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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Bill Stunt

Sitting on the deck last night, a perfect V formation of geese flew low over the river that flows through the bottom of our backyard. The beauty of the geese marshalling themselves for the trek south was both moving and a sure sign of the changing of the season. Welcome to the fall edition of the Threads of Life newsletter.

In this newsletter you can read about the summer fundraising activities we’ve been up to with the help of our supporters and partners across the county. The monies raised from these activities help support our key activity of family support in the advent of a life-changing work-related illness, injury or death.

Unbelievably Threads of Life is marking its tenth anniversary this year. Here you will find several stories about the history of the organization. Threads founder and Executive Director, Shirley Hickman, writes about the development of the family support program, one of the key services we offer our family members. Longtime supporter, Maureen Shaw, has a piece on the Atlantic forum.

An organization like Threads of Life is only as good as our volunteers and staff. Look inside for a profile of one of our key volunteers, Debbie Glenn. On the staff front, many of you will have had contact with Kate Kennington. She’s been with us for several years. You’ll find the details of the critical new role Kate has recently taken over inside these pages.

And as always we have stories - family stories from family members who have, like all of us, had their lives changed as a result of something that happened at work. Lisa Shirley was an active young mom with a thirst for adventure and excitement. Her days were full of work and play until critical machinery in her workplace broke down. Working flat out by hand resulted in a stubborn and debilitating injury that has continued to affect her life many years later. Ann Grant’s world turned forever on the late visit from a pair of police officers bearing tragic news about her beloved only son. You can read both stories here.

Hope you have a great fall and I look forward to seeing many of you in person at this year’s Family Forums.



Surviving with daily pain

Simple Tendinitis changed my life

by Lisa Shirley



Lisa in the months before her injury, "when I was still fearless"

I used to define myself as a wife and mother; a woman who took chances and enjoyed her life. I was the woman who at 35 would beg my children to go sledding with me on the coldest days of the year, and then have them ride down on my back for extra speed. I loved to be outdoors in nature. I would take two-hour hikes just to see what was on the other side of the trees. I would play basketball with my son and loved to bake with my daughter. When my children were preschoolers I ran a day care with 10 kids attending most days. I loved volunteering at the local soup kitchen. My days were full of work and family.

My life changed seven years ago the week of Mother's Day 2007, but not in a beautiful way like most mothers. My Mother's Day was full of tears and fear. Seven years ago, I had plans of traveling the world and learning world history. Seven years ago my past-times were full of adventure and risks. Seven years ago I was a normal 30-something woman with

hopes and dreams for myself and my family. Seven years ago my body didn't hurt with every step and movement.

I was hurt at work...not even in the conventional way like something falling or slipping. I was working in the fresh cut fruit department of a grocery store. It was the week before Mother's Day and we were making fruit trays; for Mother's Day we had a very high quota to fill. Throughout the week a couple of our automatic cutters had stopped working correctly so we were doing everything by hand. The day before Mother's Day I peeled and cut over 300 Kiwi fruit. For the next three days I could hardly move my hand. I will admit I did panic a bit.

I was initially diagnosed with simple Tendinitis in my right wrist. I took a week off work and returned to light duty. My light duty entailed putting cans on the shelf for eight hours a day. My hand started to change colours and swell. It also started to sweat, and it would sweat a lot. Now initially that was weird but imagine it: you

rest your hand on a table and when you lift it five minutes later you leave behind a puddle.

I was lucky, my family doctor sent me to a specialist who knew about Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (CRPS). She did some visual tests, sent me for others. Within a week I had a new diagnosis, CRPS. Within two weeks I was in a 19-week intense therapy program that gave me back 60 per cent of my hand use.

I am not surprised when people say they have never heard of it, I had never heard of it before I was "blessed" with this diagnosis. Complex Regional Pain Syndrome, formally known as Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy, is a debilitating disorder that involves skin, nerves, blood vessels and bone density. This includes constant burning pain, twitching, swelling, and don't forget sweating. Your nails become frail and full of ridges and you lose bone density. My symptoms can be brought on or exacerbated by light, touch, temperature, weather and stress.

When I was hurt at work my son, at age 11, was just getting into sports and my daughter, 13, was taking on her first summer baby sitting job. My daughter took over as much as she could in making sure her brother's needs were met as well as mine. I spent my time out of therapy doing all my body would allow; I rested. I didn't clean my house or feed my family. I spent a lot of time crying out in pain. My children couldn't touch me as it would cause me too much pain and at times waves of painful twitches. My husband couldn't touch me and at times communication was difficult. I had become angry and jaded. At that point, I only had the trouble in my arm but it was so bad that I could hardly move it at all. The pain was situated from finger tips to my shoulder blades. My arm would seize up in mid-movement and cause me to buckle to my knees from the pain. This happened quite frequently in the first few years. I would be shopping and reach for something and end up on the floor in tears.

I spent the first two years feeling sorry

for myself. Going from doctor's appointment to specialist appointment to psychologist appointment, some months I had more than a dozen appointments. That may not seem that bad to the average person but I had a hard time dressing myself so every time I was leaving the house my husband or daughter would have to make sure I was dressed before they left for school or work. It makes you feel utterly useless when you can't even look after your family; financially, physically or emotionally.

The summer of 2009 I went in to a "remission", meaning my disorder had receded to a more tolerable level. I started living more. I went camping and learned new ways to fish. I even tried to go tubing again. I love tubing, I love the speed, the water, the rush of knowing you are going to hit the water and it will probably knock the wind out of you.



Lisa Shirley on a trip to Cuba before her injury

On September 5th, 2009 I broke my hip in a tubing accident. It was soon determined that I had lost so much of my bone mass that my hips were quite weak. Sadly, CRPS can spread with injury so I now suffer with it in the left leg as well. My hip shattered; it broke in 17 places. The accident set me back to the beginning. Back to feeling constant pain, back to feeling useless but this time worse, at least I could walk before. I spent 12 weeks learning to walk again but the intense pain never went away. The doctors did more tests which always equalled more pain, finally to have a confirmed diagnosis in my left leg.

I felt very alone in my disorder. I heard there were other people who had become victims of this monster but they were just imaginary people somewhere out in the universe. Working with my doctor and

later my psychologist I helped form a support group with others who are surviving CRPS. Having that community feeling helped me immensely.

During the summer of 2009, WCB had decided it was time to send me to school. After breaking my hip, taking distance classes was great. It was a distraction from the overwhelming pain and still allowed me to hide at home in my pain. I chose to take a Youth Care Worker Diploma program. The first year while I adjusted to my new injury, I studied and excelled in the three classes I took.

With new-found confidence and the support of my WCB workers and medical team I went into three-quarter time classes at the college. The following year I went full time and was Director of Communication with the Student Association. In May 2012 I graduated second in my class and brought home the Outstanding Citizenship Award as well as a Service Award for my contributions to my fellow students. That was probably my proudest and most scary day of my life.

The crazy thing about CRPS is the more comfortable you are in your surroundings, the less pain you have. Stress and anxiety are CRPS's best friends. I was now going to be propelled into a world of job interviews and the most frightening: shaking hands. When it is painful to be touched, a handshake is more like someone putting your hand into a vice and squeezing as hard as they can. That two-second hand shake can last two to three hours sometimes.

I applied for more than 70 jobs over the summer but couldn't land a job because of all my restrictions. They all seemed to want physically able individuals who would do work I could do 85 per cent of the time but 15 per cent of the time, they wanted someone who could carry a box or walk more than one block. I was slipping again. My self-worth was slipping with every day of no employment.

You know what people say when you say you are having trouble finding work because of your disability? They say things like, "Just relax at home, WCB is paying you anyway!" I had relaxed out of the work force for six years. I could not watch another TV program or read another book to pass the time. I needed to be needed.

Last fall, my mother-in-law received a package from Threads of Life because my father-in-law had passed due to an asbestos-related cancer. She explained to me that I could join her at the family forum. I made some enquiries and learned that I could go on my own accord, as someone with a workplace injury.

I walked away from my first family forum with a new understanding or maybe outlook on my life. I had never grieved for myself, my past life, my pre-injury me. I needed to accept my new me; the new woman who was newly educated and had helped her fellow students excel in their own educational careers; the mother of two wonderful children who grew up compassionate of other people's situations.

By Christmas, I got up the nerve to apply for a job as an educational assistant with the local school division. By the end of January I was working as a substitute educational assistant. I work when my body says I can; I work and I am needed. I look forward to waking up in the morning again and have been able to reduce my medication. Most days I can look into my future and see good things. I have good days and bad days. Good days include laughter and love. The bad days are encompassed with pain and the feeling of being on fire. With the support of my family, friends and medical team, I will make it.



Lisa today; accepting her "new me"

Follow Your Dreams - Evan's Story

Evan Horkoff chose a career that would allow him to help people

by Ann Grant



Evan at a chess tournament. Taken by Boris Spremo & published in the Toronto Star

Evan came into this world on a beautiful day, August 11, 1986, full of spunk and energy. The doctor told me he was crying even before he came out. Evan Timothy Mohamed Horkoff was born in Yorkton, Sask., a gorgeous, healthy 8 lbs., 1 oz., bundle of joy, who loved to be held and rocked to sleep. He grew up to be a fun-loving rambunctious and playful boy, who loved to ride his bike, play with his pets, read books and climb walls. In 1990, I gave him a sister, Nikita. Little did he know that she would bring out the best in him.

The three of us moved back to Toronto when he was six years old. I married Byron and Evan gained a brother, Ben and a sister Alexandra. He was very close to Nikita and never tired when it came to helping her. When she was young, she would say, "Evan can you help me with this" and he would ask her to say please and then gladly help her out. My father, Evan's paternal grandfather died in a tragic car accident when we were teenagers. Evan has a large family whom he adored and family get-togethers were special to him.

Even though Evan was the 'class clown' in elementary school, and loved

to just have fun, he excelled in academics and chess, sports and music. However, he was easily bored. He was not enthralled with high school and we enrolled him in a private boarding school of his choice for grades 11 and 12. He chose Robert Land Academy, a military school. He thrived in that environment and was accepted into the Officer Training Program in the Canadian Armed Forces. He was following his dream of being in the army and was proud that he was the only one in our family to be in the military. Evan was very resourceful, and knew that after two years in private school his university savings were depleted, hence he had to find another way to get through university. He attended university while in the Officer Training Program; however, he realized that the timing was not right for him. He stayed in the army for a few years and was very proud to serve his country.

Evan grew up to be a passionate, caring, fun loving, intelligent young man with many friends from all walks of life. His best friend Trevor said "Evan was the only guy I know that had more friends than chest hairs. And if you ever had the chance to see Evan without a shirt on, you know just how grizzly that chest of his was. Even if you did not get that wonderful opportunity, he usually left three or four buttons undone so everyone could see it. That's how many friends he had."

Evan loved our family outings and vacations, especially snowboarding during March breaks and Christmas at Horseshoe Valley. He also enjoyed mixing music, DJ-ing, playing the guitar, sailing and the great outdoors. He loved to help others and chose a profession that would make that possible. Evan was accepted in Conestoga College's Powerline Technician two-year co-op program. The college only accepted 26 applicants, even though hundreds applied that year and Evan was very proud to be chosen.

Evan never wavered that being a Powerline Technician was the profession for him. He was very proud of being in the trades and, as his parents, we supported

him. He was again resourceful in getting a recruiter from Ace Construction in Calgary to fly out to interview him at Conestoga College for his co-op placement. He was offered a position with them in Calgary. While working there, he was recruited by Empirica/Galbraith and what started out as fulfilling his co-op requirement morphed into a permanent full-time position with career potential.

Evan had decided to work for a year and then return to college. We brought him up to be independent and we respected his decision – as much as we wanted him to return to college and finish his program, we knew that it was his decision to make. His job took him to many different areas, including Slave Lake after the devastating fire in 2010. The crew, however, was pulled out because of the danger. I felt good knowing that. We all knew that his was a dangerous occupation, however, as an apprentice, I was relieved that he would not be working with "live wires". Evan would not attempt a task unless he felt comfortable for safety was his number one concern. He found out in the summer of 2011 that he was also on the 'Dean's List', and asked me what that meant. It meant that he had an average mark of 80 per cent with no subject under 70 per cent. He was very proud and promptly forwarded a copy of the Dean's List to his employer.

When Byron put him on a plane on May 11, 2011, full of high hopes and big dreams, how could we possibly have known that he would be returned to us in a casket. On his return, we arranged for the funeral hearse to drive by and stop in front of our house from the airport. Our family silently stood on our front lawn. Evan loved being home and I can still see him in his many favourite places in the house with his lap top, cell phone, land line and at the same time watching sports and doing homework.

Evan and I talked and texted often. He was far away; we needed to know that he was fine. The last time my beautiful son called me was the night of Sept. 9, 2011.

He said he was very happy to be where he was and would not want to be anywhere else. He told me majestic mountains and the sunsets were beautiful. He enjoyed the work and of course, had made many friends. We talked for a while and he told me that he was working very hard.



Evan and his sister, Nikita

We ended our call as always. Evan said ‘Mom, I love you, give a hug to dad’ and I told him I loved him very much. I told him I would call him the next day and I went to bed knowing that he was happy and safe. On that particular night, all was well in our world. The kids were alright. We loved our simple life, our children were growing up and following their dreams. It is all we ever wanted: to do the best for our children, to seize the day, and to live a simple life.

The next day on Sept. 10, 2011, our Evan was the victim of a workplace fatality. It was the last day of their assignment at Crow’s Nest Pass in Alberta removing temporary transmission lines from the mountain. He got back and forth to work by helicopter and he was very excited about this assignment. Evan was working on a transmission pole that he was harnessed to, which collapsed taking him down the hill. He was removed from the hill by helicopter and to the local hospital

by ambulance. He died approximately an hour later at 6:57 p.m. However; we were not notified until 1:30 a.m. the next day when two police officers arrived at our door. The case is now with Alberta’s Crown Prosecutor.

We lived a nightmare for the next little

while. Our whole life fell apart and we knew that even though the world was the same, our world has changed horribly. Our belief system was shattered: parents do not outlive their children, especially one that embraced life with a passion and blazed through his emotions, experiencing happiness, sadness, kindness, love, empathy, euphoria, sometimes all in the same day.

My husband, Byron had enough strength to work with the funeral home and family members to plan a wonderful commemoration and tribute for our loving son. His commemoration and tribute was well attended – he was a very popular young man with many loving family and friends. We played the music he liked: rock, pop, heavy metal, disco, etc. including one his favorite songs – “Landslide” by Stevie Nicks. My sister’s company created posters of all different sizes for the funeral home and my niece Shelly created a video tribute, with the help of Evan’s many cousins. We wanted to remember Evan

alive and vibrant, not in a coffin. Nikita wrote and sang a song for Evan and Byron brought three of his bands together for a rock and Celtic tribute and farewell. The tribute ended with our friend Hal playing Piper’s Lament on the bagpipes. The commemoration and tribute seemed like a rehearsal. We still cannot believe that our beautiful boy is no longer with us.

How I ache for my first born, my only son. Byron and Nikita keep their grief from me, they soldiered on with Nikita finishing her last year of university against all odds, and Byron is the tree that never stops giving. I was lost in my own world of sadness, depression and anxiety, barely able to function and was unable to continue with my career. I protected Evan when he was young and as he grew up I still played that role of protector. I have tremendous guilt for not being able to save him. Intellectually, I know it was not possible, however, in my heart, I felt that I failed him. I would give my life for his. My guilt is unimaginable.

Evan loved to sail and we worked with the City of Oakville to plant a tree and place a plaque by the lake at Bronte Heritage Park that included the words “Soar, our Dreamlover”. We also initiated a scholarship program at Conestoga College to present a safety award annually to the student that exhibits leadership in safety. We will continue to ensure that his legacy is never forgotten.

To lose Evan is to know hopelessness, despair, helplessness and devastation. We will never forget our son. He lives safely and lovingly in our hearts always and forever. We are now trying to live in this “new normal” – a journey with Evan’s spirit. We will never tire in our quest to bring awareness of workplace fatalities. Young people should never have their lives snuffed out by workplace tragedies.

Would you like to tell your story?

Threads of Life believes that sharing our stories of loss can help promote healing. If you’re ready to tell your story of living with a workplace fatality, life-altering injury or occupational illness, please contact Susan Haldane, shaldane@threadsoflife.ca



Maureen Shaw

Leadership by inspiration

by Maureen Shaw

How do we define authentic leadership? Visionary, passion for purpose, ability to inspire others, trusting and trusted, able to communicate vision and direction to achieve goals, high ethical values for self and others, caring for others — sometimes you just feel it. There are many other attributes but I think these capture it for the purpose of this article.

I had the privilege of being witness to true leadership recently in Nova Scotia. At Oak Island Resort about an hour outside of Halifax, approximately 75 family members from Atlantic Canada came together to celebrate the lives of loved ones who have died or suffered a life-altering injury as a result of a workplace event. They also came to the Threads of Life Family Forum to support and be supported by others on their journey of healing.

Threads of Life was formed in 2003 by Shirley Hickman. Shirley and Bob Hickman's son Tim died after the ice-resurfer he was operating exploded and ignited. When the couple began to "come out of our fog," as Shirley tells it, they resolved that Tim's life and his death would shine a light on families confronted with a tragedy to their loved ones at work. They wanted to focus on peer support for families and on awareness and prevention of workplace tragedies. I was there in those early days and remember the pain, the stress, the enthusiastic conversations and then the growth — one step at a time. I also recall the passion and the way Shirley was able to move people to action. Her integrity, vision, commitment and humble but determined approach brought many to the cause. I was so proud hearing her speak at the International Labour Organization XVII World Congress in Orlando, Florida in 2005. The only speaker to put a human face on the many statistics being shown, the theories, and political speeches, she was also the only speaker to receive a standing ovation. The time for Threads of Life had truly come.

Fast forward to the weekend of May 30th to June 2nd in Oak Island, Nova Scotia, where families gathered for Threads of Life's Family Forum event.

The families were identified by coloured ribbons: yellow signified a family member who has been impacted by a life-altering injury (I wore this); red signified a family member who has been impacted by a fatality; blue ribbon signified a family member who has been affected by occupational disease; and the Forget-Me-Not flower was for new families attending their first Family Forum.

The weekend began with dinner and a reflections ceremony led by Shirley Hickman and Vince Garnier — who was presented with the Volunteer of the Year Award. It was a very moving and inspiring ceremony. A candle was lit for the mission and vision of Threads of Life. The mis-



Reflections Table, Atlantic Canada Family Forum

sion candle continued to burn each time we were in the room. Each family lit a candle and placed it in front of a picture of their loved one. It was a time for us to honour lives forever changed and reflect on the reason we have come together.

"When we light a candle, it is not in memory of a death, but in celebration of a life shared." It was also a symbol of hope for the future — a future of cultural change where awareness and prevention are paramount, for healing and strength.

The reflections ceremony also served as a beginning for people to take the next step in their journey. The weekend offered time for support, for sharing stories, quiet times and times for laughter. I was so impressed with the caring of each family member and their consideration for each other.

They reached out to help, to hold, to cry and laugh. It was a lesson in trust: people opened up their hearts and souls, and trusted this would be okay and that they would be safe in doing so — and they were.

And so, many families have moved another step towards their journey of healing. In the process, so many have also shown qualities of leadership — to themselves, to their fellow family members, to the communities they come from and others they help back home and beyond.

For me as moderator, it was an honour, a privilege and a humbling experience. But also a joy, in seeing and feeling the best in the human dimension in a time of global turbulence. I saw that one person with a vision can truly begin a momentum of change — a movement built on love for one and for all.

An authentic leader inspires others to lead and that was shown as 1,400 families are helped and supported by hundreds of volunteers across the country.

-this column was originally published in Canadian Occupational Safety, www.cos-mag.com, June 27, 2013.

2013 Family Forums



Three regional family forums bring together new family members and existing Threads of Life members each year. The Atlantic Canada forum was held May 30 to June 2 in Nova Scotia. The Western Canada Family Forum will be in Edmonton, Alberta, September 20 to 22, while the Central Canada forum is scheduled for November 1 to 3 in Barrie, Ontario.

Does it take 3 seconds to change a life forever?

by Shirley Hickman



The families of the Young Worker LifeQuilt were invited to the inaugural meeting of family members of Threads of Life in May 2003. Today we provide service to more than 1400 Canadian family members

Three seconds? Really? Is it more or is it less? How long does it take to say 'STOP', let's look and see if this is a safer way to do this? Have you said 'stop' to yourself or someone else? Have you done a task at work and then wondered if there is a safer way to do it?

Each day in Canada many, many workers get hurt. Most are able in time to return to the activities of daily living and work-life without significant challenges. For thousands more the outcome is different.

When our son Tim received burns as a result of an explosion in his workplace, his life changed forever as did ours. Ten days later when he died we hardly knew where to begin to build a new life. Our friends and community carried my family, but as time passed and I woke up from the initial grief, I wondered where other Canadian families turned for support and awareness. I could find none. I was willing to accept invitations from community organizations, health and safety associations and governments to speak for change. In 2003, Threads of Life was incorporated with a mission to help families heal through a community of support and to promote the awareness of elimination of workplace injuries, illnesses and deaths. For me the most important piece at that time was to develop a 'peer support' model. With support and a grant from the Ontario WSIB we were able to develop the Volunteer Family Guide peer support manual and training program. In March 2005 with the support of funds from the Ministry of the Attorney

General, Victims' Services Secretariat and a grant from Ontario WSIB, we trained family members living with the outcomes of a workplace tragedy to become the first Volunteer Family Guides in Canada. Rey Carr of Peer Resources shared that Threads of Life was the first organization in the world to develop this support system for family members of workplace tragedy.

In the ten years since, Threads of Life's services for families have continued to evolve. The Family Support Program now includes our Volunteer Family Guides, Family Forums and the Threads newsletter. Family Forums, now held annually in three regions across Canada, are an opportunity for family members to meet, share their stories and learn coping skills.

Since 1996, when our family experienced the death of Tim and learned firsthand the challenges of the government and legal systems, I have had the opportunity to listen as many family members share their very personal and unique journey. At first it was just family members living with the death outcome, but soon family members living with life-altering injuries and occupational disease came and shared. In May 2003 the 100 families of the Young Worker LifeQuilt were invited to the unveiling of the quilt and the inaugural meeting of family members of Threads of Life. Today we are providing service to more than 1400 Canadian family members and know many more are receiving informal support by participating in Steps for Life. None of this could have been achieved

without the support of governments, compensation boards, employers and labour organizations which reach out to tell family members about Threads of Life, and help to fund our services.

Since the peer support model was first developed, I have continued to coordinate the Family Support Program while also serving as Executive Director for Threads of Life. This fall we welcome Kate Kennington to a new role as Program Manager, Family Support. Kate requires little introduction as many of you have worked with her since she joined staff in 2008, first as a Community Development Coordinator and then as Event and Volunteer Manager. Kate's role will include pairing family members with Volunteer Family Guides, training and working with the Guides, and overseeing the Family Forums. You will be hearing more from her in future editions of the newsletter.



Kate Kennington, new Program Manager, Family Support

All family members should be receiving a mailing shortly with a survey. One of my objectives is to ensure the sustainability of this organization, and the survey will help to achieve this. I invite you to take the time to complete the information, even if you think we should already have it.

We know that Threads of Life is a club no one wants to join. It only takes seconds to change a life forever, but we do hope that over our ten years, our family support programs have helped our family members to cope with those changes.

Debbie Glen

by *Marissa Wolicki*



Debbie Glenn knew that it was a “gift” when she met Shirley Hickman, Executive Director of Threads of Life in 2003 at an IAPA conference. Doug, Debbie’s son, was killed in a fall he suffered in North Vancouver only a month prior to the conference. Shirley remained in contact with Debbie after that and invited her

to Volunteer Family Guide training. Debbie remembers having met “so many other families who had also lost sons, daughters, husbands. Listening to their stories made me realize that there are many others out there that can be helped by any one of the people in the room.” Debbie has since been set on “encouraging all the people who have suffered such a tremendous loss and to helping others on their journey of grief.”

Threads of Life filled the void that was missing when Debbie’s son passed away and for the past nine years she has been dedicating herself tirelessly as a volunteer for the organization. Debbie has also worked in the occupational health and safety system for

over a decade and has been involved in mock inquests, trials and has had many opportunities to speak with various organizations about Threads of Life through networking and knowledge exchange sessions. She is truly an ambassador for Threads of Life and always gets “the word out” to anyone she meets.

Along with being a strong advocate and supporter of Threads of Life, Debbie has also been the co-chair of the Hamilton Steps for Life event for the past three years. She is proud to say that this year will be their tenth anniversary! To date they have raised more than \$75,000 in nine years. Debbie has also found time to make and sell accessory scarves. She donates \$5 to Threads of Life for every scarf sold.

Debbie says, “the mission of Threads of Life is to help families heal through a community of support and to promote the elimination of life-altering workplace injuries, illnesses and deaths. And that is what they did for me. I have the opportunity to be involved with a wonderful community of people who have all ‘lived in the same neighbourhood’ of loss and they have all helped me on my journey to learn to love life and to enjoy each day as the gift that it is.” Threads of Life is so lucky to have Debbie Glenn as a volunteer! She has done so much for our organization and we thank her.



Scholarship winner dedicates gift to Threads of Life

Bernard Kenny is hoping for a career in health and safety, and was impressed when he read about the Steps for Life walk taking place in his home province of Newfoundland.

So when Kenny, a student in occupational health and safety at the College of the North Atlantic (CNA) in Corner Brook, won the Dick Martin Scholarship, he asked that a portion of his winnings be donated to Threads of Life.

Dick Martin was an advocate of health and safety, and a labour activist who was involved with the CCOHS and helped

establish Canada’s National Day of Mourning. The scholarship in his name is awarded annually by the CCOHS Board of Governors to two students enrolled in health and safety related programs at a Canadian college or university.

The winners for 2012-13 were Kenny and Laure-Elise Forel, a student from the Universite de Montreal. Kenny wrote an essay about stress and depression in the workplace (see sidebar). Each winner received \$3000, plus \$500 for their school. Kenny lobbied the CNA, which readily agreed to pass the donation along to Threads of Life.

from **“Occupational Mental Health: Stress & Depression in Today’s Workplace”** by *Bernard Kenny*

In today’s workplace, occupational mental health is a major concern, as employee stress and depression are increasingly prevalent. This fact is supported by the results of two surveys released in October 2012, which clearly demonstrate the growth of these risk factors continue to be a detriment to employee mental health in Canada. Coupled with the rising socio-economic costs reflected in absenteeism, health claim costs and work-life conflict, it is therefore imperative that the causes of workplace stress and depression be identified and addressed.

... Some positive steps practitioners of OHS can recommend to employers to improve the workplace environment include:

1. Promote a positive mental health culture by emphasizing a commitment to it in their OHS policy.
2. Establish an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), offer counselling services to workers suffering from work related or personal stresses.
3. Become aware of the signals that indicate a worker is stressed. Some powerful indicators include: physical (e.g. high blood pressure), psychosocial (e.g. depression), cognitive (e.g. decreased attention) and behavioral (e.g. poor job performance) (CCOHS, 2012).
4. Conduct a hazard and risk assessment: find root causes by surveying workers to identify stress sources (e.g. health and safety hazards, workload, lack of training and threats of violence).
5. Develop proper education, training and safe work practices and procedures.
6. Utilize job design, to examine not only how various job tasks are accomplished, but also to consider both the physical and mental abilities of employees.

Mark your calendars!



In May 2014, Steps for Life enters its second decade supporting families affected by workplace tragedy. In most communities, walks will be held on Sunday May 4, marking the start of North American Occupational Safety and Health week.

And there are impressive targets to aim for! The 2013 walk broke all our records, raising more than \$595,000, with thousands of walkers and hundreds of sponsors in more than 30 communities from coast to coast.

Threads of Life is grateful to all of the volunteers who put in countless hours to host the walks in their communities, and the financial support from sponsors and those who supported the walkers with personal donations. Please join us once again in 2014 as family members, health and safety professionals, co-workers and business leaders walk together with a united vision of safety and injury prevention in the workplace.

Committees rev up planning for 2014

Did you hear that? That rustling noise heard right across the country was the sound of Steps for Life committee chairpeople pulling out their checklists and files to get a start on planning for the 2014 walk. St. Johns Newfoundland has about four walks under its belt, and committee chair Jackie Manuel is preparing for a kick-off meeting in September or October. Jackie is CEO of the Newfoundland and Labrador Construction Safety Association, and also a Threads of Life board member. Her committee has a wrap-up meeting after the walk each spring to discuss how things went and any changes needed the following year. That makes it easy to jump into planning in the fall; reviewing the notes from the wrap-up session and kicking around ideas for new activities and improvements, Manuel says.



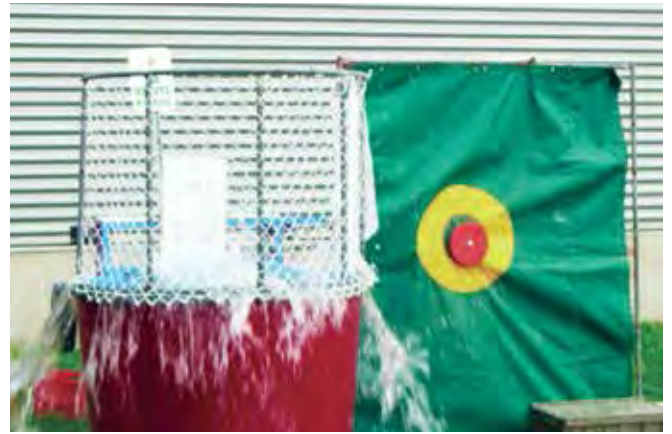
Even before that first meeting, though, she'll be in touch with all the previous year's committee members to see if they want to continue, and also contact many of last spring's walkers to see if they'd like to step up to volunteering.

"It's not a case of getting people motivated," she adds. "People are looking forward to it. They're saying 'let's get going!'"

Right across the country, committees will be looking for new volunteers, ideas and sponsors. If you'd like to get more involved in your local walk, contact a local organizer or get in touch with Threads of Life to find out who organizes Steps for Life in your area. Volunteers are needed for committee roles, short-term planning tasks, and to help out on the day of the walk. The organizers will be thrilled to hear from you!

There's a place for companies too – you can enter a team or support the walk as a sponsor. Contact John McCabe at jmccabe@threadsoflife.ca or call 1-888-567-9490 to learn more about sponsorship.

Let's get going!



Making a splash for safety... Brrr! Staffers at Giant Tiger's Ottawa head office took the plunge during a safety awareness event and raised funds for Threads of Life.

Golfers chip in for Threads of Life

Dedicated golfers need no excuse to hit the greens. But if they can support a good cause at the same time, so much the better. A number of golf tournaments this summer raised money to support Canadian families affected by workplace fatalities, life-altering injuries and occupational illness. Threads of Life is grateful for all the hours of work that go into organizing these events, and for the generous donations. A couple of examples:

TriWest Partners Forum

Golf is only one component of a partners forum hosted by TriWest Capital Partners on September 4th and 5th, at Banff Springs Golf Club and Banff Park Lodge. TriWest is an Alberta-based private equity firm with investments in a range of industries, including the service, manufacturing and distribution sectors. TriWest's goal was for its portfolio companies, advisors and key lenders to share ideas, deepen relationships and foster cooperation. They decided to make workplace safety the focus of their event choosing Threads of Life to benefit from funds raised through the golf tournament and other activities.

Lindsay Workplace Memorial Tournament

Longtime Threads of Life family member Heather Dahmer and other volunteers organized the First Annual Lindsay Workplace Memorial Tournament on August 22. Proceeds from the golf tournament will support the first-ever Lindsay Steps for Life – Walking for Families of Workplace Tragedy, planned for May 2014.

Stantec Markham gets creative to promote health and safety

The crew at Stantec's Markham office came up with a whole week's worth of activities to boost awareness of health and safety and to raise funds for Threads of Life. Staff participated in a penny drive as part of the Making Cents of Safety campaign, got outside for a mini Steps for Life walk, indulged their sweet teeth in a bake sale, and raffled off an iPad. It was all part of NAOSH week events for the Markham branch of the professional engineering and consulting firm. In the end, they were able to contribute a cheque for \$925.50. Thanks Stantec!

Lions fundraiser shows community pride

Football fans attending the October 4 matchup between the BC Lions and Saskatchewan Roughriders will be supporting three

nonprofit organizations, including Threads of Life. Three dollars from each ticket for the Lions home game will be distributed among Threads of Life, St. John Ambulance and Global Medic. Tickets must be purchased directly from the team – visit www.bclions.com or contact Hermon Tesfaghebriel (604)930-5452, hermont@bclions.com.

LCBO coin box program raises over \$11,000!

For the third year running, Threads of Life was chosen to participate in the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO) coin box campaign this spring, with a total of \$11,648.73 donated by customers and staff at the more than 630 LCBO stores around the province. The counter-top coin boxes are a chance not only to raise money, but to let more people know about Threads of Life. Thanks to the LCBO and to all those who dropped in their change over the month of May!

Centraide / United Way

Each fall, charitable workplace campaigns are launched across the country to raise funds to support their community through their local United Way/Centraide office. Did you know that you can direct all or a portion of your United Way donation to support Threads of Life's family support programs and services? Setting up a payroll deduction to make a charitable contribution through the United Way can be a simple and effective way to support Threads of Life. Even a small contribution of \$12 from each bi-weekly pay cheque adds up to a donation of more than \$300 a year: \$300 can provide peer support for one family member for one year! If your employer doesn't participate in the United Way/Centraide, feel free to contact Threads of Life to set up your own monthly giving plan.

Payroll deductions are simple and convenient and can really make a difference. Donor forms can vary slightly between the more than 100 United Way/Centraide offices across the country, but they all provide the option to direct your donation to a specific charity. To direct your donation to Threads of Life, simply fill in your United Way donor form and indicate us by our legal name, Association for Workplace Tragedy Family Support, and our Canada Revenue Agency Charitable Business Registration number No. 87524 8908 RR0001.



Speakers' messages have reached more than 50,000

Paulette Raymond was committed to telling her story of workplace tragedy to try and prevent it from happening again. But she didn't really know what that would feel like until after her first presentation this spring.

"Well, I did it!" she wrote in an email. "I can't explain how I felt when I looked up at all of those faces and saw that they actually got it. At the end, they stood up and raised their right hands to their hearts and made a promise that they would never ever forget Tommy. I got through!"

Paulette's brother Tommy was killed while he was working on the docks in Nova Scotia. While not an experienced public speaker, she took speaker training in January 2013.

"I feel like a load has been lifted that I don't think I realized was even there," she said. "Imagine, if my words actually make a difference in someone's life. Just imagine."



Threads of Life's national Speakers Bureau was launched in 2005. Ontario's Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) had been coordinating public speaking for a handful of people who had been directly affected by workplace tragedy. The WSIB asked Threads of Life to take over this program. Since then, the Speakers Bureau has swelled to include more than 60 speakers from coast to coast, each of them telling a personal story of loss and promoting a powerful health and safety message. To date, that message has reached more than 50,000 people.

The Speakers Bureau is built on the belief that sharing their stories helps people heal. But the program also works to fulfill Threads of Life's vision of creating a shift in workplace culture – like Paulette, all Threads of Life speakers influence the beliefs and behavior of the people who hear them.

For more information about the Speakers Bureau, see www.threadsoflife.ca/speakers-bureau/ or contact Susan Haldane at shal-dane@threadsoflife.ca. Training for new speakers is held annually.

Canadian Design & Construction Report

New media sponsorship spreads the word in construction sector

Construction is one of Canada's high-risk industries, and most people in the field know a family that has been affected by a serious injury, illness or fatality. A new partnership between Threads of Life and the Construction News and Report Group will help ensure those families know where to find support.

Construction News and Report Group (CNRG) – publishers of the Canadian Design and Construction Report as well as a number of regional construction reports, and Threads of Life – the Association for Workplace Tragedy Support, recently announced a partnership that will provide information about Threads of Life to readers of the construction reports.

"We have no channel to reach out to families directly," said Threads of Life Executive Director Shirley Hickman. "We rely on partners and individuals to spread the word so that those who need our support will be able to find us." The relationship with CNRG will improve awareness of the organization's services within a critical industry.

CNRG believes in promoting non-profit organizations which serve its Canada-wide readership. After learning of Threads of Life's annual Steps for Life fundraising walk, CNRG approached the charity with an offer of support.

For more information about the Construction News and Report Group, see www.cadcr.com/

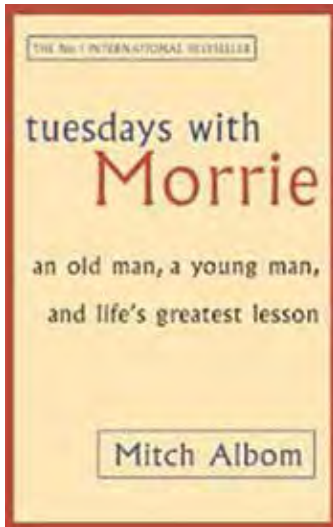


Victims of workplace incidents in Saskatchewan will now have improved access to family support programs to help them along their journey of healing. The WCB Saskatchewan is providing funding to Threads of Life to develop family support services for families in Saskatchewan. A portion of the funding will be allocated to support families from Saskatchewan to attend the Western Canada Family Forum in September.

The remaining funds will be used to recruit and train volunteer family guides and speakers for the national Speakers Bureau. This partnership will help WCB Saskatchewan and Threads of Life better support victims and their families. "Threads of Life will help families who have experienced a workplace tragedy, and in turn the people that receive training as speakers or volunteer family guides can help other people that have experienced a traumatic workplace experience," said Grant Van Eaton, Case Manager South for the WCB Saskatchewan.

"This support will enable dedicated volunteers to reach out to people in their time of need," said Shirley Hickman, Executive Director, Threads of Life. Shirley presented an in-service overview to WCB Saskatchewan case managers and staff to inform them about how Threads of Life supports families after a workplace tragedy.

Are you a reader? Join the club!



Calling all readers!

The next book club will be on Monday, October 21st at 7:00 pm EST and the selection is Tuesdays with Morrie: An Old Man, a Young Man, and Life's Greatest Lesson by Mitch Albom. You may have read it before or seen the movie but Mitch's memoir of his visits to his dying sociology professor is worth another read. Morrie inspires Mitch in many ways as they talk about life, death, love and happiness to name just a few. Perhaps his teachings may inspire you too!

To register, please send an email to bookclub@threadsoflife.ca.

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 comitestoonto@yahoo.ca or send mail to COMITES, 3010 Dufferin St. Unit 2, Toronto Ont. M6B 4J5.

Coming Events

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

Western Canada Family Forum –
September 20-22, 2013, Edmonton AB

Central Canada Family Forum –
November 1-3, 2013, Kempenfelt
Centre, Barrie ON

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

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

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.

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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

Association for Workplace Tragedy
Family Support – Threads of Life

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