

# CHIPPEWA VALLEY

Sunday, September 17, 2006

LEADER-TELEGRAM

## IT SEEMS TO ME

# Where are flowers for Angie?

Two years ago, six hunters were tragically killed in Sawyer County.

The outpouring of support and compassion from this and many other communities was inspiring. Businesses displayed signs and crosses, letters to the editor were written, and acknowledgements and funds poured in. Hundreds of "remember the hunters" stickers are still evident on cars and trucks.

And now a beautiful park memorial has been dedicated in Rice Lake. A great and worthy tribute, I believe.

But where are the flowers for Angie?

Last year, Cameron experienced a homecoming tragedy. Again, local communities rose to the crisis, showering support, love, flowers.

Where are the flowers for Angie?

This past spring, a young boy died in Rice Lake — the result of an accident. Letters were (and still are) written, flowers left, a community grieved. A wishing well reminded us a boy's life was cut short.

There has been media coverage as policies are reviewed, and parents, residents and relatives push for safer streets. All meaningful tributes to a life ended tragically.

Where are the flowers for Angie?

In May, a little girl from a nearby town died as the result of restraint while participating in therapy at a Rice Lake clinic to better prepare her for school. To my continued amazement and disbelief — the community has remained silent.

There have been no signs, no letters, no vigils,

no public show of grief or support for her family (yes, "foster families" are families), no bumper stickers or wishing wells. I don't understand.

*Where are the flowers?*

Wisconsin Family Ties (WFT) would like to change that. WFT is a statewide nonprofit organization run by families for families that include children and adolescents who have emotional, behavioral and mental health disorders.

Children and adolescents with mental health problems are the most underserved disability group, and probably the group with the most stigma attached. Still, about 12 percent of children under 18 nationwide — 7.5 million to 9.5 million — have problems that warrant mental health treatment.

It's not too late to find the flowers.

Next May, National Children's Mental Health Awareness Month, Family Ties would like to dedicate some type of memorial to

Angellika Arndt, while at the same time raising awareness of the needs of children and families with mental health issues.

Is it possible to still show compassion in honoring Angie, as we have for others? Or will she and her family, like many people with mental health problems, be ignored and forgotten?

I've seen this community rally before, and I want to believe that a little girl who liked to play, was loved and cared for, will not be forgotten.

Come on, Wisconsin ... where are the flowers? *Pelishek, of Rice Lake, is a family advocate for Wisconsin Family Ties.*



**Jo  
Pelishek**

■ Wisconsin Family Ties is in the beginning stages of planning a memorial for Angellika Arndt. If you have ideas, input or funds you'd like to share, please contact Pelishek at [jopel.wft@chibardun.net](mailto:jopel.wft@chibardun.net).