

[ENDURING LOVE - A Memorial Project](#)

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Blessed are those who have been touched by the love of a child.

The above sentence opens the dedication on the bronze plaque below the sculpture “Enduring Love” in West Victoria Park, Lonsdale Avenue and Keith Road, North Vancouver. This public art installation was lobbied for by the North Shore Compassionate Friends in 2010. The marble sculpture resembles the body of a woman, a body which embraces an empty space. Reading the plaque dedication, passers-by come to realize the meaning of that emptiness: it represents any child who died too soon.

When our North Shore TCF group took up this initiative and applied for a North Vancouver Community Art Grant, we put out a “Call for Artists.” In describing our goal for an art piece, we said that we didn’t want it to be terribly sad, that we wanted something others could relate to, even touch. This led to our choice of an artist who worked in marble, Daniel Cline, who lives and sculpts in Chemainus, on Vancouver Island. It was Daniel who added the idea of stepping stones to lead up to and surround the sculpture. Our committee decided to keep the stones’ messages open to general interpretation, rather than bearing the specific names of our children.

At the end of sharing circles at our monthly meeting, we hold hands and say a word or phrase that embodies the spirit of our child. Some of these words ended up on the stones: *Hero, Exuberant, Gone Fishing, Flying, Happy and Strong, Joy, Companion....* There are sixty stones, so I won’t list them all here. When I discovered that Daniel could inscribe images as well as words, I changed my mind about what to put on my son Alex’s stone. I was going to put “laughter,” the word I usually say at our meeting’s finishing circle, but instead my husband Woldy and I decided to ask Daniel to copy an image of an eagle that Alex drew at age eight. The eagle, a powerful symbol of freedom, had been Alex’s emblem. He once said that he wanted to come back as an eagle after he died. Now his eagle has landed in Victoria Park!

Each parent who dedicated a stone contributed \$200 to the project. This enabled us to pay our half of the cost of the marble, the plinth, and the artwork itself. North Van City paid the other half. As we are coming up to the tenth anniversary of our installation, we have obtained permission from the North Vancouver Public Art Director to add up to ten new stones to our circle. The existing stones will be cleaned up and trimmed in early June and the new stones should be installed in time for our celebration of the tenth anniversary on September 12th.

Cathy Sosnowsky, Chapter Co-Leader, The North Shore Compassionate Friends

