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# A PLACE TO GRIEVE

## Parents who've lost children hope to erect statue

By Lisa Gentes  
DAILY NEWS STAFF

SHREWSBURY - Jackie Volke knows how difficult celebrating the holidays after the death of a child can be.

"You can't celebrate the Christmas season in the same way," said Volke, who lost her son Andrew in car accident three years ago, when he was 19.

Last night, she joined nearly 200 parents, families and friends at Hoagland Pincus Conference Center for the third annual Candle Lighting, sponsored

by the Children's Remembrance Support Group.

The parents who lost children gathered for a ceremony, which included a table full of photos of kids of all ages, a dinner and a candle-lighting vigil. The event was part of the Compassionate Friends Worldwide Candle Lighting, which took place around the globe last night.

"It's very difficult and very bittersweet," Volke said of the event. "It's lovely to come to a place with parents who are grieving in the same way."

Friend Lorraine Yellick of

Northborough said when she lost her 5-year-old son Alick to illness in 1978 there weren't many bereavement groups or support systems for parents. She said last night's ceremony brought a combination of emotions, "especially at this time of the year with the holidays. But tears are healing."

Charlene Paradise of Shrewsbury founded the Children's Remembrance Support Group in 2003, after her 21-year-old son Patrick McTague died. She's organized the Candle Lighting for PARENTS, Page B5

# Parents gather to grieve, help

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the past three years.

She said last night's event was about keeping the children's memories alive. The death of a child is "the greatest tragedy that a parent or family will ever endure in a lifetime," she said.

Support group member Linda Bilodeau attended with her family last night. Her 27-year-old daughter Jill was killed in a motorcycle crash four years ago.

Last night, the Shrewsbury mother of two remaining children handed out copies of "The Christmas Box," and "The Christmas Box Miracle," by Richard Paul Evans.

Bilodeau said after reading the books, and attending a local book signing, she was inspired to bring a "Christmas box angel" to MetroWest. There are currently 61 angel statues around the country, including one in Easthampton and another in Westerly, R.I.

Bilodeau is hoping to raise \$20,000 in donations to place the statue on public land for grieving parents to go, close to

home, for solace and reflection any time of day or night.

She said the statue would provide a site for people to visit, when they cannot get to a child's or loved one's grave site.

"It's a place to grieve and heal the raw edges," Bilodeau said. "It doesn't go away, never, ever," she said of the pain of losing a child.

She said her daughter Jill sent her a message to initiate this project. "If you don't reach out, it's painful," she said.

Andrea Taylor of Shrewsbury said she cannot always visit her son's grave in Duxbury. Her son, Jason Borjeson, died 20 years ago, she said.

"What a great idea," she said of the statue, calling it a great focal point for the community.

Donations can be made to The Christmas Box Angel, c/o Westborough Bank, P.O. Box 670, Westborough, MA 01581. For more information contact Linda at 508-842-6001 or daisy0909@aol.com.

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