



The Family Forum experience

The first Family Forum is a scary experience for many people – not knowing what to expect or who they will meet. Family member Coreine Johnson agreed to share her experience as a first-time attendee at this spring’s Atlantic Canada Family Forum – *see page 7*.

Two Family Forums are coming up this fall: Central Canada in September and Western Canada in October. The next Atlantic Forum will be in May 2015.



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR *Bill Stunt*

Maybe it’s all those years of heading off to school or getting kids ready for school, but September always feels like a time for starting something new. It’s no different at Threads of Life. The fall brings two of our three annual family forums. These get-togethers are a cornerstone of Threads of Life’s family support – for those of us who

have been to several, it’s a chance to greet old friends and re-focus on what Audrey Stringer in this issue calls our “grief work”. It’s always with mixed feelings that I meet new families attending the family forum for the first time – sadness at what has brought them there; relief and pleasure that they’ve found a source of support. And it’s always wonderful to watch our experienced family members step up to make these newcomers feel welcomed and at home.

Among those newer family members are the two women who share their stories in this issue: Charmaine Salter and Diana Devine. Both tell stories of strong, loving dads whose lives were cut short – one by fatality and one by occupational disease. I’m sure that like me, you’ll wish you had a chance to know both of these men.

Also this season, planning is underway for speakers training and Volunteer Family Guide training, and of course, our Steps for Life committees are ramping up to build the 2015 walk – read on page eight about opportunities for you to get involved!

I am pleased to welcome Scott McKay as our new Program Manager for Partnerships and Fundraising. Scott comes to us with a wealth of experience in building strong relationships between organizations and individuals.



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Electrician's asbestos exposure leads to lung cancer

"Every day I can put my feet on the floor is a good day" by *Charmaine Salter*



Ronald Clarence Garland with his beloved Gibson guitar.

How does one begin

to tell the story of someone who was not only the rock, but also the sunshine in our family? This story is about my father, Ronald Clarence Garland, who was diagnosed with Mesothelioma, a cancer caused by repeated exposure to asbestos, due to his years of working as an electrician for large corporations.

Dad was born to Clarence and Nettie Garland of Windsor, NS in August 1936. He was the second son of a family of six including his brothers Jack and Bill, and sisters Rae, Janice and Susan. Family was always important to him; he and his sister Rae were particularly close growing up.

Dad left home at age 16, and went to work in Halifax at the dock yards as an electrician's helper. He became licensed in his early 20s and enjoyed his working years as an electrician with Western Electric and then Nova Scotia Power Commission. Dad loved music and bought an acoustic guitar, a Gibson, with one of his first paycheques. That Gibson became dad's constant companion up to and including when he met his future bride June Crossley at the Windsor Exhibition. We often teased him

about whether mom or his Gibson was his first love. It was dad's music that helped win mom's heart, and their love continued for more than 54 years. Dad married mom April 1957 and they had three children: Charmaine (dad always called me Charlie), Pam and Jim. We grew up in a home filled with music and friends, often having jams with mom playing piano, dad on guitar and all of us singing. We still sing to this day and my brother Jim also plays guitar. We enjoyed a close, happy family life and celebrated Christmas, birthdays and other holidays together. Christmas was always a happy time in our home. Dad loved decorating the tree, often singing "O Christmas Tree" as we decorated it. He loved having company and visiting family and friends. Dad always had a twinkle in his eye and a hug for everyone! He was a warm, loving person. Strangers often became friends and friends became family. That's the way it was in our home.

Dad played with many bands throughout his life, including the Newfie Bullet, and later formed a group called Newfoundland Connection with his long-time friends Dorothy (Dot) Rogers and David Howell. He and mom also played

with the Kings Fiddlers, a local fiddling group from Kings County, NS. It was a dream of dad's to record a CD, which he did with Dot, in September 2011. Their CD was made available to family and friends during a night of music in honor of Dad in 2012. Proceeds from every CD purchased were donated to the IWK Children's Cancer Ward, and to Christmas Angels (a musical fundraiser for local children). Dad had a great love for the children in his life. He had seven grandchildren, and two great grandchildren, as well as numerous nieces and nephews whom he loved dearly. The CD was titled "Music and Friends" which pretty much summed up dad's life.

Shortly after Christmas 2010, dad developed a nagging cough. When the cough persisted into March, his doctor sent him for X-rays. The results showed a possible malignancy through the left lung. Further investigation was suggested. In April the CT scan suggested possible Mesothelioma plus possible prostate cancer and bone metastatic disease. The appearances were felt to be consistent with Mesothelioma secondary to asbestos exposure. A thoracic surgical referral was advised. In May he was sent to the Thoracic Surgery Clinic where the surgeon examined dad, said he believed he had Mesothelioma and told him this may be a case for compensation. He was told to contact the Workers' Compensation Board to get the paperwork underway. The surgeon booked a left pleural biopsy to get the diagnosis as quickly as possible. The treatment recommended was a combination of chemo and radiation, which would treat the disease but not cure it. On June 15 the devastating diagnosis of Mesothelioma was confirmed. Our family life was changed forever.

Dad continued to be optimistic and felt that he could be the first one to beat this cancer. He had completed the pleural biopsy and was determined to make the most of every day. He had wanted to visit his granddaughter in Toronto, and when mom asked if he thought it was still possible to go, dad said yes. Mom said when? Dad said "as soon as we get our hair cut!" Mom called me to ask me if I was packed. I said "we're going!?" She said "right after lunch!" I yelled out to my husband "we're going to Toronto!" and he said "pack me something!" We were on the road within

three hours! Dad and mom held hands in the back seat and enjoyed the scenery and just being away from doctors' appointments and cancer talk. We spent a wonderful four days with our daughter and returned home to face reality.

My sister Pam researched everything trying to find a cure. She found a water ionizer, Essiac Tea, and numerous other remedies. Dad tried them all. Pam and I continued to be hopeful that a cure would be found. We believed if anyone could beat it, dad would. My brother Jim was the realist and had to keep all of us facing the truth despite how hard it was for him. During this time Jim suffered a major epileptic seizure brought on by the stress of dad's occupational disease. This put more stress on all of the family.



Ron with his sister Rae

Dad continued living his life to the fullest, saying "every day I can put my feet on the floor is a good day". He continued playing the guitar despite the pain. My sister Pam planned a celebration in August for his 75th birthday with 75 to 100 people attending. Three days later on his real birthday, the Kings Fiddlers arrived with a cake and their fiddles and we had another jam. Dad was tired but happy. You would never know by looking at the photos of those events that he was given two to four months to live back in May. He didn't record his CD until September.

Dad started to decline in November, needing palliative care at home for meds and pain control. He still looked after his personal needs up until a week before he died. He went to the hospital by ambulance the end of November due to complications of Mesothelioma. He was admitted to palliative care. While there he continued to play music for other hospital patients and

had jams in his room. We had a carol sing and a little elf visited us. The room was decorated with a Christmas tree, complete with gifts. He was able to take day trips home and wanted to make sure mom had the Christmas tree up at home. Dad was an active member of the Windsor United Church and a former member of the choir.

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On December 18 the choir dedicated their Christmas Cantata to dad. He passed away later that day on his sister Rae's birthday.

Dad was always full of life, and took care of himself. Every morning he would get up at 5 a.m., do his exercises, have breakfast, pack his lunch and drive to Halifax to work. He took pride in maintaining a healthy lifestyle and looked and acted much younger than his 75 years. The surgeon in Halifax thought he looked more like 60 than 75 and said "you're not ready to die yet." And dad said "no I'm not."

Our family continues to try to live without dad in our daily lives. It's the little things we miss most. Mom is in the midst of moving to a seniors' retirement complex and is finding it hard coping by herself, making life decisions, and missing her lifetime love. All of dad's family and friends continue to miss seeing his twinkling eyes and ready smile and hearing him play his beloved guitar.

When faced with death dad chose life.

Dad had an amazing attitude about life and death. He cried along with each of us at the thought of leaving his "Junie Bug" and his family. He knew he was leaving his pain behind and passing into a new life. He faced death with courage and had questions about what would happen and what heaven was like.

Dad's strength of character, his life, his love and his faith amazed everyone. One day during the last week of dad's life, I wondered what he was doing in front of the bathroom mirror so I peeked in and here he was trimming his eyebrows! Another time I had my arms around him to help him sit on the hospital bed when instead of sitting he started dancing with me. When he was too weak to walk I would go in front, dad would put his hands on my waist and mom would hold him from behind and dad would pretend we were a train and say "Choo ! Choo!" despite the immense pain.

Dad maintained his sense of humor, his joy and thankfulness of life right up to the end. When I am overcome with grief I hear dad's voice saying "that's enough Charlie". I wipe my tears and go on with my day thankful for being able to put my two feet on the floor.

"Behind every successful dad is a family who loves him."



Ronald Garland, along with his wife June and their children Jim, Pam and Charmaine

Family loses the rock in their lives

“Rico” Iannucci could have retired at any time but loved work too much

by *Diana Devine*



Rico Iannucci with his wife Corona

I would like to introduce you to my dad Ulderico Iannucci, or to anyone who knew him, Rico.

Rico was an Italian immigrant who came to Canada on a three-day voyage from Italy in the 1950s. He travelled with one of his brothers and a very close friend. He came to Canada with nothing but the will to work and the clothes on his back.

Not long after being in Canada and starting work at Central Precast for 35 cents an hour, he met the love of his life, Corona.

They were 22 years old and had fallen in love. They were married not long after and started to build their life here in Canada. They went on to have four girls and moved homes a couple of times.

Dad was one of the most caring, helpful and strong working people you would ever meet. He would be there at the drop of a hat for anyone. When we were teenagers, after late nights he would often be awoken at odd hours to come and pick up one of his daughters. He would never ask questions and never make you feel guilty; he would even drive friends home. His only rule was he didn't care what time you came home he just wanted us to come home and sleep there.

He loved to go camping and most weekends we would all go up in our trailer

to Ferguson Farm Campgrounds on Calabogie Road. Dad was always the life of the party and most evenings would end up with Dad playing his accordion by the campfire! He loved singing and he could play just about any instrument. He was also part of band when he was younger.

On a Sunday morning after going out on weekends we would be awoken to him playing the organ and singing. I think it was done intentionally to get us out of bed!

You couldn't waste a day in bed.

Being the third of four daughters, I had a great relationship with dad. He didn't have any favourites of course but he and I really got along. He always had a way of making me laugh and vice versa. He really got a kick out of my pranks. He was strict but you could always talk to him about anything.

When the time came for boyfriends to

All sorts of tests were done on the machine but only God and dad will know what really happened that day.

start coming by the house, all dad did was sit at the kitchen table in an undershirt and his big muscled arms and greet them. Need I say more? As intimidating as he was he had a huge heart and only asked that any boyfriend treat his girls well and with respect. Dad got to walk all of his girls down the aisle and see some of us have kids and be established before he died which I think was one of the biggest wishes. He wanted to know that we would be taken care of.

He only got to meet two of my own daughters and was so lovable with them. Every time he would see them he would play hide and seek after coming in from a days' work. It was like he had all the time in the world. He would also always give

them a toonie or a loonie. He was always giving people things and there were many occasions, even as an adult, that he would hand me money and say 'buy yourself a little treat'.

Family was the most important thing to dad and most times we would gather at my parents' house on a Sunday for a meal. It was never expected, we just did it. Even when we had our own families and husbands we continued this tradition.

Dad continued working hard in his life and never taking a sick day. He loved working and had a very strong work ethic. He instilled this in all of us and most of us had jobs by the time we were 14. Dad was a jack of all trades in his work career. He could do anything from operating large machinery to installing bathrooms and fixing leaks in foundations. In fact, in May of 2005 he came to my own home and fixed a crack in our foundation and he was actually in the same backhoe that would later bring him to his death.

Dad started working for Fuller Construction and loved every minute of it. His colleagues also loved him and his boss even got him to do work after hours for one of his daughters. Dad could have retired at any point but loved working so much that he couldn't do it and at 65 had more will, drive and energy than many people half his

age. He loved getting out and seeing the people and actually loved the work as well.

Friday, August 19, 2005 started out as any other day. I was nine months pregnant with my third child and was on the phone with my mom. We spoke every day, sometimes two and three times a day. It was about 8:10 am and we heard mom's doorbell ring. I said that I would hold because I was curious who was ringing the doorbell so early in the morning. I heard her walking to the door and then all I heard was shrieking and screaming and crying. I didn't know what had happened and just held my breath and stayed on the phone. Next thing I knew my oldest sister came on and said that mom would have to talk to me

later. I asked what was wrong and she said she would have to call me back.

What seemed like hours later but really was only 20 minutes, my husband came home as he had been called by my sister. They were concerned with how I would take things because I was pregnant. I will never forget the words that came out of his mouth, "Diana I am so sorry. I don't know how to tell you this, but your father is dead".

I just remember screaming and crying and saying no this couldn't be. The next couple of hours and days were all a blur. We had to pick his clothes, a coffin, go see him in the morgue and write an obituary. I was in shock and felt so lost.

Dad had been working in his backhoe on a job site on Parliament Hill restoring the library. He was compacting some garbage in the back. For some unknown reason the backhoe went into gear, shot backwards and started bouncing wildly while dad was facing the opposite direction. It went through an iron fence, teetered on a low concrete wall and just as my dad was almost out it went down the 200-meter cliff with my dad in it. He was pronounced dead on site and all this was before 7:00 am.

The funeral came and went and 21 days later I had my third baby girl. The next year seemed to just fly by. I had three children under four years old. I would cry every night with my new baby; I was so devastated and angry that God had taken the rock in my life. Dad was really the glue that held the family together. It was the day we realized that unsinkable ships sink and to never underestimate the impossible. Everything was so different now and we were all so worried about our mom. They had been married for 45 years and the love of her life was gone. We didn't really think she would survive this.

We all carried on with life but it was different now. You could see it in our eyes – we were all sad and it's like a light had been turned out. When my baby was one and half I decided I wanted to lose some of that baby weight, so I decided I was going to train for a marathon. I also wanted to do something to help me with my grief. This is where I came to meet Threads of Life. One of my sisters had shown me one of their newsletters and I thought that this would be a great organization to be part of – a place where other families like mine were able to talk and share.

I decided that I was going to run this marathon in my dad's memory and raise money for Threads Of Life. I raised close to \$3000 that first year and to date have

raised more than \$18,000 dollars!

Dad's case went to court and charges were laid but no one was found guilty. Nobody could figure out what happened to make that machine go into gear. All sorts of tests were done on the machine but only God and dad will know what really happened that day.

There was also a Coroner's inquest after this and the recommendations that were made were: certification and safety training for backhoe operators, and to place an emergency switch on the machines.

We had to sit through and hear all the injuries that dad sustained and how hard they worked on saving him. There were a lot of technical terms and things quite frankly his family didn't need to hear, but at the end of the day this was our dad that they were talking about and he was still gone forever.

What I really want to stress is how important it is to feel safe in your workplace. Not only is it important, but it is your right

to refuse work if you feel that the conditions are not safe. No one should go to work to die.

Our family continues to mourn dad. We have gotten stronger and we still remain united, but we never forget that terrible day in August.

My children, who were only two and four, still talk about him. They were young but they haven't forgotten him. We often say prayers for Nonno at night and my third daughter, who never met him, actually wrote a letter to Santa last year that her only Christmas wish was to meet her Nonno.

That's the kind of impact he had. He had a rare presence about him that was almost magical. We miss him more every day and hope that we can make him proud and allow him to rest peacefully. He deserves that far more than anything else after all the hard work and sacrifice he made for us.



Diana and her dad could always make each other laugh

How do you fit in?

by Shirley Hickman



Shirley Hickman (left) at ribbon cutting for this year's Toronto Steps for Life walk

September always seems like a time of renewal, yet in the calendar year we are into the last third. I woke this summer morning and reflected on the historical document we distributed to each of you with the spring newsletter: the then (2003) and the now (2013). My, how we have changed in just 10 years. Threads of Life has grown to be recognized as the Charity of Choice for workplace events and so many participants are putting their best foot forward participating in Steps for Life. Steps for Life is one piece of the puzzle of workplace safety awareness. When the community sees that 'sea of yellow shirts' walking a path, they can't help but notice. I don't think one event has ever passed that someone hasn't stopped me and inquired, 'what is this event for?'. When I explain, they share a story of someone - friend or family member - who has been injured or had died from going to work. The individual is able to have a venue to share their story of someone important to them. These opportunities are important to their individual growth and for many they don't have the opportunity to reflect on their friend or family member's life in a safe way.

Caring, Listening, Sharing, Respect, Health, Passion – the values of Threads of Life. These are more than words; they are the base of this organization - your organization. Take away one and it will be deeply noticed. How do you see yourself in this organization? You have allowed me into a piece of your life – even though the piece was not welcomed or invited. Yet despite your pain and anguish, you have been able to share with others, listen to others, put a hand out to another family member, and respect that while we may walk a path we didn't expect or want, we are not alone. Many of you share your story, at schools, workplaces and events to have a role in prevention. You do so, with passion and faith that sharing will make a difference, and believe me it does. We hear from employers and event organizers all the time their overwhelming thanks.

One of my main area of focus remains on building that solid foundation of Threads of Life, not just for the current family members, but for those yet to come, that they too shall have the opportunity to have a volunteer to lean on in the difficult days

and navigate the legal system and the continual journey of grief. That cycle of grief never fails to surprise me, as I am sure it does you also. To have someone that I can pick up the phone and share that moment, knowing they won't judge me or think I am crazy, but will trust that after I have had that moment of reflection I can pick myself up and go forward once again. The damage comes when I don't have a trusted companion with whom I can share that moment. Many times, I hear, 'I don't want to or can't, share that moment with my family'. We have learned that each family member walks this journey on an individual path. Hopefully we can share stories of the good times and the sad.

You can help! As employers, community or family members. How? Share that Threads of Life is there for family members – spouses, siblings, children, aunts, uncles, grandparents – all are welcome. Arrange for a speaker to attend your workplace safety events?

Working together we can only imagine the outcomes for the next five years. How do you fit in?

A piece of my heart

by Paulette Raymond

There's a piece of my heart that belongs just to you.

Always.

A moment frozen in time when you're still alive.

Memories flood in.

I can see you, I can touch you, I can hear your voice...

And then they are gone, leaving me alone again.

Without you.

I wonder if you knew that we are held together for all time.

That I'm your sister.

That I loved you. That you made a difference in my life.

That you were here.

Will I ever not be sad that you're gone?

Far beyond my reach.

Will I ever stop missing you?

Will I ever stop wondering why?

The face of grief and the face of depression

by Audrey Stringer



When someone you love is suddenly torn from you or when you lose something you care about, you will experience a myriad of difficult emotions and it is natural to feel that the pain and sadness you are experiencing will never subside. There is no right way to grieve and mourn but there are healthy ways to cope with the

pain of loss, to help you to integrate loss and in time move forward. But if this grief and mourning is not acknowledged and processed, depression may be your enemy that you won't be able to lead and control.

So what is grief?

Grief is a natural response to loss. It is emotional suffering you feel when someone or something you love is taken away. Feelings of loss revolve about the power of attachment. The more you are attached to someone or something that has been taken away the more pain you will experience.

So, if you love hard, you will grieve hard. Losing a loved one may cause the most intense grief but any loss can cause grief, including loss of a pet, relationship, job, health, home, and any other loss that is unique to you as an individual.

There are many common emotions of grief that can be overwhelming and scary at times: shock and disbelief, sadness, guilt, anger, fear, and physical symptoms such as fatigue, nausea, weight loss or weight gain, aches and pains, insomnia and low immunity to name a few.

There is no time frame for these feelings but if you fight them and internalize them then you may experience depression. I tell my clients we have to treat grief like our friend. Take grief's hand in yours and don't fight or suppress these feelings. If you don't release them there is the danger of complicated grief or depression.

Grief and depression are similar but different

George Engel, a famous psychiatrist, said "Grief is not a disease but can become one". Grief and depression may share characteristics. The key differences are that the bereaved maintains self-esteem and connection with family and friends, while people suffering from depression tend to be isolated and feel disconnected from others and may shun or avoid support. With grief, you will have the ability to experience moments of happiness. I enjoyed funny movies; in fact sought out funny movies to take a grief break. I scheduled monthly dinners with my girlfriends. I enjoyed sitting at the lake enjoying a sunset and I loved going to greenhouses to view the beautiful flowers and shrubs to give me a lift in spirits. Even when I went through intense suffering, I thoroughly enjoyed small pleasures.

Grief is our normal reaction to loss, but when the feelings consume you, leaving you feeling hopeless, helpless and worthless, you may be experiencing depression. In depression sadness is constant and hard to control or deal with. In grief painful recollections of loved ones are interspersed with positive thoughts and memories. Suicidal tendencies are rarely present, though the bereaved may fantasize about joining or re-uniting with their loved

one. In depression, feelings of worthlessness, lack of self-confidence and inadequacy are common, along with suicidal thoughts, severe sleep disturbances, marked agitation and complete loss of vitality.

con'd on page 12 (left column)

Family Forum:

"Somewhere I really needed to be"



Hi. My name is Coreine Johnson and I attended my first family forum in May 2014 at the Oak Island Resort, in Nova Scotia.

It took me six years after our son Jeffrey was killed in a work place accident for me to accept that I belonged in this very elite group.

My expectations for the forum were so foggy – I did not know what to expect or what my reactions would be. I was nervous and yet I was so full of emotion. I wanted to attend some of the sessions; I didn't want to attend the sessions. I wanted to talk about Jeffrey and yet I didn't want to talk about Jeffrey.

Shortly after I arrived at Oak Island I felt like it was somewhere I really needed to be. The Friday night reflections ceremony was very emotional, but it set the precedent and the meaning of why we were all there.

The sessions were open discussion and very meaningful to me. It truly made me realize you are never alone and that you do not have to walk this dark path alone.

By the weekend's end I felt like I was part of a very elite family (NOT) group. I received so much from those couple of days and I hope gave a little in return. I am already looking forward to the next forum and helping someone else feel like I did.

Family Forums are a chance to share with others who have had a similar experience of workplace tragedy, and to learn ways to cope with grief. Through fundraising, Threads of Life covers accommodation and some travel expenses for family members attending. For more information, visit threadsoflife.ca/for-families/family-forums/.

Central Canada Family Forum: September 26-28, 2014, Barrie ON

Western Canada Family Forum: October 24-26, 2014, Saskatoon SK

Atlantic Canada Family Forum: May 29 - 31, 2015, South Shore, NS

More to the walk than walking



Registration volunteers at the Durham Ontario walk are ready to go.

At Threads of Life, we love our walk participants – the people who show up every year, sunshine or snow flurries, wear their yellow t-shirts proudly, and help us meet our fundraising goals. But behind every successful fundraising walk, there are dedicated volunteers – and you could be one of them!

Steps for Life – Walking for Families of Workplace Tragedy happens in communities across the country – and every one of those communities needs volunteers willing to help plan the walk. Planning committees start their work in September. Here are a few of the roles you could help with:

- Chair / Co-Chairs – Chairs and co-chairs organize meetings, coordinate the walk plans, track timelines and act as the contact between the local committee and Threads of Life
- Sponsorships – Sponsorship volunteers help to offset costs and boost fundraising by approaching local businesses and individuals for donations of money or goods and services
- Volunteer recruitment – Volunteer recruitment means ensuring there will be enough volunteers to get all the work done on the day of the walk, and thanking all volunteers afterwards
- Local promotion/media – Promotion volunteers arrange for media support of their walk, and come up with other ways to promote the event and attract more walkers
- Logistics (location and venue, food and beverage, entertainment, and signage) – Logistics volunteers look after the nuts and bolts of the walk: arranging location, route and safety, organizing set-up and tear-down, food, entertainment, and signage
- Registration – Registration volunteers plan and carry out sign-in for walkers on the site, collect pledges and donations, and ensure paperwork is complete to submit a deposit to Threads of Life

Helping to organize your local Steps for Life walk can be incredibly rewarding. You will be helping to support families affected by workplace tragedy, and giving others the chance to learn about health and safety and show their commitment. Different roles need different skills and time, and there are many ways to contribute.

Ready to join your local planning committee? Take the first step by contacting the regional development coordinator in your area:

- Kevin Bonnis; Atlantic Canada & Quebec - kbonnis@threadsoflife.ca
- Heather Lyle; Central Canada hlyle@threadsoflife.ca
- Colleen Youngblut; Western Canada cyoungblut@threadsoflife.ca
- Or call 1-888-567-9490



Shutterbugs! Click Here!

If you have a knack with a camera, Steps for Life needs you! Good photographs can be used to promote future walks; thank walkers, teams and sponsors; and generate excitement about Steps for Life. Contact your local committee and volunteer to be the official photographer for your local walk.

WIN! With Sponsorship

Sponsoring Steps for Life offers businesses a chance to show they care – care about health and safety, care about families affected by workplace tragedy, and care about their image in the community.

Starting in September, cities and towns across the country will begin looking for sponsors to support their local Steps for Life walks. Sponsorship levels fit every budget – from the “Stepping Forward” level valued at \$500 to “Community Champion” at \$2000 and up. And every level offers opportunities to boost the sponsor’s profile in the community by putting up signs at the walk, having a logo on the walk web site, or putting the company’s name on all those yellow t-shirts.

To learn more about community sponsorship, read up at the web site: stepsforlife.ca/sponsor. Contact your local walk committee by visiting stepsforlife.ca/locations/ – just look for “Event Information” on the left-hand side to find the planning committee chairperson. Or get in touch with your regional development coordinator:

- Kevin Bonnis; Atlantic Canada & Quebec - kbonnis@threadsoflife.ca
- Heather Lyle; Central Canada - hlyle@threadsoflife.ca
- Colleen Youngblut; Western Canada - cyoungblut@threadsoflife.ca

Threads of Life also welcomes companies eager to showcase their passion for health and safety at a national level. For more information about national sponsorship, contact our program manager for partnerships and fundraising Scott McKay at smckay@threadsoflife.ca or 1-888-567-9490.

Occupational Safety Group (OSG)

As part of its mission to eliminate life-altering workplace injuries, illnesses and deaths, Threads of Life supports prevention programs reaching out to promote and to be an advocate for a safe work environment. With more than 17 years' experience, Occupational Safety Group Inc. (OSG) has been doing the same – they are dedicated to preventing injuries and illness through exceptional, accessible occupational Health & Safety training. Their safety experts assist companies with training, consulting and evaluating challenges faced in maintaining a positive health and safety culture.

Three years ago, OSG reached out to partner with Threads of Life and have been a supporter of the organization ever since, with a portion of every Joint Health & Safety Committee Certification (Part 1) registration fee donated directly to Threads of Life programs. OSG also participates in the annual Steps for Life event in London, Ontario, and spreads the word about Threads of Life in all promotional and educational communication.

Chief Financial Officer Todd Bond says Threads of Life is a natural partner for OSG. "Threads of Life is directly associated with what we are trying to prevent," he says. "We train people to stay safe and we want to support the families of individuals who have suffered a loss or life changing injury or illness due to a non-safe environment. It's important that people know their rights in terms of safety when they are working. These tragedies can be avoided with proper training."

OSG offers over 200 safety training courses across Canada in the classroom, online and onsite. "We support Threads of Life by what we do each day. We educate people on how to work safely in all types of environments and how to recognize potential hazards," Todd explains. "We want Threads of Life to have zero members."



Distinct Tech makes a splash!

Managers at Toronto's Distinct Tech went below and beyond for Threads of Life recently -- below water, that is! The company brought in a dunk tank and managers agreed to get all wet, with funds raised going to Threads of Life. The event was one of a number of events and initiatives the company has organized, with Threads of Life as their Charity of Choice. In November last year, the firm donated \$6,000 raised throughout 2013. Distinct Tech is a design, engineering, construction, service and maintenance company, with projects in outside plant and construction, hydro-excavation, aerial construction, horizontal directional drilling, and underground construction.



Need a pair of work boots? Consider Mark's.



For a pair of antislip footwear, you might want to consider checking out Mark's. This large Canadian retailer will donate a portion of proceeds from the sales of the antislip Tarantula line of work boots. Look for our logo on the boot tag.

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

Smart
Clothes.
Everyday
Living.

Mark's

Rachel Rauhut



Rachel Rauhut is the type of person who jumps into new things with both feet. So when her father Ron Rauhut found Threads of Life, Rachel wasted no time getting involved. Both Rachel and Ron, and all their family, were grieving the death of Rachel's aunt Marlene who was killed while working for a highway maintenance crew.

In May of 2010 Rachel participated in her first Steps for Life walk in Edmonton. That fall she attended the Western Canada Family Forum in Calgary – and she has only missed one family forum since then.

She was drawn to the Threads of Life Speakers Bureau as a way to honour her aunt's memory.

"She was a big part of our family," Rachel says. "I'm hoping that people that do hear the story pay attention, and do something about it."

Although she had some experience in public speaking through 4-H and school, Rachel isn't someone who wants to be the centre of attention. Still, since taking her speaker's training in 2012, she has been a mainstay of the Speakers Bureau in western Canada, completing two presentations in 2012, four in 2013 and three in the first half of 2014. She also served as spokesperson for the brand-new Steps for Life walk in Lloydminster this year, and appreciated the chance to communicate her message not just to the walkers, but to the mayor and safety professionals who attended.

Rachel is a pipe-line worker in the Alberta oilfield, and her employer, Newforce Energy Services, has been very understanding about allowing her to schedule her shifts around her public speaking appointments. Her plan is to eventually move into heavy equipment operating.

While her schedule doesn't allow a lot of down-time, Rachel recently tried out a colour run in Edmonton – a 5-km run in which runners are blasted with "colour bombs" of dyed cornstarch, a different colour for each section of the race. Rachel enjoyed it so much, she's planning to do another. The main attraction for Rachel is that both runs are fundraisers for children's charities.

Rachel continues to refine and strengthen her presentation. Her story is hard-hitting, but "I have to put in that harsh reality," she says. "This isn't what happens in movies; this is what happens in real life." Her message to audiences is to "take a step back" to think about safety, and stop or refuse a task if it is unsafe. Her family still copes with grief over her aunt's death, but Rachel hopes that telling Marlene's story can help some other family avoid the same pain.



Holiday survival tips: Tell us yours!

Holidays can be the toughest days when a workplace fatality or occupational disease means you're missing a loved one around the table. But over the years, you've figured out ways to cope. Why not share your ideas with other family members? How do you honour your loved one or get yourself through Christmas, Hanukkah or other special days? We will compile some of your answers to print in the next issue of the newsletter and to share on our Facebook page. Write a few sentences. You can email them to shaldane@threadsoflife.ca or post at facebook.com/threadsoflife.



“I have a voice again” by Lisa Shirley

Lisa Shirley joined the Speakers Bureau early in 2014. She agreed to share some journal entries about the experience of becoming a Threads of Life speaker.

January 2014

It is a couple weeks before speakers' training and I am getting nervous. I am not exactly sure how this began. I was asked to share my story in the newsletter in Fall 2013. I agreed because I wanted to help spread awareness of both Threads of Life and my disorder, Complex Regional Pain Syndrome. I was surprised when I realized that trying to write your story can be very difficult. I thought of things I hadn't thought about in a long time; I remembered parts of my recovery that were very painful to think about.

I always enjoyed public speaking before my injury. I worry whether I still have the courage to do it. I worry whether my body can take the nerves or be able to keep up the stamina to give a good presentation. The training agenda calls for long days and my hands are not as strong as they used to be. I just have to remember to believe in myself and take breaks when my body demands.

February 2014

I have just completed Speakers Bureau training and it wasn't as bad as I thought it would be. I had the opportunity to write my story before I got there so had some tweaking to do and it was done. I am sure I will have to adjust it according to the audience but I am happy with how it turned out.

The days were long for someone with my limitations but the result is worth it. I found the connection you make with the others there is irreplaceable. I was kind of nervous about my computer skills but thankfully there were others who were happy to walk me through it. The sharing of ideas around the room was a wonderful confidence builder. There are certainly the boring parts like policies and procedures but almost a nice break from looking into yourself.

If I had to pick a good, bad and ugly, the ugly would be the schedule—long days with short breaks and my condition doesn't always follow the schedule. The bad would be the nerves you feel when you are about to do your presentation and you think you're not ready. But the best part for me was being able to say my speech and see the reactions of people I had grown to trust. Just so you know, everyone did great and we were all nervous. It was nice to see everyone's confidence soar.

I am home now and exhausted but back in my comfort zone. The flight home gave me a chance to reflect on my presentation and realize the distance I have come in my recovery. When you are given the chance to examine yourself and see your own growth, it is very rewarding. My body is in need of a long rest and I am sure I will bounce back.

March 2014

It is two weeks before my first presentation and I am nervous but was given great hints and positive reinforcement at training so I am sure it will go fine. I have been asked to speak at the Vocational Rehabilitation Association of Canada Saskatchewan Annual General Meeting and it is a perfect fit for me. This will be a great opportunity to promote both Threads of Life and the need for vocational aids while in recovery from an injury.

April 9, 2014

The presentation went great! I did practice once a day for the last two weeks but it was a breeze. My nerves this morning were out of control, which in turn made my pain levels go up. I have to admit, I wasn't sure if I could do it. They introduced me and I just went for it, even found myself improvising. I am very proud of myself today. My presentation had impact; my words do make a difference. They even invited me to have lunch with them. I am very proud of myself today.

April 15, 2014

I am officially Saskatoon Steps for Life spokesperson and honoured to have been on Global Saskatoon Morning Show this morning. I thought I was nervous before the presentation! As I waited to be called in the “green room” I went over the Threads of Life and Steps for Life key points about 600 times and drank a gallon of water. My nerves calmed. The interview was about three and a half minutes long and I think I said everything I wanted to and remembered the most important part....Have fun. .

May 4, 2014

Today was the Steps for Life walk and it was a wonderful success. As spokesperson, I did a little mini-speech before the walk started. It was my first time speaking about my condition in front of my family. That 5-minute speech has changed our relationship in a good way as we now have a new understanding.

Being part of the Speakers Bureau has changed my life. In this very short time I was given back a purpose. I have a voice again; a reason to keep fighting my condition so I can continue to promote workplace safety and help other families be spared what my family has gone through over the last few years. The healing journey is never an easy one, but the little milestones we make along the way sure are magical.



...con'd from page 7

The Face of Grief and the Face of Depression

Those who are at risk for grief-triggered depression include:

- Bereaved who have previously experienced a major depression
- Bereaved who abuse alcohol or drugs
- Bereaved who have a stressful lifestyle
- Bereaved who lack a social support system
- Bereaved who have experienced unexpected or violent death or suicide of a loved one

Personality styles also play a part in depression. Those whose outlook is generally more negative may be at greater risk. How we are socialized in our family of origin and how grief and mourning was normalized play a role as well.

We live in a mourning-avoidant society. Avoiding emotion and avoiding the mourning process, compulsive behaviors, minimizing feelings, overwork, over use of alcohol, drugs, or other substances can all retard the grieving process.

Grief work is the hardest work I ever had to do. Your spouse, children and friends can't do your grief work and you can't do theirs. We can never get over our losses, but we can learn to live with them and integrate them into the fabric of our lives. We have to have the courage to do the work of mourning, and that takes strength and perseverance too. If you are willing to grow and learn through loss you will come out the other side blessed with compassion, health, and most definitely living a life with purpose and meaning. You have to embrace the pain to get the gain and then depression will not hold you in its tight grip. You have resilience. Seek it and yell "victory".

Audrey Stringer is a bereavement counsellor, author, speaker and laughter yoga leader. She has been involved with Threads of Life for 10 years, facilitating popular workshops at family forums. Audrey has published two books – Get Over It and Scaling the Mountain of Grief. Her third book, Buddy's Life Lessons, will be published this fall. For more information: www.astringerofhope.com.

Coming Events

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

September 26-28

Central Canada Family Forum,
Kempenfelt Centre, Barrie ON,
more information at
[http://threadsoflife.ca/
upcoming-regional-family-forums/](http://threadsoflife.ca/upcoming-regional-family-forums/)

October 24-26

Western Canada Family Forum,
Delta Bessborough, Saskatoon SK,
more information at
[http://threadsoflife.ca/upcoming-
regional-family-forums/](http://threadsoflife.ca/upcoming-regional-family-forums/)

January 2015

Speakers Bureau training – F
or more information contact Susan
Haldane, Program Manager –
Communication and Marketing at
shaldane@threadsoflife.ca or phone
1-888-567-9490

February 19 - 24

Volunteer Family Guide training,
For more information email Kate
Kennington, Program Manager –
Family Support, at [kkennington@
threadsoflife.ca](mailto:kkennington@threadsoflife.ca) or
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Association for Workplace Tragedy Family Support

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

MISSION

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

VISION

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

VALUES

We believe that:

Caring: Caring helps and heals.

Listening: Listening can ease pain and suffering.

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

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

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

Passion: Passionate individuals can change the world.

HOW TO REACH US

Toll-free: 1-888-567-9490

Fax: 1-519-685-1104

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Family Support – Threads of Life

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