



FAMILY & healing

Family comes in all different forms. There's the family you're born into, and the family you choose. As the Canadian winter closes in, and the holiday season approaches, it's a great time to gather your family close, whether they're connected by blood, by community or by experience.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

features

A life well-lived	2
A caregiver's journey	4

departments

FAMILY SUPPORT

Caregivers need care too	6
Comfort foods to bring us home.....	7

VOLUNTEERS

How I prepare for a speaking engagement.....	8
Carolyn Sim	9

PARTNERS AND FUNDRAISING

EllisDon: Building on a foundation of care and commitment.....	10
--	----

STEPS FOR LIFE:

Thank a sponsor	11
Welcome (back) to the Steps for Life Family! ...	11

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Bill Stunt

"You can't choose your family," the old saying goes. But attending family forums always reminds me that, to some extent, you can. Many of us are fortunate to have loving, supportive relationships with the people we are related to. The two family stories in this issue are perfect examples. In addition, all of us at Threads of



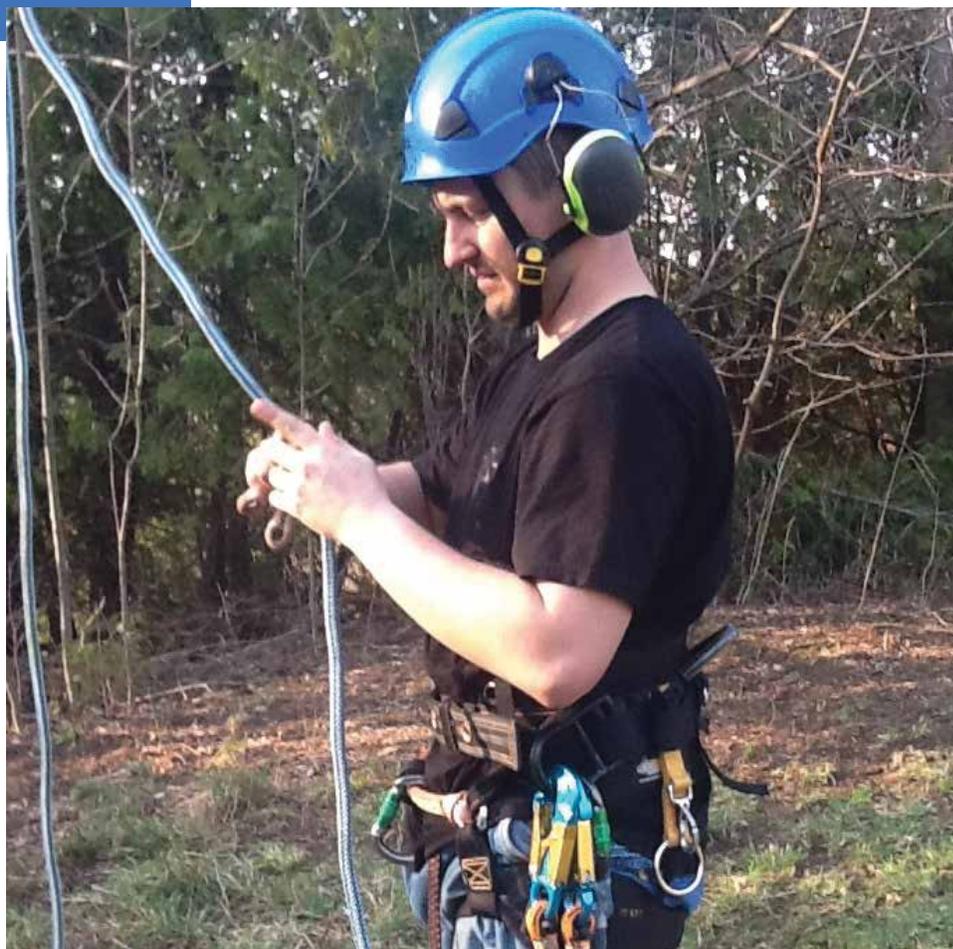
Life have a family within this organization. Our three regional family forums in 2019 – each one a full house – are an occasion for our family to get together and welcome one another. Whether you are an individual affected by work-related fatality, injury or illness; whether you are a volunteer, a sponsor or a partner, you are part of our family. We hold you close.

A LIFE WELL LIVED (but tragically cut short)

Adam Andrew Francis Sura

May 3, 1990 - May 4, 2018

by **Debbie Wickham**



Adam ready to climb

From the moment Adam was born, he was a joy to behold. He had a beautiful smile and he let the world know he was in it. Fast forward to day care and watching Disney movies together. From the back seat of the car on the way home, I heard a rendition from the movie Mrs. Doubtfire, “I’m a hip old Granny, I can hip hop, be-bop, dance til you drop, and yo-yo make a wicked cup of co-co.” Little did I know that hip hop would be his style of music in his twenties!

He made me a beautiful Thanksgiving Day card (in grade one I think) with a tree with big strong brown branches and crimson red leaves and a poem inside the card that read: “Thanksgiving is great, Thanksgiving is fun, with a big Thanksgiving crew, I almost like Thanksgiving as much as you” Little did I know the, but Adam had a gift for words, drawing, and a huge love of trees (I’ll expand on this later).

Adam played many sports such as soccer, rugby, baseball, basketball, karate, and was a winning goalie on the Rep hockey team in Erin, Ontario where we lived. He often yelled into the crowd “Hi Mom!” which really thrilled me. But above all he was an avid

snowboarder and landed many tricks. His many friends proclaimed he was unbeatable at disc golfing. He also loved kick boxing to get in shape.

Adam’s love of music started in his day care Christmas show when he played Billy Ray Cyrus and grabbed the mic at the end of the performance of “Achy Breaky Heart” and said: “You all listening?” It progressed to high school when he and four of his friends formed a band called the ‘Sasquatches’ and crafted songs like “Cash Flow” (or lack of it!). Later on in his twenties in the music scene in Guelph, Adam’s hip hop Group “Skeleton Crew” which morphed into “Phreaks of Technique” rapidly gained popularity.

Adam loved to cook which didn’t come from me but landed him “Chief Wing” cook at McCabe’s Restaurant in Guelph and the hearts and stomachs of many of his friends.

Following the big ice storm in the winter of 2013, a good friend of Adam’s convinced him to apply for a ground crew job at a tree service company in Campbellville to clean up all the broken tree damage. His interest in everything to do with tree care grew over the following years and Adam applied to

Humber College’s Arborist Apprenticeship Program in January 2017. His boss was really impressed with his progress in completing Level I of the program and encouraged Adam to take his International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Certification which he successfully completed, becoming a Certified Arborist.

If that wasn’t enough, Adam got his DZ Operators license that same summer and was ready to drive the company bucket trucks. This led to his boss promoting him to crew leader and things kept progressing so much that Adam urged his boss to allow him to take the Level II Arborist Apprenticeship Program in January 2018. He told me that Humber College had the best climbing school. Adam graduated with Honours in March 2018 and out of a class of 100 he was the only Certified Arborist. Adam wasn’t finished there. He successfully completed a one-week hydro safety course with above average marks, exceeding the expectations of the instructor. His boss said he was the future of his company.

At 28 years old (May 3, 2018), Adam was finally reaping the rewards of his hard work.

He was about to move into a nice big house in Guelph with his good buddies and to celebrate his birthday with a close gal friend. Tragically that was not to be. On Friday, May 4th 2018, Adam went to work clearing trees in Milton along the hydro lines. A big tree fell across the road, blocking the path of a school bus with a young child aboard. According to the bus driver, Adam boarded the bus and comforted the child, saying he would get the tree out of the road. He and his co-worker cut the tree up and removed the limbs so the school bus could get by. They were just finishing up clearing the debris when a sudden huge gust of wind (110 km/h) snapped off a large tree which fell on Adam and his co-worker. Adam was killed instantly and his co-worker (Zach) died later on in hospital.

A memorial site was erected for the two young arborists that night and the family of the young child placed a sign on a log, which thanked them for their heroic efforts. Because of Adam and Zach, their child made it home safely that day. The only solace was that Adam died doing a job he loved and helped a child get home.

The huge love and tributes he has received from family and so many of his close friends are testimony to Adam's positivity and infectious personality. In the words of one of Adam's roommates and fellow hip hop artists when he heard of Adam's passing: "This isn't fair. No one deserves to lose a ray of sunshine like this. This ray of sunshine doesn't deserve to be lost. I've lost family before but never someone I was this close to, and I can't describe how terrible it feels. You were always the nicest person in the room, you were always the funniest person in the room, and you oozed swag with every bar you wrote. I love you Adam Sura. I miss you more than I can even fathom already. None of us will ever be the same without you in our lives. No one will ever be able to replace you or what you've done for everyone you've ever met. You were the realest. I'll never forget you."

Wherever Adam went, he spread laughter and fun. He was always thoughtful of others' feelings, making sure they were included. His legacy is summed up in the words of one of his schoolmates: "Adam Sura is so deeply engrained within me. Whether it's talking about movies or music or just something hilarious that's happened to us recently. It's so hard to live and not be reminded of him all the time. But while that makes me sad, being reminded of him makes me feel so very

happy because I know that he'll be with me forever. Thanks for talking to me the first day in grade nine; my life changed forever. Love you buddy."

Adam loved his family and drove long distances to be at family gatherings. He would arrive with arms wide open and make all occasions truly memorable. His was a life well lived. A fellow arborist posted a video on Facebook of Adam sitting at his desk at Humber College saying, "Demand the best, from yourself." He certainly gave life his best effort. I couldn't be more proud of him and am grateful to have been his Mum.

“ Adam would be so happy to help out students struggling with the costs of their tuition and required equipment so that they could achieve the same success as he did.

Here are some words from one of Adam's hip hop songs that are like his mantras: "Forget what you can't do, just focus on things that you can..." You can lend a hand to yourself and turn a two to a ten!"

Adam had used his company's bucket truck to install Christmas tree lights for one of his friends, Cindy. Cindy kindly set up a fundraising campaign which raised \$12,000 towards annual memorial scholarships in Adam's memory. Adam's dad, stepmom and I decided to award the funds to students attending Humber College's Arborist Apprenticeship Program because we know that Adam would be so happy to help out students struggling with the costs of their tuition and required equipment so that they could achieve the same success as he did.

Extreme weather events like the huge windstorm on May 4th, 2018 which

took the lives of Adam and his co-worker, as well as a construction worker in the Greater Toronto Area, are happening with alarming frequency due to climate change. Adam was very conscientious about following safety protocols on his job and never taking shortcuts. The Ontario Ministry of Labour did not find any fault with Adam's employer because there was no safety procedure that could have avoided his and his co-worker's deaths. According to Catastrophe Indices and Quantification Inc., insured damages from this windstorm, which affected Ontario and parts of Quebec, topped \$410 million – with \$380 million of this damage in Ontario alone. And that figure doesn't cover the costs to governments and taxpayers. For Ontario, this was the most costly insured event since the 2013 Toronto floods, which caused almost \$1 billion in damages. The greatest loss in this terrible windstorm was the loss of three precious lives, including my son Adam, who had worked so hard to achieve his life goals but didn't get to realize the success he so deserved.

I am so grateful to Threads of Life over the past year and a half. My Volunteer Family Guide, Joanne has been a tremendous support to me in so many ways. I know that she understands what I'm feeling and going through because she lost her son in a workplace tragedy too. Last year I was fortunate to attend the Family Forum and I came away so uplifted and united with other parents in my situation. I also really look forward to receiving the Threads of Life newsletters.



Adam with his mom

A CAREGIVER'S JOURNEY

Sharing in the challenges and joys of recovery from severe burns

by June Easter

“Is he dead or alive?”

“Alive.”

Six simple words. Six words which had the power to affect the lives of Vance and others.

That question – that response held hope of survival. I knew Vance in that instance needed every resource available if he was to see tomorrow and the tomorrows after that. I stated to Vance's friends “What are we wasting time for?” They drove me home to Vance. Minutes later EMS were driving Vance and me to Prince County Hospital. I knew Vance would be going further and when asked I told the ER doctor, “Halifax, I have family there.”

I knew the recovery would be long. I had no idea of how long the recovery, how complicated the injuries. I did know Halifax had a burn unit associated with Dalhousie University Medical School. This would mean top rate specialists, updated knowledge and extra resources. A decision I have never regretted.

Vance had decided to do a couple of jobs in the welding shop. As he crouched down to cut a steel rod, a piece of steel flew over his shoulder, landing on the cutting hoses behind him. Welders keep the cutting hoses and tanks behind them as a safety practice. This particular piece of slag burnt through the hose creating a blowtorch out of the hose. An explosion behind him, the hose travelled across Vance's lower front legs and back across his abdomen. Vance turned immediately to shut off the tanks, dumped water on himself, and



June and Vance today

ran for the garden hose. Our daughter Jewel, hearing a noise, looked out the patio door and saw her dad running for the garden hose. Phoning 911 she stated the facts and ran to assist her dad. Starting to mist the water on her father, she was quickly joined by two family friends. They would take Vance from the patio, drop and roll and use the patio umbrella to extinguish the flames while Jewel continually misted.

I agreed to be Vance's chief caregiver and advocate. Estimated time frame: five years. I had the life skills and experience to do this. I knew I could only take one day at a time – don't worry about yesterday or tomorrow. I had to focus on this day, this hour, this minute. I was in for the long haul. This role will demand total immersion in the task. This was a role I wouldn't survive without setting limitations. Some would call this survival. Failure was not an option.

Halifax is a four-hour drive from home. The night of the accident it was foggy. Driving over with family we were kept

updated by my brother who was at the Queen Elizabeth Health Science Centre. He had met the burn specialist who was waiting for Vance's arrival. We would be arriving shortly after Vance's ambulance. The doctor asked for the details. Hearing the burnt skin had been misted with cool clean water by our daughter he stated, “She saved his life; he has a chance.” The waiting game began. It was midnight, where had the time gone? I would hear he will live the night, later he will make the day. The time would increase until I heard “he will live.” There was no idea of the quality of life.

My daughter and mom stayed with me those first days. I would sleep every chance I could as I knew I was in for the long haul. Vance would be in the ICU in the early days. He was in an induced coma until he stabilized to the point where he could be transferred to the burn ICU. During this time, I met members of Vance's medical team. This team included medical staff of various disciplines who would be involved in his care while at the QE II. Later I was told the staff had been watching me. They determined

I could handle anything. They were planning to teach me what I needed to care for Vance post-hospital. I was ready.

Life had a new routine. I would be at the hospital in time for the doctor's morning check of Vance's condition. The burn nurse would give an update since I left the hospital. I would spend the day talking to Vance, holding his hand, washing his face, creaming his hands and feet. I read when he was sleeping. Gradually I would take a more active role – assigned physiotherapy exercises on the weekend, nail care and other duties as requested. The day came when I was told to go home to PEI but be back tomorrow. Vance had improved enough I could do this.

This role of chief caregiver and advocate I accepted is not a role for everyone. The magnitude of the injury is one factor to consider. I am in good health and physically fit. I had a support system. Life experiences, education and work experiences had given me a strong skill set. I knew I had to look after myself to be there for Vance in the long term. I will share a few of these points with you.

Team Player: Vance's recovery depended on the need for everyone involved in his care to share knowledge that could impact care decisions. In the hospital, notes were made on his medical chart. At home we encourage necessary notes to be made in his journal. Vance has three heart stints. His caregivers had recorded loss of colour, turning blue in the face. Documentation enabled the family doctor to refer Vance to his Halifax cardiologist.

In the hospital Vance was cared for by a variety of nurses. He enjoyed conversations with each one and as a result was seldom bored. We encouraged home care to assign more than one worker to Vance's care.

I was a team player in the hospital. I could monitor Vance when a nurse had a task elsewhere. I knew where to go if Vance needed assistance. If Vance's doctor had to leave Halifax, I was in Halifax. Should Vance have a crisis, one of us would be in town.

Mommy Time: I am a mom to two older children but this does not change the need to spend time together. In a crisis the need is enhanced. Simple things like shopping, cooking a meal together, watching a movie, attending church or a sporting event reassures parent and child that some parts of life can be normal. Mom's love is constant. Mom needs this time to gauge how the child is doing. I was fortunate as family friends checked in with our children to see if they needed anything.

Alone Time: The caregiver needs to look after herself. Each time I went home to PEI I was guaranteed eight-plus hours of alone time

in the car. I could roll down the window and enjoy the mountain air in Nova Scotia or the salt air crossing the Confederation Bridge. I might listen to current news, country music or the 1970/80 music hits. Summer months featured a hot fudge Sunday at a favourite PEI ice cream place. If I was home for Sunday, I would join my choir or mom for lunch.

Look After Yourself: I went to the rink when I was home. A friend pulled me aside and told me to go shopping, get a new coat. "You look awful." I did just that. The next trip home, she was happy. "June you looked as if you were sick." You will get depressed enough; don't allow yourself to get depressed looking in the mirror.

If you are travelling, keep your vehicle maintained and take extra care for your safety. Let someone know when you should be reaching you designation. You don't want family or friends worrying about you.

Be Firm: When you say "NO" mean it. Christmas 2011 I was not done with my shopping. Vance was scheduled for surgery. The doctor knew I would not be far from the hospital should a problem arise. I was standing at the checkout when my phone rang. Answering the call, I was told Vance had refused the surgery. How soon could I get to the hospital? Ten minutes later I walked (stormed I was told later) into the ICU. I could hear the nurse tell me to go easy on him. Slam went the door. "Just what do you think you were doing?" I asked Vance. "I want to go home." For the first time Vance heard the facts: he needed the surgery. He was on IV, a feeding tube, monitors, he had areas with no skin. He could not walk. He could not get out of bed. If he left this room, he would get an infection. He needed the skin grafts. I could not take him home even if I wanted to. The doctor came in and Vance told him I had said some terrible stuff. The doctor assured him I had told him the truth. Vance went back to the surgery.

I said no to other situations. The rehab doctor at Queen Elizabeth in Charlottetown, PEI was insistent I purchase a van. I refused; I was not driving a van. Vance it was discovered could fit into the Dodge Ram and later his own Dodge Dakota. The Workers Compensation Board was planning to install a lift on the ceiling over our bed, purchase a hospital bed, and enlarge the bathroom at the cost of a spare bedroom. No. I argued we were going to wait until Vance arrived home and then determine exactly which renovations were unnecessary. In fact, the status quo was an advantage as Vance was legally blind and knew the original floor layout.

Support Groups: In Halifax I met members of the Canadian Burn Survivors Association. These individuals shared their survival story. I knew I was not alone. Vance would become involved in this group. In this group he met individuals that knew firsthand the recovery process as he knows it. They can identify with the medical, physical and emotional issues of a burn survivor.

The second support group we were introduced to was Threads of Life, by the Workers Compensation Board of PEI. Vance is an individual suffering the aftermath of a life-altering workplace injury. In this group Vance has met other men struggling to find a new focus.

Time has flown since September 24, 2011. Our family shared 51 weeks in QEIL, six months on the Queen Elizabeth rehab in Charlottetown, PEI and numerous hospital admissions related to his burn injury. This and a regular physiotherapy schedule are expected for his lifetime. Vance has continually needed to set new goals. No long-term care, no wheelchair, no ramps. Instead, he has managed walking, jogging and snowshoeing. He accepted the challenge of walking our daughter down the aisle and added an unexpected waltz. This year he held our first grandchild and plans in the future to teach her how to throw a football.

I am thankful for these eight years, seeing Vance grow in recovery, confidence and setting new goals. He has maintained his positive attitude and determination, which has played a significant role in his recovery. I see the joy in his eyes when he has reacquired or gained a new skill. Family and friends have supported us on this journey – may God bless each of you.



Vance has continued to set new goals & challenge himself.



by **Caregivers Alberta** (www.caregiversalberta.ca)

Caregivers need care too.

Caregivers are an essential part of our society. There are more than 8 million caregivers in Canada- more than 1 in 4 adults. If you were to replace all the care they provide it would cost \$66 billion per year.

Providing care comes at a cost. Many caregivers face negative consequences because of caregiving.

- Higher rates of stress, anxiety and depression
- Greater risk of burning out
- Difficult emotions like grief, anger, frustration and guilt
- Poor physical health and lack of sleep
- Out-of-pocket expenses
- Employment impacts including absenteeism, reducing hours and exiting the workforce
- Difficulty finding resources and getting necessary support
- Strained family relationships

As a society, we need caregivers. The population is aging, and people are living longer with illness and disability. As care needs grow, we rely on caregivers to fill in the gaps. But caregivers can't do it without support and recognition from the government, the system and the community.

The Caregiver Well-Being Checklist

Below are some suggestions for improving your well-being. You may want to start with one item and build up to a few. Select the ones that you feel will benefit you the most. Remember- if you don't get to your goal there is no guilt- just something to strive towards as you are able.

- I am getting out/exercising at least twice a week.
- I am getting at least 7 to 9 hours of restful, sound sleep per night.
- I talk with or visit up to 3 friends or relatives weekly.
- I keep my annual medical and dental appointments.
- I am eating 3 balanced meals a day, or 4 to 5 small nutritious meals per day.
- My legal and financial papers, including Wills are in order and available.
- I have kept up with my hobby or special interest.
- I do something special for myself at least once per week.
- I acknowledge my feelings as they come up.
- I attend a community caregiver group, support group, or speak to a friend or counselor about my feelings if I need to.

Adapted from: Family Caregivers' Network Society, Resource Guide for Family Caregivers, 2006.

Comfort foods to bring us home

by **Sandra Hickman**, Production Coordinator

Living on the 'wet coast' you can expect some rain come Autumn, and November is known as our stormy season. And what do we do when we start to feel gloomy and run down? Well, I for one look for comfort food to cheer me up. Luckily, on Facebook, there are a gazillion delicious recipes that everyone is sharing right now.

However, it got me thinking, how much comfort food could really be out there? So, out of curiosity, I did a Google search and I found over 8 million results. The first was the definition; according to Google, comfort food is food that provides consolation or a feeling of well-being, typically any with a high sugar or other carbohydrate content and associated with childhood or home cooking. Well, I thought, they certainly got the part about high sugar or carb heavy right. No low-fat comfort food for this girl – what's the point?! I mean really, how comforting is that?

I know what I like for comfort food, but I started to wonder: what do my co-workers enjoy? So I asked them, 'what makes you feel all warm and cozy inside when the weather/world gets nasty outside?' The most popular response seemed to be homemade mac 'n' cheese (totally agree – yummy!!) and Heather was even kind enough to share her grandmother's recipe (yay for us!):

Heather's Grandma's Homemade Mac'n'Cheese

(making it always reminds me of her -Heather)

INGREDIENTS

3 cups - Macaroni
3 cups - Grated Old Cheddar Cheese *(and can always add more, as Grandma would say - "you can never have enough cheese!")*
2-3 tbsp - Butter or Margarine
1/2 cup - Milk
1/4 cup - Flour
1 can - Mushroom Soup

DIRECTIONS

1. Cook macaroni noodles to your liking.
2. In a pot, add butter/margarine, bring to a bubble; add milk, and stir in flour slowly.
3. When thick, add the mushroom soup, and the cheese to melt.
4. Pour over the macaroni.
5. Sprinkle with some cheese on top.
6. Bake for 45 minutes at 350.

=Yummy!

Tip: If you like the crispy top of a baked mac'n'cheese and would like more of it, use a baking sheet, spreading the mac'n'cheese across, instead of filling a baking dish. Works like a charm.



In second place we had homemade soup – with fresh bread of course (another one of my faves). From the remainder of the responses I got, it was clear – I need to start inviting myself over for dinner more often – everything sounded so good:

- Mom's meatloaf (not just any meatloaf) smelled amazing in the oven and was our favourite thing for a Sunday night dinner. It was made with ground beef and ground pork, and she would roast potatoes in the pan beside the meatloaf -- the potatoes were almost as good as the meatloaf, with a crispy outside from cooking in the fat from the meat. Not very healthy, maybe, but what comfort food is?
- Roast chicken, garlic & Boursin mashed potatoes with gravy and stuffing – truth be told, it's all about the stuffing (I would agree with that);
- Mom's hamburg stew - like shepherd's pie, but the reverse and a little more runny gravy;
- Nachos! Restaurant or homemade...doesn't matter to me. Chicken, ground beef, pork...all fair game! BBQ chicken nachos would be my favourite. MmmMmm...

A few other favourites are beef stew with a nice crusty bread or a beef pot roast with mashed potatoes and gravy. Something slow-cooked and savory. Lasagne and roast chicken are also near the top of the list.

The list wouldn't be complete without the salty goodness of chips with chocolate - *I mean really, is there anything better than sweet and salty together??*

It was apparent too, most if not all of the comfort foods that came to mind for us as staff also came with a sweet memory of home. I know all of the comfort foods that I enjoy bring me back to my childhood; be it cuddling up with my dad for our traditional Friday night pizza and a movie, or coming home from Sunday afternoon hockey and smelling mom's amazing chili. Comfort food does just that. It comforts. It helps us mourn, it helps us celebrate, it helps us remember and when we need to, it brings us home.

How I prepare for a speaking engagement

by Marj Deyell



Speaker volunteer Marj Deyell shares her story with students at Fanshawe College

It's been said that one of life's greatest fears is public speaking. When we're asked as members of the Threads of Life Speaker's Bureau to do a presentation, how can we appear composed and confident in front of the audience?

I remember the training sessions as a very emotional, exhausting experience. Writing the story of our family's encounter with a workplace tragedy beforehand brought back many painful memories, but was it therapeutic as well? I'm sure many Threads of Life speakers would say that it was.

When I'm asked to do a presentation I first jot down the main points I want to use on paper. Then I start typing. Being in a quiet room with no distractions seems best. Then I practice, practice, practice!

It's helpful to know ahead of time about the venue. Will there be a podium, a microphone to use, is there a table to use for handouts, who is the audience, how many do they expect, etc. Thanks to Susan and Patti for much of this info ahead of time!

I will remember my first speaking engagement! The audience was to consist of approximately 50 students who were finalists in a safety video contest. The venue was an old movie theater in downtown Toronto, but it wasn't 50 students in attendance – the theater was packed! The media was also present. Thank goodness the bright lights shining in my eyes made it almost impossible for me to see the audience beyond the first few rows.

My goal when I started doing presentations was to reach as many young workers as I could. I started with our local high school and eventually did many in our area and beyond.

Adapting to the environment of the venue sometimes can be challenging. If possible I like to be able to walk among the audience. Presenting in a long, narrow tent at one event was especially challenging. The workers at the back couldn't see the slide show at all. It was good to be able to walk back amongst them to hold their attention.

My husband, Brian, was in the room at one of my first presentations at his place of employment. I hated it and so did he! He hasn't been in the room since, but is my driver. Not having to think about driving to a presentation has been very helpful.

Some presenters use very few slides, but I like to have about 20-25. That way I don't have to rely on my notes. If I do go off track I have my notes highlighted with the main points I want to make especially my call to action:

Safety is everyone's responsibility and it begins with YOU!

If there are newsworthy events in the media before a presentation I try to adapt it and use them. Has there been a recent workplace incident, have new findings come out regarding some health issue, etc.?

Self-care is emphasized whether we're speaking, working as a volunteer family guide, or in whatever capacity as a member of Threads of Life. What a good time to book a massage, take a nap, read a good book or do whatever you find relaxing.



Carolyn Sim shares her story as a speaker volunteer

Carolyn Sim: Creating a legacy through volunteering

by Lorna Catrambone

Volunteers all have their own individual reasons for getting involved. For Threads of Life volunteer Carolyn Sim her reason is very personal.

“I volunteer for Threads of Life to show my sons that their dad, although he died, is not forgotten,” she says. “That by talking about him, we can prevent other tragedies, prevent other families from going through what we went through. I have always volunteered, and it was important to volunteer for a cause that we are connected to. Volunteering for Threads of Life has helped me continue to grow and heal.”

Carolyn is a tireless advocate for Threads of Life. She is a Volunteer Family Guide, a member of the Speaker’s Bureau, a member of the Sarnia Steps for Life committee, attends trade shows and events, and most recently, led the charge to launch a peer support group in her community.

Carolyn’s husband Dan sustained a severe brain injury after a fall from a ladder into a deep window well. He died two weeks later.

She remembers first learning about Threads of Life in 2010 from her

cousin, who told her about the Steps for Life walk. She realizes too that she was given information about Threads of Life following Dan’s accident, but at the time, it didn’t resonate.

Carolyn attended Steps for Life, where she met other families who had experienced a workplace tragedy. Later that year, she attended her first family forum. “I knew I wanted to be a part of Threads of Life and to volunteer. The next winter I attended Speakers Bureau Training and Volunteer Family Guide training”

Carolyn’s favourite memory as a Threads of Life volunteer was at the 2018 Steps for Life walk. The family spokesperson at the walk that year was the young daughter of the family member that Carolyn supports in her role as a Volunteer Family Guide.

“I was so proud of her,” Carolyn recalls. “She is the youngest family member ever to volunteer to share their story at a Steps for Life walk. She did such a great job.”

Carolyn also finds time in her very busy schedule to volunteer for the Brain Injury Association of Sarnia/Lambton, another cause she is passionate about.

Through her volunteer work, Carolyn Sim is creating a beautiful legacy.

EllisDon: Building on a foundation of care and commitment



EllisDon's team at Steps for Life Toronto in 2019

Steve Chaplin, Vice-President Health Safety & Environment with EllisDon, has always been a large supporter of organizations helping to support families and provide education on reducing workplace injuries. Having been directly involved with workplace tragedies himself, Steve sees the value of his company's partnership with Threads of Life. Relatively new to EllisDon, Steve was surprised to see how keen EllisDon employees were to get involved.

“When you think about passive versus active support, EllisDon people are actively engaged [in Threads of Life],” Chaplin says. “I’ve never heard of anybody raising that amount of money here before for an organization like Threads of Life.”

The construction and building services company first became a national sponsor for Steps for Life – Walking for Families of Workplace Tragedy in 2019, after participating at the local level. EllisDon came in at full speed. Their employees created a video promoting the cause, led fundraising initiatives and walked in communities across the country. Together, in addition to national sponsorship, teams raised more than \$28, 700 to help those affected by work-related injuries, illnesses and deaths.

Support for Steps for Life and Threads of Life within EllisDon comes from the ground up and from the senior levels down, Chaplin says.

It’s a reflection of the company’s safety culture; a philosophy that “we want folks to go home safe each night to their families.”

The approach to safety is always evolving, but is built on a solid foundation of care and commitment. That makes the partnership with Threads of Life a natural fit. Chaplin hadn’t heard of the organization before coming to EllisDon two years ago, and it was the employees involved in the walk who explained what the organization is all about.

For 2020, the company has already re-committed to a national sponsorship and appointed a national coordinator for its Steps for Life efforts, and plans to get started early with an internal awareness campaign, team leaders across the organization, posters, barbecues and other events.

“EllisDon is a committed supporter,” Chaplin adds. “We want to continue to work with Threads of Life to support the important work the organization does.”

This fall, two EllisDon employees who were most involved in Steps for Life were invited to attend the Reflections ceremony at the Central Family Forum. Olivia D’Aquila and Claudia Wisotzky watched while Threads of Life members lit candles in honour of loved ones and their experiences as injured or ill workers. Afterwards, they wrote:

“This evening, hearing all the stories from families that have lost loved ones, opens our eyes to why we raise awareness for Steps for Life. EllisDon’s partnership with Threads of Life is important because at EllisDon we believe safety is our top priority and it gives us purpose to ensure our workers go home safe every night.”



Thank a Sponsor

What do 160 companies across Canada have in common? Large and small, century-old and brand-new, big-city and small-town, in every line of business imaginable, they were all sponsors of Steps for Life-Walking for Families of Workplace Tragedy in 2019.

That's 160 businesses and organizations that all share a passion for safety and a concern for families affected by workplace tragedy. Many companies come back year after year, and new ones join their ranks, thanks to the volunteers who pound the pavement to secure sponsorships in every community.

When you see a Steps for Life "Proud Supporter" sign in a shop window, or recognize a business logo on your community Steps for Life page, be sure to thank them for their sponsorship!

Some examples of the difference our sponsors make:

- 1. Community Champions** (\$2,000 sponsorship) – Prints one issue of our quarterly newsletter *Threads*, distributed to family members, supporters, government and corporate partners. *Threads* offers family members a chance to share their story and learn about grief and healing, and about *Threads of Life* programs and events.
- 2. Community Leaders** (\$1,500 sponsorship) – Allows one family member to travel to attend training for the *Threads of Life* speakers bureau. *Threads of Life* speakers deliver a powerful message about health and safety at conferences, safety meetings and schools – because they know all too well the consequences when something goes wrong at work.
- 3. Community Supporters** (\$1,000 sponsorship) – Provides meals and accommodations for two family members to attend a family forum. *Threads of Life* family forums are where people affected by workplace tragedies gather to heal and to discover they're not alone.
- 4. Community Advocate** (\$500 sponsorship) – Rents a venue and provides materials for one community peer support group. Peer groups are safe spaces where those grieving a work-related tragedy can connect with others and learn to live with their loss.
- 5. Stepping Forward** (\$250 sponsorship) – Covers the cost of one month's phone bills so that *Threads of Life* staff can respond when families reach out for help.



Welcome (back) to the Steps for Life family!

Four new communities will host walks in 2020

It's not easy to organize a Steps for Life event – we likely don't need to tell YOU that! But in 2020, four new or returning communities will play host to Steps for Life walks, bringing the total close to 30 walks from coast to coast in Canada! Welcome aboard or welcome back to Sydney Nova Scotia, Windsor Ontario, Thunder Bay Ontario, and Vancouver British Columbia. Watch the www.stepsforlife.ca website for the complete list of walk locations.

Registration opens in February!

Coming Events

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

Advanced Volunteer Family Guide training – January 23-26, 2020

Speakers Bureau training – February 27-March 1, 2020

HOLD THE DATES!
And stay tuned for registration details.

Atlantic Family Forum
June 12-14, 2020

Central Family Forum
September 25 - 27, 2020

Prairie-Western Family Forum
October 23-25, 2020

SHARE THIS NEWSLETTER!

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

How to reach us

Toll-free: 1-888-567-9490

Fax: 1-519-685-1104

Association for Workplace Tragedy Family Support – Threads of Life

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

contact@threadsoflife.ca
www.threadsoflife.ca
www.stepsforlife.ca



Association for Workplace Tragedy Family Support

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

MISSION

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

VISION

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

VALUES

We believe that:

Caring: Caring helps and heals.

Listening: Listening can ease pain and suffering.

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

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

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

Passion: Passionate individuals can change the world.

EDITOR Susan Haldane,
shaldane@threadsoflife.ca

DESIGNER Chris Williams
chriswilliams@rogers.com

GUEST CONTRIBUTORS
Marj Deyell
June Easter
Debbie Wickham



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