



Photo by Jed Owen from Unsplash

NURTURING SEEDS OF HOPE

We've all been looking forward to spring, perhaps more this year than ever before. As trees start to bud and garden seeds to sprout, Threads of Life is also nurturing some hopeful new growth. Our monthly online workshops are bringing together family members who are learning and also reaching out to support one another. And as always, we see growth and healing in the family members who share their stories to help others realize they're not alone.

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Bill Stunt

Everyone was happy to say farewell to 2020 this January, even though we had no idea what 2021 would bring. With so many unknowns, we're doing our best at Threads of Life to create firm ground for our family members and partners to stand on.

Our Spring Family Forum in Atlantic Canada will go ahead, although it will be online rather than in person. And Steps for Life is full speed ahead, with a mix of virtual and in-person events where they're allowed. We know that while many activities slowed or stopped due to the pandemic, workplace injuries and deaths have continued, and Threads of Life continues too, nurturing hope and healing for those we serve.



The day my life changed ... for the better?

Lack of training contributed to life-altering injury

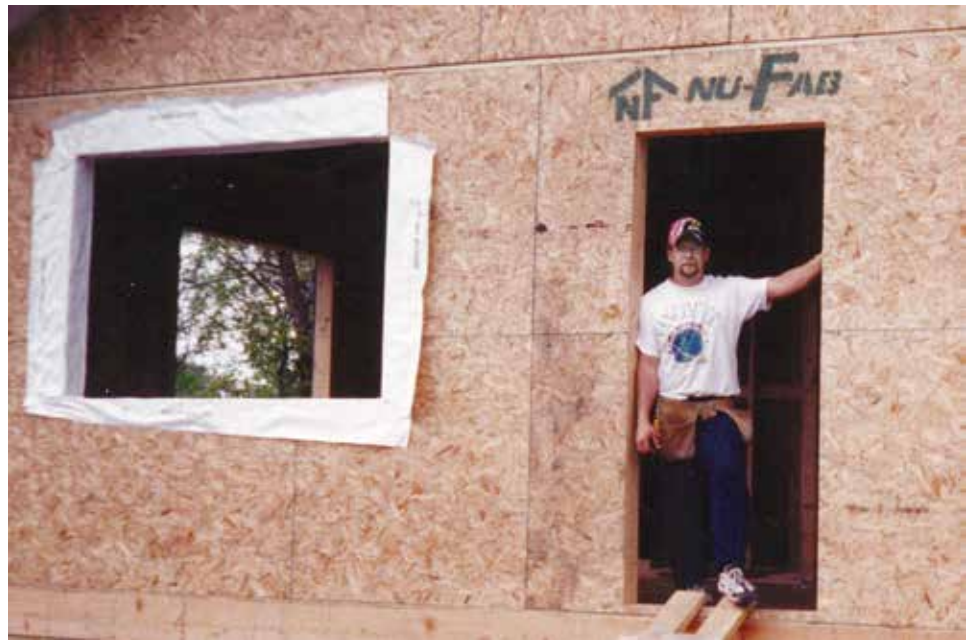
by Grant W. Barnsley

Our parents always told my sister and me that we could do whatever we wanted; you just have to work at it. Our taste for hard work began early when we would go with my parents to the farm. I loved the long days of harvest and open prairie landscapes that went for miles. I love the feeling of accomplishment when I've done a hard day's work! With this desire to do well and be successful, I would sometimes cut corners and not see the dangers of a task. This would catch up to me on a chilly but sunny day; September 11, 1987.

In February, 1987 I got my first job at a local hydraulic shop and was able to start working in my chosen trade: machine shop. Finally, the long days of studying to cut threads, tapers and hit tolerances smaller than the hairs on your head, had paid off. I was moving up the ranks and feeling quite comfortable. My career as a machinist had begun, but there was one thing missing: training! There were no safe operating procedures for daily tasks and there was definitely no training on lifting and rigging, sling capacities, load ratings. All I knew from watching the others was, if it was heavy grab a big sling and carry on.

In the early to mid-80s, jobs were scarce and you felt privileged to have a job. As a young apprentice you wanted to be accepted. You jumped at the chance to machine large parts for the local steel plant or get the forklift from down the street to load a truck. Well the day came for me to deliver a large hydraulic cylinder to the local steel mill.

So, without hesitation I connected the hook of the overhead hoist to the sling that was choked around the cylinder and started



Grant didn't want to miss out on anything, including building his own house

to raise it. The sling was frayed and its lifting capacity was compromised. If you do some simple rigging math, the lifting capacity of that sling was around 2000 lbs, however if you choke a sling, its lifting capacity is cut in half, then if you factor in the fraying and damage to the sling, it should have been in the garbage! But, not knowing all of this and knowing I had a job to do, I continued to pull and before long the cylinder was about 48 inches off the floor.

I ran to jump in the truck, but my manager said that he would back it under and I should guide him in. I went around the back of the truck and tried to stabilize the now gently swinging cylinder, when my entire life changed forever!

I was leaning into the cylinder to stabilize it, when the sling broke. The load came crashing down, hitting my knees on its way to the floor. Seconds after, I'm lying on my back trying to comprehend what just happened. My attempt to stand up was unsuccessful because I was sitting on my feet. That's when I realized that the cylinder had hit me, breaking both of my legs below the knee. My right leg sustained a compression fracture, my left leg a compound fracture with the bones sticking straight out. The pain was unbearable as it shot up both thighs, right to my hips. I started to scream. My foreman came to my side and comforted me until EMS could get there. I remember saying to my foreman "I want to be able to walk again!"

Finally, EMS arrived and I heard the ambulance driver say, "man look at this kid's legs"! They cut off my pants and new boots and taped my feet together before loading me

onto a stretcher. I thought it was strange that they weren't tying up my right foot or taking off my boot, but they did, I just couldn't feel it!

In the ER, nurses were asking me questions, the police were asking me who I was, where I worked. Then I heard it: the familiar twinkle of Dad's keys on his belt and his one heel that lightly dragged as he walked. Dad came around the curtain to see me lying on the stretcher covered with a thin sheet. He asked if it hurt and I said not too bad, but I was still buzzing from the laughing gas in the ambulance.

Doctors took X-rays looking for vascular damage as well as bone trauma. This is where things get a little fuzzy. I remember a nurse asking me if I would like some morphine. I quickly said yes please! Mom talked to me before I went in for surgery. She told me they may have to amputate my right leg through the knee. I agreed, not knowing what I was agreeing to!

I woke up in ICU, both legs in casts and bandages. My right leg looked like a Meccano set, which I learnt later is a Hoffman's apparatus. The long screws of this apparatus held all the bones in my right leg in place. My left leg was in a cast to my upper thigh with a plate holding it together. Due to the crushing injury of my right leg and the lack of blood flow to my foot, the doctors conducted a procedure called a fasciotomy to allow the outer tissue to swell without restricting blood flow. At one point the doctor stuck all of his fingers into the large 12-inch incision, hoping to find a pulse. Because there was too much vascular damage, a week later the decision was made that my right foot would have to be

amputated. I got very emotional, even angry. I remember during a Demerol trip, saying to my mom that I didn't want to get lung cancer, like Terry Fox. Mom said "you won't get lung cancer"! I said "but Terry Fox did"! She explained he lost his leg because of cancer. I can remember a feeling of relief knowing that I wouldn't get cancer and saying to mom and the doctor, "well if this thing is coming off, let's get rid of it!"

Surgery was set for September 18. After surgery I can remember looking down: yep it's gone! Thank God, I thought! No more sleepless, never-ending nights waiting for that sweet, sharp prick of a needle and the soothing warm glow of Demerol to ease the pain of dying tissue. Wrong!! Now the nerve endings were dancing around like ropes in the wind; this excruciating pressure pushing down on my right knee. My foot felt like it was stuffed toes first into a tube and I couldn't lift it or take it out. The only way to relieve the terrible discomfort was to flex the freshly severed muscles on the right side of my calf to keep the spasming nerves from crossing over to the left side. But, when they crossed to the other side, there was no coming back! The pain was so intense; I would grit my teeth and scream, squeezing my thigh just above my knee with everything I had.

After a few hours of this, the doctor ordered an anti-spasmodic drug along with some other concoction of pain meds. Almost instantly, the meds started to take effect. I wasn't in the hospital, but in my head I was curled up in the living room chair at my Grandma Toni's house. Now I'm hallucinating! Which I would find out is a side effect of the meds.

The hours turned into days. Things were feeling better and I looked forward to rehab. As an inpatient at Wascana Rehab I worked out every day, eating like a king. The prosthetics were fitting not too badly; I had to figure out these new changes my body was going through. My stump would shrink when I wore my leg and swell at night when I took it off. Wool socks and foam liners eased the pressure of the prosthetic and would be my new normal for the next 24 years, until I finally was introduced to something new and more exciting to walk on. This new technology was incredible! I could finally get rid of my knee brace and thigh lacer. The new leg is held on with suction. It felt like I was wearing a soft glove, no more pinching or sores. This new leg has been by my side since 2012. My willingness to accept change and being mentally ready to accept my new prosthetics would allow me to take on whatever new challenges it would bring. A positive mental

attitude is a very powerful healer. If you stay focused on what you want, there's nothing that will hold you back!

A positive mental attitude is a very powerful healer. If you stay focused on what you want, there's nothing that will hold you back!

Now it's been over 30 years since my accident. I have never ever felt that I was handed the dirty end of the stick that day or missed out on anything in the years that followed. I would push myself even harder when I was told that I should take a different path or you shouldn't do that because of your leg. I've built garages, my house at the lake, helped several people with their building projects. I climb hills, ride bikes, drive my Camaro with a six-speed manual transmission. Have I missed out on things? Not at all! I don't even consider myself disabled, just short on one side!

Unfortunately, my machining career did come to an end in February of 2007. I was breaking in a new leg and a sore started, which was nothing unusual. I knew that if I gave the liner a buff here or there with the die grinder it would eventually feel better. But this sore really got away from me. Infection set in and I couldn't wear my leg due to swelling. I would spend the next several months undergoing numerous small surgeries to revise the folds and imperfections on my stump. Now my leg wouldn't allow me to continue as a machinist. It sucked,

but my left hip was hurting all the time from the constant standing and favouring of my right leg. I didn't know what would happen next, 40 years old and no career. Well there's a bit of stress! But I was able to re-open my file with WCB, so I could still pay my bills and feed my kids in that two-year window while I worked closely with WCB. I was enrolled in many classes and other programs, all the while looking for a new job or career. Finally, I was able to get back on my feet and landed a position with the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission as a field consultant.

Today, I've gone from a field consultant at the Apprenticeship Board to an occupational health & safety officer, my true calling!

Just recently I requested my old file from Occupational Health & Safety. When I looked at the pictures I was taken back immediately to the smells of the shop, the poor lighting and yes, there it was, the sling! All snarled up and ratty. I looked through the paperwork, hoping there would be something in those pages to indicate a prosecution charge or a fine, but there was nothing.

Unfortunately, today workers are still not being properly trained in their duties. For me the gap was hoisting and rigging, and even my three rights as a worker. This lack of training cost me my right foot, a 13-month stay in hospital and rehab, years of discomfort, both physical and emotional. The sad part of my story is the suffering that my family went through worrying about me. BUT I never gave up! A lot of these types of injuries can be eliminated once workers are educated and understand that training is a huge part of the job. It's not just another day in the classroom, it's the start of you being safe and coming home to your loved ones.



Grant (left) and his sister Heather

A life together

Hard worker ‘always answered the bell’

by Winnie Odo

I firmly believe that we are called to live our lives in the forward; however, I can only understand my life if I am willing to go back and visit the past, and so a new journey begins:

One Sunday afternoon in May 1971 my mother called to me and said there is a man, Gerald Odo on the phone and he wants to speak to you. I was surprised and my first reaction was, “I wonder what he wants?” I answered and he invited me to go to a drive-in movie. I was 24, working at the Credit Union in the town close to where I lived. Gerald was 25 and unemployed; he was then between jobs.

Little did I know that one year later I would be walking down the aisle of my parish church on the arm of my mom and dad to become Mrs. Gerald Odo, promising God, Gerald and the world that I was in this for life, “for better or worse”. At the time Gerald weighed about 220 pounds. He was a robust man, well built and very healthy. Shortly before our wedding Gerald had offers for two jobs, one at the local steel plant, the other a three-month job at the coal mine which was closer to where he was living at the time, so he chose the coal mines. That three-month posting lasted until 1996 when he lived out his dream of retiring at 50; however his dream became a reality as the result of a disability.

After five years of marriage Gerald and I became parents to a chosen child, Raymond, who was six weeks old and immediately captured our hearts. We were very nervous and scared but wanted to become the “parents of the year,” sharing our lives with this little tyke. Parenting was new to us and wasn’t always the joy we thought it would be. Becoming parents was a huge transition, being responsible for something as precious as our son. The days turned into weeks, the weeks into months, the months into years and one day we awoke and realized that we were old. Gerald was a hard worker and



A proud grandfather

accepted every extra shift he was offered with little regard for the toll his environment was taking on his health. After 15 years above and below the ocean, Gerald was diagnosed with a serious lung disease called silicosis or black lung. The levels at that time were low but worthy of a Worker’s Compensation pension. Being compensated for this disease did not come close to the diminishment that Gerald lost as he lived each day.

After 15 years above and below the ocean, Gerald was diagnosed with a serious lung disease called silicosis or black lung.

His disability affected many aspects of our lives. We had both loved to dance and he was very smooth on the dance floor. He also loved to sing and play the guitar; trust me when I say, there were very few parties that he didn’t get a bid to attend and there were many times I was left behind. Gerald was the one who could fix anything from a broken window to a broken heart. Now, he

became very arthritic, lost the sight of one eye which played a part in him losing his license because of a car accident. Ultimately he had to accept the fact that his breathing was limiting some of the things that had given him much joy and a deep sense of pride to his manhood.

Looking back, I can see that much of the damage and debilitations took place gradually and happened very subtly. Periodically he had to go to the Pulmonary Clinic for lung functioning and each time he went to be tested, the levels increased and the compensation was also increased. He was a smoker, as were most of his co-workers, which magnified the damage in his lungs. Unconsciously we stopped dancing, we stopped socializing. Life went on and Gerald, with his good work ethic, still answered the bell each time it rang. His condition was not going to get better. In fact, it was worsening with each passing year.

He had left school at a very early age. He was 15 years old when he got his first job at a local hardware store, granted a dismissal from school because he was helping out at home. He loved to work. It was something that really fulfilled his life and made him feel good. As his health diminished and the pain and suffering increased, he turned to the bottle for comfort. It certainly didn’t

remove the pain but it dulled it. This took its toll on our relationship. Some couples grow together through pain; however, pain led to excessive drinking which ultimately caused a separation between us and at the beginning of the summer in 1993 we went our separate ways. Gerald moved into an apartment and I remained in our home in Langan. We could see that we were only hurting ourselves and those around us by staying together. I never stopped loving him and I prayed daily that he would find sobriety. I lived by the words of the Serenity Prayer and accepted the things I could not change. I had tried for 21 years to make our life the best it could be but I, too, reached a point in our relationship when I was no longer able to answer the bell, even though I had promised “for better or worse”. He was in trouble with his employer because now, this man who loved to be a good provider was no longer able to answer the bell. Alcohol had taken over our lives.

As Christmas time got closer he hit his bottom and on December 7 he found sobriety. It was the greatest thing that could have happened to both of us. We were very cordial to each other during this separation and thank God when we tried to pick up the pieces of our lives it was relatively easy to enjoy each other’s company again. I remember saying, “Gerald, we can’t change the beginning but if we are willing to work at this each day, there’s a good chance we can change the end.” Thankfully, together we made that happen.

His dream of retirement came in 1996 when, having attained the magic number – his age of 50, plus years of service totaled 75 points – he had reached the requirements for pension. No more clock, no more exposure to the dust that plagued our lives and damaged his lungs. By now many breaths depended on puffers prescribed to help alleviate the inability he experienced as he tried to live as normal a life as his body was able to manage. He was acutely aware of the danger he was in with cigarettes but was now adversely addicted to them. On more than one occasion I would try to encourage him by saying “Gerald, if you knew how much I am enjoying your pension, you would quit, now are going to try and give them up?” Not today would be his response and so life went on.

About 10 years ago, through Gerald’s worker’s compensation advocate we were introduced to Threads of Life and to the Family Forum at Oak Island. We struggled because these weekends always seemed to clash with our son Raymond’s birthday. But from the moment we took part in the Family Forum we were head over heels in love with Threads of Life. This became the highlight of our year. It seemed the perfect place for us to be as a couple living with a life-altering illness, a place where we could learn coping skills from others with the same issues, a place where we



Gerald and Winnie on their wedding day

could let our hair down and even feel young again.

Last spring, just as we began to live with COVID-19, Gerald was sent for a chest X-Ray. Within days our doctor phoned to say that he was very concerned about a large mass on his right lung and wanted to send him for further explorations. During a biopsy procedure, his heart became very erratic which started a new regime of testing. The inevitable was before us but I really think that we both clung to denial as we prayed that “this too, shall pass.” On April 11 Gerald didn’t get out of bed. I checked in on him around 10:00 am and he said he didn’t feel good and wanted to stay in bed. I suggested we phone an ambulance and adamantly he said “no, don’t do that”. I went back in around 10:30 and said, “I’m calling the ambulance to ensure that everything is OK. This time he said “Winnie, I tried to do this on my own and I can’t anymore. I have to allow someone to help me”. The ambulance arrived around 11:15 and as they drove down our driveway with him in the back, the thought came to mind, “he’s not coming home” and he didn’t.

Three weeks later his on-call doctor came with the results of a recent X-Ray, to tell him that he had cancer and that the prognosis did not look good. She laid out his options, one of which was to simply let nature take its course, assuring him that they would take the best possible care of him. His response was, this is the one I want. He turned to me and said “Winnie, are you OK with this?” My response was “No, Gerald, this is not OK but what choice do we have? We have to play the hand we are dealt. If you are willing to play it with me, I am willing to play it with you!”

As the doctor was leaving she told him that she would be back tomorrow and again on Wednesday. This all took place on Monday, April 27.

At 2:00 am on Tuesday the phone rang. It was the hospital telling me his condition had changed. I arrived at 2:20 am and spent the next few hours with him, never dreaming for a second that he was dying – denial is powerful; it helped me to spend that time with him and to remain calm in the midst of all that was going on around me. At 8 minutes after 7:00 his earthly life ended and his pain-free, peaceful life began.

I was filled with emotions; some sad, others filled with gratitude. I am as normal as the next one and can be just as selfish but at that time I was very aware that this was not an ending, it was a new beginning. The pain and suffering that were his and mine, these past few years were over. Gerald fought the good fight, he finished the race and in a strange way I knew that I would be OK. Gerald was very peaceful and so ready to go to God and it would be wrong for me to stand in the way of all that he had gained.

We do live our lives in the forward but only understand what is happening when we go back in time. When Gerald asked me on Monday if I was OK with his decision, he was really asking me for permission to die. I had no idea at the time, what I was saying yes to!

This is a new day. Gerald was laid to rest on August 5 directly across the road from the home he built for us in 1974. Every morning I go for a walk, but only after I go across the road to spend some time with him, to thank him for all he did for us while he was with us and to acknowledge my gratefulness for all that he is still doing for us. In a beautiful way, I felt Gerald’s presence with me as I put this story of our lives together. In an even more strange way, I feel it is part of our closure and is all part of a divine plan.

FAMILIESCONNECT online: Nurturing seeds of hope

Q: *What did you like best about this FamiliesConnect session?*

A: Knowing at least for me, I was not alone in my grief and the loss of my son. There were many others sharing in their losses as well. I had a great sense of release from a lot of tension, just from the short exercise we did ... There are many things being offered by Threads of Life, that will indeed help me and many others transition from profound grief ... I hope to take part in many more sessions. I intend to make sure I learn the complexities of this laptop as I never had one before, and I hope to be a part of Threads of Life for a long time to come.

-Sharon

FamiliesConnect is the newest program Threads of Life offers to help members connect and refresh their coping skills. The series of monthly online workshops is free for those affected by work-related fatalities, life-altering injuries and occupational disease. See the insert in this newsletter for upcoming topics, or visit threadsoflife.ca/familiesconnect.

Like Sharon, who shared her reaction after January's FamiliesConnect session, many people may feel intimidated by the technology or the online format. We want to do everything we can to make this easy, so everyone can participate. All you really need is a computer with internet connection, but even your phone can work.

If you'd like to participate in a FamiliesConnect session, but aren't confident you know how, please let us help! We have a tip sheet we can send you by email, or you can simply call Kelley Thompson in our office, and she will walk you through the steps. Reach Kelley at kelley@threadsoflife.ca or call 888-567-9490, ext. 101.



Atlantic Family Forum moves online for 2021



May 28 to 30 will find Threads of Life members from across the Atlantic provinces meeting up online for the Atlantic Virtual Family Forum (AVFF). With continued uncertainty around travel and the size of gatherings permitted for this spring, Threads of Life made the decision to cancel the in-person forum and move events to Zoom.

The forum will offer workshops and opportunities to chat, following the format of traditional family forums. It will begin with a Reflections Ceremony and then present 10 different sessions to choose from.

The AVFF is open to anyone from Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, who has experienced a life-altering injury, occupational disease or the work-related death of a loved one.

We encourage you to register by April 30. Please register early to ensure your space – participants will be confirmed on a first come, first served basis. Visit threadsoflife.ca/AVFF or call 888-567-9490 for information.

Need a pair of work boots? Consider Mark's

Looking for a pair of anti-slip footwear? Be safe AND support families with Mark's! This large Canadian retailer will donate a portion of proceeds from the sales of the antislip Tarantula line of work boots. Look for our logo on the boot tag.

**A portion of your boot purchase
will be donated to Threads of Life.**

Smart
Clothes.
Everyday
Living.

Mark's





Veronica, left, stands with Threads of Life family member and volunteer Lynda Kolly at Steps for Life Winnipeg

Volunteer Profile: Veronica Suszynski by Zaria Cornwall

Veronica Suszynski is a portfolio leader at SAFE Work Manitoba in the Support Services Portfolio, which provides service to all Manitoba employers in the areas of occupational hygiene, musculoskeletal injuries and preventing young worker injuries.

Veronica is currently chair of the Winnipeg committee and she is one of Steps for Life's longest-serving volunteers — 10 years!

How did you first come to know about Threads of Life?

I started working at SAFE Work Manitoba in 2010 and it was that connection that helped me find Threads of Life. One of the colleagues was a volunteer and so I was brought out to one of the meetings. But, I had not heard of Threads of Life prior to this.

Tell me about your experiences in Threads of Life.

It started with the walk and then I volunteered with the committee. I want to mention that we have the best committee! We have the same dedicated group show up every year to put on a successful event. I have come to rely on them to get everything done and they never fail in this task!

I became so dedicated to the organization after I attended the Saskatoon Family Forum in 2014. I felt so fortunate. It was impactful; I learned just how many people Threads of Life helps.

Why do you volunteer for Threads of Life?

It's twofold. I am a health and safety professional, so I can give back directly to the community and help increase awareness of illness, injury, or fatality. The other side is the personal connections that I can build with family, friends, and co-workers.

Meeting these people and talking to them, being able to help them even in a small way is great to see. I love the sea of yellow we can create but the monetary value in raising funds for those going through something terrible like workplace tragedy is just as great.

What's your favourite memory about your work as a volunteer?

One of the walks that stood out to me was in 2011. There was rain that turned into ice and my committee showed up Sunday morning and we quickly had to cancel the event. We tried to contact people so they would not come and rescheduled the event for the next week. It was unbelievable but it was great that everyone responded so quickly.

From that experience, we learned that it is important to have a back up plan. I mean the next year there was a flood threat so there were many questions about, "okay what now?" Even in 2020 with the pandemic we had to cancel the walk and did it online instead. There was participation but it was quick of us to pivot like that.

What other community/volunteering do you do?

I volunteer with the Manitoba Riding for the Disabled Association and it is a therapeutic riding program for children with disabilities. I am a side-walker so that means I am with the child or I am leading the horse.

So, I do that and support Threads of Life.



What comes after inspiration?

by **Susan Haldane**, Manager Marketing and Communication

It's a good feeling, inspiration. We all like to feel inspired. Otherwise, why would there be so many lists of inspirational sayings, or motivational memes floating around out there?

I had anthropologist Margaret Mead's famous line posted above my desk for years: *"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."* It inspired me to believe that change is possible, and that I could be part of it.

Every month, when the staff of Threads of Life get together for a meeting, one of us is assigned to launch the meeting with a reflection on our corporate vision and mission. It's a very useful practice, because it ensures those foundational statements come alive in our day-to-day work, rather than collecting dust on a shelf.

When my turn came recently, I was thinking about Threads of Life's vision statement,

"Threads of Life will lead and inspire a culture shift as a result of which work-related injuries, illnesses and deaths are morally, socially and economically unacceptable"

and the word that jumped out at me was "inspire". I thought about the many Threads of Life members I've worked with, who persevere in the face of physical and emotional pain; who make the choice to try and help others by sharing their story, volunteering or fundraising. Now that's inspirational, I thought!

One of the definitions of "inspire" is to make someone have a particular strong feeling or reaction, and to make someone feel they want to do something and that they can do it.

An article called "Why Inspiration Matters" in the Harvard Business Review says that inspiration is transcendent, and "such transcendence often involves a moment of clarity and awareness of new possibilities."

By sharing their stories, whether through our newsletters and other

publications or through our speaker's bureau, family members help others find that transcendence. The moment of clarity allows people to see the real-life consequences of a workplace fatality, a serious injury or an occupational disease. And their safety message offers an awareness of new possibilities – the possibility that we could do things differently; that other families could be spared this pain.

Reading or hearing these stories can be heart-breaking, but the inspiration for change that they bring feels good. There's a rush, a buzz to feeling inspired. However, if inspiration stops there, we will never create that culture shift for workplace safety; never achieve the vision. I think it's up to us as listeners and readers to take our moment of clarity, our awareness of possibilities, and turn them into action. That's when we, as a small group of committed citizens, will change the world.

Learning to
SHARE

Threads of Life believes sharing your experience of workplace tragedy helps you heal.

Are you ready to share? You could write a reflection on one idea, like the piece on this page; write a poem; draft a post for our blog (threadsoflife.ca/news); or share your full story as two family members have in this issue. To learn more, email: Susan at shaldane@threadsoflife.ca.

Welcome League of Champions!

There's a brand new member in the Threads of Life partner family – or 80-plus new members to be exact! The League of Champions is an Ontario organization which seeks to inspire and influence leaders to commit, collaborate, and take action to improve safety culture. Its members include leading national and international firms in construction, contracting and related sectors.

The League is sponsored by the Ontario General Contractors' Association. It focuses on recognizing safety achievements, education for its



members, and promotion of health and safety. As a partner of Threads of Life, the League of Champions will encourage its member companies to get involved in Steps for Life and other programs like the Threads of Life speaker's bureau. Threads of Life has the opportunity to help the League's member companies better understand the impact a workplace tragedy has on families, and how our programs and services can help.

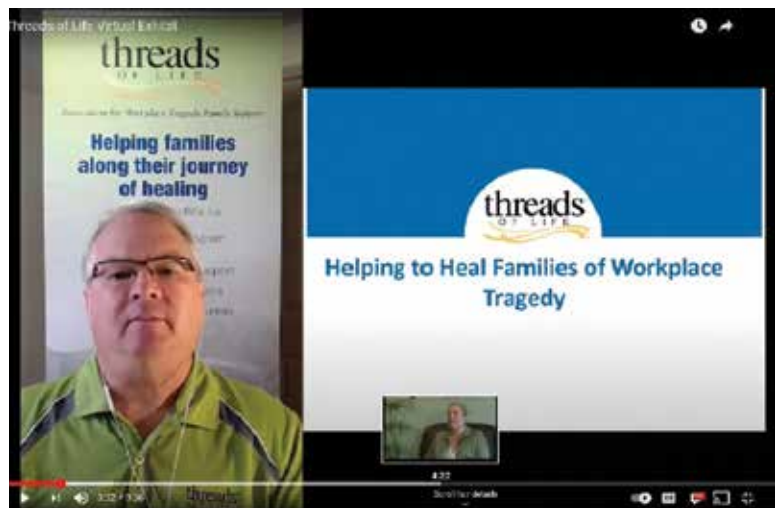
Welcome League members! You're champions in our books!

Threads of Life launches virtual trade show exhibit

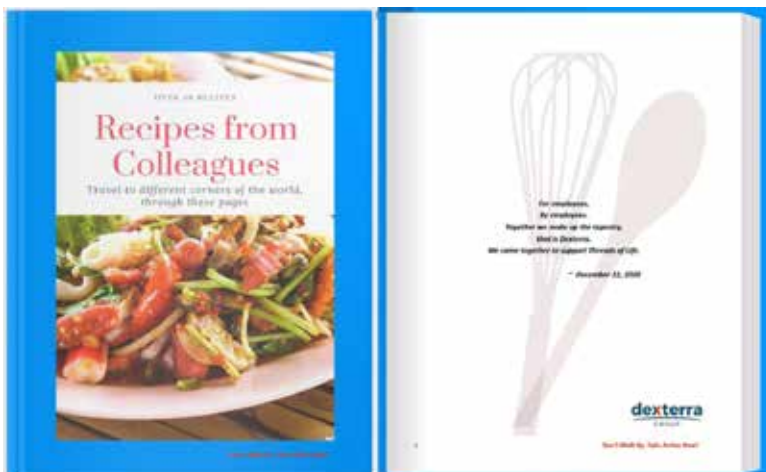
New times demand new ways. One of the innovations born of the pandemic has been the virtual trade show, and Threads of Life has created a new virtual trade show exhibit to fill that need.

Trade shows have always been an important way for Threads of Life to meet new partners and build relationships with our volunteers in health and safety and business. When the pandemic hit, at first trade shows were cancelled, but then many found ways to recreate their events online.

Threads of Life's Director of Partnerships and Fundraising, Scott McKay, didn't want the organization to miss out on these opportunities to spread the word about our programs and services, so he created an executive introduction which explains Threads of Life in a nutshell.



The Threads of Life Virtual Exhibit will be coming soon to a trade show near you! For a sneak preview, go to YouTube and search "Threads of Life Virtual Exhibit".



Dexterra Cookbook

Employees from Threads of Life partner Dexterra worked together to create a cookbook as a fundraiser.

The project was led by Holly Van Drine.

*Thank you to
Holly and team for
your support!*

It's ON...and we need you!



Most frequently asked question about Steps for Life this year:

Is Steps for Life on? Answer: It's ON!

There's been a lot of change over the past year. But Steps for Life – Walking for Families of Workplace Tragedy can be your constant. Our annual fundraising event is definitely happening, and registration is open now.

Because of the pandemic, Steps for Life planning committees knew they would need to be flexible. Some communities have opted for fully-virtual events, in which participants will still register with their community page, but will walk (or run or dance or bike) in their own household group. Their fundraising will still contribute to their city's totals. And other communities are planning blended events, with an in-person walk which complies with all local guidelines for numbers and distancing. Even in those communities, though, participants have the option of a virtual Steps for Life event on their own.

With so many alternatives, we anticipate yellow t-shirts on every trail and street across the country this May! To register and learn more about your community's plans, head to stepsforlife.ca.

Why Steps for Life matters to me.

It was 2008 when Betty Evans's son, Stephen, died while working on a cattle station in Australia, turning Betty's life upside down.

As Betty recalls, she was walking through an office building when she saw a poster for Steps for Life on the wall. That is the moment she learned of the event and the organization, Threads of Life. She signed up and walked the following weekend.

The first year, Betty participated as a walker and soon after she began to volunteer, acting as a spokesperson in Calgary, Lethbridge and Red Deer, and helping with volunteer recruitment. For Betty it is so important to "highlight the importance of workplace safety and how valuable it is for others to participate." She wants to make it clear that when people raise money, it provides a space for families like hers to go after something happens.

Being part of Steps for Life "makes you feel like you are not alone. You can make a difference." She can keep Stephen with her through her experiences and keep his memory alive.

The contribution of Steps for Life donors and sponsors is high on Betty's gratitude list. She knows it's valuable to support others; it matters. Betty encourages people to help in whatever way they can: "you can participate in so many ways, become a speaker or a Volunteer Family Guide. It is all important in the healing process."



Betty's son Stephen died while working in Australia



All this good... and prizes too!

We know you don't do it for prizes. You're part of Steps for Life because of all the good it does – raising the profile of workplace health and safety, and raising up families and individuals affected by tragedy.

But prizes are okay too, right? This year, when you register online, donate online and fundraise online for Steps for Life, you have a chance to win one of three gift cards, thanks to a donation from Amazon.

Step up and win three ways:

1. Register online by April 1 and you're automatically entered for a chance to win a VISA gift card worth \$500.
2. Make a personal donation online of at least \$95 (that's money you donate to your own campaign) and you're automatically entered to win a VISA gift card worth \$1,500!
3. Fundraise at least \$200 online (that's money you raise from others) and you're automatically entered to win a gift card worth \$2,000.

There's also a chance to win by submitting a 500-word essay about why Threads of Life is important in your community. Look for "Walk to win" on the Steps for Life web site for full contest details.

Everybody wins when you participate in Steps for Life – prizes make it a win-win-win!

Pssst... It's a fundraiser...

We love to see all those bright t-shirts and shining faces every May during Steps for Life season. But don't forget, Steps for Life is a fundraiser too!

It's the biggest single source of funding every year, to power Threads of Life programs and services for those affected by work-related tragedies. We know, it's awkward to ask people for money, but a few small requests will make the world of difference to families learning to cope in the aftermath of tragedy. When you register at stepsforlife.ca, you'll find tools to help you fundraise – we've even written your emails for you! This year, there's no fee to register, so you can kick off your fundraising campaign by donating yourself!



SHARE THIS NEWSLETTER!

Pass it along or leave it in your lunchroom or lobby for others to read.

DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

If you've been personally affected by work-related tragedy, and would like to share your story in our newsletter, please email Susan Haldane at shaldane@threadsoflife.ca

How to reach us

Toll-free: 1-888-567-9490

Fax: 1-519-685-1104

Association for Workplace Tragedy Family Support - Threads of Life

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www.stepsforlife.ca



Association for Workplace Tragedy Family Support

Threads of Life is a registered charity dedicated to supporting families along their journey of healing who have suffered from a workplace fatality, life-altering illness or occupational disease. Threads of Life is the Charity of Choice for many workplace health and safety events. Charitable organization business #87524 8908 RR0001.

MISSION

Our mission is to help families heal through a community of support and to promote the elimination of life-altering workplace injuries, illnesses and deaths.

VISION

Threads of Life will lead and inspire a culture shift, as a result of which work-related injuries, illnesses and deaths are morally, socially and economically unacceptable

VALUES

We believe in:

Caring: Caring helps and heals.

Listening: Listening can ease pain and suffering.

Sharing: Sharing our personal losses will lead to healing and preventing future devastating work-related losses.

Respect: Personal experiences of loss and grief need to be honoured and respected.

Health: Health and safety begins in our heads, hearts and hands, in everyday actions.

Passion: Passionate individuals can change the world.

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Yes I will, help bring hope and healing to families

Gift Payment Options

- I'd like to make monthly gifts
 \$25 \$50 \$100 \$ _____
- I'd prefer to make a one-time gift
 \$25 \$50 \$100 \$ _____
- I've enclosed a void cheque to start direct withdrawal for monthly giving
- You may also donate to Threads of Life online at www.threadsoflife.ca/donate
- Please send me updates about Threads of Life events via email at: _____

Visa MasterCard

_____ account number _____ expiry

NAME ON CARD _____

SIGNATURE _____

PHONE NUMBER _____

ADDRESS (for income tax receipt) _____

Threads of Life, P.O. Box 9066 • 1795 Ernest Ave • London, ON N6E 2V0 1 888 567 9490 • www.threadsoflife.ca

All donations are tax deductible. Charitable Registration Number #87524 8908 RR0001