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# Powerful stories offer light to darker days



## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

*Bill Stunt*

I don't know about you, but this year's "fall back", in terms of daylight saving time, caught me by surprise. I just wasn't prepared for the early onset of darkness. I think I was in a bit of denial. I've grudgingly gotten used to it. In any case, along with the short days, the steady daily drop in temperature has made me concede that winter is truly upon us.

It's a complicated time of year in many ways. Along with the light and drastic change of weather, there are the holidays that can be difficult for people dealing with grief. It's always good to remember that we all need a bit of extra self care and comfort to help get through what can be difficult months. Please be good to yourselves and those around you.

In the pages of this edition of the Threads of Life newsletter there is an interesting article written by Tom Wilson. It's a reflection on some of the work that's been done in our regular volunteer family guide teleconferences. In the article Tom reflects on the various kinds of normal. In our world, the term "new normal" is used a lot. Tom deconstructs what that actually might mean. Take a look.

Inside these pages you'll also see a lovely piece by Marianne Levitsky

reflecting on Threads of Life and the fact that we are celebrating our tenth anniversary this year. Hard to believe that the organization has reached that milestone but it is true and the acknowledgements of that fact at this year's family forums have been powerful.

Our organization survives on the work of our volunteer and staff members. We're very happy to introduce to you our three newest team members. Welcome aboard Sherrie, Kevin and Heather. As well, we count on our donors to provide us with the funds that allow us to run our programs and provide our services. TriWest, a large Canadian investment firm, is our newest and biggest corporate sponsor. Read about their incredible contribution to TOL.

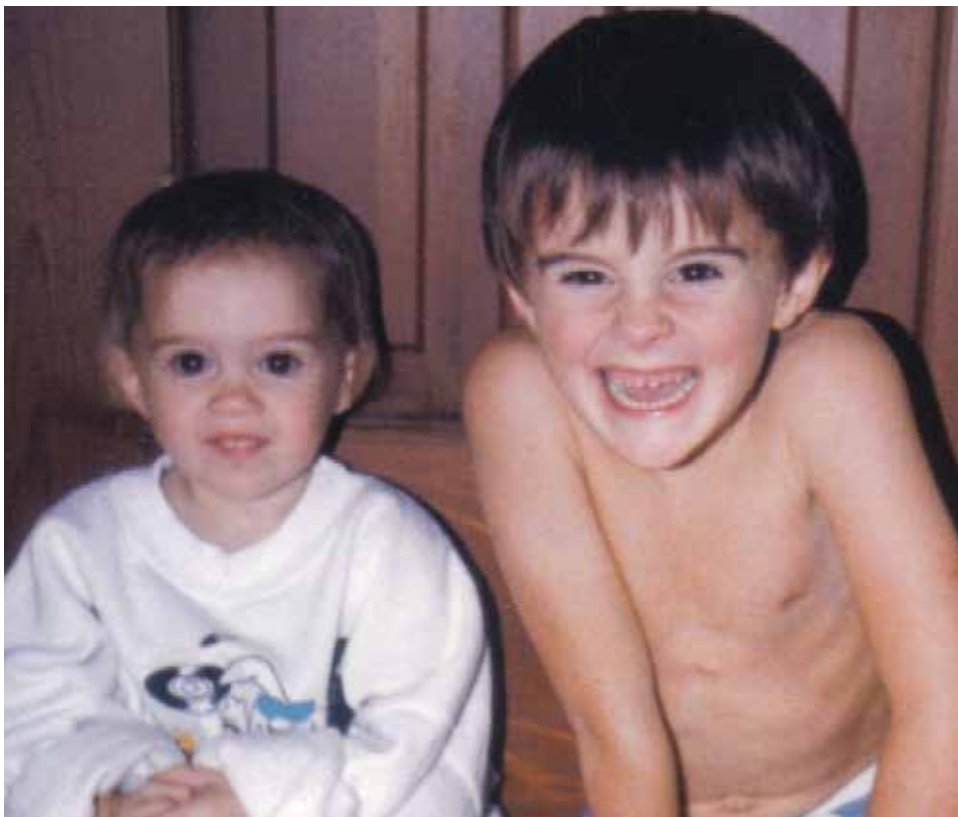
And as always at the heart of our newsletters there are stories - family stories by Threads of Life members who have been affected by a workplace tragedy, illness or life-changing injury. This month's stories are from a mom and wife: one who lost a beloved son in a workplace tragedy and the other who lost a husband and a business partner to a fall that no one could foresee. Both are powerful and moving.

Take care and best of the holiday season ahead.

# “Have a good week and I love you”

**Marking ten years since John's death at a Michigan worksite**

by Marj Deyell



John with his sister Laura

**Ten years** have passed since the launch of Threads of Life in 2003; this wonderful organization that none of us ever wanted to join. Ten years have also passed since the day our son, John, was tragically killed at work.

My husband Brian and I had four children – David, Helen, John and Laura. John was a proud big brother when his baby sister Laura arrived. He was a happy, mischievous child with an ear-to-ear grin and a twinkle in his eye. He was always inquisitive, taking things apart to see how they worked, mechanically-minded like his Dad.

John was interested in sports from a young age although at his first hockey game he was reluctant to go on the ice. I can still see just the top of his helmet sticking up over the boards with the rest of the players all sitting in a row on the bench. He grew to love the game as well as softball, snowboarding, hunting and fishing. At school he joined the cross country team. He loved the challenge of long distance running. Determination and stamina is something I always admired in him.

John loved animals, especially dogs and became good at training them. We'd had several dogs over the years but the last one, Rosie, was a favorite. She was smart and John spent many hours training her. She never did make a very good hunting dog though. As I was walking her one day about a year ago I let her off her leash to have a run along the roadside ditch. She took off into the swamp and I could hear her barking and barking. She wouldn't come back. Frustrated, I followed the sound of her barking and found her at the base of a tall pine. Hidden up near the top of the tree was a raccoon. Rosie had treed

**Train your employees to do their specific jobs properly. Invest time and money up front and reap the benefits of a better, more qualified, more content workforce.**

her first coon! Her master would have been so proud! Earlier this year, at the age of 15+ Rosie was put to sleep. What a hard decision to make as I'd always felt she was our last living connection to John.

John had a good work ethic. He helped

his uncles picking stones in the spring, getting the fields ready to plant and with the haying and harvest. He always had a nickel in his pocket because he never wanted to spend any of his hard earned money. What a cheapskate!

In 2002, John graduated from St. Clair College in Windsor as an Industrial Mechanical Engineering Technician. In July of 2003, he got a job with a mill-wrighting company with the hopes of an apprenticeship. He bought his first car and signed a lease to rent his first apartment. He was just ready to start out on his own. Life was good!

Labour Day weekend in 2003 came and John was home from Detroit, where the Ontario company he worked for was installing a bucket elevator system at a cement company. I remember so clearly John and his Dad having a conversation about the lax safety standards at the worksite. A red flag!

The night before John was to leave for his second week in Detroit he went to the local Tim Horton's and got himself a large double-double coffee. He knew he'd have to leave very early the next morning and he wanted to have coffee ready to microwave. Before I went to bed that night I did something I hadn't done in years. I stuck a note on John's coffee cup telling him to have a good week and that I loved him. I'm so glad I did because I never got to say those words to him again.

On Wednesday, September 3, 2003 as I was washing the breakfast dishes our phone rang. It was John's boss informing me there'd been an "accident". When I asked how badly John was hurt, he replied "It's not just a broken arm. Get your family together and go to Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit a.s.a.p." He gave me the number of the hospital and hung up.

I tried to get in touch with Brian at work, but kept getting the answering machine. After several attempts he finally answered and started for home (a 50 minute drive). While I was waiting for Brian to come home I telephoned the hospital and

was put in touch with a “patient advocate”. Carrie would be John’s “advocate” until we got there. I begged Carrie to tell me how John was. From her lack of information and my gut instinct as a mother and a nurse I suspected John was already dead. The feeling of panic was overwhelming. While I waited for Brian I got in touch with other family members to let them know that we’d be leaving for Detroit.

When Brian arrived home he too called the hospital not believing what I’d been told. We picked Laura up at school and started for Detroit.

We arrived at the hospital about six hours after that initial phone call. Security at Henry Ford Hospital was different than anything I’d ever experienced working as a nurse in Ontario. We had to go through a



John Deyell

metal detector and they searched our purses. Carrie met us and took us to the emergency room doctor who told us John had died of his injuries. This young doctor was visibly trembling talking to us. Trying to revive John had been difficult for her and the emergency room staff, but the staff had done a good job of preparing John’s body for us to identify. He didn’t appear to have a mark on him. The covers were pulled up tightly to his chin just like we’d tucked him in as a little boy, but I was afraid to pull back the covers. I didn’t want to see what 2500 pounds of steel had done to his body.

A family decision was made to donate John’s organs that were still viable. Today, someone in the state of Michigan is able to see, to walk, etc., because of John’s gift. I pray he was treated with respect!

John was killed when the head of the conveyor system they were unloading fell off the deck of the truck, crushing him underneath. He was aware only briefly that the conveyor head was falling, just long

enough to shout “Look out” to his co-worker, a co-worker who tried to pull him to safety in time, but couldn’t. Everything happened too quickly. Did that co-worker, his supervisor that day, blame himself? Was the forklift training that John had received at college enough? Had the supervisor become careless? Was John?

Weeks later we travelled with John’s employer to the worksite where John had died. I could understand his concern about the lax safety standards he had mentioned when he was home on Labour Day weekend. Forklift operators were buzzing around the worksite and hardhats weren’t visible. It made me realize how big the equipment was they had been installing. It looked huge! We talked to a worker who was there the day John was killed, who told us his version of what had happened. No one from the company management spoke to us – only an office worker who told us we shouldn’t stand where we were because “it wasn’t safe”. How ironic!

John’s Ontario employer was charged with three different offences by the Michigan Department of Consumer and Industry Services (equivalent to our Department of Labour) - forklift training was inadequate, accident prevention and training were inadequate and load stabilization and inspection were inadequate.

Other than seeing workers and management come through the line-up at the funeral home, driving to Detroit to the worksite and one meeting with the owner and general manager, we have not met with John’s employer. For two years they sent a cheque to add to a scholarship we had set up in John’s memory, then they stopped contributing. Was I angry about that? Yes! Would I recommend anyone work for this company today? I’m not sure. Perhaps it is one of the safest places in Ontario to work. Perhaps it isn’t.

I read recently that everyone has been through something that has changed them in a way that they could never go back to the person they once were. I will never be the person I was before John died. We will never be the same family. There will always be a hole, that missing link. But, many positive things have changed for us too since that day in 2003. A new grandson has been born, Helen has been married, Brian has retired.

This year on the 10-year anniversary of John’s death we had a celebration of his life. Family members, boyhood and college friends were invited. What a wonderful time we had hearing stories about John, some we knew about and others that were new. One story that impacted me was

from a girl John knew growing up, a girl who came from an abusive home that we knew nothing about, a girl who revealed to us how good John had been to her and how much she loved him. They had apparently made a pact that if they each weren’t married by the time they were 30 they would marry each other. Today she remains single.

I’ve been a member of the Speaker’s Bureau and a Volunteer Family Guide for several years. It was time to give back to Threads of Life, to tell our story, to be part of prevention. I didn’t want to age and become a bitter, old woman! It’s been therapeutic. My focus was presentations in high schools, believing that young people especially need to hear about safety. Brian is my driver and greatest support.

On September 3, 2013 I received an email request for a presentation in the state of Michigan. Because it was the 10-year anniversary of John’s death that day I felt that I definitely should go. Is John still with us in spirit? Yes. Over the past 10 years has there been a day when I haven’t thought about him? No.

What message do I want employers to think about? Train your employees to do their specific jobs properly. Invest time and money up front and reap the benefits of a better, more qualified, more content workforce. Work-related death, injury, illness and disease are not, and should not be an inevitable and acceptable cost of doing business. Workplace safety is everyone’s responsibility and it begins with YOU.



John loved animals – his dog Rosie was a favourite



# Electrical contractor touched many people's lives

**Collapse of a hydro pole causes Bob Murray's death after 28-year career** by Barb Murray



Bob and Barb in the VW Beetle he had always wanted

*“Tragically, on Tuesday, August 24, 2010, Bob was taken from us in a workplace accident.” Those words were incredibly hard to put down on paper, as I started to comprehend the reality of the accident.*

My life changed forever with the sudden death of my husband, Bob, while at work. He and I had owned and operated our own electrical contracting company for 28 years. We had three other staff working that day in another town trying to get a school finished before the start of the school year. Bob was working by himself at a greenhouse, where we had done all the work for the last 25 years. One of the owner's sons was helping him that day. Bob was to cut the overhead wires down, as they had been replaced with underground wires. The wires had been disconnected from the power the previous day. Bob had been up and down the wooden pole several times the day before and three times already that

day. He had a ladder up the pole, attached at the top, and he had his pole climbing equipment on – a belt that he clipped onto the ladder. So, he was attached to the ladder, and the ladder was attached to the pole – which was the recommended procedure. He cut down one of the three wires, and lowered it to the ground, leaving two still attached. When he cut the next wire, the pole broke off underground as it was rotten inside. No one could have known this. It looked perfect on the outside, as solid as the day it was first installed. But without the tension of the wires, it toppled over, taking Bob and the ladder with it. I understand from the young helper that he tried to unclip himself from the ladder, so that the pole would not fall on him. The pole and ladder fell together, and Bob fell off to one side. He was dead within seconds of hitting the ground. The autopsy would prove that the blood vessels that supplied the heart tore off as a result of the impact with the ground. The helper called 9-1-1 right away and performed CPR. But there was no hope.

I was sitting at my desk in the office,

working away. Bob had been in the shop at 9:30 a.m. helping me unload a truck full of material for the school job. Then he was off to take down these wires, do a few other things at the greenhouse and come back to the shop for lunch. I heard the ambulance go screaming past and thought to myself – ‘that is never a good sound’, but had no clue it was for Bob. I continued to work and was on the phone with our son. Two RCMP officers came into the shop at five minutes to noon and stood at the counter. I remember thinking “what is wrong?”, but then I saw their faces. I told our son I would phone him back. That is when the officers told me there had been an accident and that Bob was dead.

The RCMP officers drove me to the hospital and I went into the ER room where he was. There was only one mark on him – a scrape on the side of his head – how could he be dead? The doctor and nurses were right there with me, trying to explain what they thought had happened – but none of their words made sense. “Why? I don’t understand” – that is all I could say. The nursing staff got in touch with Bob’s brother and his wife, who quickly arrived. They took over the task of finding the rest of our family and telling them the horrific news. Our two sons were on their way from Winnipeg and Steinbach right away; Bob’s sister and our daughter caught the first flight from Edmonton; the rest of our family came to be with me as soon as they heard. Two of our best friends came to sit with me at the hospital until family could get there.

Bob’s brother went to tell their mother and to bring her to the hospital. She is over 85 and not in good health. She kept saying “Why wasn’t it me? I’m old – Bob has so much to live for yet. Why wasn’t it me??”

Bob and I met at the Carman fair when I was just 16 and Bob was 20. I went home to Winnipeg and promptly broke up with my boyfriend, saying ‘we may as well break up, as I’ve met the man I’m going to marry’. It sounds silly, but we both felt that way, instantly. We were married a few

years later.

After our three children were born, Bob liked to go cross-country skiing and snowshoeing with them. Sometimes we could steal enough time from the business to go camping in our tent trailer, or travel around Manitoba and find neat places to visit.

At times Bob focused too much on work and not enough on family. Getting him away for a holiday was hard to do! Once away though, he was able to relax and have fun. Our best holiday was when we took four days to drive from Manitoba to Edmonton, stopping in Rosetown, SK at a bed & breakfast where we met some wonderful people, in Oyen, AB for the Friday farmers' market, pulling over on the highway just to see the wheat fields waving in the breeze... A wonderful trip.

Bob loved curling and golf. The highlight of his golf career was getting a hole-in-one in 1999. He travelled to watch curling events every chance he had, and curled in many community bonspiels. For the curling and golfing community, Bob's volunteerism was constant, dedicated and humble. At the curling club wind-up in March 2010 he was named Volunteer of the Year.

That day in August, leaving the hospital was the hardest thing to do. How could I leave my husband, my friend, my lover, the love of my life there? How could I possibly go on from here? But I had to do it – that 'cotton ball of fuzziness' had started to surround me and I was working on autopilot.

The next few days passed in a blur. Funeral arrangements had to be made, but it was very difficult, as I didn't know Bob's wishes. It was something we had never discussed, but I knew that I wanted to be cremated, so I hoped he did too.

Living in a small community, Bob had touched many peoples' lives. He had been in almost every house and business in town over the 28 years we were in business, and a huge number of people came to his funeral. I was numb throughout the whole thing. I remember only bits and pieces of the service. I'm told there was a slide show of photos, but I have never seen it. One song we chose was by a group Bob had sung with a few years before. It was one that he would still sing once in a while, or whistle while he worked. It 'spoke' to him. But I guess I never considered that I would be able to pick his voice out from the choir. Actually, a lot of people could, as he had

the most beautiful tenor voice – strong, clear and true. As we noted in his obituary, Bob was never one to raise his voice, except in song. So, weird as it may seem, he sang at his own funeral.

Manitoba Health and Safety investigated Bob's death and concluded that no one person was at fault – it "simply was an accident". Workers Compensation was very good to me – I was assigned a person to help me through the things that needed to be done for WCB, and was able to work with a grief counselor, for which I am extremely grateful. I was given a sum of money, as Bob had WCB coverage. It isn't enough to make up for his death, but has enabled me to stay in our house and enough to live on for a few years. I would strongly encourage owners of small businesses to get this coverage, as it does help after such

to remember that. They have lost a good friend, but, I'm still here! I need to cultivate new friendships on my own, but living in a small town, that is very difficult.

I am coming out of the 'grief fog' and returning to the real world. I'm looking for a new job, have my house and business building up for sale and am ready to make a new start. I wish with all my heart I didn't have to, but that is just a wish. Reality is that this is what I need to do, in order to move forward with my own 'new normal'. Thankfully, I have found Threads of Life and have benefited greatly from the caring and support given to me. I know that without the support of my Volunteer Family Guide, the Family Forums and participating in the Steps For Life walk, this whole journey would have been much more difficult.



Bob Murray with son Graham and the family dogs at Christmas 2009

a catastrophic event. One challenge for me was that the WCB wanted the paperwork completed and the file closed as soon as possible. Asking me to decide about payment - when I had difficulty simply trying to decide whether or not to get out of bed - was overwhelming.

As the days, weeks and now years, have passed, community support has dwindled. Some friends don't know what to say to me. I tell myself that I'm their worst nightmare – living proof that IT CAN HAPPEN TO YOU and they don't know how to deal with it. It is their loss too and I need

It is up to every one of us to take a look at each situation that could have devastating consequences and make sure that no one else suffers a workplace fatality. Workplace safety should be first and foremost in everyone's mind as they go about their daily tasks – not just for that 15-minute safety meeting, but all day, every day. Despite all our best efforts, things can still go wrong, without warning. I wholeheartedly support Threads of Life's mission and wish for the day when worker deaths, injuries and illnesses become a thing of the past.





Tom Wilson

## Understanding normal after a workplace tragedy

by Tom Wilson

*This article is the result of comments and insights from two Volunteer Family Guide teleconferences in May. In preparation for the conference the attendees were provided with a background document prepared by the moderator.*

*The document itself grew out of an idea in a newspaper story. The story's writer claimed that a tragedy event has instantly created a new normal. In contrast, the idea of a "new normal" often heard within our Threads of Life family describes the time on our journey of healing when we say our life feels normal again.*

*For the purposes of our discussion normal was defined as usual, regular or natural. Further, it was recognized that normal changes over time and that the change may be evolutionary or revolutionary.*

Evolutionary change is the ongoing life changes that we accept as a part of living. Babies are born, weaned and become toilet trained. We attend school, change schools, and one day leave school, college, or university to join the work force. Later may come marriage, often followed by babies and parenting. We change jobs, move from one place to another, retire. Finally there are the end of life events like downsizing or leaving the home, the funerals of friends and family members. Each change is a process of leaving one normal and taking up another. Some changes are welcome, even desired. We expect them and integrate them into our lives with a minimum to moderate amount of emotional upset.

The major challenges in a person's life coincide with drastic change – the unwelcome event that comes unexpectedly and often tragically. Workplace tragedies bring revolutionary change – the day when, after much searching, the diagnosis of a disease contracted in the workplace is announced; the day the life-altering injury occurs; the day a loved one is killed in the workplace. The day we are thrust into grief. These are our moments of entering a new normal. It

is now normal for a loved one to be forever absent. Normal to be disabled. Normal to be suffering with an incurable disease. We have entered the normal of experiencing grief.

This unrecognizable normal is more than unwanted; it is resented. Its disruptive, almost continuous state of confusion creates a sense of not knowing what to do or how to do it. One of our responses as new griever is to want our old normal back. The oft-expressed question of the griever is, "will life ever be normal again?"

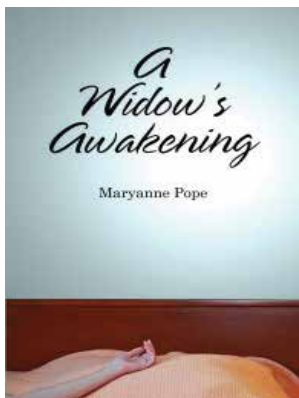
One of the mysteries and blessings of grieving is that our "self" requires time to take care of the "hurt." Our bodies, feelings, spirits need to heal. The healing process takes time, sometimes a lot of time. This well-documented process eventually arrives at a place named acceptance or accommodation or integration. The chaos and upset of revolution becomes a quieter daily living under different circumstances. Some griever are now able to describe their life as normal.

As the author of the background piece I was attracted to the idea that a tragic event creates the new normal and speaking of a

new normal sometime in the future was unnecessary. This reflects some aspects of my personality and my tragedy experience. Collectively, the participants in the teleconference found this concept difficult to accept.

We explored our experiences following the workplace tragedy and some were able to recall the time when they could again accept the state of their lives as "normal." For many of us normal will always be life before the tragic event. Even several years after the tragedy some of us are unable to describe our lives as normal. Some spoke of the new normal as an ongoing process of rebuilding their lives, of making difficult decisions, of struggling to move forward -- a process that often has moments of fearing for the safety of surviving family members. We call it the new normal because many of us will always remember the old normal as the true normal.

From our conversations I came to understand that for griever, normal may be more a state of mind or heart than a dictionary definition.



## BOOKCLUB

Looking for a Christmas gift for a reader on your list?

The next book club read will be *A Widows Awakening* by Maryanne Pope on Monday, January 20th at 7:00 pm EST. Based on her own experience, Maryanne writes openly and honestly about the relationship between a husband and wife before and after his sudden death as a police officer. The writing of the book has been her way to "make sense of the unacceptable" and Maryanne hopes to join in on the conversation with you on the 20th.

To register or send your suggestions for the next book title, please email us at [bookclub@threadsoflife.ca](mailto:bookclub@threadsoflife.ca). Read more about *A Widow's Awakening* at the author's web site: <http://www.pinkgazelle.com/a-widows-awakening/>.

## Ten years of inspiration

by Marianne Levitsky



Marianne Levitsky, far left, with other WHWB members at a meeting to discuss an undergraduate program in occupational hygiene at Renaissance University in Nigeria

As Shirley Hickman noted in the Fall issue, *Threads of Life* is an international pioneer in supporting family members affected by the failures of workplace health and safety. Reflecting on what *Threads of Life* has accomplished in just ten years, we are all proud to be associated with an organization that has done so much to support families dealing with workplace tragedies and to remind us why we must prevent such tragedies from happening to others. *Threads of Life's* initiatives like family support, Steps for Life, Family Forums, and the Speakers Bureau all attest to the impact of this organization in raising the profile of occupational health and safety, not just in Canada, but around the world.

**I have learned that in many parts of the world, the barriers we often perceive between work and home simply do not exist; many people do hazardous work where they live, and whole families are exposed to health and safety hazards.**

In my reflection on the fifth anniversary of *Threads of Life* in the Fall 2008 issue, I recalled when Shirley Hickman spoke to the World Health and Safety Congress in 2005, receiving a standing ovation from hundreds of international delegates. I described how Canadians in the audience felt a sense of pride in the way she put a human face on workplace tragedy, and how members' stories show us the porous boundaries between work and personal lives. This has become all the more real to me recently, as I have been involved in starting an international organization of volunteers promoting occupational

health around the world. I have learned that in many parts of the world, the barriers we often perceive between work and home simply do not exist; many people do hazardous work where they live, and whole families are exposed to health and safety hazards. Stories like those recently told by survivors of the fires and building collapse in Bangladesh factories make us aware that impacts of unsafe working conditions link us to people around the world who make the things we wear and use every day.

Similar messages about how unsafe and unhealthy workplaces touch us all have been conveyed by *Threads of Life* since it began. Ten years ago, *Threads of Life* led the way in demonstrating the

power of personal stories and human connections in responding to and preventing workplace tragedies. It continues to be an inspiration in showing how person-to-person connections can help us address the consequences of workplace injuries, illnesses and deaths and unite us in our resolve to prevent them everywhere.

*Marianne Levitsky has been involved with Threads of Life since its inception. She is currently Occupational Hygiene Consultant and President, Workplace Health Without Borders.*

## David Craw, Super Star

by John Craw

A poem I thought I'd never write,  
But God had a special guy in sight,  
Our son, our friend has gone to a better place,  
We shall no longer see his face,  
Meanwhile let's remember him,  
His smile, his hugs and that thing on his chin.

When he was born I yelled "it's a boy!"  
Couldn't wait to buy him a brand new toy,  
He love his sports, he was great,  
He loved soccer and he could skate,  
He once was a goalie, if you can believe,  
He wanted to be there for the Maple Leafs

A nice thing happened along the way,  
He loved her right up to his dying day,  
He met a beautiful girl, the love of his life,  
Trice Hendry, his wonderful wife,  
And Ally made the couple three,  
Add two more for a family

Ashley and Cassandra are pretty names,  
Twins quite close but not the same,  
He became an electrician, he connected wires,  
He loved his work, his heart's desire,  
We'll all miss him, we can't deny,  
It's time for us all to say "Goodbye"



February 20th 2012

## Barb Beck



It's an urgent need to spread the word that drives Barb Beck to pull out her checklists every year and start planning another Steps for Life walk in Windsor Nova Scotia.

"It's the satisfaction of getting the word out there and hopefully nobody has to go through what we went through," says the Threads of Life family member

and volunteer. Barb's husband Ron died in April 2004 when the brakes failed on the freight train he was working on and he was crushed between two rail cars. Steps for Life is a way to let people know "how important safety is, to everyone down the line" – both employers and employees.

Barb first joined Threads of Life after her daughters urged her to attend a family forum with them. She quickly signed on as a volunteer for the Halifax Steps for Life walk, and spent two years learning the ropes before deciding in 2011 that Windsor needed its own walk. It would be more accessible for people who didn't

want to drive to Halifax, and "I knew there would be plenty of support... Thankfully, it worked," she says.

That first year she hoped to raise \$5,000, but \$11,000 rolled in. Since then, the walk's earnings have held steady and she has the sense that through various means – like posting huge copies of the poem "I chose to Look the Other Way" at the walk site – the message is getting through.

A couple of years ago, Barb decided to take the training to be a Volunteer Family Guide as well. At her very first family forum, she says, Larry and Cheryl Mackay introduced themselves to her, and have been there to support her ever since.

"I thought, if I can do something to help someone else the way they helped me, then I wanted to do that," Barb says.

After going back to school in her late 40s for business administration, Barb also volunteers teaching computer skills to adult learners, many of whom have learning challenges or are mature students who haven't seen a classroom for decades.

She describes herself as a "follower" rather than a leader, and "not an outgoing person". But if that is true, then Barb has overcome those characteristics to make a difference in the lives of many – both through Threads of Life and beyond.

## threads OF LIFE Welcomes New Staff!

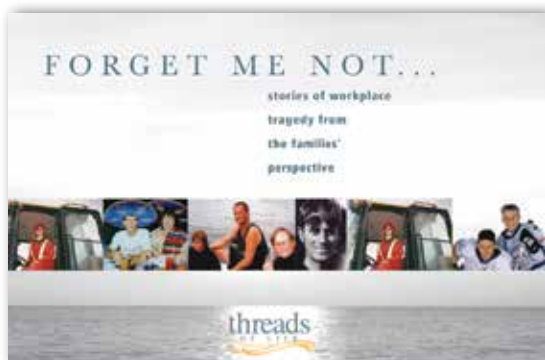
There are some new voices on the phone at Threads of Life this fall. Sherrie Zajac has taken over as Event and Data Management Coordinator. Sherrie lives in Eastern Ontario and will be organizing family forums and other

events as well as working with Threads of Life's Speakers Bureau members on the bookings for their presentations. Kevin Bonnis joined the staff as the Regional Development Coordinator for Atlantic Canada and Quebec. Kevin is also a family member of

Threads of Life, and has been a speaker and a Volunteer Family Guide as well as a volunteer with Steps for Life. While he currently lives in Ontario, he is looking forward to relocating to Atlantic Canada and is getting to know the members and partners in that region. Heather Lyle hails from southwestern Ontario and will be Threads of Life's new Regional Development Coordinator for Central Canada. Heather brings a background in marketing and communications to her new role, as well as her knowledge of the organization as a Steps for Life volunteer.

*We are thrilled to welcome all three new staff members!*

## Don't forget... to work safely



**Forget Me Not** tells the stories of lives changed forever when a loved one was traumatically injured at work, diagnosed with an occupational disease or fatally injured. You and your employees won't be able to forget these powerful and moving stories. Safety matters — and this book highlights all the reasons why.

Use stories from *Forget Me Not* to set the stage for training, or hand them out to new hires during orientation. All proceeds go directly to Threads of Life support programs and services for families of workplace tragedy.

To order, visit [www.threadsoflife.ca/for-families/our-new-book-forget-me-not/](http://www.threadsoflife.ca/for-families/our-new-book-forget-me-not/) or call 1-888-567-9490





## Save the date! May 4, 2014

### Mark your calendars for Steps for Life 2014!

We're ramping up once again for Steps for Life – Walking for Families of Workplace Tragedy! Last year's walk was a tremendous success – raising more than \$595,000 for Threads of Life's family support programs and services. The annual fundraising walk will be held on Sunday, May 4 in most communities – check [stepsforlife.ca/locations](http://stepsforlife.ca/locations) for date and time information for your local Steps for Life event. Online registration opens January 31st! Register early and invite your friends, family and co-workers to donate or register to join you!

Over the past seven years, Steps for Life has raised more than \$ 1.7 million for family support programs and services. Look for new walk events to be added in Victoria BC, Regina SK, Lindsay ON and Sydney NS.

## How to help us make Steps for Life 2014 our most successful walk yet

1. Register. Registration opens January 31! You can easily register online, then invite your friends, family and co-workers to join you in raising awareness about workplace injury and illness prevention.

2. Explain why Threads of Life's services are important to you. There are a lot of worthy charities donors can support. Others are more likely to support you with a donation or by registering to participate if they know why you believe families affected by workplace tragedies need our family support programs and services. Your fundraising page text can easily be customized to share why Steps for Life is important to you!



## Support Steps for Life as a sponsor

We have a number of local sponsorships available to companies who want to support their local walks. Sponsorship packages range from \$250 up. Create a customized regional or multi-site sponsorship that suits your needs. Your community organizers welcome your support and it's a great way to be visible in your community as a leader. For more information on sponsorship levels contact the Regional Development Coordinator in your region:

- Western Canada: Colleen Youngblut  
[cyoungblut@threadsoflife.ca](mailto:cyoungblut@threadsoflife.ca)
- Central Canada: Heather Lyle  
[hlyle@threadsoflife.ca](mailto:hlyle@threadsoflife.ca)
- Atlantic Canada and Quebec: Kevin Bonnis  
[kbonnis@threadsoflife.ca](mailto:kbonnis@threadsoflife.ca)

If you would like to discuss national sponsorship of Steps for Life, please contact us at 1-888-567-9490 or [contact@threadsoflife.ca](mailto:contact@threadsoflife.ca)

## TriWest Partners dig deep to support families



Many participating companies served as sponsors and supporters for the TriWest Capital Partners Forum

Threads of Life received a substantial boost from a very significant donation announced September 4th as part of the TriWest Capital Partners Forum. TriWest along with its portfolio companies, advisors and key lenders joined forces to offer more than \$100,000 to support Threads of Life programs and services for those affected by workplace tragedy.

TriWest is an Alberta-based private equity firm with investments in a range of industries, including the service, manufacturing and distribution sectors. It organized a forum, at Banff Springs Golf Club and Banff Park Lodge, where its partners could share ideas, deepen relationships and foster cooperation. TriWest decided to make workplace safety the focus of their event, and chose Threads of Life to benefit from funds raised through a golf tournament and other activities.

“This donation is a huge step forward for Threads of Life,” said Executive Director Shirley Hickman. “Our membership, and the demand for our programs has been steadily growing in Western Canada. This is an amazing gift, which will help us reach out and serve many more families.”

The funds from TriWest Capital Partners will be used to support programs such as the Western Canada Family Forum, training for Volunteer Family Guides and other resources for families.



The Banff Springs Golf Club made a stunning backdrop to a highly successful September fundraiser



*Thank you to TriWest and all your partners!*



## It just makes cents!



Making Cents of Safety is a great way to raise funds and support our family support programs at school, your workplace and in the community. Collect your toonies, loonies, quarters, dimes and nickels and make a donation to Threads of Life – and help support families who have been personally affected by a workplace tragedy.

All funds raised go directly to family support programs and services to families affected by a workplace fatality, life-altering injury or occupational disease. These programs and services include training volunteers to provide peer support to other family members through the Volunteer Family Guide program and to share their story with schools and businesses through the national Speakers Bureau.

You can place fundraising jars around town where you work and live. Please help support this campaign by downloading your jar labels at [www.threadsoflife.ca/making-cents](http://www.threadsoflife.ca/making-cents) and placing jars in local businesses, the curling rink, your church, or other busy spots, to collect any and all change.

Call 1-800-567-9490 or email: [contact@threadsoflife.ca](mailto:contact@threadsoflife.ca) to request information.

## Resolve to make it monthly

What are you doing New Year's Day? Will it include making resolutions or reviewing your finances? Unlike those promises to get fit or quit caffeine, giving monthly to Threads of Life is a resolution you can keep -- easily. It's flexible. It's convenient. And most of all, it's rewarding.

Your monthly gift will help us to support families that have experienced a workplace tragedy, whether it's a fatality, life-altering injury or occupational disease. Your support will ensure that we are able to reach people with our message by developing new partnerships, printing materials like brochures and flyers, and attending events.

Monthly giving is a consistent, reliable and cost-effective source of funding for Threads of Life. Donations can be processed more efficiently than single gifts, guaranteeing that 90 per cent of your gift or more is directed back into our family support programs.

You can increase, decrease, pause or stop your donations at any time, at your convenience. You are in control.

On average, three Canadians are killed every day as a result of unsafe workplaces; hundreds more are injured. The fact is, we have a long way to go in the fight to change the attitude about creating a safe work environment for all Canadians. We are asking for your support. Your monthly gift of \$10, \$20 or \$30 (just \$1 a day) can make a huge difference.

For more information on monthly giving, please email: [contact@threadsoflife.ca](mailto:contact@threadsoflife.ca) or call 1-888-567-9490



## A new partner for Family Forum: OCEU/CUPE 1750

Members of the Ontario Compensation Employees Union (OCEU) see every day the results of workplace tragedy. That's one reason why the OCEU recently signed a five-year partnership to sponsor the Central Canada Family Forum. This partnership will allow Threads of Life to better support the family members that attend the annual family forum in Ontario.

"Threads of Life helps give families who have experienced a workplace tragedy the best chance to recover through their programs and services," said Harry Goslin, President & CEO. "Our support will enable more families to attend the Central Canada Family Forum and help with their healing."

The Central Canada Family Forum offers families affected by a workplace tragedy the opportunity to come together to share, network and, ultimately, heal. Participants gather to learn coping skills for grief, active listening skills, tips on how the occupational health and safety system works, self-care, and much more.

### *Memorial for Italian workers*

A group of volunteers is working to establish a memorial to members of Ontario's Italian community who have lost their lives to work-related injuries or occupational illnesses. The memorial is planned for downtown Toronto.

To support the project or submit names of workers to be included in the memorial, contact [comitestoronto@yahoo.ca](mailto:comitestoronto@yahoo.ca) or send mail to COMITES, 3010 Dufferin St. Unit 2, Toronto Ont. M6B 4J5.



## Family members' experiences needed for research study

Threads of Life family members know all too well the impacts that a workplace tragedy can have on members of a family. But a new study by researchers in Australia will try to quantify those impacts to improve the support families receive, and the researchers are looking for input from Threads of Life members.

The Aging, Work and Health Research Unit at the University of Sydney and the School of Management at the University of New South Wales (Australia) are investigating the consequences of workplace death for surviving family members.

Around the world, thousands of family members become survivors of a sudden work-related death each year but little is known of how the death and the responses of government and other organizations affect them.

This world-first study funded by the Australian Research Council will pinpoint ways to improve support for partners and families following work-related tragedies. Results will be used to improve and better manage the consequences of work-related deaths for families.

The research team is currently inviting participants to complete a survey about their experiences. If you are interested in participating, please visit the following link to be directed to the survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/workplacedeathstudy>

If you would like more information or would like the survey in hard-copy format, please call (+61) 415 898 398 or email [lynda.matthews@sydney.edu.au](mailto:lynda.matthews@sydney.edu.au).

## Coming Events

Please let us know if you'd like more information or would like to get involved!

Volunteer Family Guide training -  
January 9-14, 2014, Kempenfelt Centre,  
Barrie ON

National Speakers Bureau Training -  
January 30-February 2, 2014,  
Toronto ON

Steps for Life - May 4, 2014 (in most  
communities)

Share your most creative moments  
Sometimes writing can capture  
our thoughts and feelings the way  
no other means of expression can.  
Sharing these expressions can help  
you heal, help others understand  
and help them on their own journey.  
We welcome your stories, essays  
and poems. Send your contributions  
to [shaldane@threadsoflife.ca](mailto:shaldane@threadsoflife.ca).

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*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 that:

**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.

### HOW TO REACH US

Toll-free: 1-888-567-9490

Fax: 1-519-685-1104

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