers and consider ways that Buddhist teachings could anchor and fuel actions to help alleviate suffering in the world. Each of us was tasked with designing our own service project as part of the program. When I heard Dr. Rushton recount her colleague’s anguish, I felt a call to bear witness to the suffering I heard in this statement about loss of identity and knew I had found my project.

Of all healthcare professionals, I chose nurses because they struck me as the frontline of the frontline. In April of last year, I posted an invitation on my website to nurses who had provided direct care to COVID patients. The pandemic had been underway a little over a year; vaccinations had begun and held promise for relief. I realized I was making a difficult request to ask nurses to revisit memories of what they experienced as they provided care, but I hoped that what felt like a small lull in the pandemic’s progression would offer space for such conversations. My goal was to record audio of a variety of voices offering first-hand perspectives and to create from them a story that reflected the collective experience—a story that would be art as much as documentary, that would connect viewers with feelings rather than facts and

statistics, and that would capture what ER, ICU, and COVID unit nurses saw and felt as they cared for patients.

Author and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel said, “To listen to a witness is to become one.” I wanted those of us, like myself, who had been safely on the sidelines during the pandemic, to become witnesses—to feel the weight and depth of the experiences endured by nurses in a way that words alone cannot adequately convey. And by reflecting the real and raw narratives nurses shared with me, I hoped the project would offer them a sense of feeling seen, heard, and valued.

From May through September last year, I amassed ten hours of audio through one-on-one conversations by phone or Zoom. Typically, in editing a project, the “sound bites” that move me will leap out as I re-listen to an interview. I know how to distill an hour’s worth of raw material into five minutes that captures the essence of what was said. But this story was different. Many of the nurses spoke in present tense as they remembered moments and narrated them to me. They spoke with an urgency, vulnerability, and authenticity that made me feel I was right there with them. Countless times as I listened and re-listened, I had to stop to take off my headphones and weep. “If I am feeling all of this emotional

Witness, continued on page 7

Witness, continued from page 6

intensity second-hand,” I kept thinking to myself, “how on earth did it feel to be in these nurses’ shoes?”

Every minute of every interview felt essential. I realized quickly that the nurses’ voices and words carried so much power that my job was to help the viewer listen as deeply as possible. I created the film’s imagery to draw the audience into the emotion of the story rather than to illustrate each moment literally.

“I don’t know if anyone else has talked about all the death,” one nurse said. “It’s not just that they died, it’s how they died.” Unwittingly, she had summarized the common thread of all my interviews. “I’m tired of witnessing so many crappy deaths,” another said. Nurses described the pain of seeing people die without their loved ones present; of struggling to show compassion and care, while covered head to toe in PPE; of yelling through two masks and a face shield to be heard over the sound of a ventilator; of witnessing patients kept alive on machines as their bodies became unrecognizable from their former selves. “We’re moving into a place for which there are no words,” one concluded. “And that was essentially every day.”

Not every nurse who contacted me about the project chose to participate. I traded correspondence with twice as many people as I interviewed. One nurse sent a message back saying, “I may have too much anger, at the moment. Plenty of stories but may be blocked right now.” Even these short exchanges helped inform the film. Of those with whom I spoke, most echoed at least some level of anger, in addition to the fear and grief that may be the more expected storylines of their experiences. Most also admitted that

they had barely begun to process all that they had been through. They all affirmed that the relationships they had with their fellow nurses were vital to their ability to bear the circumstances.

By the time of my last interview in September, the landscape of the pandemic had shifted again. The Delta variant was causing a new surge. When I was finishing production of the film in late December, Omicron was usurping Delta. As we have learned more about how to protect ourselves from the virus over these past two years and as the medical community has learned more about how to treat it, the stories from the beginning of the pandemic began to stand out to me as unique because of how little we knew in the face of such a deadly, fast-moving threat. As one nurse said, “We didn’t know what we were dealing with, but we knew we were the ones who had to deal with it.”

Even as the pandemic continues to stress the healthcare system, it is clear that many of us have become accustomed to the successive surges, new variants, and the existence of vaccines that bolster people’s ability to survive the illness. I wondered if we may have already lost touch with the precarious uncertainty that pervaded the pandemic’s beginning. This thought brought me back to my mission to bear witness through this film and reminded me of what one of the first nurses who responded to my invitation wrote to me: “I want to offer my story for this project to be of service to the memory of what we, as nurses, have experienced. This time should not be forgotten.” Through our bearing witness to the stories of the nurses in this film, may we become witnesses ourselves in service to the memory of this time, that it not be forgotten.

Editor continued from page 2

Lucy Heegaard shares her talents and “bears witness to suffering,” detailing her collective narrative service project, recording nurses’ stories from the pandemic. I look forward to following Lucy’s ongoing series as it evolves. Thank you, Lucy, for sharing and continuing to help preserve these important nursing experiences and memories. As a retired nurse, I, of course, am a bit partial, but I would agree, “Nurses are the frontline of the frontline.” Thank you, nurses and all healthcare professionals for your brave and tireless service.

Our own board member, Andrea Tatley, opens a touching, personal window into one of her own spiritual ministry visits, following a “simple request.” Andrea will join MCDES for our free, member only virtual event on Thursday, March 24th (see page 9). Andrea’s title, “Winter’s Secret Work” may well remind us of the hidden values of wintering. Thank you, Andrea! We look forward to a relaxed evening together, equipped with, as you request, our “children’s art supplies and soft hearts!”

Thanks, as always, to MCDES resident book reader, Eunie Alasaker for another great book review. Reading Eunie’s review will again reinforce this thought of the healing power of storytelling, as well as the comfort of culturally-familiar food! Please remember that *Coalition News* welcomes both book and/or movie reviews with death, dying, and bereavement themes. Please submit to sdardis@aol.com.

We are most grateful to Minneapolis poet Michael Kleber-Driggs for granting permission to reprint a poem about his father’s death, “After you left.” Michael’s latest poetry book,

Editor continued on page 10

Prayer in the ICU: A COVID Story

by Andrea Tatley, M.Div.

Editor's Note: This article was originally posted on December 5, 2020, at <https://andreatatley.com/2020/12/05/prayer-in-the-icu-a-covid-story/>. It is reprinted with permission. Ms. Tatley is offering a MCDES member only event on March 24, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. See page 9 for more about that event.

Before the sun comes up, it is quiet. Deer wander the line of pines searching for a frosty apple or two from the small grove. A cat sits by the computer screen purring in request of a soft lap for a nap. Sirius to the East, Arcturus to the South, and a brilliant beaver moon gently blanketing the garden where tomatoes reddened, just a couple months ago. The spirit of the land has rested and speaks in soft tones only heard in the pre-dawn hours.

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Yesterday I received a request. Not an odd request, but a very simple, quite normal request. They usually start with the same words, "I have a patient for you to see..." The phrase is then followed by, "I know you are busy..." or "if you have time..." A story follows: part tragedy, part complexity, sometimes with a dash of hope because after all, these folks are usually quite sick by the time they land on the doorstep of our specialty service. But this request was not complex. A daughter, hundreds of miles away, her mom swept off to another state, to a hospital equipped to care for her when the local hospital ran out of answers and beds. Mom and daughter, both alone with miles separating them in the midst of a pandemic and a virus standing in the way of being together. This is a common story and a heartbreaking occurrence in these days.

The request? A prayer. That was it. A prayer, tearfully requested by the daughter. Of course. Of course I will go pray with your mom... Theory has

it that one of the last senses we maintain is hearing. I share this with patient families all the time. "Assume they can hear you. Say whatever you need to say. Say it all." Grabbing the mask I hate, shoving my claustrophobia into the depths once again, I took a deep breath and headed to the ICU.

Entering the room, two beautiful nursing souls tended to mom. Gently guiding tubes, moving cords, changing sheets, checking monitors, adjusting bags and body. Hanging on the IV pole, next to a clear liquid-filled bag, was a beautifully simple rosary. Pale pastel beads, silver cross, Hail Mary full of grace...

I asked the nurse if we could place the rosary in her hand; she tenderly wrapped it around the weathered fingers, "I'm not Catholic, she said." "Me neither..." I replied. Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee...

Masks make it difficult to hear and so to pray, even with the hope she might be able to hear me, above the drones of the breathing machine and the bells and whistles of the intensive care unit... Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus... my prayer seemed so loud, it felt as if the words reverberated

down the hall... wafting into rooms, transforming from word to sacrament; a divine balm to soothe worried and furrowed brows of both staff and patients...

One nurse had remained, joining the prayer while changing the urine bag. We shared an "amen," and she carefully replaced the rosary on the IV pole, "so it doesn't get lost in the sheets." I thanked her and washed my hands in the hallway sink, allowing the warm soapy water to cascade over my palms a bit longer than normal. I looked over the unit: social workers on the phone, doctors in consultation, nurses in and out of rooms, it all looked the same as when I had walked in just moments before.

The visit wasn't long, it wasn't complex. Prayers through a thick mask, for someone on a ventilator, whom I hoped heard at some impossible level of awareness above all the noise of the ICU was like screaming a prayer to a deaf God... and yet... the spirit speaks in soft tones sometimes only heard in the pre-dawn hours.

*Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.*

"Assume they can hear you.  
Say whatever you need to say.  
Say it all."

~ Andrea Tatley

## MCDES Member Only Event: *Winter's Secret Work* Virtual Event with Andrea Tatley, M.Div. Thursday, March 24, 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.

As we wrap ourselves in fleece, cradle a warm mug of our favorite beverage and watch the softly falling snow...

We imagine the emergence of daffodils tips, the bursting of tree buds and the sound of returning birdsong. Our Midwest winters can be bold and fierce, inviting quiet and a movement inward. But then...the temperatures rise, the snow melts, and as if overnight it happens...voila...spring!

On Thursday, March 24th, we will gather for a special MCDES member event, *Winter's Secret Work*. We will pause on the threshold of a new season, say goodbye to winter and welcome all that spring has for us.

There will be time to quiet the heart and soothe the soul; to hear the warmth singing in our hearts. Using elements of poetry, photography, writing, and more, we will uncover the messages left by winter and listen for the call of spring. You will discover how the use of our senses enables us to notice our body, to process fear, and note what brings us discomfort in order to ease our hearts and open our souls to a fresh energy. You will find rest, refreshment, and comradery as we craft a ritual to move us into this new season awaiting inside each of us.

Bring something to write with and something to write on: non-lined index cards, markers, colored pencils (or whatever is in your children's art stash) and soft heart.

**Andrea Tatley, M.Div.**, is a writer, photographer, and coach. She finds restoration in practices such as travel, nature, gardening and climbing around the boulders of the north shore of Lake Superior. Her work is focused on nature-based resilience therapy as it integrates with spirituality and includes the sacred creative, mindfulness and their impact on lowering anxiety and stress while increasing resiliency.

**This FREE event is offered only to MCDES members. REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED.** Register at <https://www.mcdes.org/memberevent022322.html>.



Andrea Tatley, M.Div.

## 2021 Donors to MCDES— Thank You!

MCDES gratefully acknowledges these 2021 contributors: Joseph Amberg, Shawn Anderson, Dan, Staci and Lindsay Bell, Jan Bergman, Caroline Burke, Sharon Dardis, Susan Eckfeldt, Dennis Flom, Kari R Franz, Kelly Galarneau, Jane Gehan and John Wright, Jerome and Beth Marie Geis, Robert and Julianne Geis, Hilary Greene, Charlie Greenman, David and Gail Griffin, Ed Holland, Rita Hughes, Shari & Paul Lindemann, Kristine Litzow, Anne Morehouse, Polly Norman, Nola Relay, Becky Saunders-Pearce, Nancy and Randy Schmitz, Joanne Schoen, Patrick Schoffman, Carolyn Schroeder, Marc and Suzanne Simpson, Beverly Turk, Diane and Daniel Velaski, Dale Weick, and Ben and Barry Wolfe.

As always, MCDES appreciates the generous donations from both members and non-members. Whether given for scholarships or memorials, because MCDES is a 501(c)(3) organization, all gifts are tax deductible. Thank you!

“The best way to find yourself, is to lose yourself in the service to others.”

~ Mahatma Gandhi

## Book Review: *Crying in H Mart*

By Michelle Zauner (2021) Published by Alfred A. Knopf

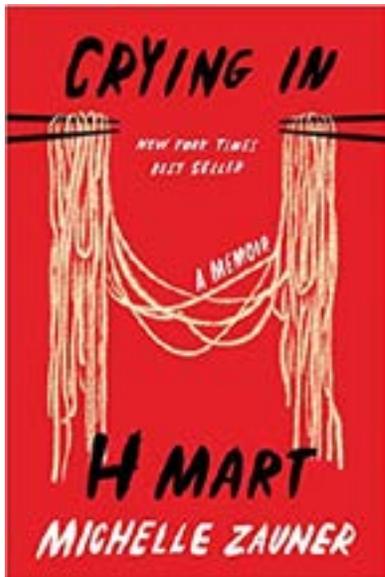
Reviewed by Eunie Alsaker

If you are a fan of year-end best-of lists, then you will have heard of *Crying in H Mart*. While memoirs of losing a parent decades too early are not rare, Michelle Zauner's original voice makes this book rise above its peers.

Zauner was born in Korea to a Korean mother and American father. Growing up in Oregon, she was seldom away from her mother, and they navigated their often lonely lives together. This included an annual trek to Korea to secure themselves in their roots and nurture their connections for another year. Korean food was love made visible in this family. During the author's teen years when conflict with her mother was the norm and her Korean heritage a burden, food was their oasis. During college with anger still raw, the care packages didn't stop. And when at age twenty-five, Zauner learned her mother was dying from cancer, she returned home to help her mother die and to reclaim their connection and her culture. Food was central in this process.

In the grief-filled days that followed, Zauner tried many things to keep herself upright. What finally brought meaning and bonding to her mom was cooking. "Every dish I cooked exhumed a memory. Every scent and taste brought me back for a moment to an unravaged home." (p. 212) Fermentation is an essential element to many Korean foods. This breaking-down process to create something both delicious and medicinal is a fitting metaphor for the author's grief. As she cooked, she often found herself in the Asian food market, H Mart. In her words, "So, when I go to H Mart, I'm not just on the hunt for cuttlefish and three bunches of scallions for a buck; I'm searching for memories." (pp. 10-11) There, seeing all the Korean names of food, she felt herself fluent in the language and culture.

This beautiful book is packed with vivid descriptions of grief, connection, and culture. It reaches deep into the restorative power of love and cooking. The fact that it evoked memories of cooking with my own mom was a bonus. It even prompted me to search out Mom's Swedish rice recipe. The results were delicious.



"In my life, I've lived, I've loved, I've lost, I've missed, I've hurt, I've trusted, I've made mistakes, but most of all, I've learned."

~ Unknown

Editor continued from page 7

*Worldly Things*, won the Max Ritvo Poetry Prize, and is a finalist for the 2022 Minnesota Book Award. Thank you, Michael for your permission and generous spirit.

Thanks, too, to Carrie Newcomer, poet, singer, and songwriter, for her recent email reflections in support of Ukraine and for the hurting world in general. You can find more about her at <https://www.carriewcomer.com/>. This poem, "Send Love, It Matters" reminds us how we can support one another, even when we are far apart and feeling helpless.

Change is in the air at MCDES! As you will note, the Board membership is evolving and is looking for both a treasurer and yes, a newsletter editor! Please see page 11 for details. Both current treasurer, Peter Thoreen, and I, are most happy to answer questions regarding these roles. I will echo what Kay Johnson stated, that there are many surprising gifts to be had when you join MCDES in service.

I close with a wish that the stories shared in this issue will prompt you to share your own tales, with a colleague, a loved one, or maybe in your own journaling. Stories are healing medicine. Whether pandemic or professional musings, personal stories, or tales from abroad, we gain solidarity in stories. We discover who we are and what we're "made of." MCDES is composed of a diverse group of empathic and compassionate souls who care for one another and the world. May you all continue to prevail and find healing in sharing. Stay well, in touch, and thanks for all you do, so well, for so many.



## MCDES Openings

### MCDES Board Recruiting A New Treasurer

By Peter Thoreen

Greetings fellow MCDES members. At the end of 2022, I'm going to finish a second round of being on the MCDES board. My first was in the late 1970's when we started up the organization. I've been a member and committed to the MCDES education mission for over 40 years. So, I'm familiar and committed to MCDES but am not a financial person by training.

Even so, this second go around, I volunteered to serve as the treasurer. I will finish up five years in that role in December. It is a pretty easy job as the organization is financially healthy and our conferences have been financially self-sustaining, even at very reasonable registration fees. This stable financial health allows MCDES to continue to offer scholarships to attend our conferences and fund events such as the upcoming free webinar for members on March 24th.

The only criteria needed to be both a volunteer MCDES board member and serve as Treasurer, is to be a member and to be committed to our mission. You should be willing to make at least a three-year commitment but can serve multiple terms on the board. We have excellent staff support and fine-tuned processes. The Treasurer's duties take little time and attention. In today's virtual banking world, you can do this from the comfort of your living room. You do need to be a bit organized, be okay with numbers and not be afraid to ask questions about reviewing and authorizing checks for expenses that MCDES incurs.

Feel free to contact me if interested in considering this board duty, [peterthoreen@gmail.com](mailto:peterthoreen@gmail.com). We also have a more detailed job description at our website, along with application information: <https://www.mcdes.org/boardrecruitmentinfo.html>.

Thanks for your continued membership, support and interest in MCDES.

### Coalition News Editor and Board Position Available

By Sharon Dardis

After 22 years of service on the MCDES board and as Editor (since June 2002) of the quarterly newsletter, *Coalition News*, I am stepping down at the end of 2022. MCDES is currently seeking a candidate to fill my position on both the Board and as newsletter editor.

When I joined the Board in early 2000, I worried how the skills and experience I was bringing to the table would fit with the organization. What could I contribute? Luckily for me, the newsletter editor position became available. But I was concerned. Was I really equipped and up to the task?

I am a retired hospice nurse. I am also dedicated to the principles of caring for the dying and the bereaved; the work of MCDES members: death, dying and bereavement. My work values matched the goals and objectives of MCDES; education, networking, support. I'd have some past board experiences. I enjoy reading, writing and communication. But I'd never edited a newsletter. Those were my qualifications. I decided to give it a try.

I admit it was lucky for me that Verla Johansson, the administrative coordinator, was very good at layout and also at editing. If you'll note in our copy, we both love commas!! We quickly discov-

ered that editing is certainly a team effort! It was also a big bonus; Verla and I had good chemistry. We learned to work well together and quickly became friends!

Change is good. The new editor will bring new skills, perspectives and insights. This quarterly newsletter issue is Volume 44; No. 1. The next editor will have a chance to be a continuing part of the history of this long-standing, much respected, interdisciplinary endeavor; what an honor!

The past years have been ones of learning, growing, and many blessings. I can honestly say that being a MCDES Board member and holding the editor's position has offered me new friendships, experiences, and opportunities.

Sometimes taking a step into the unknown can bring great risks; but with that also can come great rewards. If you are considering applying for the Editor's position and a place on the MCDES board, I would encourage you to go for it. You have nothing to lose and a lot to gain.

A complete job description, time required and duties of the *Coalition News* Editor position can be found at: <https://www.mcdes.org/boardrecruitmentinfo.html>. Feel free to email me at [sdardis@aol.com](mailto:sdardis@aol.com) with any questions. Thank you! It has been a life-changing privilege to serve MCDES.

### MCDES Administrative Coordinator Position Open

By Verla Johansson

After 27 years as your Administrative Coordinator, I am stepping down at the end of 2022. It has been a privilege to serve you.

The position has been posted and the Board is considering several applicants, so stay tuned.

## Death & The Arts: Poetry

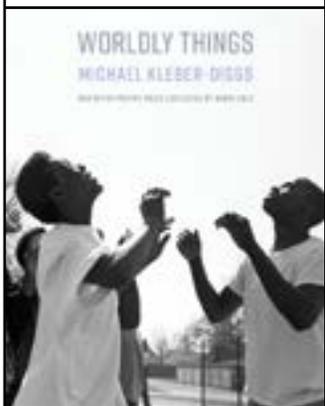
### After you left

the weight of your absence  
 became a black hole revolving  
 around my memory of you—itself  
 a black hole. Wavelets wrinkled  
 the sheer sheet of space and time.  
 Father, the loss of you is a planet  
 orbiting what might have been.  
 I cannot say if the emptiness is  
 a grand celestial body or a vacuum  
 so complete nothing can escape. I know  
 these forces have mass and motion  
 that bends, calls in, ripples fabric—  
 distorts the pace of light  
 for a billion years.

~ by Michael-Kleber-Diggs



Michael Kleber-Diggs



**Editor's Note:** Michael Kleber-Diggs (he/him/his) is a poet, essayist, literary critic, and arts educator. His debut poetry collection, *Worldly Things* (Milkweed Editions 2021), won the Max Ritvo Poetry Prize and is a finalist for the 2022 Minnesota Book Award. His poems and essays have appeared in numerous journals and anthologies. Michael is married to Karen Kleber-Diggs, a tropical horticulturist and orchid specialist. Karen and Michael have a daughter who is pursuing a BFA in Dance Performance at SUNY Purchase. His website is <https://michaelkleberdiggs.com/>. His poem is reprinted with permission.

### Send Love, It Matters

Somewhere someone needs help.  
 Send love.  
 It matters.  
 If you can't get there yourself,  
 Then take a deep breath.  
 Breathe in the weight of their troubles.  
 Breathe out and send all those burdens  
 Into the Light  
 Where sorrows can be held  
 With the most tender and infinite grace.  
 Breathe in what you can do.  
 Breathe out what you can't change.  
 Spool out a thread of connection,  
 Send courage and calm.  
 For the nights can be long  
 And filled with shadows,  
 And sometimes terrible  
 Unexpected waters will rise.

Somewhere someone needs help.  
 Send love.  
 It matters.

~ by Carrie Newcomer

**Editor's Note:** Carrie Newcomer is a songwriter, poet & podcast co-host with 19 nationally released CDs & three books of poetry. She often catches something luminous from the corner of her eye, chuckles at things no one is noticing and lives in the woods with two rescue dogs. Ms. Newcomer's poem is reprinted here from her February 25, 2022 public blog, [https://carrinewcomer.substack.com/p/send-love-it-matters?utm\\_source=url](https://carrinewcomer.substack.com/p/send-love-it-matters?utm_source=url).

## Sundries

### I Keep Trying to Catch His Eye

When celebrated ESPN writer Ivan Maisel's son died by suicide in 2015, he channeled his grief into words. His deeply personal and moving book, *I Keep Trying to Catch His Eye: A Memoir of Loss, Grief and Love*, is a testament both to a father's love and to the human soul's ability to grieve and remember and still not lose hope. Listen to an interview with the author, and Kerri Miller of MN Public Radio at <https://www.mprnews.org/episode/2022/01/12/in-an-emotional-memoir-a-sports-writer-reflects-on-the-loss-of-his-son>. Visit the author's website at <https://ivanmaisel.com/about-the-book/>.

### Is 'Death With Dignity' Really Possible?

The home hospice nurses were frustrated and discouraged. My 89-year-old mother, dying of uncorrected aortic stenosis, was refusing the pain medication the nurses repeatedly offered her. Years earlier, she had declined to undergo aortic valve replacement, despite my recommendation to do so. Ronald W. Pies, MD, poses the question, "Has this slogan crowded out the importance of life with dignity?" Read more at <https://www.psychiatrytimes.com/view/is-death-with-dignity-really-possible->.

### ADEC's Handbook of Thanatology, 3rd Edition

We are truly excited and proud to announce the release of the newest edition of ADEC's *Handbook of Thanatology, Third Edition: The Essential Body of Knowledge for the Study of Death, Dying, and Bereavement*. This third edition is an accessible volume that

offers essential knowledge in the field of thanatology in a format that is practical for both novices and those with extensive experience in the field. Available at <https://itascabooks.com/the-handbook-of-thanatology-third-edition-the-essential-body-of-knowledge-for-the-study-of-death-dying-and-bereavement/>, as well as other sources.

### Staying Green in Final Disposition

A natural burial creates opportunities to ritualize the cycle of birth-life-death that connects us with the entire earth community. We will view and discuss portions of a video of a natural burial graveside service conducted by funeral celebrants, Anne Archbold and Marilaurice Hemlock. You'll hear stories from Heinz Brummel about how he helped carry out his dear friend's wishes for a natural burial and what that experience was like for him. Event recording is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-k2GIF-Bu9E>. Anne Archbold and Marilaurice Hemlock can be reached at [finalblessingsmn@gmail.com](mailto:finalblessingsmn@gmail.com).

### Giving Workers More Time To Grieve In An Era Of Loss

When Jess Mah's boyfriend died by suicide last April, she told her work colleagues about the loss—and that she would be taking two days off. "How ridiculous," she says now. "Until it hit me directly, I didn't think, 'OK, wow this needs to be a bigger conversation,'" she says. "Bereavement is a part-time job in and of itself." Eventually, she canceled a week of meetings, then another. In the end, she took three months off—and instituted an unlimited paid bereavement leave policy at the company, where she now serves as executive chairwoman. Find out more

at <https://www.wsj.com/articles/giving-workers-more-time-to-grieve-in-an-era-of-loss-11644210060>.

### The Wildling Project

For most of us, the pandemic has been draining, frustrating, confusing and overwhelming — but it's only been one chapter of many. Meanwhile, for kids, COVID-19 has colored a good chunk of their lives. The Wildling Project is helping them process all of that upheaval. Read more and listen at <https://www.mprnews.org/episode/2022/01/03/helping-kids-find-themselves-through-their-stories>.

### Children, Coping With Loss, Are Pandemic's 'Forgotten Grievors'

Courtney Grund, whose husband died of COVID-19 in August, received an alarming text message: Her 16-year-old son was "talking about self-harm," according to the message, sent by his friend. She quickly signed him up for grief counseling, she said in a tearful interview, using her maiden name to protect his privacy.

John Jackson, a disabled veteran on a fixed income, said he had struggled to find help for his 14-year-old daughter, whose mother died in the pandemic. Read more at <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/09/us/politics/children-lost-parents-caregivers-covid-grief.html>.

### Bereavement Policies in the Evolving Workplace

Grief and bereavement leave are complex issues for many employers. Employers may have defined bereavement policies of three to five days for leave while the fallout from the death of a loved one can rarely be encapsulated in a relatively short time frame. Em-

Sundries continued from page 13

ployers may also have the added issue of employees who had substantive pre-death leave due to illness, injury, or other circumstances and have been struggling to fill the missing employee's role well before bereavement leave is at issue. Find out more at <https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/let-s-talk-about-grief-bereavement-3085797/>.

## Comforting the Dying for Eighty Years

In December 2021 the *Star Tribune* published an article with a MCDES connection worth mentioning. Our Lady of Good Counsel hospice in St. Paul opened December 7, 1941; yes—80 years ago; the same day as the attack on Pearl Harbor. As the article explains, about 40 years later, “MCDES’S own” Dorothy Geis’s son, Steven, was accompanying his physician father, LeRoy, visiting patients at the hospice. The childhood memories Steven shared about those times with his dedicated parents and the nuns who ran the hospice, speak to the earliest days of hospice care in our community. As Steven tells it, there was even a roller skating nun!

Dorothy Geis, Steven’s mother, was a nursing professor and part of the first MCDES Education Committee for the then fledging organization, dedicated to serving the dying. Current MCDES members and former Board members who served with and remember Dorothy fondly, include Paul Johnson, Gail Noller, and Ben Wolfe. Dorothy energetically hosted many morning Educa-

tion Committee meetings at her home on Summit Avenue in St. Paul. Members gathered around her dining room table, “well fed and graciously served” as Dorothy came and went, sometimes in her bath robe, meeting the demands of not only MCDES, but her own career, a busy family of five children and her physician husband. According to Paul Johnson, Dorothy “had an eye for conference costs...always questioning whether or not MCDES could afford it.”

Gail Noller stated, “Dorothy was a strict steward of MCDES funds.” Because of her energetic efforts “to keep membership fees affordable,” when she retired from the board, MCDES established the Dorothy Geis Educational Scholarship Program, which, along with her family’s generous continuing support and member contributions aimed at scholarship, continues today. Many attendees unable to pay full registration costs have benefited from the Geis family’s generosity.

Steven, Dorothy’s son, was just a kid when those meetings on Summit Avenue were held. The *Minneapolis Star Tribune* article ([https://replica.startribune.com/infinity/article\\_pop-over\\_share.aspx?guid=50401a4d-eee9-493a-9928-7c20c988eb8a](https://replica.startribune.com/infinity/article_pop-over_share.aspx?guid=50401a4d-eee9-493a-9928-7c20c988eb8a)) about Our Lady of Good Counsel Hospice in St. Paul, weaves a wonderful thread that binds our Minnesota death, dying and bereavement community together, honoring those whose life mission of comfort for the dying, continues today. Dorothy (and Dr. Geis) would be proud!

## MCDES’ 45th Anniversary

by Sharon Dardis

Minnesota Coalition for Death Education and Support is celebrating its 45th anniversary, along with an esteemed list of other noteworthy anniversaries this year, including Minnesota Public Radio (55 years), the attack on Pearl Harbor (80 years), my own high school graduating class reunion (55 years), and the Apollo 11 crew leaving earth for the first human mission to land on the Moon (53 years).

Anniversaries are a cause for reflection; for us to witness, to remember, and to share stories of the past is a privilege. We testify to the occasion or organization’s value in our lives. Reflection, in turn, gives weight and meaning, underscoring our ability to connect meaningfully with others in the world.

Hooray for MCDES and 45 years! We continue to serve the death, dying, and bereavement community in meaningful ways; with education, networking opportunities, and support to those dedicated to the care of dying and grieving persons. Thanks to everyone who has helped make this happen: members, founders, board members, advocates and supporters. It could not have happened without everyone’s participation. Thank you for your role in making MCDES the organization it is today!

**Editor’s Note:** For a complete history of MCDES, go to <https://www.mcdes.org/history-of-mcdes.html>.

**Happy 45th  
MCDES!**

## Food As Medicine

by Sharon Dardis

“Comfort food is food that provides a nostalgic or sentimental value to someone, may be characterized by its high carbohydrate level or simple preparation. The nostalgia may be specific to an individual, or it may apply to a specific culture.”  
~ Wikipedia

What food comforts you? I mean, besides maybe a poached egg on toast or a steaming bowl of chicken noodle soup when you're sick? Is there a family recipe that triggers longing, comforts you, or helps you recall special memories, people or moments? I was interested to find, on the Wikipedia website, a “partial list by region of comfort foods around the world.” It's pretty apparent, world-wide, food, like stories, can also be healing medicine, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comfort\\_food](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comfort_food).

In this issue, because both Eunie and I mention how ancestral food evoke emotions, Verla and I decided to “go out on a limb” and share the recipes for Eunie's mother's Swedish rice and my aunt's borscht soup. We hope this doesn't create an avalanche of recipe submissions! On the other hand, have we ever thought about a MCDES cookbook? Just kidding! Enjoy!

### Ukrainian Beet Soup (Borscht) - from Sharon Dardis

Native to Ukraine, there are hundreds of varieties of borscht. The most common ingredients are beets, which lends to the soup's red color and unique flavor. Although my own Aunt Mae, an immigrant from a small village near Kyvy, was vegetarian, her borsch was delicious! With or without meat, the aroma of borsch simmering is always a comfort. Serve with a thick, crusty slice of bread.

2 lb. beef chuck with bone (I often just use stew meat)  
9 cups water  
3 medium beets, peeled and cut in half  
1-1 1/2 tablespoons of salt (to taste)  
2 medium potatoes, peeled and cubed  
1 small carrot, scraped and grated  
1/2 medium head of white cabbage (3/4 lb) shredded  
1 ripe tomato coarsely chopped  
6 tablespoons tomato paste  
4 black peppercorns  
Freshly ground black pepper  
1 tablespoons wine vinegar  
1 teaspoon sugar  
1 bay leaf

1. Simmer meat in water for 30 min. Then add the beets and salt. Boil for 10 minutes more.
2. Remove the beets from broth and grate coarsely. Return to pot and add remaining ingredients.
3. Simmer the soup another 1 1/2 hours or until done.
4. This keeps for several days and seems to improve with age! To serve, I like to add a dash of wine vinegar to the bowl, a dollop of sour cream, and a sprinkle of fresh dill.

Note: This recipe can be as varied as you wish. I often add a can of tomatoes instead of chopped, omit the potatoes or add more carrots and beets. Enjoy!

### Swedish Rice - from Eunie Alsaker

1 cup white long-grain rice  
2 cups water  
6 cups whole or 2% milk (divided)  
5 eggs  
1 tablespoon cornstarch  
1 1/4 cup sugar (divided)  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
1/2 teaspoon almond flavoring  
1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar

1. Boil rice and water until water is absorbed – about 13 minutes. Add 4 cups warm milk. Bring back to boil and simmer five more minutes, stirring often.
2. Separate eggs into two mixing bowls. Beat egg yolks and add two cups milk.
3. Mix 3/4 cup sugar, cornstarch, and salt in small bowl. Add this to the egg yolks/milk mixture, then add to the rice mixture. Simmer a couple minutes until thickened. Add vanilla and almond flavoring. (Total cooking time for rice will be 20 minutes.) Pour into sprayed large baking bowl.
4. Make meringue by beating egg whites until stiff. Slowly add 1/2 cup sugar and cream of tartar. Spread over rice.
5. Brown meringue at 350 degrees for about 12 minutes. Let cool to room temperature. Serves ten.

Note: This recipe came from Eunie's mom, Mildred Alsaker.

Minnesota Coalition for  
Death Education and Support  
P.O. Box 50651  
Minneapolis, MN 55405  
715-733-0265

# Coalition News

## March 2022

### MCDES Board Members

Eunie Alsaker, Secretary

Diane Bauer

Ronald Bell, Jr.

Allison Chant

Sharon Dardis

Kay Johnson, Vice-Chair

Kelli Kinney

Christine Lewis

Andrea Tatley

Peter Thoreen, Treasurer

Tim Thorpe

Florence Wright, Chair

*MCDES membership does  
not imply certification or  
accreditation of its members.*

### Grief Resources

Jewish Grief Education/Support Group:  
[www.ifcsmpls.org](http://www.ifcsmpls.org).

Pathways—A Healing Center: [www.pathwaysminneapolis.org](http://www.pathwaysminneapolis.org).

North Metro Grief Support Coalition:  
763-413-2985.

Allina Support Groups: Search for “grief support” at [www.allinahealth.org](http://www.allinahealth.org).

Capitol City Grief Coalition: Contact coordinator Lois Knutson, 651-227-4430.

Downtown Coalition for Grief Support:  
[www.mplsgriefsupport.com](http://www.mplsgriefsupport.com).

MN Network of Hospice & Palliative Care:  
<https://www.mnhpc.org/grief-support>.

Children’s Grief Connection:  
[www.childrensgriefconnection.com](http://www.childrensgriefconnection.com).

Compassionate Friends:  
<https://www.compassionatefriends.org/>.

Hastings Area Grief Coalition: <https://account.allinahealth.org/events/59327>.

Weathering Life’s Losses—Adult Support Group, and Kids in Grief Support Group. Thurs., Stillwater, 651-430-4586.

Grief Support-Essentia Health-St. Mary’s Medical Center (Duluth):  
[www.Essentiahealth.org/griefsupportduluth](http://www.Essentiahealth.org/griefsupportduluth).

West Suburban Coalition:  
[www.westsuburbangriefmn.org](http://www.westsuburbangriefmn.org).

The Grief Club of Minnesota:  
<https://griefclubmn.org/>.

Dakota County Grief Resources:  
<https://www.co.dakota.mn.us/HealthFamily/MentalHealth/Training/Documents/GriefLossSupportServices.pdf>.

Youth Grief Services, Fairview:  
[www.fairview.org/youthgrief](http://www.fairview.org/youthgrief).

The Young Widowed Support Group:  
mraem@parknicollet.com.

Center for Grief, Loss & Transition:  
<http://griefloss.org> or 651-641-0177.

South Mpls Coalition for Grief Support:  
[www.trustinc.org/programs/grief-support](http://www.trustinc.org/programs/grief-support)

Bloomington-Richfield Grief Coalition:  
<https://brgriefcoalition.com/>.

Prince of Peace Grief Support, Burnsville:  
<https://popmn.org/mission/support-groups>

Edina Coalition for Grief Support:  
[www.edinagriefsupport.org](http://www.edinagriefsupport.org).

The Grief Project: [www.griefproject.org](http://www.griefproject.org).  
Brighter Days Family Grief Center: [www.brighterdaysgriefcenter.org](http://www.brighterdaysgriefcenter.org).

Crisis Text Line: Text “MN” to 741741.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255).