

This article appeared in the Press & Sun Bulletin on March 14, 2008

## Angel Statue Serves As Touching Memorial

By Pam Kroft

In an ideal world, children outlive and have the task of burying their parents after their death.



But in the lives of hundreds of parents locally, the opposite is true -- the parents have been left the nightmarish task to bury their children.

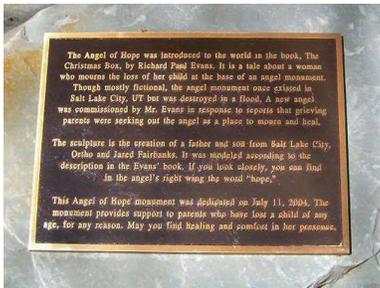
In 2002, a handful of others and I formed a committee to bring an angel, the Angel of Hope, to our community to be placed in memory of all children who have died too soon. In July 2004, the angel was dedicated with the help and hard work of several community members, volunteering their skills and time to our mission.

There is no age specific to a child's death -- if a child dies and there are living parents, those moms and dads are living the nightmare that in an ideal world doesn't exist.

As someone who frequents the Jeanne and Park in Port Dickinson, traveling west along by a magnificent sight: that very Angel of stately trees and bordered by two walkways, Chenango River. Leaving the park's pathway



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Nearing the angel, my eyes travel up to the innocence and beauty of its face and the wings that frame its body. Looking more closely, the word "hope" is engraved in one wing -- that one word we all cling to as we walk along our grief journeys. Placed around the angel are memorial

pavers with names, dates of birth and death, and well-thought-out sayings depicting the child who are gone. You, too, will find yourself reading each and every name wondering about the story that lies within each piece of clay.

Once the engraved pavers have encompassed the area surrounding the base of the angel, no more will be placed -- but two pavers stand out among the rest: "All children gone too soon" and "all unborn children," honoring each child that shall pass in years to come.

As a parent of a child whose name lies beneath the angel, I wish there never was a want for such an angel and that not one more pavestone would be engraved. That's the ideal world I spoke of, but I live in the world that each day a new obituary appears in our newspaper and there are names of parents mourning the death of a child. Before that horrific day in October 1994, I too lived in that ideal world, never taking much notice of obituaries or the ages of the deceased. When I became a member of the "group that has the highest dues," I realized the importance of angels in parks and memorial pavers placed in memory of children gone too soon.



As a member of the Angel of Hope committee, I encourage you to visit the park, head west on the pathway and enter the angel's garden -- all while being overwhelmed by its beauty and innocence, not unlike the children it represents.