

## From The Editor: On Looking for Helpers

*When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, "Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.*

~ Mr. Rogers

As I write this, late August of 2019, it feels important to say, first of all, that all of the articles in this summer issue of *Coalition News* came together before the deadline of August 1st. Which means the articles submitted were written...all these comforting thoughts....in July, or even June, long before the latest shootings in Texas and Ohio had occurred, and long before yet another week of discord and anger and fear flooded the airwaves. Scary things, indeed.

Toni Morrison (may her memory be a blessing) said in her 1993 Nobel address, "Language alone protects us from the scariest of things. Language alone is meditation." Looking for the helpers, like Morrison and Rogers, and all our contributors who arm us with well-written insights in this issue, helps me feel less afraid and even hopeful.

I feel hope in the company of helpers like the ones in this issue who somehow were able to write words, in advance, that especially today, inspire

and comfort us. They offer language, phrases, and thoughts that help express our sorrow and suggest ways for us to carry on in the face of ongoing national uncertainty, grief and worry.

I suspect this latest issue will remind you, as it reminds me, that we are indeed fortunate to be members of an organization that consists of all sorts of wise, empathetic and competent helpers. My association with MCDES so often encourages me...that there are among us, kind and humble helpers in our lives who far outnumber the evil, the arrogant, the thoughtless, and cruel of this world. This knowledge helps me sleep at night.

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*In the very end, civilizations perish because they listen to their politicians and not to their poets.* ~ Jonas Mekas

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Helping comes in many forms. Shielding someone from bullets is a terrifyingly courageous example; laying down one's own life for that of a friend, family member, or even a stranger. Helpers have done and will continue to do that. But there are other kinds of helpers; those among us who listen with compassion, who share tears, within the therapeutic setting but also in every day life. As a terrified child finds solace holding a hand or sharing a hug, so adults need to feel safe in the arms of compassionate listening and supportive language.

MCDES members do that in spades!

In the midst of so much unrest and ongoing national tragedies, our fall conference should prove to be another sellout. Don't miss Ken Doka on Friday, October 4th. He will address living with grief in the aftermath of tragedy. And in the meantime, this latest issue, full of helpers' insights, should tide you over until then.

Thanks to MCDES Chair Kay Johnson, for her latest, most-personal reflection, which focuses beautifully on caregiving and love. And MCDES board member Eunie Alasaker again honors us with yet another brilliant piece about self-care and self-compassion. Helpers grieve, too. Eunie recognizes this and offers suggestions to help calm and restore us. This is another "clip and post" keeper! Thank you, Eunie and Kay.

Past MCDES board member Ted Bowman addresses the topic of "Great Grief." He puts into words what many today struggle to name. Ted is also a poet, having shared his work with us in past issues. His writing reminds me of a quote by Jonas Mekas, who said, "In the very end, civilizations perish because they listen to their politicians and not to their poets." If you, like I, find comfort in Ted's words, please respond to him, as he requests, with your own thoughts on this topic, which may lead to ongoing articles in future *Coalition News* issues. Thank you, Ted.

Tom Hubler, MCDES member, addresses a new topic; the unique



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*Coalition News* is published quarterly by the Minnesota Coalition for Death Education and Support. Your submissions are encouraged. Editor: Sharon Dardis Layout: Verla Johansson  
Deadline for Dec. newsletter: **Nov. 1, 2019.**  
(covers December, January & February events).  
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MCDES is a nonprofit 501(c)3 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.

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situation of family businesses and loss. As yet another helper, he mentions and encourages the recurring themes found in this issue—love, trust, generosity of spirit. Better angels and helpers, indeed. Thanks, Tom.

Lastly, another MCDES member, Patricia Brenneman, wisely takes us to Lakewood Cemetery with her quiet reflections on landscape as a contemplative practice. Clearly, we must continue to keep our eyes on the helpers among us. Patricia, we thank you.

So I sleep well at night, trusting helpers such as all of you, will continue to help save our world. “Better Angels Persevere” flashes boldly in my thoughts, a neon-sign flashing with arrows pointing to “Helpers Enter Here.” It’s a scary time and a big job, saving the world, one compassionate word, one quiet listen at a time. But I believe if we stick together, we will be encouraged and enabled to continue the good work we do, for so many, so well.

Enjoy these waning days of summer, be generous in love and helping, and we’ll see you at the fall conference.