

# threads OF LIFE

VOL.13, NO3 Fall 2015

P R E V E N T I O N

S U P P O R T

P A R T N E R S H I P



## Telling our stories

Stories can connect and move people like nothing else. This fall Threads of Life speakers will be telling their stories to students, miners, businessmen and safety professionals from New Glasgow NS to Banff AB.

*Could you be a Threads of Life speaker? Learn more on page 8*

Threads of Life Executive Director Shirley Hickman was the first member of our speakers bureau when it started ten years ago. Recently, she told her story at the Annual Saskatchewan Health & Safety Leadership Charter in June.



### MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

*Bill Stunt*

“No man is an island,” the poet and cleric John Donne wrote. That’s true of each of us – we are all connected by humanity and experience. But it’s also very true of Threads of Life. Our partners and supporters are instrumental to the work we do. As a family member and a board member, I always find it heartening to know that volunteers, professionals, agencies and companies

stand with us. In this issue, you’ll read about TriWest Capital Partners, which has been a major funder over the past three years, and about the unique initiative of an individual supporter, Colin Steadman, who organized a Hovercraft tour of Alberta this summer to raise awareness.

The two family stories in this issue seem, on the surface, to be worlds apart – a PEI man severely injured by hot oil, and a young Alberta woman deciding after 10 years to share the story of her brother’s death – but we know as Threads of Life members, we are woven together by what we have shared. We are not islands. We are not alone.

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

### features

A sister’s perspective.....	2
Still asking the question ‘why?’.....	4

### departments

<b>REFLECTIONS</b>	
Part of a very extended family.....	6
A new adventure.....	7

### VOLUNTEER PROFILE

Diana Devine.....	8
Telling our stories.....	8

### FAMILY SUPPORT

Adjusting to an environment in which the deceased is missing.....	9
---	---

### STEPS FOR LIFE

Close up on Red Deer.....	10
Ready, set, go!.....	10

### PARTNERS AND FUNDRAISING

TriWest Capital Partners change the future for hurting families.....	11
--	----

# A sister's perspective

by Desirae Kozak

20-year-old became caught in conveyor belt



Jahryn Kozak was a big brother and protector to Desirae

## On December 13, 2004

Jahryn Kozak set out to work at the gravel crushing company where he was employed. On this morning, while he was sweeping excess gravel from underneath one of the gravel crushers his sweater caught in the conveyor belt and he was pulled into the machine. He died on the scene and this accident could have been 100 per cent prevented had there been proper safety provisions in place.

I write this for my older brother in his memory as we pass the ten-year anniversary of his quick and unjust departure from our world.

My brother was only 20 years old; somewhat of an outcast and a bit of a trouble maker. He often spent time with the wrong crowd and probably came home in the back of a cop car more times than I am aware. We weren't necessarily friends, me being three years younger than him and a polar opposite character-wise, but we could have been one day. I loved him but I didn't understand why he made the decisions he did and why trouble seemed to follow him. He made silly boy mistakes

that I didn't understand and had a bit of a reputation.

But Jahryn had a big heart. He was my protector and he took this job very seriously. He walked me to and from school every day when we were in elementary school, always patient with me as I took my time. He was quick to torment me but quicker to stand up for me if he had to. We would go climb trees or he would play Barbies with me but almost always the heads were removed. He would always find my hidden Hallowe'en candy and leave me with only suckers (also responsible for that is my oldest brother Brayden, Jahryn's partner in crime). If you were a dear friend he would take the fall for you not fearing the consequences. He had a laugh that I can't clearly remember but I know I miss it greatly. He always said "I love you". We all do this and I value this in my family so much, there are no ways to put it into words. No matter who he was with or where he was, if you were leaving or getting off the phone he always said "I love you" when other kids would be too embarrassed to do so.

I remember a lot of little details about the day I came home to find out my older

brother would never be making it to another Sunday dinner. I was 17, in my graduating year of school, and it was a Monday. It was December and the last week of school before our Christmas break and I went with a friend to do some Christmas shopping after school. I remember the gift that I bought for Jahryn that day: a hand mixer because he was working in a restaurant kitchen and was really beginning to enjoy the culinary process. I was excited to give him something that would take him in that direction. It seems like a silly gift to me now. When we went to pack up Jahryn's apartment he already had presents wrapped under his tree waiting for us to open Christmas day.

I should have known something was wrong when I pulled up to the house where we grew up. At my parents' I always parked in the first spot on the street beside the driveway and I remember pulling up and being annoyed that there were a few vehicles blocking my spot and I had to park a bit down the street. The second I stepped into our home I knew something was wrong. The kitchen had a few of my family members and family friends of my parents and it was clear they were grieving. It was my dad who walked up to me to tell me something awful happened and that my brother had been killed that morning. The moments after that are a blur of tears, hugs and disbelief. I spent most of my evening hiding in my bedroom, never one to really be comfortable showing the extent of my emotions no matter the circumstances. While in my room I was hit with that feeling. My flight mode kicked in and I just had to get out of the house. I remember leaving and going to my friend's house. I cried. Her family grieved with me.

Jahryn got the job at the gravel crushing company and it seemed like a blessing, like he was heading in the right direction in life. He was working hard and keeping busy and eventually moved out and into his own apartment. All very good things! The day my brother didn't come home he was cleaning excess gravel on the ground underneath one of the rock crushers. He was wearing a hooded sweater which got caught and my brother was killed on the scene. The proper guards were not in place, a key safety component that had been overlooked. My brother lost his life to a company that didn't want to spend money on

safety. All that would have been required for this machine to have been safe would have been a simple guard. A piece of metal not even costing forty dollars is the key component in my brother's life. A company whose \$300,000 fine was a tax write-off.

These are the frustrating pieces that families have to deal with when they lose someone to a workplace fatality. There is blame and finger pointing and a long court process. It took three years for the courts to come up with a decision. This included many court dates that my parents had to sit through. We wrote victim impact statements and then there was more waiting. My parents were joined in these proceedings by my grandparents, providing a great deal of emotional support, and my grandfather working rather vigorously to ensure that there were charges laid for this safety oversight. Eventually 11 charges were laid and the company pled guilty for one count in my brother's case. A charge was dropped against the municipal district of Wainwright which had contracted the company for road maintenance.

This is a bittersweet victory for our family. Although the company was charged a fine of \$300,000, it was in the form of a donation and was eligible for a tax write-off. So even though there was punishment it came with reward and just shows the level of injustice that can come with this kind of loss. My family fought for Jahryn's rights. On top of their huge loss already they had to continue to fight for a change in safety practices.

We just passed the ten-year anniversary of the death of Jahryn. We have all dealt with this loss in our own ways but we keep him alive in our world every day. We bring him up at family functions and we go through pictures. We often talk about the "what ifs". We discuss how we think he would be living now and what he would be up to. He had so much un-lived life ahead of him.

I struggle but I tend to keep my struggles to myself. My car has seen more tears than my friends and family have. Holidays have been very difficult in the past, and will continue to be in the future. Christmas was put on pause for a few years, but there is nothing wrong with having lasagna for supper and not putting up a tree if that is what gets you through the season. We spent more than one Christmas "celebrating" this way. I also struggled with bringing it back, feeling angry that it was taken away and then trying to reincorporate it back into our

life after such a long break.

I feel guilty about my grief, often feeling selfish about how his absence affects me. Jahryn's life was taken away from him. He was deprived of so many life experiences and my heart hurts for him every day. Since the day I turned 21 I have outlived my older brother, a difficulty I deal with every year on my birthday. My high school graduation was a hard time for me, Jahryn's death being only six months prior. Shortly after that I turned 18 and found myself in more social settings where Jahryn's presence was missed and I was faced with a lot of people who knew him but did not know how to approach me about it.

"Oh...Jahryn WAS your brother..." awkward pause... "Let me buy you a shot"

No. Jahryn IS my brother. Always; no past tense.

and how disappointed I already am because I know there is going to be a dark empty space on that day. I try and day dream the way a young woman does and then I am hit with anxiety about how sad the day is going to be. And then I cry because I know that he would give anything in the world to see his little sister get married. This feeling will never go away. He is only going to miss more birthdays, more anniversaries and weddings. I will miss these major milestones in his life for him. There is no friendly banter about him getting old, no giving him the gears about a new relationship, no watching his face light up as he watches the woman he loves walk down the aisle.

All these things he will miss and we will miss for him, all because someone didn't want to put proper safety precau-

“ My family fought for Jahryn's rights. On top of their huge loss already they had to continue to fight for a change in safety practices.

Christmas, birthdays, Mothers'/Fathers' day, National Siblings day etc. Major milestones in our lives are greeted with a dark shadow. My brother missed the birth of his niece; he's missed weddings and anniversaries. I dread my wedding (if/when that happens) because of this loss. This is when I feel most selfish, when I think of my life

tions into effect. This was a giant failure, not just for this company but also the safety company that should have been more diligent in ensuring safety was in full effect. I wonder how many other malpractices are over looked and how many more people need to lose their life and family members because of it.



Jahryn's family at the Steps for Life walk

# Still asking the question ‘why?’

Family man battles back from serious burns

by Nevin diJulio



Nevin on his first day in the Halifax burn unit

## Hind sight: a wonderful thing if you could act on it.

The ability to change a decision that was made and have the outcome change as well. This was one of the thoughts I dwelled on over a four-month stay in the hospital – three months in the Burn unit, two weeks in the ICU and three weeks in rehab.

In June of 2011, I was working as a processing operator for a company called Cavendish Farms which produces frozen French fries for grocery stores and large franchise restaurants such as Wendy’s, Burger King and KFC. They employ roughly 750 people, running 24/7, with four crews on 12-hour rotating shifts. I had been working there for just shy of four years.

I started as a general cleaner and progressed to working in the warehouse and operating the machines used to peel the potatoes. I also became a member of the First Responders Unit. I was familiar with the safety procedures and I followed them to the letter, almost to the point that I annoyed some of my co-workers.

At the time of the incident I was training as a fryer operator. I had been training

for about three months. Getting qualified on the fryer meant a raise in pay. Just trying to provide for my family.

I’m married. I have four kids and a grandson – a very busy family life. Between organized sports, school events and other interests we had little time to breathe. We spent a lot of time together. We were very close and we put family first. That family bond would come in handy over the next four years.

On June 21, 2011 I was scheduled to work the night shift from 7 p.m. June 20th to 7 a.m. June 21st. Initially I had put in for vacation time that night as it was my birthday. However there was an oil change-over planned, and as a trainee, I figured it was in my best interest to cancel my vacation and perform the changeover.

It was an uneventful evening. At around midnight we were told that the changeover would take place at 2 AM, once the product in the system had cleared the fryer.

The first part of the process was to turn off the heating element for the fryers. Current temperature was 380 degrees F. The second part was to open the valves to allow the oil to be pumped to holding tanks. The fryer has two stages, each about 10 feet wide and 15 long and there would be about five inches of oil in each stage. To change the oil, the operator had to stand

under one of the filters and turn the valves manually. I had opened two valves and was opening the third one, while narrating what I was doing so my trainer could verify that I was following the process for the proper reason, when hot oil met water that wasn’t supposed to be in the system.

When hot oil and water meet, the oil tries to get out of the way as fast and violently as possible. Remember the filter I mentioned earlier? Well that’s where the oil went. The filter is a box, about four feet long, 2 ½ feet wide with folding double doors on either side. The first stage of the fryer emptied itself over my head. Simply put, I took a shower.

I was kind of lucky. My trainer saw what was happening and warned me. I was able to cover up to sort of protect myself. I hugged myself and dropped my head between my shoulders. I also had to move because the shower was still in progress. I had to move backwards, then to my left, forward and then to my left again before I was out of the oil.

I was in the walkway at the beginning of the first stage of the fryer when I fell to the floor. That’s when I screamed. Four times at the top of my lungs. I could be heard in other parts of the plant. The following was running through my mind: Why me? Images of my wife and kids. Who would take care of them? Grandson, mother, brothers, sisters. What was going to happen to me? Happy Birthday!!!! I was 45; would I make 46?

While this was going on, there was a safety meeting happening in the office about 40 feet away. Lucky for me it was being attended by four of the first responders working that evening. They attempted to pick me up but I told them not to touch me. I got up and walked to the flushing shower which was already running. The first responders asked me questions while they directed me under the water and started to cut off my clothes so they wouldn’t get embedded in my skin.

So began an experience that changed me, challenged me, humbled me, shook my faith and opened my eyes; opened them to the fact that life had been very good to me and my family. I went from being the guy that helped everyone to needing everyone’s help.

So, from 2 a.m. to roughly 9 a.m. on the morning of my birthday the following happened:

- I was going to start the process of pumping the oil to the holding tanks and then go to break
- I received burns from 380-degree oil to roughly 45 per cent of my body (back, arms, legs, ears and face)
- 20-minute cold shower, naked with most of my co-workers watching while waiting for the EMTs to arrive
- 15 minute trip to local hospital where they started meds, IV, blood tests, catheter and prep'd me for transit by air, to the Burn Unit in Halifax, NS (about 300 km away)
- 10-minute drive to local air strip because the evac helicopter was down for repairs and I was transported in a small plane – so small that no one in my family could accompany me on the trip
- arrived at the hospital around 9 a.m., being told that my family was on their way.

Over the next four months I went through surgeries for skin grafts, bowel obstruction, appendectomy, and placement of ostomy. I battled infections including MRSA and coped with X-rays, CAT scans, MRIs and a range of medications and antibiotics. At different times I was hooked up to PIC lines to drain infections, CT lines for medication, breathing and feeding tubes, along with IVs.

I went home on October 19, 2011. I had just started walking on my own again at the beginning of the month. I still had the ostomy in place. I was taking 10 different medications. Weak, tired and scared. Not done yet. Once home my routine included twice-daily bandage changes, changing the ostomy, physio, occupational therapy, compression garments, referrals with surgeons, psychologist appointments, and further infections.

As life altering and devastating as the physical injuries are they are more easily attended to than the emotional effect an experience like this has on a person. Cuts and burns heal. Infections are treated. Broken bones mend. These are injuries that have standardized procedures for treatment.

Emotional wounds take a more customized treatment plan. This is where the support of health care professionals, families and friends is so important. I know for

a fact that if it hadn't been for my wife, children, mother and my extended family, which includes my friends, I would not be here today.

Sadly, they can only help if you let them. They have to understand that they don't know what you're feeling. Hell, a lot of the time you don't know what you're feeling. And it takes longer than you think it will. Much longer.

To look at me, you wouldn't know that anything had happened until you see the scars. You can't see the emotional scars. So it's hard to judge how effective the therapy has been or how far along the healing process an individual is.

I used to believe it couldn't happen to me. And if it did, it would be a minor setback and I would be right as rain quickly. As you just read, not so much.

It can happen. It does happen. Even when all the safety procedures are followed and the proper PPE is worn it happens. I was following the established procedures under the guide of a qualified operator while I was in training – procedures that had been followed for 15-plus years. The company later changed these procedures.

I tried to return to my employer. I went back to work for six months, in a different position, and then realized that being in an industrial environment was having a very negative effect on me. I'm not sure I'll ever be able to work in an industrial setting.

My perspective on many things has changed.

I know things could have been much

worse. But I tried to find a positive aspect to focus on. The fact that I was still training meant that I had someone with me and they were able to warn me. I look at who may have been working there instead of me and as arrogant as it sounds, I'm not sure if any of them would have come through this as well as I have.

It's been a difficult four years. Many times I have questioned whether it was worth it to go through the pain of all the procedures, of the constant memories, the flash backs and the uncertainty of whether I would get back to the person I was before the incident. I feel like I've lost 10 years. I didn't expect to feel the way I do until after I retired. I also feel like I've lost some mental capacity.

Then I think of the day I was present at my first family forum. At dinner that first night there is a ceremony of remembrance, where the family members of individuals affected by workplace injuries, occupational illness and fatalities honour the memory of their loved ones and the event that changed their lives forever. During that ceremony I realized that my family wasn't on its own. I wasn't on my own. Other people were feeling the things we were feeling, they were going through similar situations and dealing with the same situations we were.

The person I was before the incident is gone. What I have been through has had such a profound effect on me that, still, to this day, I ask the question why.



Nevin at right, with his family

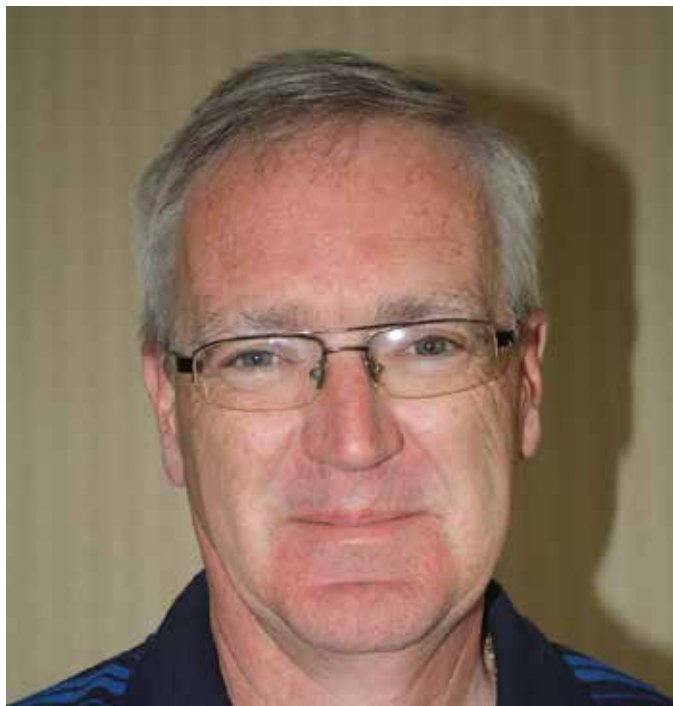
## Part of a very extended family

by Glenn Johnson

On March 10th, 2008 we lost our son Jeffrey in a workplace accident. For the next couple of years I was existing in a very dark world. I felt lost and so full of guilt. One evening while watching the evening news something caught my attention. It was the news brief for the Steps for Life walk. I listened to what it was and what it represented and I was captivated by it. I immediately went to my computer and Googled it and sent an email to Shirley Hickman. Within two hours I had a reply back. Shirley called me that week and we talked on the phone for well over an hour. She told me about the family forum and how I should attend. I thought about it in the days following and decided no I really did not want to go. I didn't want to be a part, or I should say didn't feel I should be a part of that group. After much consideration I did decide to attend.

The day to leave arrived and I had so much regret for saying yes. I still had the feeling that I didn't want to belong. I arrived at Oak Island with a very heavy heart not knowing my reactions. I took part in the reflections ceremony and I attended the sessions and over the course of that weekend I realized something that changed my outlook on many things. I realized I wasn't alone; that there were others that felt the same pain and heartache and guilt as me. We were all travelling this different path of life. By the time the weekend was over I knew I belonged; that I was a part of this group. I was a part of a very extended family. This year I attended my third family forum and even though I return home emotionally exhausted I gain so much hope and love from the weekend with my extended FAMILY.

This year I was honoured by being asked to facilitate the men's session. I agreed to do so but a couple days later I began to have second thoughts. I wasn't sure I was capable or experienced enough. Each year I do a talk at the High School graduation ceremonies and present a scholarship in memory of our son Jeffrey and I always focus that talk on Jeffrey's story and on workplace health and safety, but I still wasn't sure I could facilitate the men's session. My wife Coreine always gives me a boost of confidence and she said,



“You know you can do it” and so I followed through.

To say I was nervous would be an understatement. I prepared mentally and always I have to see something on paper in front of me, but the morning of the session I had nothing. I wanted to be able to focus on what was in my mind and to always be a listening ear. I told the group gathered that it was my first time doing something like this, so please forgive me for any mistakes. I feel the session went well and the members of the group told me afterwards that it was a good session. As men we feel we are supposed to be the strong one; we tend to bottle up some of our emotions inside and focus more on our spouse and our other children and making sure they are okay. This can sometimes be very negative and push you into a very dark place that you have to fight very hard to get back from. The men's session helps you talk to other men and in doing so it makes you realize that never are you alone. There is always someone on that same path.



### Join the family...online

Threads of Life is a big extended family. And now there's one more way to connect with your Threads of Life family – through our new blog. Every week there's a new article or story about topics like grief and healing, workplace safety culture, volunteering or Steps for Life. If you subscribe, you'll get an email notification every time there's something new to read. You can find the blog at [www.threadsoflife.ca/blog](http://www.threadsoflife.ca/blog). The family's all here!

### Let your light shine

Are you a closet writer? Are you the person others come to, to “make sure I say this the right way”? Do you have a story to tell or some thoughts to share? We have lots of ways you can let your literary light shine. Consider writing your family story, or a reflection for the newsletter, or compose a post for our blog. Contact Susan, [shaldane@threadsoflife.ca](mailto:shaldane@threadsoflife.ca) or 888-567-9490 to get more details.



Belle (left) and Bailey on their cross-Canada journey

Belle and Bailey are travelling from Eastern Ontario to Vancouver Island, British Columbia. Each day they wonder what new adventure they might get into. They have never travelled 400 or more km in a day, let alone day after day. They have never experienced sleeping in a hotel room. They are certainly best friends and good company for each other. Their companions are Bob (my husband) and myself. Just like the dogs, we are not sure what each day will bring. Some days the mornings start out sunny and warm, then by the end of the day, we are wearing every coat and also a rain jacket. There is only so much you can pack into the car when doing this kind of travel. Bob and I have not travelled across Canada to the west coast by car before. We have driven north around the Great Lakes –dipped into Lake Superior, witnessed tall evergreen trees, and roads that have been blasted out of the rugged rock landscape our country has. We have had days of nothing but evergreens and lush green vegetation, days of travelling the prairies – where you can see as far as the eye is able, and watch that grain silo grow in size. Sort of like our daily lives, I reflect. Despite the best planning and lists, we all get sidetracked from time to time. Our family members are testament to those changes. Despite that I am on vacation, and I certainly

took a break from my regular routine, I am forever reminded of the many family and community members I have been privileged to have met. I see a road sign announcing a community and there I am, thinking of you. Even for those who live nowhere close to the road we are travelling, the experiences we have shared come to my mind as I enter the province in which you live. I reflect on how our lives have been forever changed, when a family member went to work and didn't come home as healthy as they were at the beginning of the day, if they came home at all. I think about the courage so many of you have found in an attempt to find a new normal. Just like Belle and Bailey, none of us really know where we are heading tomorrow – but we give it our best and face the challenges as they greet us. Belle is our Golden Retriever, Bailey is a one-year-old Chocolate Lab, and belongs to our son's family. I look at them and am sure they are drawing courage from each other on this new journey, just as we have each found that when we share challenges, they seem just a little lighter. Our summer journey is not just a vacation, our family is relocating to B.C. so our cross-country trip is taking all of us away from home, and toward a new home.

# A new adventure

by Shirley Hickman



## Welcome a-'board'!

The Threads of Life board of directors welcomed a new member this year: Karen Lapierre Pitts from Nova Scotia. Karen has been a long-time family member and volunteers with Steps for Life, the Volunteer Family Guides and the speakers bureau (see a volunteer profile of Karen on our blog, [www.threadsoflife.ca/blog](http://www.threadsoflife.ca/blog)).

The board of directors includes ten volunteer members, a blend of family members and partners. They meet four times a year and oversee the strategy and operations of the organization, guiding decisions in areas like strategic planning, human resources, finances, and programs.

*“I remember a speaking engagement I did right before Christmas for a local construction company,” Diana Devine says. “They were a group of workers gathered in their lunchroom that had come to hear my story. It made me think of my Dad and how much he enjoyed the comradeship of working with people and I could just picture him sitting there at lunch making jokes and laughing with his co-workers. It also made me sad because I know my Dad will never get to do that again.”*

This favourite volunteer moment reconfirms why Diana volunteers with Threads of Life, as a member of the speakers bureau and a passionate fundraiser. She strives to help and impact other families who are going through similar events in their lives. “Hopefully with all the speaking I have been doing, I too can try to raise awareness and help prevent future fatalities or injuries at the workplace,” Diana explains.

Diane’s father Ulderico, known to all as Rico, was working on a job site on Parliament Hill when the backhoe he was operating suddenly engaged, propelling the machine forward. The backhoe wouldn’t turn off and bounced several times. It went through a concrete wall and fell over the high embankment behind the parliamentary library. He was killed instantly. At 65 Rico could have retired but he enjoyed his work so much that he chose to continue.

Diana, like so many others, learned about Threads of Life through a family member or a friend, in this case her sister. At the time of her father’s death, she didn’t personally use the services that Threads of Life had to offer, but her sister shared a newsletter that inspired Diana to pick up the phone and connect with Threads



Diana with her dad Rico

of Life. That was in 2007, and the rest is history as she says.

In addition to joining the speaker’s bureau and making numerous presentations, Diana has been running the Ottawa Marathon in her dad’s memory while raising money for Threads of Life. To date she has raised close to \$19,000 and looks forward to reaching the \$20,000 mark. To Diana, the running the marathons has been a small way of showing that with hard work and determination you can do anything in life. She is not sure how many more marathons she will run but whatever she chooses to do to raise money and workplace safety awareness will show her family the benefits of hard work and how far that takes you in life.

“This was my Dad’s motto, and I hope that my own children will have this way of thinking and acting in their futures,” she says.

Diana enjoys many other volunteer activities, including staying involved with her children’s schools, helping with their BBQs, attending field trips, and assisting in the classrooms.

“I think it’s important to give back to your community because you just never know when you may need a helping hand in life.”



## TELLING OUR STORIES

A new speaker coming to speakers bureau training chalks up some major milestones. First, there’s being able to get your story down on paper for the first time. Then, there’s arriving at training, discovering the others are just as nervous as you, and building some new friendships with people who know what you’re going through. And at the end of the training, there’s finding the courage to stand up in front of the group and deliver your presentation for the first time.

“The best part for me,” Lisa Shirley wrote after finishing speakers bureau training, “was being able to say my speech and see the reactions of people I had grown to trust. Everyone did great and we were all nervous. It was nice to see everyone’s confidence soar.”

Lisa completed her training in February 2014 and has gone on

to do a number of presentations, telling the story of her life-altering injury and delivering a powerful health and safety message.

Threads of Life’s speakers bureau includes roughly 60 members who have shared the health and safety message with more than 61,000 people. Each year, eight to ten new speakers participate in a weekend-long session where they learn tips and tricks for public speaking and how to leave audiences with a call to take action on health and safety. They build a computer file of photos to go with their speech, and each participant takes the podium to deliver their presentation.

No previous public speaking experience is required, and trained speakers can choose where and when they’d like to tell their stories.

Are you committed to helping eliminate workplace deaths, injuries and illnesses? Do you have a personal story about workplace tragedy to tell? Ask about our next speaker training, coming up in January – contact Susan Haldane at [shaldane@threadsoflife.ca](mailto:shaldane@threadsoflife.ca) or 1-888-567-9490.



## Adjusting to an environment in which the deceased is missing

*For anyone trying to make sense of grief and how it's changing them, there are many studies and models. This year, Threads newsletter has been looking into one of the best-known approaches, psychologist William Worden's "four tasks". This issue focuses on the third task, adjusting to an environment in which the deceased is missing.*

This change happens over time, and depends on the relationships and roles of the grieving person with their loved one, or the injured or ill person. There are three types of adjustments, Worden notes:

- External adjustments – how the death or tragedy affects your everyday functioning in the world
- Internal adjustments – how it affects your sense of self
- Spiritual adjustments – how it affects your values and beliefs about the world.

Threads of Life's Resource Manual for Volunteer Family Guides speaks to this third task:

The grieving person is adjusting to the new reality every time he or she:

- Takes on a role that the loved one used to do
- Works with the injured or ill worker to build strategies that incorporate the reality of the injury into their daily lives, or
- With the ill worker, gets new information on how the disease has progressed and what treatment is required to help manage it or the pain.

The grieving person is forced to deal with adjusting to the new reality whenever he or she has to do things such as:

- Face a few financial situation



Taking on a role the loved one used to do is one way of adjusting to the new reality

- Read a complex autopsy report
- Attend court hearings, or
- Go back to work or school.

Grieving family members are continually engaged in adjusting to their new reality. For example, an injured or ill worker must come to terms with new limitations while family members must adjust their daily lives to incorporate care and support for their loved one.

Some people may react, Worden writes, by promoting their own helplessness or withdrawing from the world, but "Most people...decide they must fill the roles to which they are unaccustomed, develop skills they never had, and move forward with a reassessed sense of themselves and the world"



## FAMILY FORUM

### A chance to connect and learn to cope

For many family members, the Family Forum is a highlight of the year – an exhausting weekend, but a time to recharge, reconnect with friends, and learn new skills for coping with grief and change. The successful Atlantic Canada Family Forum brought a close-knit group of families and supporters together in May. The central and western forums are coming up this fall.

The programs will offer a blend of traditional popular sessions like art therapy, the siblings and men's get-togethers, and masks of grief and loss; with new topics. For example, facilitator Audrey Stringer will lead a discussion of interrupted intimacy which will explore relationships before and after a tragedy, and look at strategies to reconnect and reduce loneliness.

For more information about family forums, visit the web site at [threadsoflife.ca/for-families/family-forums](http://threadsoflife.ca/for-families/family-forums).

Central Canada Family Forum  
October 2 – 4, 2015  
Kempfenfelt Conference Centre, Barrie, ON

Western Canada Family Forum  
October 23 – 25, 2015  
Radisson Hotel & Conference Centre Calgary Airport, Calgary, AB

# Ready...set....go!



It all starts now! If you're a walker, get out your calendar and set aside the first weekend in May for Steps for Life. And if you're a committee member, get ready to bring your best ideas and energy as planning for your local walk starts this fall!

Most Steps for Life walks will take place Saturday, April 30 or Sunday, May 1, 2016, with a few locations on alternate dates. But committees will be busy in the fall selecting volunteer roles and figuring out how to take their walk plans up a notch. Want to get involved? Send us an email at [contact@threadsoflife.ca](mailto:contact@threadsoflife.ca) and we'll connect you with your local committee.

## Close up on a walk committee... Red Deer



For the full version of this interview, and to see the Red Deer committee's great ideas for promotion and walk day, visit the *Threads of Life* blog at [www.threadsoflife.ca/blog](http://www.threadsoflife.ca/blog)

by Colleen Youngblut

One of the best ways to generate new ideas for planning a Steps for Life Walk comes from sharing ideas from one committee to another. In this edition of the newsletter we have interviewed Donna Trottier from Red Deer, Alberta. Red Deer had a very successful year, increasing both their sponsorship and their media presence.

**Question:** What do you feel was your biggest success as a committee this year?

**Donna:** We had a really solid committee this year which helped spread out the workload. We are happy about the diverse group of people that got involved in our event.

We did a really good job of splitting up the responsibilities on the committee. Main roles were: Fundraising, Advertising/Marketing, Logistics/Volunteers, Registration. Everyone on our committee was looking for sponsorship and door prizes but we had one person on the committee who really went after donations and did the lion's share of fundraising. Having someone (and the right person) focused on fundraising seemed to help bring in more support.

**Question:** When will you start organizing for the next year's walk? What are your first steps?

**Donna:** We will likely get together in November for our first meeting. Our first steps will be determining who will be on the committee again. We are also considering changing from Sunday to Saturday, because on that first Sunday of May there are three



The Red Deer Steps for Life committee celebrate on walk day 2015. Chairperson Donna Trottier is third from the right

other fundraising walks in the Red Deer area. We are going to consider Saturday to spread out the available resources over the weekend and to hopefully get a radio station to attend our event.

**Question:** What's your favourite thing about organizing Steps for Life?

**Donna:** My favorite thing about organizing the event is working with a great group of people on a team to make a difference. All of the folks on our team are kind, helpful, enthusiastic, go-getters who want to help with the walk, make it fun and get the job done. At the end of the walk we all had a bit of euphoria with our successes.



Colin Steadman, a manager with the Alberta Construction Safety Association and Hovercraft enthusiast, took his family on a tour of Alberta waterways this summer, in part to raise awareness for Threads of Life. Here, Colin is interviewed by a Lethbridge television station.

## New walk manager leads the way

Steps for Life will have a new spring in its step as our new national manager, Heather Lyle, takes over. Heather has been closely involved with Steps for Life as Threads of Life's regional development coordinator in Ontario since 2013, and as a volunteer for her local walk before that. In her new role, she will work closely with the regional coordinators, and will help lead Steps for Life to a new level as a national event.

## TriWest Capital Partners change the future for hurting families

TriWest's partners were on a mission. A few years ago, they decided they wanted to share their company's success and give something back to their community. They started looking for a cause they could support. And the result of that search has meant more families can find the support and information they need at their most painful times.

TriWest Capital Partners is one of Canada's leading private equity firms, having made majority ownership investments in more than 30 different manufacturing, service and distribution companies, based mostly in Western Canada. From a head office in Calgary, the partners of TriWest work closely with the management teams of each portfolio company to put in place a strategy for growth, operational excellence and efficiency.

"While we contemplated supporting many different worthwhile charities," says Lorne Jacobson, co-founder and senior managing director of TriWest, "it seemed like the most appropriate focus was on workplace health and safety, given the heavy industrial environment in which TriWest portfolio companies typically operate. Everyone knows someone personally who has been touched by a tragic workplace accident, and we have even experienced losses within our own portfolio companies. We knew that the cause of workplace health and safety would also resonate with our management teams and our service providers, and it is a cause that should be championed with more publicity and focus."

Since 2013, TriWest has adopted Threads of Life as its charity of choice, raising more than \$250,000 to date through an annual forum and golf tournament for its portfolio companies and suppliers. This support has covered the costs for many families to attend family forums, and for volunteers to be trained as volunteer family guides, to offer a listening ear and a shoulder to lean on for



others following a workplace tragedy.

"TriWest came to us out of the blue and asked how they could help," says Threads of Life's executive director Shirley Hickman. "Since then, their contributions have helped to change the future for many families – by providing services to families already coping with a workplace tragedy, and hopefully by helping us prevent future tragedies."

From TriWest's point of view, "we have been very happy with our sponsorship of Threads of Life that we are achieving our goal of helping individuals in need in a time of personal crisis, and also helping to raise awareness of the importance of workplace health and safety," Jacobson said.

Once again this September, TriWest's partners and the senior managers of its portfolio companies and partner organizations are getting together in Banff for the Partners Forum. Threads of Life representatives, including family members whose lives have benefitted from TriWest's efforts, will be there to offer a huge thank you to TriWest and all the participants for their support.



## LCBO campaign marks new record

Thanks to all those customers who dropped their change into LCBO coin boxes this spring, the boxes at checkout counters across Ontario raised more than ever before: more than \$15,000! Each month, Ontario's Liquor Control Board stores select different charities to feature on the coin boxes in their outlets. Threads of Life was one of the charities chosen, for the fourth time. Thank you to the LCBO, and to their customers!

**7 (more) reasons to give** You give to Threads of Life for all kinds of reasons, and family members thank you for funding family forums, volunteer family guides, training for speakers and other services. Here are just a few of the reasons that sparked donations to Threads of Life recently:

- Honouring a safety-minded coworker who was retiring
- A donation in lieu of Christmas cards to suppliers and customers
- A memorial gift in honour of a friend's life
- A wedding gift
- A donation instead of speaker gifts at a health and safety conference
- A celebration for receiving a company safety award
- A monthly pledge by an individual wanting to share his good fortune

Does that give you any ideas? Whatever the reason, it's easy to give to Threads of Life. Use the donation form on the back of this newsletter to mail in a cheque, or visit our online donation page at <http://threadsoflife.ca/donate/>.

## Coming Events

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

### Central Canada Family Forum

October 2 - 4, 2015  
Kempenfelt Conference Centre,  
Barrie, ON

### Western Canada Family Forum

October 23 - 25, 2015  
Radisson Hotel & Conference Centre  
Calgary Airport, Calgary, AB

For more information and to register,  
visit <http://threadsoflife.ca/upcoming-regional-family-forums>

### New Speaker Training

January 28-31, 2016  
Mississauga, ON

For more information contact  
Susan Haldane  
[shaldane@threadsoflife.ca](mailto:shaldane@threadsoflife.ca)

### Volunteer Family Guide Training

February 25-March 1, 2016  
Barrie, ON

For more information contact  
Kate Kennington,  
[kkennington@threadsoflife.ca](mailto:kkennington@threadsoflife.ca)



## How to reach us

Toll-free: 1-888-567-9490  
Fax: 1-519-685-1104

Association for Workplace Tragedy  
Family Support - Threads of Life

P.O. Box 9066  
1795 Ernest Ave.  
London, ON N6E 2V0

[contact@threadsoflife.ca](mailto:contact@threadsoflife.ca)  
[www.threadsoflife.ca](http://www.threadsoflife.ca)  
[www.stepsforlife.ca](http://www.stepsforlife.ca)

**EDITOR** Susan Haldane,  
[shaldane@threadsoflife.ca](mailto:shaldane@threadsoflife.ca)

**DESIGNER** Chris Williams  
[chriswilliams@rogers.com](mailto:chriswilliams@rogers.com)

### GUEST CONTRIBUTORS

Nevin diJulio  
Glenn Johnson  
Desirae Kozak



The Standards Program Trustmark is  
a mark of Imagine Canada used under  
licence by Threads of Life.



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 RR001.

### 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.



# Yes I will, help bring hope and healing to families

## Gift Payment Options

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

Visa    MasterCard

\_\_\_\_\_ account number          \_\_\_\_\_ expiry

NAME ON CARD \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS (for income tax receipt) \_\_\_\_\_

Threads of Life, P.O. Box 9066 • 1795 Ernest Ave • London, ON N6E 2V0 1 888 567 9490 • [www.threadsoflife.ca](http://www.threadsoflife.ca)

All donations are tax deductible. Charitable Registration Number #87524 8908 RR001