



Speaking up for Safety

All Threads of Life members are passionate about prevention. Members of our speakers bureau, like Erin Pitruzzella, act on their commitment by sharing their story at safety conferences, schools and events. Spring – particularly Day of Mourning and NAOSH week – is the busiest time for the Threads of Life speakers bureau.

Read more about volunteer opportunities with Threads of Life on page 7, see Erin’s story on page 4, and don’t miss our new video online at www.threadsoflife.ca where Erin talks about her motivation to be a speaker.



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR *Eleanor Westwood*

At a recent Threads of Life event, the theme was gratitude. According to one definition I read, gratitude is not just “the quality of being thankful”; it’s also “readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness.” I really like that idea of being ready to show appreciation. For so many Threads of

Life members, like the two who share their stories in this issue of the newsletter, life hasn’t given them much to be grateful for. Yet, they have found something. As our Family Support Manager Kate Kennington tells us, gratitude is not about pretending the terrible things didn’t happen, and it’s not about making those “at least...” statements (“at least... it wasn’t worse”). Gratitude is a practice that will make us stronger and healthier. As Threads of Life enters its 15th year, there are many things we can appreciate. I am grateful for all the partners and donors who fund our programs and make our work possible; for the brave individuals who share their stories so that others will know they’re not alone; for the volunteers who give their time and energy just because they believe in our vision. You’ll see all those people on the pages of this newsletter. As we move into spring, we can all stand ready to show appreciation and return kindness.



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TONY'S STORY

A life together cut short by asbestos-related mesothelioma

by **Candace Palumbo**



Candy and Tony

November 12th, 1983 was our small winter wedding reception in Toronto where my husband Tony and I first met. Following courses of Italian food and moving speeches we jived and danced for everything that night, to songs Tony mixed together from over five decades. He was an audiophile and I was just discovering the depth of his appreciation for all kinds of music. I still listen to those compilations often. We prepared our nondenominational service for that morning with our own vows and readings at St. Paul's United Church but actually married officially at Toronto City Hall in July. I had already leaked our secret engagement to one of Tony's six siblings, a sister of my vintage. Neither of us could hold it from his mom who gladly agreed to be our witness. We hushed that summer event until announcing it at the November wedding and did so to explain the greater meaning and brevity of our Church ceremony. It was

light on some religious and official constituents and shorter than the proposal. Our personal vows, Corinthians, poets, Bach and the Beatles preserved 20 minutes. Together, we obliged many requests to recall that history out loud and it was fun to tell every time.

We enjoyed our occasions over dinner at home with family and friends, out for a pint, maybe to see a movie or play. Our anniversary fell on a Sunday in 2017 and I recalled fondly his parents' family tradition of Sunday lunch... we would usually be there. We and our two children shared years of milestones, special days, sad days and ordinary ones with fresh home-made food and the animations of a large close family around this abundant table. There was always someone celebrating and someone to miss.

Tony died on July 24, 2014 at 59. He succumbed to mesothelioma, an incurable cancer caused by asbestos exposure. He had

worked in construction for companies that no longer existed by the time he was diagnosed. He had also worked with his dad on different construction jobs; however, his dad's memory was failing and I wasn't part of Tony's story until after he had finished studying at York University. It was difficult to obtain the information we needed to complete a claim with the Ontario WSIB, a challenge for many with mesothelioma because of its long latency – over 25 years. Companies fold or change names. There must be a link between the diagnosis and occupational asbestos exposure for a worker to be compensated. The Canada Revenue Agency expedited Tony's request for his archived tax returns which verified the company names and the dates he worked. The WSIB accepted Tony's claim and provided much needed financial and medical support.

Confirming a mesothelioma diagnosis would take months. Tony's shortness of breath in late June of 2013 could no longer be resolved with his inhaler, bike riding or vigorous gardening. The remarkable fatigue concerned me and I asked him to see our family doctor. He could see me fretting from inside... "It's probably something simple, maybe just a different prescription..." He would tell me he was still strong and healthy and it would be fine. He was more concerned for me and our daughter. What was this now? He was active, ate well and had regular check-ups. He read and challenged himself. We were all working and learning. A close circle of long-time friends and newer ones cared about us. We loved our kids and each other. We had a dog. These are things you need as a person, a partner and a parent to absorb and deflect coming losses.

Family and friends joined us with our daughter Emma at home on the evening of July 12, 2013. It would have been the birthday of our son Dylan who died on April 25 that year. We had gathered again to honor the memory of his life. We were all grieving; still in slow motion and in the weeks ahead we would assemble one August evening for a special memorial tribute to Dylan that Emma and friends had organized. Tony was nervous that night, not feeling well, but he spoke to Dylan's friends, listened to their stories about him, the music he made with them, the poems and spoken words and appreciated their art on the walls. The kids spilled onto the sidewalk, packing up instruments, mingling through

hugs and tears and saying goodbye. We went home late; both of us worn and no one knew anything yet. We were waiting for a negative result on his chest x-ray.

No. The family doctor called him back in quick time to discuss the results. The night before Tony's appointment we made dinner for close friends visiting from B.C. and he casually shared this news which they took in with obvious and quiet worry. This was the last time we would have any ease about Tony's health condition. He waited for me to return home from work the next day to give me the news. There were four large masses on the right lung and he had a specialist's consult pending. Emma was missing her brother terribly, studying at Ryerson and working. Tony was adamant that no one should know until there was something more definitive to report. I was between the power of denial and the brutal forces of anticipating this man's suffering and his absence from my own life and so many others. I called Emma. I visited Tony's sister's house and his eldest sister was also there. Tony was bike riding with a friend when I texted him to join us. Getting off his bike in the driveway where I was waiting in tears, he gave me a hug and said "it's ok, I told someone too". That was a weekend in September.

The working diagnosis was adenocarcinoma but the specialist advised a biopsy to be sure. We both researched this condition, its symptoms and treatment. He was losing energy, losing weight and falling asleep too early as we watched our favorite shows after dinner. He was against risking biopsy because of the potential for disrupting cells and hastening the progression of the disease. Making this decision would become moot but not before we toiled over it, figuring the advantage of knowing the tumor type. Intractable focused headaches plagued him and defied relief in the next few weeks. Tony distracted himself with projects and ran his business reselling networking equipment from the home office. The market was slow and he worried about finances. His mind was turning all the time.

Word had spread and someone always came by to listen or hold us upright. Our messaging was full. We continued sharing communal dinners and spending evenings out or gathering for a backyard fire singing to someone's guitar. Tony still loved meaty political discussions and stayed current with world news. The headaches finally overwhelmed his every move and our brother-in-law urged him to go to the emergency. It was a Friday in early October. He told me to go to work, saying I would be better off occupied with anything

else. He called around 3:00 pm. I couldn't breathe or think but I drove to meet him. He was booked for neurosurgery to remove a tumor from his cerebellum. Biopsy confirmed mesothelioma and that it had spread from his lung. We were told to get our house in order on October 16th and Tony should do things he enjoyed. Over the next few months, we met

was driven to finish projects around the house. We listened to music. He was ornery and stubborn sometimes and so was I. He worked in the garden again in spring and as always, I did what he told me to there. We attended funerals and birthday parties, played charades and had movie nights. We remembered camping trips, canoeing in Algonquin with the kids, hiking

“ Word had spread and someone always came by to listen or hold us upright.

with a neurosurgeon, an oncologist, a radiologist, a thoracic surgeon, a social worker, four naturopaths and three palliative care physicians. Each of them described what they could do and left no uncertainty about the unalterable path ahead of him. Advanced pleural metastatic mesothelioma would end his life in two years or less.

Tony was discharged home where he wanted to be in November and would return to hospital as an outpatient. The day we came back through our front door together, I helped him to the living room sofa, knelt on the floor beside him and told him not to leave me. He said he wouldn't, he would be here for a while. We still had to reduce the swelling around the incisions and address his visual and coordination challenges so he could function. Recovering from two lengthy brain operations was the least of the problems he would endure physically and emotionally. His thinking and sense of humor were changed and his body failing yet by the will and strength within him, he engaged and connected with all of us, telling us things he wanted us to know.

We never travelled to Italy and Scotland as we had hoped but Tony loved being with his family and enjoyed his home. Emma came up to spend time with her dad, cooking his favorite foods, running errands, talking about music and what seeds to plant. We walked our dog. We visited friends in Florida where he rode a bike and played tennis one last time with a friend he'd known since childhood. It was a welcome break from the sub-zero February cold in Toronto which he couldn't tolerate any more. He

and horseback riding in the mountains out west and our trips out east. The morning before he died, he asked me to stop moving and sit with him and I could see that he couldn't bear the weight of his illness.

We visit Tony's memorial tree of life in Toronto Cedarvale Park in the neighborhood where he grew up. In July, I take his ashes to the Bay of Fundy in Nova Scotia which I now call home. We had few separations in our years together by mutual choice. In his last ten months he needed my constant presence, my work and my care. I was mad when I got tired. I never imagined I would know the privilege of being all this for someone.



Candy and Tony with children Emma and Dylan

A HAPPY FAMILY FROZEN IN TIME

Construction labourer is struck and killed by dump truck

by **Erin Pitruzzella**



Erin and Leo

I first met Leo in the spring of 1994. After a business dinner in Toronto one of my coworkers suggested we stop at a dance club we passed on our way home. I told her I wanted to call it a night but she persuaded me anyway. When I entered the bar I lost my friend to the dance floor. I turned around to find a deeply tanned, Italian man wearing a suit smiling at me. He asked me to dance. I said no thank you and started to look for my friend. The man followed me and asked to buy me a drink. Hmmmm – persistent! It paid off. Five months later we were engaged to be married.

Over the next few years we would relocate from Ontario to Nova Scotia for Leo's work. Leo was close with his family and missed them terribly. Having his own family meant everything to him. I had family in Nova Scotia who quickly loved Leo like their own. Our daughter Marleen

was born in April of 1998. Leo called my family in the middle of the night to meet us at the hospital. Leo was so excited when the nurse handed the baby to him, he walked out of the delivery room! "Sir, sir, Mr. Pitruzzella, where are you going? You can't take the baby," the nurse yelled after him. In true Leo fashion he yelled back "the baby wants to meet her family. They are waiting for her in the hallway!" That was Leo. Always proud of his family.

Our son Michael was born two years later. Leo was working in Ontario while we stayed in Nova Scotia. The baby came a week early and Leo flew to Halifax the next day. He was telling everyone in the hospital he had a million dollar family...without the million dollars!

Leo's family was his world. He would play peekaboo on the floor with Marleen, take to the swings at the park, or prop her up on the sofa to watch his favourite

football team, the Pittsburgh Steelers. He bought Michael a little yellow construction hat and what looked like safety boots. When he took Michael to construction sites, Michael was eager to climb on the machines. Leo would insist he could look but not touch; the machines were dangerous and he did not want his boy to get hurt.

Leo bought a home for us in Ontario. We enrolled the children in the local school. Leo and I never missed a school recital, pageant, or competition. We went everywhere as a foursome, whether it was to the mall, weekend outings, birthday parties, visiting family or friends. We were always together.

July 13, 2009 seemed like any other beautiful sunny summer day. Every day started the same way: Leo got up at 4:00 am, put on his work pants and his orange safety work shirt with the distinctive yellow 'x' on it, grabbed his lunch bucket, wallet, phone, a quick kiss for a good day and left for work. No matter what the job, Leo always began with a smile. I admired that he had no worries ... he just took every day in stride. As the son of immigrant Italian parents, hard work was part of his heritage. I dropped off our eight-year-old son Michael and our 11-year-old daughter Marleen at their summer camp, wished them a good day and headed to work. My workload was demanding and when I was interrupted to take a phone call from Leo in the morning it was a welcome break. Hearing his voice made my day. He told me he loved me and was looking forward to a quiet evening. Not too long after that Leo called me again. This time he told me not to forget to pick up the children and buy meats and buns at the deli for his lunch. I was very rushed during this call, laughed that I would never forget the children but I did not have time to talk, I had to get back to work and would talk to him that night. Words I came to regret later.

By dinner time Leo had not come home from work. Instead two York Regional police officers banged on my door. With them were two women from Victim Services holding teddy bears. I thought

they were looking for someone else's house but the police officer asked if I was Leonardo Pitruzzella's wife. I answered I was. He said they were sorry to inform me that my husband was involved in an accident with a truck at his place of work and he died. I stared in disbelief. Numb and unable to make a sound. Marleen burst into tears and screamed "my Daddy is dead? My Daddy is dead?" I held her tight and rocked her, trying to comfort her. The strangers at my door asked if they could come inside. The world spun and my legs gave way. I thought I was going to pass out. The strangers helped me up the stairs to the living room. I had to tell my little boy why his daddy would never be coming home again. While the police spoke to me the women sat down and handed their teddy bears to the children. In a rage my daughter flung the bear at them and yelled she did not want it – she wanted her daddy. I insisted the police take us to Leo so we could help him. I was told that I could not see him, I could not help him and I could not be with him. I had a million questions, but no one would answer me – just that it was being investigated and they left the coroner's business card on my coffee table.

As family and friends heard the news, they came to the house. Some were playing with the children, others making phone calls, some were watching TV. And there on CP24 was Leo! The reporter announced that a construction worker had been struck by a dump truck, dragged and killed in Vaughan. The image was unforgettable. The company's red dump truck with yellow police caution tape cordoning off the site where the accident took place. And in front of the truck was a tarp held down with orange safety cones. Under the tarp was Leo. The people in the room yelled "turn it off! She can't watch that!" It was surreal. Our real life drama was public news.

Funeral arrangements were made quickly. At the coroner's request, the casket was closed. The immediate family was ushered into the funeral parlour first to pay respects. Our past, present and future was in a wooden box that was screwed shut. A family photo on top of the casket was of a happy family frozen in time.

Our families were devastated, but did all they could to support us. Days ran into

nights without my husband. I missed his touch, his love, his laughter, his support, his company. Life seemed without meaning for my family – we were just going through the motions. Three days after we buried Leo's ashes, we were driving when another car crashed into us. We were loaded into separate ambulances. I kept asking where the children were. A police officer told me he was having someone call their father to come and meet them at the hospital. I burst into tears and yelled 'no, stop, you can't. He asked why not? I told him because we buried their father three days ago.

I went back to work. Bills kept coming in and taxes were due. Now I was a single parent caring for our two young children. Dealing with the Ministry of Labour and WSIB became my new world. I waited anxiously for phone calls and emails to update me on their investigations. Court dates were set, cancelled and rescheduled. A couple of years later in a courtroom I finally heard the details leading up to and surrounding Leo's death. It was like a kick in the stomach. At approximately 4:30 pm July 13, 2009, the company was working on paving driveways for homes. That afternoon he was doing the job that he so passionately loved, when one of the company's dump trucks, laden with asphalt, reversed without a flagperson present. The vehicle hit Leo and backed over him, dragging him several feet. He was crushed and dismembered under the weight of the truck. Leo had a loud voice. How could so many people be around and no one heard him yell? It was an emotional afternoon. I presented three victim impact statements, two on behalf of Marleen and Michael and one from myself. There was not a dry eye in the courtroom by the time I finished reading the statements. Even the judge excused herself. The company was fined the maximum amount according to precedence, as well as an additional 25 per cent for a victim's fund. How can you put a price on someone's life? Life to me is precious and priceless.

More time passed and we coped. Our co-ordinator from the WSIB was a true comfort to us. She mentioned an organization to me called Threads of Life and there I found the support I needed. My Volunteer Family Guide, also a widow

with young children, listened to me as I cried and got my frustration out for the endless battles I was up against. I attended the Threads of Life Family Forum. There I met men and women who all carried with them their unique stories of workplace injury, illness or fatality. It was a safe environment to share my story. The workshops were informative and gave me the tools to gather strength. There was hope.

Finally I received a call from the Ministry of Labour that the coroner's inquest would take place in Aurora, ON. I sat there for two days holding Leo's photo for all to see. Pictures on the giant screen in the courtroom showed the interior and exterior of the red truck, police tape, safety cones, tarps, diagrams. We heard audio tape of the witness, and investigators said the music in the truck was so loud when they re-created the scene, they could not hear the other investigator yell from behind the truck. After countless cross examinations, the jury deemed Leo's death an accident. They recommended clear signage on job sites requiring a flagperson, a backup camera visible to the driver, and that the radio should be silenced when the vehicles are put in reverse. Was this finally closure? No, just another part of the journey that is our life.

It has been a long journey since the death of my husband. Each day is a gift to us and we remember Leo every day. After years of counselling, support from family for myself and the children, and finding Threads of Life we have been able to live a new normal.



Leo and Erin with their children Marleen and Michael



Anticipation

by **Kate Kennington**

Children often count the number of sleeps with intense excitement and anticipation as a special day or event draws near. As we grow older that level of excitement usually wanes yet the feeling of looking forward to something is still strong. Anticipating an event can bring feelings of delight, dread or even numbness.

Each spring at Threads of Life we definitely count the days until Steps for Life! So much planning goes into the event and we do look forward to it with excitement. Of course there is one thing we can't control – the weather. Our walk committees have risk management plans in place yet it still causes some anxiety no matter what as we anticipate the day itself.

That feeling of anticipation can take us many places and be complicated by many emotions. The anniversary of my husband, Rob's death is in May and each year in the weeks before I anticipate that day and it brings memories and plenty of emotions to the surface. I always try hard to reflect in a way that is healthy, however there will always be some regrets, words that can never be spoken, conversations unfinished and no new memories to be made. I think I have worked through the anger and the guilt but

some years something new will trigger and I do know there are still pieces to explore as we approach 12 years since he died. And even though I know it happens every year, that anticipatory grief still catches me by surprise.

For families living with a life-altering injury or an occupational disease there is that same complicated anticipation of anniversary dates of when their lives were forever changed. And there is also anticipatory grief of what is yet to come and how their injury or illness will continue to impact their lives and that of their family.

A diagnosis of occupational disease usually comes with a life expectancy range. We all know that there is only one way out of this life, however to be told a definitive date is very, very different. This causes grief to start before the loss. It is human nature to grieve when we know a loss is ahead of us. And there are so many complications along the way as roles change and small pieces of our loved one disappear as their disease progresses. It can be a slow good-bye; always wondering when the final good-bye will happen.

Some important reminders for all of us are to know that the complicated emotions of anticipatory grief is normal, and one of the best things to do is talk about how you are feeling. Connect with others who know you or your loved one and share together. And as you have all heard me say – take good care of you! Grief takes a significant emotional toll and it is some of the hardest work you will ever have to do. Self care is essential and you are worth it!



Volunteering with Threads of Life

Volunteers make the world go ‘round. Threads of Life’s work wouldn’t happen without them. We have hundreds of volunteers, and in 2017 they donated more than 8,350 hours of their time!

Our volunteers gain from their experience too – for many, it’s the chance to honour their loved one or their own life experience, to help other people heal from work-related tragedy, and to prevent future tragedies.

Threads of Life volunteers fill a variety of roles. If you’re ready to tackle something new, here are some possibilities:

- **Volunteer Family Guides** – Volunteer Family Guides are patient and active listeners, with good self-knowledge and a sense of compassion. Training will help to reinforce knowledge of the principles of grief, communication skills and healthy coping skills. To become a Volunteer Family Guide you need to have personally experienced a workplace tragedy, and be far enough along on your journey that you are able to offer your support to others who may be just starting.
- **Threads of Life speakers** – Threads of Life’s speakers tell the real stories behind the health and safety stats. They bring home the devastating impact a workplace tragedy has on families, co-workers, and the community. Members of the Threads of Life speakers bureau are volunteers who have been affected by a workplace fatality, life-altering injury, or occupational disease.
- **Steps for Life – Walking for Families of Workplace Tragedy** – With walks in roughly 30 communities across Canada, Steps for Life calls on the talents of hundreds of volunteers! Before the event you can join an organizing committee. On the day of the walk, lots of volunteers are needed for all kinds of tasks from folding t-shirts to barbecuing to directing traffic.
- **Workshop ideas** – Our annual family forums are a chance to share experiences and learn healthy coping skills. Topics have included healthy grieving, mental health, grief and addictions, mindfulness and meditation, art therapy and much more. We’re often looking for ideas for new forum sessions – why not propose one?
- **Write a blog or article** – The Threads of Life weekly blog, and this newsletter, are ideal places to share experiences and reflections. If you like to write, we can use your help!
- **Organize an event** – If you’re a go-to, get-it-done kind of person, try organizing a fundraising event to support Threads of Life. Get your workplace, neighbourhood, friends or school involved.
- **Spread the word** – Sadly, there are always more people who could use Threads of Life’s programs. We can provide you with information to distribute to your local funeral home, church or grief counselling office.

We are grateful for Threads of Life’s volunteers, who give so much of themselves to build a safer and better world.

“ If our hopes of building a better and safer world are to become more than wishful thinking, we will need the engagement of volunteers more than ever.”

Kofi Annan,
the former Secretary-General of the United Nations



Lissa Gaudet

Lissa Gaudet volunteers as the co-chair of the Halifax Steps for Life walk. Lissa's position as QHSE Advisor at McNally Construction Inc. in Halifax brings the importance of workplace safety to Lissa's mind every day.

Lissa was first introduced to Threads of Life in 2010 when she was working for the Nova Scotia Construction Safety Association. She was asked to join their team for Steps for Life. Lissa was hooked right away. She had found an organization in Threads of Life that shared the same values and goals that she had. Lissa wanted to spread the word and let everyone know about Threads of Life.

In 2012 Lissa jumped in feet first by joining the planning committee. There are many details, big and small, to organize and arrange. Lissa was willing to help wherever she could. The Steps for Life walks wouldn't be possible without people like Lissa getting on board and helping out.

In 2013 the Halifax Steps for Life committee found itself without a chair. Lissa willingly stepped up and took that co-chair role and has co-chaired the Halifax walk every year since.

Co-chair was not the only new position for Lissa that year; she had also taken on her current position at McNally Construction Inc. Taking on a new job and a new volunteer role in the same time period shows Lissa's passion and dedication to both her health and safety career and to Threads of Life. Lissa was able to convey her passion for Threads of Life to the management team at McNally and bring them on board as a community leader sponsor in 2013. McNally has sponsored the Halifax Steps for Life walk every year since and will be returning again in 2018.

Lissa attended the Atlantic Family Forum a couple of years ago. As a volunteer you don't always get the opportunity to meet the people you are helping. But Threads of Life is not a faceless charity as we all know. Lissa not only got the opportunity to meet several family members, she also had the opportunity to hear their stories and experience a reflection ceremony with them. Lissa describes this moment as one of the greatest honours of her life. Lissa was committed to helping raise awareness for Threads of Life and its family members before she attended the forum, but that commitment was set in stone for her afterwards.

In recognition of Lissa's valued service as a volunteer Lissa was nominated for a Threads of Life Community Action award. This is awarded to those who have volunteered for three or more years and have made a significant impact in two or more of our four strategic objectives: raising awareness, volunteering, participation, and revenue. Lissa's name was put forward for an award by her fellow co-chair, Trisha MacIsaac. Trisha felt Lissa's efforts should be recognized because in her opinion, the Halifax walk just wouldn't happen without Lissa. Lissa said she was honoured to have been given the award, but she didn't volunteer for the recognition. Her greatest satisfaction comes on walk day when she sees the sea of yellow t-shirts.



Bruce Power: Friend of Threads of Life

Brian and Marj Deyell presented the "Friends of Threads of Life" award to Bruce Power CEO, Mike Rencheck (centre). Bruce Power supports this organization every year as a "Champion Sponsor" at walks in eight different cities across southwestern Ontario including Barrie, Durham, Hamilton, London, Mississauga, Ottawa, Sudbury and Toronto.

"Safety is our Number One value at Bruce Power and we keep it at the top of mind in everything we do. Our focus is on the next minute of every day to ensure our own safety and that of our fellow workers," said Mike. "Our support of Threads of Life is one way we can demonstrate our commitment to safety and support for those who have suffered a workplace tragedy."

Every year, more families across Canada find their way to Threads of Life when they need support coping with a work-related fatality, serious injury or disease.

Our wish is that every person who could benefit from Threads of Life programs knows how to find that help. And thanks to partners like WorkplaceNL, that wish is coming true. Every year, more families across Canada find their way to Threads of Life when they need support coping with a work-related fatality, serious injury or disease. Our wish is that every person who could benefit from Threads of Life programs knows how to find that help. And thanks to partners like WorkplaceNL, that wish is coming true.

WorkplaceNL delivers workplace injury and illness prevention and compensation services in Newfoundland and Labrador, and is one of the many workers' compensation boards across the country that have forged partnerships with Threads of Life to support those affected by workplace tragedy.

“WorkplaceNL has a vision of safe and healthy workplaces, and we strive to reduce the impact of work-related injuries when they do occur,” says Dennis Hogan, CEO, WorkplaceNL. “Spreading the word about Threads of Life amongst our staff and clients is just another way people can become aware of how to get the support they need to heal physically and emotionally.”

Each year, WorkplaceNL shares information about the Atlantic Family Forum with workers and their families who have experienced a tragedy. General information about Threads of Life programs and services is also available in WorkplaceNL's offices and from their staff.

So that staff members understand how Threads of Life can help clients, WorkplaceNL regularly brings Threads of Life speakers in to share their stories and talk about how Threads of Life has helped them. This February, speaker Paulette Raymond and Threads of Life's director of partnerships Scott McKay together met with WorkplaceNL staff to answer questions and further develop this partnership.

Raising awareness about the impact a workplace tragedy can have on a family and community is also a priority. WorkplaceNL arranged to have speaker Alex Tuff share his story at two Health and Safety Symposiums in 2017 in Newfoundland and Labrador, promoting prevention and letting even more people know about Threads of Life's speakers bureau, family forums and other programs.

WorkplaceNL is involved in annual Steps for Life – Walking for Families of Workplace Tragedy events as well. In addition to sponsoring walks in St. John's and Corner Brook, the organization supports its staff participating as volunteers and walkers.

Contact with their province's compensation board is one of the key ways new families find Threads of Life, and Newfoundland and Labrador is no exception. Thanks to the partnership of WorkplaceNL, more families in Canada's easternmost province are finding hope and healing.



WorkplaceNL: helping to grow awareness



Threads of Life volunteer Alex Tuff shared his story at a Workplace NL Health and Safety Symposium last fall



How you help

Our partners work side-by-side with Threads of Life to achieve our mission of helping families heal and preventing future life-altering workplace injuries, illnesses and deaths. Here's how:

Growing awareness: Partners help to spread the word so everyone who could benefit from Threads of Life's programs will be aware of what we have to offer.

Growing our volunteer base: Partners organize events or support their employees' volunteer efforts.

Growing our participation: Partners help Threads of Life to get more people involved.

Growing our revenue: Partners sponsor events or programs, hold fundraisers, make donations and name Threads of Life as their Charity of Choice.

Volunteer, Fundraise and Register **TODAY!**



Registration is now open for Steps for Life – Walking for Families of Workplace Tragedy in close to 30 communities across Canada. Go online to our new and easier-to-use website (stepsforlife.ca) to register. You can also donate to a walk or a community.

We all want to pay it forward and give back to our community. When you participate in Steps for Life, your efforts help raise awareness about workplace health and safety. You also help to provide programs for people dealing with the effects of a workplace fatality, serious injury or occupational disease.

Most walks take place the first weekend in May. Check the website for the walk date in your community.

Your commitment and compassion can change the world. Register for Steps for Life this year to make it happen.

Your Walk Your Way – any day in May

There are Steps for Life walks from coast to coast in Canada – but if you're too far from one of the walk communities, or can't make it on walk day, you can still be involved! Your Walk Your Way is a chance for individuals or groups to do their own Steps for Life thing. You can still register online and use all the handy fundraising tools on our web site. Then just pick your date, and walk, run, ride or whatever you like. On the Steps for Life web site, under "Find a location near you", instead of clicking on a city just scroll down the list of communities to "Virtual – Walk your way event". And you're off to the races!

Steps for Life sponsors see the big picture

It takes a special company to invest in the future of health and safety, and in healing for those affected by work-related tragedy. But that's what our Steps for Life sponsors do. Through their support for the walk, they help to create awareness, and sustain the programs Threads of Life provides. This year, in addition to dozens of community sponsors, we have ten partners who stepped up to support the walk on a national level. Thank you to our national sponsors!

A huge thank you to our national sponsors for Steps for Life 2018.



TOTAL BUILDING ENVELOPE



MEDIA



You too can become a **CHAMPION FUNDRAISER!**

For almost 10 years, Estella Hickey and her friend Michelle MacDonald have been participating in and fundraising for Steps for Life – Walking for Families of Workplace Tragedy. Estella's son, Kyle, died in March 2008 in a workplace explosion. Threads of Life has been there for Estella and her family, both socially and as an information source. It is this relationship that drives Estella and Michelle's fundraising efforts. They have become champion fundraisers for their team.



So what makes this duo so successful at fundraising?

"We feel the success is due to our story," Michelle says. "We make sure everyone knows why and what they are supporting. Our story is raw and often emotional but is memorable and resonates

with many." The circle of supporters they have is large, varied and loyal. A priority during their fundraising campaign is to thank their supporters. This helps to build the relationship and continues from year to year. Estella and Michelle's team is formed out of love, a shared love for Kyle.

Once the walk is over, they immediately start planning for the next year. They host annual events, but make sure to mix it up to keep it fresh and interesting. Michelle says, "Our most successful event has been our craft and bake sales. We are blessed to have such talented and creative friends and family. We make sure to personalize the event with photos and banners as well as offer a little something to make people feel welcome. We offer items from every price point so everyone leaves with something; no amount is too little."

You can be this successful too!

Step up and join others in your community to raise awareness about the importance of preventing workplace injuries and illnesses. Once you register to walk, as a team or individual, then you can start fundraising.

Registration is easier than ever before with our new website: www.stepsforlife.ca. You can create your own fundraising page and share the news. Walking as a team will multiply the impact you can have. Steps for Life is a community event and best shared with those important to you, like Estella and Michelle.



Michelle (left) and Estella (right) with supporters at a fundraising dance

Did you know that if every Steps for Life walker, approximately 5000 of us, raised just \$200 each, we would raise \$1 million? Here are some tips of the trade to help you personally develop your fundraising plan.

- 1 Set up your personal page online
- 2 Set your goal high
- 3 Get your first donation today
- 4 Send an email to everyone you know
- 5 Use technology to share, share, share
- 6 Create a possible donor list
- 7 Repeat, remind, rewind
- 8 Say thank you

The first pledge is always the most important one. You can get more information on these tips from our Walker Toolkit Package.

Finally, visit our fundraising page FAQs where you may find the answer to your question. If not, contact us at steps@threadsoflife.ca. We are here to help!

Coming Events

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

Atlantic Family Forum – June 1-3, 2018 – Atlantica Resort, Chester NS

Central Family Forum – September 28-30, 2018 – Nottawasaga Inn, Alliston ON

Prairie & Western Family Forum – October 19-21, 2018 – Saskatoon, SK
Saskatoon Inn & Conference Centre.

SHARE THIS NEWSLETTER!

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



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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
www.threadsoflife.ca
www.stepsforlife.ca



Association for Workplace Tragedy Family Support

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

MISSION

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

VISION

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

VALUES

We believe 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.

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Yes I will, help bring hope and healing to families

Gift Payment Options

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

Visa MasterCard

_____ account number _____ expiry

NAME ON CARD _____

SIGNATURE _____

PHONE NUMBER _____

ADDRESS (for income tax receipt) _____

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

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