

Ontario's WSIB: A Friend Indeed



Thread of Life volunteer Erin Pitruzzella speaks at a WSIB Day of Mourning ceremony

Threads of Life is fortunate to have many partners from coast to coast who stand behind our mission, vision and mandate to support families experiencing a workplace fatality, life-altering injury or illness. In the case of Ontario's Workplace Safety & Insurance Board (WSIB), they have been a partner since before Threads of Life formally existed.

Shirley Hickman, Threads of Life Executive Director recalls the early days, when she was one of the group informally known as “One Hundred Families” who came together on the creation of the Canadian Young Worker Life Quilt, a tribute to young workers killed or injured on the job. “In 2002 a seed of an idea was planted with staff at WSIB, to create an organization connecting family members living with the outcomes of workplace tragedies. The staff already knew that this need existed. The support of all WSIB staff has been steadfast these past 18 years behind a vision and mission that aligns with the daily work they do.

From this initiative, Threads of Life was formed, and the WSIB has been an active partner ever since.

As Threads of Life grew to offer more programs and support more families, so did the level of commitment from the WSIB. Over time they have become a generous financial contributor, providing funding to support delivery of our programs and services in Ontario. WSIB staff volunteer on many of our Steps for Life planning committees in Ontario, and create teams that participate and fundraise in walks all across the province. WSIB also provide meaningful opportunities to help raise awareness and highlight workplace injury prevention.

Each year, on the Day of Mourning, the WSIB invites a Threads of Life family member to share their story of how a workplace fatality changed their life. A few years ago during North American Occupational Safety and Health week, they made arrangements to have the Life Quilt displayed in the lobby of their head office, offering staff and visitors the chance to view this powerful, visual tribute to young workers.

It is said that “hard times reveal true friends”. In the past few months, as the emerging COVID-19 pandemic raised many questions and concerns and resulted in the switch to a virtual Steps for Life event, the WSIB's support was unwavering. Their annual financial contribution for 2020 would not change, and across the province, the WSIB Steps for Life teams continued to rally with a unique #mywhymyway activity that involved a virtual team meeting with staff members donning colourful costumes.

Threads of Life does tremendous work supporting the families of people who have been killed or injured at work and in promoting workplace health and safety,” said Thomas Teahen, President and CEO of the WSIB. **“We value our partnership with Threads of Life and are proud to continue providing financial support to help do this important work. We look forward to working closely together over the coming year to raise health and safety awareness and prevent workplace injuries and illness.”**

Strong partnerships like the one we have with the WSIB ensure that Threads of Life remains successful in delivering our mission to help families heal through a community of support and to promote the elimination of life-altering workplace injuries, illnesses and deaths. The WSIB is truly a friend in deed.