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# Bereaved mother reaches out with statue

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TELEGRAM & GAZETTE STAFF

SHREWSBURY — Linda Bilodeau knows the grief and pain that follows when a parent loses a child. Her daughter, Jill, died September 2001 in a motorcycle accident on Route 9 in town.

Ms. Bilodeau is now working to bring a statue called the "Christmas Box Angel — Angel of Hope" to the area as a way of creating a place where parents who have lost a child can grieve and find some serenity.

The statue was part of the book "The Christmas Box," which was written by Richard Paul Evans and is about a woman who mourns the loss of her child at an angel monu-

ment. The story, published in 1993, is fiction, but there was once an angel statue in Salt Lake City, according to the Web site [thechristmasboxhouse.org](http://thechristmasboxhouse.org). A new statue was placed in the city in 1994 when grieving parents searched for the statue as a place to visit, the Web site said.

Now there are almost 60 statues scattered across the country including ones in Easthampton and Westerly, R.I.

"It is a tribute to all the kids who passed," said Ms. Bilodeau, 57, in her home at 80 Main Circle. "We want to keep their memories alive and the only way we can keep their memory alive is to reach out to other parents in the community who are suffering. I know what it is like to have your child ripped

from your life."

An organization called The Christmas Box International arranges for local groups to buy the statue, which costs \$12,500, plus a few thousand dollars for a monument base. Ms. Bilodeau is seeking donations as well as a place to put the statue.

Ms. Bilodeau is part of the Children's Remembrance Group, which is a group of parents in the area who have all lost children, she said. The group consists of families from Shrewsbury, Auburn, Sutton, Worcester and Northboro to name a few. Jill Bilodeau attended the Worcester State College's nursing program and dreamed of working on Life Flight, the medical rescue helicopter.



T&G Staff/PAUL KAPTEYN

Linda Bilodeau holds a small marble replica of the "Christmas Box Angel" in front of a collage of photographs of her daughter, Jill, who was killed in a motorcycle accident in 2001.