



Steps for Life turns tragedy into hope

Steps for Life 2017 brought together families, communities and businesses, and together, they made many good things happen!

Read all the details on pages 10 and 11.



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Eleanor Westwood

Each one of us wants to be respected. While respect can mean different things to different people, at Threads of Life, it means we believe in honouring the personal experiences of loss and grief our members have had. That's one of the values at the heart of the organization. And it's one that is so well reflected in Steps for Life, our major fundrais-

ing event. The empathy of all the volunteers and supporters is evident in the way they welcome family members and speakers at the local events, in the time taken to read memory lane signs, and in the energy they devote to the event itself. Steps for Life makes a difference in many ways, but one way is its demonstration of respect to those who have experienced tragedy first hand.

Respect can be a hard thing for a young worker to earn at a first job. If you're young, or will only be there for a couple of months over the summer, you don't always get the training and supervision you need. In this issue of the newsletter, we honour the stories of two young workers whose summer jobs ended in tragedy, and feature other articles focused on young worker safety. As parents, grandparents, employers, supervisors and workers, let's all do what we can to respect the needs – and the stories – of young and new workers.

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AN EARLY END TO YOUTH AND DREAMS

by David Collins

Injured young worker copes with chronic pain and achieve new goals



David today, with his partner Nick MacVane.

Superstitions: “The belief in supernatural causality—that one event causes another without any natural process linking the two events together”. Many people have asked me if I’ve become superstitious since my accident happened on Friday the 13th. In fact, there have been 24 “Friday the 13ths” since the night that changed my life and to me it’s just another day of the week.

Friday, June 13, 2003 was my last day of grade ten and all I had left to do was write my final exams the following week. Summer vacation was finally here! My 17th birthday was less than a month away and I had a job lined up to make some spending money for the summer. My biggest dilemma that day was deciding if I should go to work or if I should hang out with friends and celebrate the end of the school year. Even at 16 though, I was responsible. I chose to go to work so I could make a little bit of money.

This was my second season working at a

four-star resort near my home in Georgetown, Prince Edward Island. I worked in the kitchen as a dishwasher. I didn’t love my job – it was dirty, hectic, and physically demanding – but I had dreams of becoming a chef and attending the Culinary School of Canada, in Charlottetown.

That evening I was working with a friend and co-worker, Matt, who was also 16. It was a slow night in the kitchen and we began wrapping up our shift around 11:00 p.m. The kitchen staff had already left for the night and we were the only ones left. One of our last duties was to take the garbage to the dumpsters at the other end of the property, using the staff “golf cart” – a powerful, heavy-duty version. Neither of us had drivers’ licenses, but management didn’t pay attention to who had access to the keys and it was common to see the young dishwashers using the golf carts.

The weekend prior we had gone for a little joy ride and this was our intent again. With

Matt behind the wheel, we took the cart for a drive before heading to the dumpsters. On the way back to clock out, Matt began driving the cart in tight, fast circles. We hit a large rock, nearly tipping the cart. I fell to the ground and before he could stop, Matt circled around again and accidentally hit my back with the cart.

I rolled around in front of the golf cart. I remember laughing at first, thinking I was fine. Moments later when I attempted to get up, I realized something wasn’t right. I couldn’t move my legs. I realized this was serious.

Matt and I were both terrified. He didn’t want to leave me there, and I didn’t want to be left alone. He attempted to lift me into the cart, but despite his best efforts, he couldn’t do it and he had to leave me behind while he went for help.

As I lay on the ground in the dark, I looked up at the stars. I began to think about being in a wheelchair. I broke down and started to cry. I was now scared when I thought about my future.

Matt finally came back with a supervisor and said the ambulance was on its way. The supervisor rushed over to me and told me to lie down and remain completely still. He put his hands beneath my head to prevent me from moving around, but the damage had already been done. My brother, who was working that evening in another kitchen at the resort, said he had called our parents and they were on their way.

It seemed to take the ambulance forever. My visibly-upset parents arrived shortly after the ambulance and all I could say to them was that I was sorry. The paramedics got me onto the backboard and rushed me to the nearest hospital. The doctors and nurses there didn’t let on the severity of my injury but indicated that I had indeed broken my back and that I needed to go to Charlottetown to see an orthopedic surgeon.

At 7:00 a.m. on June 14 I was transported to the hospital in Charlottetown where the orthopedic surgeon assessed me. He wasted no time in determining that I needed care that Charlottetown could not provide. He confirmed that I had broken my back and that there was significant spinal cord damage. I kept asking, “Will I be able to walk again?”, but the doctor could only tell me that it was still too early to know.

By 9:00 a.m. I was in an ambulance on my way to the QEII Health Science Centre in Halifax, a four-hour drive, where a neurosurgeon was waiting for me. I drifted in and out of consciousness from the medications, but my mother said it was the longest trip of her life. Everything happened so quickly that she didn't even have time to go home and pack a bag.

When I arrived at the QEII, tests began immediately, including x-rays, CT scans, and MRIs. Intense swelling around the injury site made it hard to get clear imaging and would also delay any operations. The pain was unbearable, very hard to control, and was like nothing I'd experienced before.

“ Despite all of this, I try not to let my pain disrupt my life. I still have a passion for cooking for friends and family. I enjoy taking road trips – I feel free and unrestricted when I'm driving.

The doctors told me that I probably would not walk again. I had a burst L1 fracture with spinal cord and nerve damage. In other words, when the bone broke it exploded and bone fragments went everywhere. Furthermore, they said when Matt tried to lift me it most likely caused more damage than the original injury. They indicated that once the swelling had decreased they would be able to operate and fully know the damage.

On June 17 I went under the knife for the first time. I was scared but I just wanted to get it over with as I was in so much pain and hoped that surgery might help. The eight-hour surgery consisted of the removal of bone fragments from my spinal cord and nerves, a bone graft from my hip for the spinal fusion of T12 to L2, and four titanium rods to help support my back.

Shortly after the first surgery I began to regain some movement and feeling in my lower half. The doctor was realistic and told me that although I was slowly gaining feeling, I still may not be able to walk. He explained many paraplegics in wheel chairs have some strength, but not enough to be able to walk.

While I tried to stay positive, many days I wanted to give up on everything. However, my family, friends and the nurses wouldn't allow that. They kept me motivated to stay positive and keep going. I began physiotherapy in my bed – mostly stretching my limbs and exercising my arms because I had even lost the strength to feed myself.

When the swelling went down enough that they could remove the remaining bone

fragments, I had my second surgery. The surgeons also tightened the rods that had become loose with the reduction of swelling. After the second surgery, movement and strength in my lower half continued to increase, but not yet enough to stand, let alone walk.

I spent my 17th birthday at the QEII. Mom bought me an ice cream cake in an attempt to lift my spirits. That night a couple of the nurses surprised me with balloons and a frosted cupcake with a lit candle. It was also a celebration because I was leaving the QEII the following day.

Only July 11th, I returned to PEI to continue my journey in the rehabilitation unit.

While I would now be able to see my family and friends more often, I still suffered from major depression as I struggled to accept that I was a paraplegic in a wheel chair.

In August I finally had enough strength to stand up and take my first step. It was only one step, but it was a start. It took every bit of energy I had and I remembered feeling exhausted but a sense of achievement came over me. I had been told I would likely never walk yet now I'd taken my first step! From there it slowly got easier day by day, but I still had a long road ahead of me.

On October 17th I was finally ready to go home. I was walking with a walker and continued physiotherapy four days a week. I slowly got stronger and remained determined, and by April 2004 I was walking without any assistance!

The injury taught me how to set goals and how to achieve them. Finishing high school was challenging due to my limitations and my fear of being trampled in the hallway when the bell rang, but the school was very accommodating. I graduated only one semester behind – this was a great achievement, but what was next?

Before my accident, I wanted to become a chef but that was not ideal anymore. I cannot lift heavy objects or stand for long periods, and my balance is horrendous. One of my high school teachers asked if I had ever thought about taking a business program. She pointed out my high grades in her business class and

thought I would be well suited. I've always had an interest in business, marketing and technology, so I thought, "Why not?!"

Today, I'm a Channel and Product Marketing Coordinator with Invesco Canada, a global investment management company. I started as a UPEI co-op student in the summer of 2008 and have worked my way through a few different positions. Invesco has been very accommodating, and I'm very thankful for this.

I suffer from chronic pain due to scar tissue left on the nerves in my back after the bone exploded. I have to be very mindful of how I'm sitting, standing, or lying, because if the nerves are agitated then the pain sets in and I'm completely out of commission for hours. My pain is a little different than most – it's all or nothing. Right now as I'm writing this I have a pain level of zero, but when my back is "triggered" the pain slowly escalates to the point where I'm lying in bed unable to move, and I've literally urinated in bed because I was unable to get up to use the washroom.

Despite all of this, I try not to let my pain disrupt my life. I still have a passion for cooking for friends and family. I enjoy taking road trips – I feel free and unrestricted when I'm driving.

Friday June 13, 2003 will always be the day that changed my life. I had to learn to walk again, I matured at an earlier age, and I had to learn to set and achieve goals for myself. Of course, I wish that the accident had never happened and I often wonder where I would be today if it hadn't. I've learned to accept things I cannot change and make the most of life.



David taking his first step with physiotherapist.

by
Elizabeth Stewart
with Kate
Kennington

"I knew in my heart that something was wrong"

Keeping Terri Lynn's memory alive helps mom fill the void



Liz and son Jason with Terri Lynn's memory lane sign

It is a huge understatement to say that the grief journey is difficult and hard to travel. What we hope for those affected by workplace tragedy is that they find a support network of family and friends, find ways to honour their loss and to learn to trust in their resiliency. Loss changes us and grief doesn't ever leave us entirely. However love doesn't end either. Love will always remain.

Elizabeth, known as Liz to her friends, spoke with Kate Kennington and shared her story and her love for her daughter, Terri Lynn. There is no questioning either Liz's resilience or the strength of her love.

Liz has no bad memories of Terri Lynn. "We never had a disagreement. How many parents can say that? Terri Lynn was a delightful child, a delightful teenager and a delightful young woman. She always had all kinds of friends. She loved people and everybody loved her. She was a special young lady. A real special lady."

With just 18 months between Terri Lynn and her older brother Jason, they were very close. "They did everything together, shopping and went out clubbing together when they were older. They were just one grade apart and always went to the same school. They even had the same friends. To this day, Jason still finds it hard to talk about her."

"I loved that we were not only mother and daughter, we were best friends. We would go somewhere together in the car and the neighbours always knew because we would get in, put in a tape, turn up the volume and start singing. We were always laughing. When Terri Lynn was away at university I sent her a care package for Valentine's Day that included a box of smarties. There was a place to write on it who it was to and who it was from. I wrote 'To: My Best Friend, From: Mom'. Later I found that she had cut that out from the box and kept it. I still have it. I'll never get rid of it. I wouldn't take a million dollars for it." Some things are truly priceless.

Always involved at school and in her community between Girl Guides, highland dance, friends and babysitting it was evident even from her first jobs that "Terri Lynn was someone you could put into any situation and she would be happy. She worked part-time at the playground at the mall. She would come home with letters and presents from the kids. She wasn't allowed to go into the ball pit but the kids would drag her in anyway to play. She loved the little kids and they loved her. I still have some of the notes from those kids. Terri Lynn was at university and wanted to become a teacher. She would probably have taught in elementary from kindergarten to grade 3. She had so many goals and I know she would have achieved every one of them. Ultimately she wanted to marry and have five kids. No more and no less. She even had the first girl name picked out. She would have been a wonderful mother."

The summer that Terri Lynn was 19, Liz was able to get her a job at the construction company she worked at in Moncton. Terri Lynn was a flagger alongside the highway on a construction site. "She loved being with people and enjoyed all the people. She enjoyed the job and wasn't frightened. Just two nights before she was killed Terri Lynn said to me, 'You are paranoid about me standing

out there Mom aren't you? I'm not afraid.' I live with the guilt that I got her that job and wonder if only I hadn't gotten her that job. My brother tells me not to think that way. That you don't know what else might have happened."

Terri Lynn had to be to work earlier than Liz so a coworker who lived nearby would pick her up in the morning. He and Terri Lynn got to be good friends. On July 16th, 1993, Terri Lynn relieved one of the other workers who had also become a good friend. "The other girl had only turned and taken five or six steps when Terri Lynn was hit. A car with a travel trailer on the back rear-ended the first car that was stopped. The stopped car struck Terri Lynn."

"I was sitting at my desk at work and I knew that something was going on. Everyone had left the office and I could hear whispering. I knew in my heart that something was wrong. The first thing I thought of was Terri Lynn and sure enough Wayne, the head of the paving division came and said we had to go to the hospital. It is a day I will never forget. It was a Friday and it rained a bit. I'd like to forget that day but I never will."

"I remember as we drove to the hospital we didn't say a word. When we pulled into the emergency parking lot I said to Wayne 'Is she going to die?' but he didn't answer. I couldn't find my son, my husband was away working up north and I couldn't find my sister. My father-in-law was a doctor and was there. After they told me Terri Lynn had died it was just like a scene from the movies. I asked why can't I cry? What is wrong with me? My father-in-law told me I was in shock. I called my friend, Bonnie and after she came I don't remember. I don't even remember leaving the hospital."

"Bonnie took me home and neighbours were standing in the driveway. It was hard. I don't really remember anything until the day of the funeral but I know that the house was full. I don't remember who was at the house. You kind of block that out – your body's way to protect you. I wish it had never happened but it did. Unfortunately it is something you have to deal with. It has totally affected my health. It is not the way it is supposed to be. The day we buried her I kept thinking, this isn't the way it's supposed to be. She should be doing this for us. I didn't want to leave her; she didn't like to be alone. I do know that my little girl left this life knowing she was loved."

There are many ripples to Liz's story. Terri Lynn's co-workers were devastated by her loss. There were two girls who were especially close to her and they asked for photos to

remember her by. The young man who Terri Lynn carpooled with just could not wrap his head around what had happened. There are some things that don't and never will make sense.

The man whose car was rear-ended and hit Terri Lynn turned out to be a neighbour and knew the Stewart family. "I felt sorry for him. We wrote a letter to let him know that we didn't blame him. I needed to see him but was told that he didn't want to see me. So I arranged to just be there one day when he got home from work. When he saw me he went sheet white. I said we do not hold you responsible for this. At the end I gave him a hug." Sometimes there aren't words for what the heart would like to say.

The case went to court and the driver of the car with the trailer was charged with driving without due care. "I did not go. I couldn't nor did my husband. I remember driving home from work one day and hearing the news on the radio and it was announced. He walked away. When I got home I asked my son if he had heard the news but he hadn't. I told him. Your sister, my daughter is dead and he walked. I couldn't believe it."

"There is not one day that has passed by that I don't think of her. Not one day that I don't mention her name. People will say to me 'I didn't know what to say'. I tell them, you don't have to say anything. Just come over and give me a hug. I will talk about Terri Lynn." You can hear the smile in Liz's voice when she talks about her daughter but that wasn't always the case. "It took a good year or more before I could talk about her without breaking down and losing it. One day her dance teacher brought over a tape of Terri Lynn dancing and I kept touching the screen. It was her."

"It took me a long time to get the courage to go through her room. The door was shut from July to November. I couldn't go into her room. Going through her things felt like such an invasion of privacy. Finally a friend came in and said it was time. It was Remembrance Day and was a bright sunny day. Probably one of the hardest things I had to do. The room was just as she had left it. That was hard. My friends got me through. I thank God for my friends."

Looking back at the past 24 years, Liz reflected, "the biggest

impact is the loss – part of our family is gone and will never be replaced. It is just such a void in our lives not having her. Just void. I have to talk about her. The hole that is left in my heart and the void that is left in our family, not just for me and Jason and her father, it is the rest of our family. She was so loved and is so missed. Her loss is a void in our lives."

With the attitude of sink or swim, Liz coped. When asked what helped her, she responds without hesitation. "My three grandsons. Every time they walk in that door I think of Terri Lynn. How much she would love and spoil those kids and do things with them and take them places. And my best friend Donna. I can call her for anything. Friends get you through."

Liz has many words of wisdom that come from her experience. "You can't give up. You just can't. You have to go on. You will never forget and it is something that you have to live with for the rest of your life. You have to learn to cope. Somehow you just have to do it. There are days you get up that you don't want to but somehow you do. There are others that you have to think about. My kids always came first. I can't be in a state of mind that I can't be any support to my son. He needs love and understanding."

"I think it is important to keep Terri Lynn's memory alive. It is so important that people know how special she was. My special girl. That is what she was and what she is."



Terri Lynn



Monday mornings are a fresh start for health and safety

by Trish Penny

My company policy, like many, states Monday mornings are orientations for all new staff hired on that week. Monday mornings are a day to build anew, refresh, and reiterate the importance of working safely. Monday mornings are the beginning of a strong foundation of a safety culture.

I used to hate Monday mornings, but now I live for them. After losing my brother Luke, to a construction site incident when he was just 26, I realized the significance of training all workers, especially new and young workers, on the importance of health and safety. It was at that time I decided to become part of the solution, rather than let the problem swallow me whole. When I began reflecting on the statistics that indicate every day in Ontario an average of nearly 20 young workers under the age of 25 sustain lost-time injuries or are killed on the job (according to the Ontario Ministry of Labour), it became evident to me that training accurately and early is tremendously important.

During these Monday morning orientations, we reiterate more times than I can count the importance of asking questions and knowing their three basic rights. After their orientation, new workers have access to my direct cell phone number, my e-mail address and where I sit in the building. I need them to know they can come to me to

discuss any concerns they have when it comes to their health and their safety. It is important for me that they know and understand that asking questions makes one look more competent, rather than the contrary. Asking questions means you're running risk assessments in your head, and it means you fully understand the scope of the work. It shows your presence in the activities being performed and demonstrates your willingness to complete the work without incident.

These Monday mornings are a time to ensure understanding. But they are also much more than that. Monday mornings are a time for you to make your commitment to your supervisor, your colleagues, yourself and your family to work safely each and every day.

It is my hope that with Monday mornings come many more safe and healthy days ahead.

Life of a wife

My husband goes to work each day,
 And I worry about the safety way.
 What does his company culture think?
 About safety, and the monetary link.
 Do they cut corners, hair straight back?
 Or do they have his safety back.
 How would they put a value on his life?
 How would they explain his accident, to his wife?
 When a workplace accident affects many lives,
 The burden of truth lies in coworkers' eyes.
 Could they have said something to stop the pain?
 A loved one lost, because of a monetary gain?
 The company wouldn't save any money,
 If a worker couldn't go home, it's just not funny.
 An empty bed with a pillow full of tears, is all we have
 to replace the lost years.
 None of us, in the morning say "goodbye", with the
 thoughts of our loved one "Oh he might die"
 In a workplace accident, we just can't see, how that little
 phrase "it won't happen to me"
 Could change our whole world...infinitely.

- Andrea DelCol

Family Forums: Programmed for learning!

by Kate Kennington

Threads of Life's four annual family forums are always a chance to learn healthy coping skills and share experiences. There are tried and true sessions which will always be offered. Masks of Grief & Loss is one, where new family members have an opportunity to share their story, hear others and begin to understand that they truly are not alone. The get-togethers for different relationship groups – such as widows or siblings – offer a chance to be with others who really 'get it' so that we can support and learn from each other. Then there is the Men Only session. I do not know what is discussed as I am not allowed in, however I do know that healing happens. The art workshops offer a different way to explore grief as not everyone likes to talk.

With your feedback, we are always developing new sessions to add to the program. Here's a sneak peek:

Last year there were sessions on addictions, a taboo subject that needs to be talked about and our forums provide a safe place to do so. This year each forum will offer a session focusing on mental health, whether it be concerns that existed before your loss, because of your loss or what life has thrown at you since. We know that mental illness will complicate our ability to grieve in a healthy way but again it is a taboo subject that tends to be avoided.

How many of you have had well-meaning people say really horrible and hurtful things to you? The art of condolence is not an easy one in our grief-avoidant society. At the Atlantic forum, Estella Hickey felt it was time to talk about this subject and discover how we can teach others what is helpful to say, even when that means to admit that you don't know what to say. For some things we all have learned, there just aren't any words.

You will hear it said that Threads of Life is your organization. And it is! All that is accomplished each year to support families and to reach out with the message of injury prevention could not be done without the



Art workshops at family forums offer a different way to explore grief

many, many hours of our dedicated volunteers. For the last few years, we've been holding sessions at the forums to help build your skills. The active listening sessions this year will also dig into what it is really like to be a volunteer family guide and be able to offer that essential listening ear to another.

Those of you who have spoken to the media know it can be nerve-racking. Media 101 sessions will be offered at each forum with a focus on 'How to ace the interview!' With a little coaching, some simple tips and practise, you will be able to face the microphone with greater comfort to get your message heard.

The programs are being developed for the three fall forums and your ideas are welcome as well as offers to facilitate a session. It is so important that the sessions are relevant to you and having family members as facilitators is so valuable. As Shirley says, the forum weekend is a gift to yourself and we want to ensure that you are able to get the most out of it.

Please send your suggestions!



Threads of Life staff had a chance to recognize Carin at a recent dinner in her honour

Happy retirement, Carin!

In June, Threads of Life said goodbye to Carin Whittal who retired after 10 years. Carin joined Threads of Life when it was still very new, and offered her leadership and energy as we grew. As our office coordinator, she kept track of a million things at once and helped many new staff members learn the ropes, including Kimberly Bondame, who now takes over in Carin's position. Thanks, Carin, and all the best in your retirement!

Mark Roehler



Mark Roehler, centre (in Threads of Life vest) at the opening of Sarnia Steps for Life 2017

Just a couple of weeks after this year's Steps for Life walk in Sarnia, a worker at a local business was killed on the job. For Mark Roehler, chairman of the Sarnia walk committee, it was a sad reminder of why the walk – and the work of the volunteers – is so important.

“That’s what we want to prevent,” he says. “And we want to make sure that if unfortunately something does happen, people are aware of the services that are there for them.”

A passion for health and safety brought Mark to Steps for Life and Threads of Life in the first place, but seeing the growth and healing of the volunteer family members is what keeps him motivated. When he’s worked closely with family members, and hears them share their stories, “these are the ones that really impact me,” he says. “I know what it means to them. To see the change in them, even in a 12-month period – I cherish those moments.”

Mark has been involved with the Sarnia walk since its start in

2010. He had been working in environment, health and safety for a large corporation, and in 1995 launched LEHDER Environmental Services along with three partners. The company now employs 37 people and offers air quality services, emissions testing and environmental, health and safety services.

Mark was already volunteering with the then-IAPA (Industrial Accident Prevention Association – now WSPS), and when he heard about a new fundraising walk being kicked off in Sarnia, he went to the very first meeting. There were only four volunteers, and he saw his energy and skills could be put to good use for a cause that was important to him.

Steps for Life Sarnia has seen impressive growth in the past few years. For 2017, Mark is optimistic they’ll be close to their goal of \$25,000 – more than triple what the walk raised just a handful of years ago. He attributes that to the passion of the local volunteers, and going out to talk to local companies about sponsorship and participation. The committee starts in September, prepares a lot of its own materials to promote Steps for Life, and makes sure all sponsors receive a personalized thank you. This year, the walk attracted VIPs from every level of government, and had great turnout despite nasty weather.

“I’m hopeful that next year we’ll grow even more,” Mark says. “We’re always out talking about it!”

He continues to volunteer in high schools doing health and safety presentations, and is also the president of Safe Communities Sarnia-Lambton. So helping families affected by workplace tragedy, by volunteering with Steps for Life, is a perfect fit.

“For me, the big thing is this is aligned with my main goal to keep everybody safe,” he says.



Teaching and learning through video competition

Teaching someone else is a great way to learn. The annual Youth Video Contest, Focus on Safety, gives high school students a chance to learn about workplace safety, and all of us can learn from the results.

Contest winners for 2017 were announced recently. Students represent their high schools and submit their work to a provincial competition. Provincial finalists compete for national honours. Threads of Life Executive Director Shirley Hickman is one of the national judges.

“I’m always amazed at the quality and power of these videos,” she says. “I’m sure they would have an impact on young workers, but I think that there’s a place for these messages in any training program.”

You can see the 2017 winning videos at http://www.ccohs.ca/youngworkers/video_contest.html:

FIRST PLACE *Zach MacMillan-Kenny*, Riverview High School in Riverview, NB: "The Eye"

SECOND PLACE *Ben MacMillan and Jacob MacDonald*, Morell Regional High School in Morell, PEI: "Know Your Limits"

THIRD PLACE *Rain Cahigas and Sham Abdullah*, Daniel McIntyre Collegiate Institute in Winnipeg, MB: "Your Right to Set Things Right"

FAN FAVOURITE *Shannen Garibay and Maria Himbeault*, Clavet Composite School in Clavet, SK: "Focus on Safety"

Partners bring health and safety message to young workers

Few things are more compelling for a Threads of Life speaker than the chance to talk to young workers. It means a lot to be able to influence and maybe even protect someone who's ready to start a first job. And thanks to Threads of Life's loyal partners, our speakers have those opportunities.

In 2016, more than 800 high school, college and university students across Canada heard one of our family members' stories, courtesy of companies and organizations which provide grants to support Threads of Life programs and services. While most groups that book a volunteer speaker are asked to cover the speaker's travel expenses and provide a donation to Threads of Life, schools seldom have a budget for those costs. Funding support from our partners means Threads of Life can reach out to schools in all parts of the country and offer them a powerful, personal health and safety message.

Using the power of a story

by Marj Deyell

Marj Deyell is a Threads of Life family member and member of the speakers bureau. This spring she was one of a number of speakers who were able to share their stories in schools and colleges, thanks to our partners' funding for the speakers bureau.

Each work day in Canada, three people do not return home safely from work. On September 3, 2003 one of those workers was our son John. John was 23 years old and had only been on the job for a little over nine weeks.

Since John's death I've felt an obligation to tell our family's story. Those young people who would soon be entering the workforce, those who are the most vulnerable and in need of protection, became my focus.

Shortly after taking the Speaker's Bureau training in 2006 I was asked to speak in Toronto to a group of contestants who had entered the Young Worker Safety Video contest. There were to be about 50 people in attendance. Upon arrival I soon realized there were closer to 500 than 50! Unnerving, to say the least, but I was hooked! This would be my way of helping to prevent workplace tragedies.

Over the years I've done presentations for many schools and organizations and in many different settings including Winnipeg, Manitoba, the states of Texas and Michigan in the U.S. and many places throughout Ontario.

In April of 2017, the Ontario Power Generation (OPG) site at Tiverton, Ontario invited me to speak to their workers. This presentation has stuck with me for many reasons. Not only were the workers attentive, but very generous in donating to my **Your Walk Your Way** which was

High school co-op programs are one focus for this service. A number of speakers have been able to tell their stories to students just days before they start their work placement for the school semester.

Global mining company Vale Inc. is one partner which has been supporting Threads of Life since 2011.

"We share with Threads of Life a commitment to improving safety culture across Canada," says Cory McPhee, Vice President Corporate Affairs for Vale Base Metals. "Vale believes that one way to accomplish this is to ensure that tomorrow's leaders and tomorrow's workforce understand the importance of workplace health and safety. We're pleased to support Threads of Life speakers as they share their stories and messages in high schools, colleges and universities across Canada."



Marj Deyell with students after sharing her story at Fanshawe College in London Ontario

coming up soon. After the presentation one of the men who stopped to talk told me about his son who was a paraplegic. He had fallen off the back of a truck, broken his back and would be in a wheelchair for the rest of his life. Such hurt in the fathers eyes! He was devastated.

I hope that by sharing John's story, I can help people understand that ALL of us are responsible for workplace safety - employers, employees, parents, and teachers. ALL of us must protect the most vulnerable in society! ALL of us are responsible!

Your best foot forward

There were t-shirt streamers and boot-print cakes. There were toques and umbrellas and sunglasses. There were senior citizens and a two-week old baby. There were events with 30 walkers and events with hundreds. And there were smiles – lots of smiles.

Any way you picture it, Steps for Life 2017 was a huge success! More than 5100 walkers in 30 locations raised more than \$676,000! An incredible 321 teams took part, and 186 sponsors supported events locally, regionally and nationally. The money raised through Steps for Life this year will make a huge contribution to the services Threads of Life can provide. It will help fund things like our four annual family forums, training for our volunteer guides and speakers, and the newsletter you're reading right now!

But Steps for Life is not just about fundraising. It's also about helping people understand how common workplace tragedy is, and the impact it can have on a family and community. The walk achieved these goals too – close to 40 news stories were published or broadcast related to Steps for Life, and 180 personal stories were told through memory lane signs. As a result, Threads of Life is already receiving requests for information from new family members and supporters.

As organizers, volunteers, walkers, donors and spokespeople, you made all this happen.

Thank you!



Why we walk



"Everybody has a job in health and safety – and it is the right of every worker to go home to their family safely at the end of the day. Steps for Life helps to remind all of us that we all need to be more conscious of preventing these types of incidents – the human cost is simply too high. Being a spokesperson for Cambridge Steps for Life allows me to remind everyone in the community of the importance of safety and how simple miscues can turn tragic. To honour my brother and share his story in the city where he was raised will be a privilege for me. It allows me to walk within the community to promote the efforts of Threads of Life as their entire organization of staff and volunteers work to help families suffering from a workplace tragedy to heal and to strive for a zero harm environment for the future."

-Todd Smith, whose brother, Sean, an auto mechanic, was killed while working under a limousine. The jack supporting the limousine failed, and the car fell and crushed Sean. Simply having the proper safety equipment would have prevented his death. Todd was to share his story at the Cambridge Steps for Life walk, which had to be cancelled due to flooding.



Recognition

Teams prove up to the challenge

Steps for Life is a great way for a business to build spirit and express its health and safety commitment. Teams from across Canada took part in our 2017 Steps for Life Corporate Challenge, raising funds for families of workplace tragedy. Thank you to ALL our teams who participated in Steps for Life, and congratulations to our Corporate Challenge winners:

NATIONAL CORPORATE CHALLENGE WINNER Stuart Olson Industrial Walkers (Team Captain: Tamera Madden), Fort McMurray AB

REGIONAL WINNER: Atlantic Canada, Dragon Lady (Team Captain: Dayle Biggin), St. John's NL

REGIONAL WINNER: Central Canada, Black & McDonald (Team Captain: Veera Seepersad), Durham Region ON

REGIONAL WINNER: Western Canada, Willbros Angels (Team Captain: Kim Taylor), Fort McMurray AB

COMMUNITY/FAMILY TEAM – Spirit Award Winner, Livin' The Dream in Memory of Kyle Hickey (Team Captain: Michelle MacDonald), Halifax, NS

YOUR WALK, YOUR WAY – Spirit Award Winner: Stantec Steppers (Team Captain: Becky Davis), Mini-Walk



Coming Events

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

2017 Family Forums

Central Family Forum,
September 22 - 24, 2017, Barrie, ON

Prairie Family Forum,
September 29 - October 1, 2017,
Saskatoon, SK

Western Family Forum,
October 20 - 22, 2017, Calgary, AB

2018 - 2019 Training

Speaker training - February 22 - 25,
2018, Mississauga, ON

Volunteer Family Guide Beginner
training - 2019 date to be
announced

SHARE THIS NEWSLETTER!

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



The Standards Program Trustmark is
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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

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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.



threads
OF LIFE

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

Thanks to our Steps for Life sponsors!

THANK YOU! Steps for Life benefits from the support of sponsors both on a national and community level. Thank you for demonstrating your leadership and your commitment to health and safety!



Association for Workplace Tragedy Family Support

NATIONAL SPONSORS



Champions



COMMUNITY LEADERS

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Stuart Olson
The Staffing Edge

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