



## A history, and a future, of caring

Twenty years ago this spring, a group gathered to discuss what support families need to help them cope after a work-related fatality, a life-altering injury or an occupational disease. Out of that meeting, Threads of Life was born. Members, partners, volunteers and staff all work for the day when tragedies are eliminated, but in the meantime we continue to gather – in spirit, in effort and in person – to build on that history of caring.



### MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Bill Stunt

I personally have been involved in Threads of Life since 2005, only a year after my son Karl died and just two years after the organization began. For those of us who've experienced tragedy, whether illness, injury or death, time sometimes runs past faster than we can imagine and sometimes seems almost to stop. It's hard for any of us to believe Threads of Life is 20 years old.

Throughout 2023, we'll be honouring this milestone and hearing from members who've been part of this organization since its founding and those who've found it just recently. No matter where you fall along that timeline, you're a vital part of Threads of Life and our history of caring. Thank you for being a thread in our strong tapestry of support.

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20<sup>th</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY  
2003 - 2023

# On the Journey Together

by **Shirley Hickman**,  
Executive Director and  
Founder, Threads of Life

**T**hreads of Life is a charity still in its infancy, but as we enter our 20th year, it is important to reflect on what we have learned from the past and how to plan for the future. So how does an organization like Threads of Life get started? For me it was a commitment to do something positive and productive with my love for our son, Tim. When Tim went to work, Saturday, March 23, 1996, we were all planning how to celebrate his 21st birthday in a couple of days. His friends were planning to celebrate that evening. Never did it cross our minds we would all be gathering in a small hospital waiting room.

When Tim died, our family was cared for with love from our extended family and the many community organizations we were connected with. As the months and years went on, we found the health and safety partners already knew family members would benefit with an opportunity to connect with each other to share stories and experiences. These system partners also knew there was an important missing piece in the prevention of future workplace injuries, illnesses and deaths. That piece is the very personal story so many family members now have.

In Tim's youth, his favourite sport was hockey, playing goalie. I was not a good hockey mom and could not understand why he chose that position. So getting a part-time job in a city arena was a natural fit, while still going to college. Tim was not sure what he wanted to do upon graduation, but I am sure it would be something to do with caring for



Every day as I work I look at photos of Tim and my granddaughters, and they remind me why I do what I do.

people. He was always there when someone needed something.

Tim is our second child. His older brother, Michael honours Tim in his own way, as does his dad, Bob. Like other families, we each seem to have found our own unique way. Bob and Michael each enjoy woodworking and seeing their projects come to fruition. Michael, a pilot, has shared he reflects on Tim's life when he is flying and helping others. Our family has grown and we are fortunate to have Sandra as our daughter-in-law. I think of her as a daughter. We are blessed to be able to watch our granddaughters Hailey and Jocelyn grow and they are now both teenagers. They both hear the safety messages often. We did encourage safety with our boys also, however we were not prepared when tragedy hit home. Our granddaughters learn of Tim's life through the stories we share. They do or say something funny, and we say 'uncle Tim may have done the same'.

In the late 1990s all the Canadian health and safety partners were exploring how to decrease injuries, particularly to young workers. Our family was invited to participate in a couple of those meetings and slowly awareness grew that the voice of family members had a place. Together we met and developed the vision and mission statements for an organization.

Each of the provincial WCBs reached out to a few family members of young workers who'd been injured or killed at work. In spring 2003 we met in Toronto to explore what they felt would benefit their own family and others. Out of that meeting grew Threads of Life – the Association for Workplace Family Tragedy Support.

Since 1996 I have had so many opportunities. I have met family members who, like our

family, felt not just the grief of a death, injury or illness, but the many, many challenges of the unknown system of investigations and the legal process. I see those family members learn to honour their grief productively, find healthy ways to cope, and many become volunteers to ensure the organization is here for other family members. I have met so many passionate system partners and employers, who all believe in our vision. Sometimes my heart feels overwhelmed.

We all know that there is much more to do to ensure that all workers come home safe and well at the end of their shift. Threads of Life's strategic plan drives us to continue to partner with government and OHS system partners, employers and organizations that share a common vision. We want every Canadian family who has been affected by a workplace tragedy – life-altering injury, occupational disease or fatal injury – to be aware of the programs and services of Threads of Life. We want to ensure that as Threads of Life grows we have our financial and human resources in place to manage. I believe we will if we continue to think as we have since our beginning. I have always reminded our staff and volunteers: it is like building a house – you start with a strong foundation. We have been doing that and will continue to reinforce that foundation.

I have always volunteered since I was a teenager. I enjoy seeing individuals gain new skills and confidence. I continue to volunteer each week at my local hospital as an opportunity to help people in a time of stress. When I get a smile or seem to help them pass some time, that is my reward. Hence, I know and appreciate each volunteer for Threads of Life – no matter what role or time you have.

*Continued on pg. 5*

20<sup>th</sup>  
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## Kindred spirits on the road to safety

by Liz Webley

**T**he unforgettable day that changed my life was August 27, 1998. That day, my husband, Dick Van Rooyen was killed while working on Highway 401 with his road construction crew. A young driver who fell asleep at the wheel crashed into Dick as he was placing pylons to change driving lanes. Two policemen informed me of his death and I was in shock. We had been married 36 years and now I was a widow, my grown children and grandchildren were without a father and grandfather. A court case and an inquest the following year brought some safety changes to work performed on highways. I became involved with road safety, first with the Ontario Advisory Group on Road Safety and then with the Sarnia Lambton Safe Roads Committee. My goal was to make drivers aware of their responsibility on the roadways in honour of Dick's memory. Then, in 2002, I moved to St. Mary's with my new husband, Fred Webley.

Fred was retired from the building construction field. In the past he had worked with asbestos and he suffered with mesothelioma, a work-related lung disease. I became aware of Shirley Hickman and the beginnings of Threads of Life and the travelling LifeQuilt. Fred and I participated in the second Steps for Life walk held on Toronto's Ward Island. This group understood the value of workplace safety! We felt a kindred spirit with them.

Fred and I became part of the first group to be trained to become Volunteer Family Guides and later I became a volunteer speaker. The training was heartfelt and meaningful and left me feeling uplifted. The training



Liz with Fred

has proved helpful for the years of connecting with new widows to provide peer support. Because Fred had also become a Volunteer Family Guide, I could discuss my phone calls with him and he became my local support. I also was a speaker at various health and safety meetings and at a few Steps for Life walks.

The highlight of the year was the annual Family Forums; we both loved them. To see old friends again and make new ones, plus to discuss issues at the various workshops were wonderful experiences. It was a place to be supported but also to support others. As we aged, we no longer drove all over the province, and I gave up the role of being a speaker and Volunteer Family Guide. When Fred reached his 80th year, he was hospitalized for a week. Then he enjoyed a few years of relative good health. That changed in the summer of 2020 when COVID was rampant. Fred was diagnosed with cancer and passed away September 20th. I was a widow again, and his family were without a father and grandfather. We had been married for 18 years.

There were no in-person Family Forms during the pandemic, but there were Zoom sessions. It was better than nothing at all and kept us in touch. However, in the fall of 2022, Family Forum in Central Canada again was a reality and I was thrilled to attend it. A member from London, Ontario offered me a ride. This was my first time attending without Fred. It was so gratifying to see my old

friends in person, to talk to new ones and to be part of this caring group.

Thankfully, Threads of Life is national in its outreach and offers Family Forums in the Atlantic, Central Canada and in the West. The magazine contains personal stories of loss and heartbreak but also of courage and resolve after involvement with the Threads of Life volunteers and support. As we honour the organization's 20th anniversary, my hope is that this wonderful association will continue to offer support along with the many partnerships and the many volunteers.



Liz with Dick

20<sup>th</sup>  
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## Finding a passion for injury prevention

by **Bill Bowman**

**M**y workplace injury was similar to most members of the Threads of Life family, with one major exception: I was lucky! Why? First, because I only had one arm and not two in the brake press when it activated. Second, since I was working alone, I was lucky I did not faint, dying on a factory floor in a pool of blood.

The injury happened in the summer between my first and second year of university. At the age of 19, I felt fortunate to get a job in a Hamilton rail car manufacturing company making three times what I was earning as a weekend maintenance man at a nursing home. It would pay for my tuition, books and all the fun things you do at university.

August 29th was my second-to-last day to be worked before returning to school. It was the Friday before Labour Day, and I was scheduled to work the following Tuesday to be paid for the holiday. As usual, many senior workers caught the “long weekend flu” and booked off work on that Friday. The foreman approach me stating he really needed some parts made up and the regular “operator” was off. Wow, what an opportunity, as the hourly wage was higher than that of a “helper” -- being in charge of a job was financially rewarding. I had not worked as an operator before.

Assigned to work on a small brake press, I located the “V” shaped dies which would form the 12”x 16” pieces of 1/8” steel to the correct angle. The male and female sides of the dies weighed between 60-70lb each. Once set in place and secured in the press, the “gauge” or



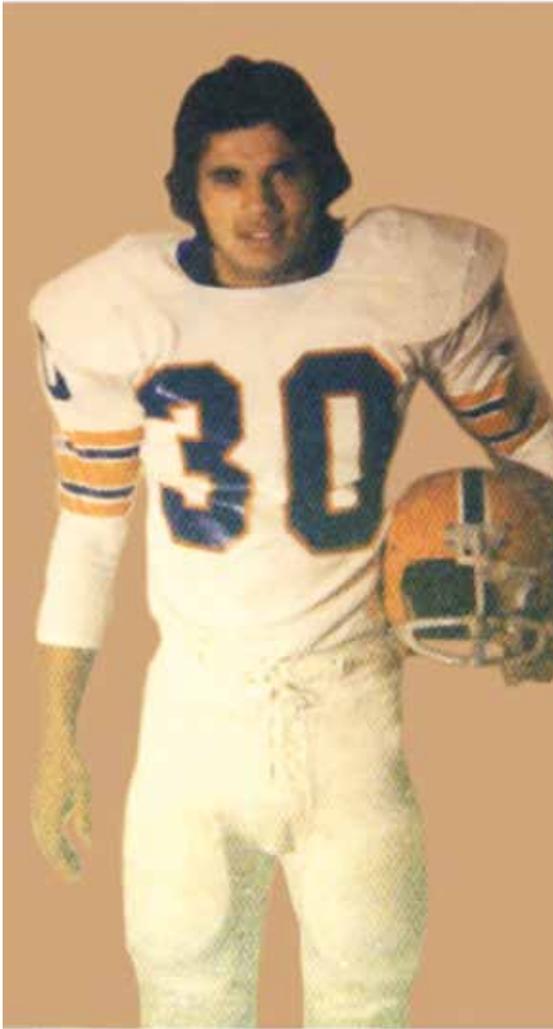
Bill today

bracket positioned behind the contact area was adjusted and tightened with a wrench so that each part is “pressed” or bent correctly.

While adjusting the gauge, holding it with one hand and pulling on the wrench with the other, I stepped on the unguarded foot pedal and activated the machine. I heard the machine begin to cycle, saying “Oh shit” and then could hear and feel the crushing of the bones in my left arm. When the press raised, my left hand was on the other side of the machine. With blood squirting to the ceiling, I picked up my left arm and ran about 75 feet, screaming for help. The coworker who stopped me, sat me down and tightened his belt around my arm. He may have saved my life. After six weeks of failed attempts to reattach my arm and hand, the final amputation

was made where the die met my arm.

The injury has impacted my life, but I was fortunate to have extremely supportive family and friends. At one point, my father said he would give me his left hand if he could and he meant it! But perhaps more than anyone, the informal mentoring of my Uncle Jim Moodie aided my recovery and acceptance of what had happened. Living in Montreal, Uncle Jim was a WW2 veteran and an amputee. As a member of the Canadian Army, in what was named the Devil’s Brigade, he stepped on land mine and lost a leg below the knee. While on family visits and camping trips in the summer, he never displayed any signs of a disability. For example, he would remove his prosthetic and hop down to the water and swim like everyone else. He



Bill before his injury

IAPA, especially Debbie Glenn (who tragically also became a family member) and Maureen Shaw their CEO, welcomed me with open arms to their active group of volunteers. With their support and that of my employer, many presentations of the Young Workers Awareness Program (YWAP) were completed as well as participation in their local volunteer network. With the exception of these folks, the realization of the impact of workplace tragedies on an individual and their families was generally not well understood by most in our community, perhaps since they had not experienced such a tragedy. Soon after Threads of Life formed, I started involvement as a member of the Speakers Bureau and later a Volunteer Family Guide.

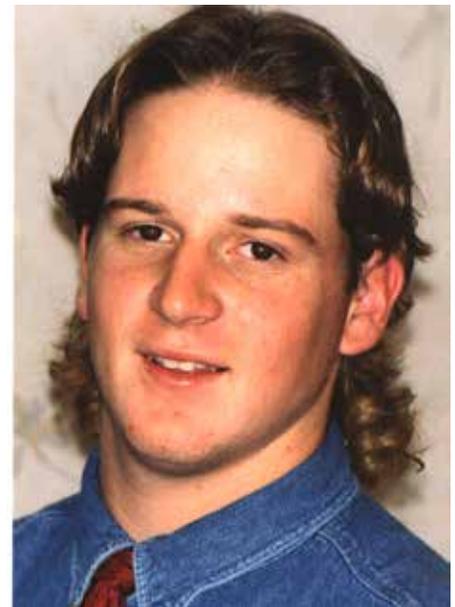
Surprisingly to me, I continue to occasionally relive what occurred on that fateful day, the horror of it, the impact it had on others and what could have been done differently by me or others to prevent it. Then facing reality, it passes, and I realize nothing is different, as the past cannot be changed. Fortunately, then and now I am supported on my ongoing journey by my family, friends and all those who are family members of Threads of Life. Thank you.

Sadly, many workers and their families and friends continue to experience a devastating loss as a result of a workplace injury; however, they have not had the childhood experiences and mentor which definitely aided my recovery. Although their family and friends try to understand and provide support they may not be equipped or recognize what could be said

or done to help their loved one and/or themselves on their journey of healing. This is why Threads of Life is so important for those who are beginning or continuing their journey of healing and therefore my involvement will continue as long as I am able.

*...On the Journey Together  
continued from pg. 2*

Daily we hear or feel the passion that our family members and each partner bring. Together we all keep the vision in front of us – 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. You have all shown commitment during the past 20 years. You ask what you can do next. We need each of you to help us reach those family members who do not yet know of our programs and services. We have the tools to help you. Please let us know if you have an opportunity. We are on this journey together and I thank each of you.



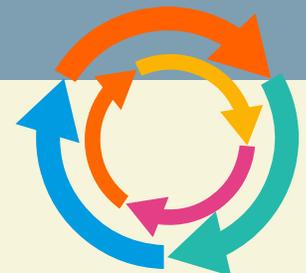
Tim Hickman

was also an active volunteer of the War Amps of Canada. I can still hear Uncle Jim and Aunt Mildred saying “You just have to make the most of what you’ve got left”. He lived by that saying and I try to do the same.

By 2003 when Threads of Life began, my passion for injury prevention, particularly with young workers, had begun. It was sparked while attending a local IAPA (now known as WSPS) conference. The folks involved were all very enthusiastic about injury prevention. Everyone I met from the

## Threads of Life believes sharing your experience of workplace tragedy helps you heal.

**Are you ready to share?** You could write a reflection on one idea, write a poem, draft a post for our blog ([threadsoflife.ca/news](http://threadsoflife.ca/news)), or share your full story as family members have in this issue. To learn more, email: Susan at [shaldane@threadsoflife.ca](mailto:shaldane@threadsoflife.ca).





## New sessions coming for 2023 Family Forums

Some exciting and helpful new sessions are in the works for this year's family forums. While the forums are still weeks or months away (see dates below), the program planning is nearly done and the Threads of Life team has been searching for workshop topics that will help family members heal, share and learn new coping skills.

Programs for each of the three regional forums will be posted online as registration opens, but we wanted to give you a taste of what's planned:

- Meeting the Unique Mental Health Needs of Men and Boys
- Maybe Swearing Will Help
- Holding the Hope
- Trauma and Addictions
- Chronic Pain Self-Care, Finding the Silver Linings

- Remembering with Love
- Chronic Sorrow
- Cultural Healing
- Healing with Nature

Not all topics will be available at each forum, but there will be a blend of sessions for everyone: those affected by injuries, deaths, and illnesses both recent and in the past. Watch the Threads of Life website for more details! [www.threadsoflife.ca/ff](http://www.threadsoflife.ca/ff).

- Atlantic Family Forum – May 26-28 – Registration closes Apr. 18
- Western Family Forum – Sep. 22-24 – Registration opens in Apr.
- Central Family Forum – Oct. 27-29 – Registration opens in June

## Leaning on compassion and understanding

This year marks the 20th anniversary of Threads of Life. That's 20 years of continued support for families affected by a workplace tragedy. Over the years we have met with many families and will continue to grow and develop opportunities where families can find comfort and heal.

There isn't a typical Threads of Life family. We come from across provinces and territories, work sectors and backgrounds. It sounds strange to be connected to others through a work-related tragedy doesn't it? But here we are together. Understanding that there are many challenges that families face, it is very important to us that every person who finds our community of support is offered help to deal with the impact of loss. Thankfully we have many partners and friends who want to ensure there is a place for families to connect and find support when a workplace tragedy happens.

Finding ways to cope and identifying with others who have been through a similar experience can significantly help those who are feeling alone move with their grief and loss. We have to find a way to move forward with what's happened, but that doesn't mean we forget, "move on" or "get over it." It's always good to remind ourselves of what helps:

- **Find a good listener.** Talk to someone who will listen – really listen, whether it is a trusted friend, family member, counsellor, doctor, or Threads of Life volunteer family guide.
- **Be a grief gumshoe.** Explore and find resources that you can identify with or find useful, and that you can learn from.
- **Keep company with others.** We can't stress this enough: do not allow yourself to become isolated. We're social creatures, and grief makes social supports even more important.

Whatever you do to support your journey, Threads of Life is an additional support network for you to be part of: whenever you need it, and for as long as you need it.

If you'd like to connect with a trained peer support volunteer, we offer a one-on-one match with a volunteer family guide. This is an opportunity to share your challenges with someone who understands the path you are on. If you'd like to be connected, contact Karen at [kpitts@threadsoflife.ca](mailto:kpitts@threadsoflife.ca) or 1-888-567-9490.

Read a longer version of this article on the Threads of Life blog: [www.threadsoflife.ca/news](http://www.threadsoflife.ca/news).

# Donors like you: Fred Fretz



Fred and his wife Wendy

Like so many people, it was a family story that first brought Fred Fretz to Threads of Life. And like so many, it was the chance to have an impact on many that kept him involved both as a volunteer and as a donor. He was a member of the initial Threads of Life board of directors, and served on the board for eight years. He has remained a generous supporter, making annual donations.

When he retired from the board in 2014, Fred commented: “You see Threads of Life in action and come away reminded that ‘this is really important,’” he says. “That’s the aspect that keeps you going.” We checked in with him recently to talk about why he continues to support the organization.

## How did you learn about Threads of Life and become involved?

In the early 2000s I was looking for ways to increase my community involvement. A letter came across my desk that had been sent to a former President of our company that described the goals of Threads of Life and its desire to recruit board members. As the head of Human Resources in our company it was my department’s mandate to champion our health and safety efforts and frankly, I was blessed to work in an organization where that commitment was taken very seriously. The solicitation letter was written by Shirley Hickman. As a London resident, I was all too familiar with the terrible workplace tragedy that had claimed the life of Shirley’s son Tim. On top of the media attention the tragedy received, my wife Wendy had taught Tim in elementary school. I applied for the role and am grateful that I was selected.

## As a loyal donor, what is it about Threads of Life that has encouraged you to support the organization even after retiring from the Board?

While serving on the Board I was honoured to attend Family Forums in all parts of the country. This allowed me to meet dozens of family members who continued to live with painful realities of trying to carry on after workplace tragedies devastated their families. We also had visitors from the Speaker’s Bureau participate in our company’s annual health & safety day. Our employees were moved and inspired by these talks which reinforced our own efforts to drive home the incredible importance of safety in our work and personal lives. So, witnessing the Threads of Life processes in action, funded through our donations, was very gratifying and reinforced the importance of the organization’s existence.

## What is the impact or difference you would like your gifts to have?

While we may never know the full impact of Threads of Life’s efforts, I pray the programs we fund will inspire companies to be more safety diligent; workers to always work safely while never taking shortcuts; and survivors of workplace tragedies to find and use the supports of Threads of Life.

*Threads of Life is honoured to have many loyal funders and donors. You can donate directly on our website at [www.threadsoflife.ca/donate](http://www.threadsoflife.ca/donate). If you’d like information about other ways of giving, or providing a gift in your will, please contact Scott McKay, Director of Partnerships and Fundraising – [smckay@threadsoflife.ca](mailto:smckay@threadsoflife.ca) or 888-567-9490 extension 104.*

## Celebrating support: TriWest Capital Partners



Shirley with TriWest’s Dino DeLuca

At Threads of Life, we are fortunate to have partners who understand the ripple effects of a workplace tragedy. TriWest Capital Partners have demonstrated once again their compassion for families affected by tragedy, and their commitment to help. After a lull for the pandemic, the TriWest Capital Partners Forum came back strong in 2022, raising just under \$70,000 for Threads of Life. The Forum also led to additional donations of \$15,000 from two participating organizations. The TriWest event brings together TriWest’s portfolio companies in support of Threads of Life and STARS air ambulance. It makes a huge difference not only in raising funds, but in spreading the word about Threads of Life’s work to new potential family members, partners and volunteers. Funds raised by the event help to send families to Family Forums to learn healthy coping skills, train Volunteer Family Guides to work with grieving individuals, and provide information for those who’ve experienced a workplace fatality, life-altering injury or occupational disease.

“TriWest Capital Partners is honoured to support Threads of Life and the work they do in our communities,” said COO Dino DeLuca. “TriWest, along with our incredible partners, are committed to supporting families impacted by workplace tragedies and we are very pleased to see our support is helping to make a difference.”

# Volunteer profile

## Joanne Wade

Our lives take many twists and turns and fortunately, we do not know what is around the corner. Unfortunately, the sharpest curve for me in the road of life, was my son Brent's death on Nov.9, 1999 when he was killed in the workplace at the age of 22.

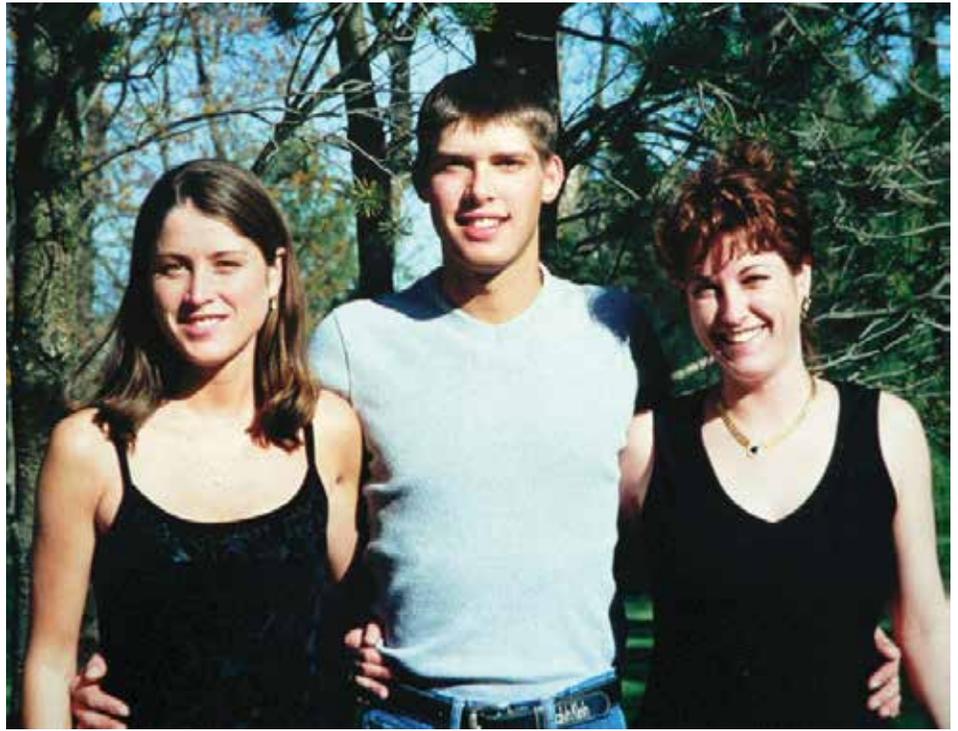
We take the normalcy of our lives so much for granted that we forget to be appreciative and grateful every day for all we have. The INSTANT I was informed of Brent's death – my youngest and my only son, a brother to my two girls, Chrissy and Laura – I was thrown into a world that was completely foreign to me. For months I questioned why him, not me. The heart-wrenching, gut-wrenching pain was barely survivable.

I well remember the feeling of emptiness, hopelessness and aloneness. So much of me had died with him. Future dreams, plans, family times, him walking his sisters down the aisle and being there for them and their children was gone. It takes but One Instant to change your life forever. I felt the joylessness was going to be forever and I would never feel happy or be able to laugh again. I should have been a support for my girls but I was not. I have many regrets and feelings of guilt about this, but I was brought to my knees in my deep grief. As a single parent, I once felt strong, in control of my circumstances as I had been through a number of trying things in my life. Now I was weak, vulnerable, numbed, tearful, indecisive and so fearful something was going to happen to one of my girls. My girls and my many close friends were my support. Counselling and a grief support group in Sudbury just did not help me. I poured myself into keeping very busy with work and in my church. But when I was alone with my thoughts I would easily slip into sadness and depression.

The person I was, I had lost. Now I had to make a new normal and acquaint myself to the new me. That is what my journey of grief entailed, learning to accept the reality of a life without Brent and progressing to a new normal to find hope and some type of joy again.

I believe, through God's love and understanding, He had put in my path, the opportunity to have Brent on the Young Worker's LifeQuilt, a memorial dedicated to the thousands of young women and men between the ages of 14 and 24, who have been killed and injured on the job.

My girls and I were invited to the inauguration of the LifeQuilt in Toronto, in 2003, and hence the beginning of Threads of Life organization. Little did I realize at the time how this organization in its infant stage would eventually evolve to what it is today. Nor did I realize how it would impact my life and the lives of thousands of others.



Brent Wade with his sisters Laura and Chrissy

I remember the feeling of being with people who had lost a child and understood my journey. I remember feeling a connection with people who were completely unknown to me. I felt safe to be who I was and where I was, along this forever journey of grief. There was something healing about sharing my story and hearing others' stories. And that is how my healing journey began.

From 2003 on, I could see my healing taking place.

I had been existing but now I was starting to feel like I was living again. We were a community of loss and together we shared our stories of our families before and after our loss. We shared our fears, our deepest emotions. We helped one another put emotions into words when we could not. We became family, very diversified in culture, religion, ethnic origin and where we lived, yet connected in the common denominator of loss, through a death, injury or disease.

Shirley Hickman, the founder of Threads of Life, was such a great support. She helped me understand the emotional journey I was on. The loss of her son Tim had given her the strength to want his death to make a difference and not be for nothing. She gave us the tools to help us find our way to healing. She has been our guiding light.

I became involved as a Volunteer Family Guide because I remembered where I had been, the lifelessness I had felt, and the merry-go-round of emotions. I remember being with my siblings who were enjoying their family times and I felt resentful, envious, angry, guilty for having these feelings and thinking I was the only one who felt these feelings.

It was only by being with our members and sharing that I realized I was not alone in my emotions and what I was feeling was normal.

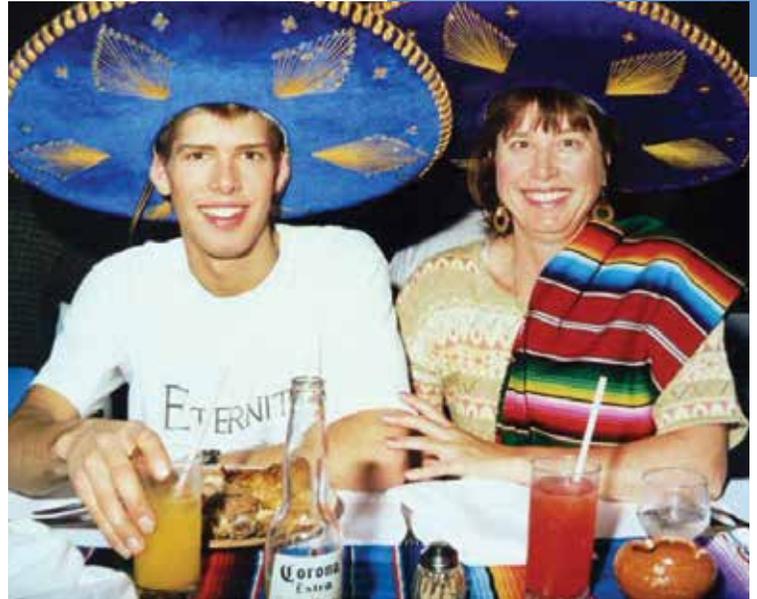
At the beginning of our organization, the majority of us had suffered our losses within two or three, to 16 years previous. We had spent a number of years struggling on our own. Now people are becoming more aware of Threads of Life, who we are and our mission and vision. They are finding us sooner and being supported much sooner than I was. I have seen the benefits, the impact on one's physical and mental health, of having one-on-one support from someone who is travelling down that same road. I have also been a recipient of the support each of

us as members give each other. I have seen the difference we have made in each others' lives, and I also have experienced the healing effect of being able to be there as a Volunteer Family Guide, for someone who has lost. We give each other hope. We can see by others that there will be laughter again, laughter without guilt, a sense of joy again.

I am blessed to be able to once more enjoy life to its fullest, enjoying my family and my grandchildren. Our lives have been enriched with having had Brent with us for 22 years. We miss him each and every day. We cherish his memory and keep him alive by sharing stories.

My belief as a Volunteer Family Guide, is that we walk beside a person remembering no one's journey is the same, a person's loss and grief felt is dependent upon the relationship they have with the lost loved one, and everything in its own time.

I am a retired Registered Nurse, and in my 40-year nursing career, I have dealt with death, dying and supporting families but with my son's death I realized I knew nothing of what these families went through. Over these past 20 years with Threads of Life I have grown as I have gone through my healing journey. Threads of Life has put living back into life for me. My way of giving back or paying it forward, so to speak, is to be a VFG and a Public Speaker. Remaining an active member of Threads of Life is very important to me. I am so proud to be a member of such a fantastic organization.



Brent and Joanne in Mexico

I wish to thank all staff and management for all they do to provide us with the opportunities to connect, to attend the many workshops intended to help us, for our Forums and excellent facilitators, for the many opportunities to share our stories, for accepting us for who we are in our struggles to find our new selves.

## New volunteers give the gift of their time and energy

For the first time in nearly three years, new volunteers were able to gather in person for training this winter. Six new volunteers stepped up for the Threads of Life speaker program, and six became Volunteer Family Guides. At the same time, a dozen volunteers are completing their virtual and one-on-one orientation for the new role of Community Engagement Volunteer.

Speaker volunteers are family members who share their personal experience of work-related tragedy with the goal of preventing future injuries, illnesses and deaths. Volunteer Family Guides provide peer support to other family members who are coping with tragedy. And Community Engagement Volunteers work to raise awareness of our organization in their physical or virtual communities by sharing information about our programs and services.

At Threads of Life we rely on our volunteers to help us achieve our mission “to help families heal through a community of support and to promote the elimination of life-altering workplace injuries, illnesses



New speaker and family guide volunteers gathered in November to share and learn about their new roles

and deaths.” We couldn't do it without them. If you're interested in becoming a volunteer, visit our web page <https://threadsoflife.ca/volunteer> or contact Lorna Catrambone, [lcatrambone@threadsoflife.ca](mailto:lcatrambone@threadsoflife.ca).

# Walking together, so nobody walks alone.

The reason we walk is right in the name: Steps for Life - Walking for Families of Workplace Tragedy. We walk in support and prevention, because as any family that has experienced a workplace tragedy will tell you, we can't continue to have more families devastated this way.

The main reason we walk in Steps for Life is to ensure Threads of Life can continue to provide support to those who need it after a workplace fatality, life-altering injury, or occupational disease. We walk with people like this year's Steps for Life spokesperson, Melanie, a mom and widow, who is now raising her son without his dad. Mark, an industrial electrician, was severely injured in a fall while doing maintenance on an industrial press. He lost everything that made him Mark on that one day -- and four years later, his injuries cost him his life as well. His dream was to be a father, and today, his son is growing up without him. We walk with people like Melanie, and her son, their family and friends, and their community. "To be able to share my loss and experiences with people who have lived a similar journey is so invaluable to my healing," Melanie explains. "My husband will never come home but having the opportunity to share our story makes it feel like our loss means something."

Melanie is our national Family Spokesperson for Steps for Life 2023. Watch for her video coming in March. If you've personally experienced a workplace tragedy, we want to walk with you. If you want to ensure families like Melanie's have support services when they need it, we want to walk with you. And if you want to raise awareness about



Melanie, right, walks with her team, the "Work Boot Warriors" at London Steps for Life in 2022

health and safety to help prevent future workplace tragedies, we also want to walk with you.

We're walking together. Because we're stronger together and because above all else, no one should be walking this path alone.

Registration is now open in all communities at [stepsforlife.ca](https://stepsforlife.ca), so go ahead and sign up to walk with family, friends and co-workers walking arm in arm together in both support and prevention. [#WeWalkTogether](https://twitter.com/WeWalkTogether)

## Finding the "U" in "TEAM"

**It's true, there's no "I" in team, and there's no "U" either, but there is a "YOU" !**

We love our Steps for Life teams – they make such a huge difference in drawing more people to raise awareness, and in raising more funds for those affected by workplace tragedy.

Steps for Life teams come in all shapes and sizes. Many families affected by workplace tragedy form teams with their relatives and friends, to honour loved ones affected by injury, illness or death. Many of our partners and sponsors – especially our amazing national Steps for Life sponsors – walk together to support families and to demonstrate how important health and safety is in their own workplaces.

And where there are teams, there's often some friendly competition. Steps for Life teams across the country vie to see who can raise the most money, and be named the champion team in their region or even for the entire country.

You can be part of the meaningful fun! Join an existing team or create your own at [stepsforlife.ca](https://stepsforlife.ca).

- 1**  
**RECRUIT:** Assemble your team of 3 or more walkers.
- 2**  
**REGISTER:** Registering online is easier than ever before! Visit hyperlink and click on the Register tab in the top right corner then follow the step-by-step instructions.
- 3**  
**RAISE FUNDS** We encourage all participants to raise funds for Threads of Life's family support programs. As a Team Challenger, the goal is to raise \$100 or more for each team member. In our walker toolkit\* you will find all the information you need to start fundraising for Steps for Life, plus key steps to creating a successful Challenge Team!

\*The walker toolkit can be found in the About section at [Stepsforlife.ca](https://Stepsforlife.ca)

# Where do your \$ go?

When you donate to Steps for Life, your dollars make a difference! Steps for Life is a terrific awareness event and an important opportunity to honour lives changed by workplace tragedy. But it's also Threads of Life's premier fundraiser of the year. We ask all participants to contribute by raising money to support programs

for families affected by work-related fatalities, serious injuries and illnesses.

There are lots of tips at [www.stepsforlife.ca](http://www.stepsforlife.ca) to make fundraising easy. Here's the difference you can make when you donate or fundraise for Threads of Life:

**\$48.50** sends our Threads of Life newsletter to 6 families for 1 year. Through the newsletter's stories, you're helping families feel they're not alone.

**\$98.50** pays travel for a volunteer speaker sharing their story with a high school co-op class. You're helping to keep tomorrow's workers safe on the job!

**\$161.53** provides 1 family forum participant meals for 1 day, nourishing their bodies while workshops and sharing nourish their minds and spirits.

## Upcoming Events

- **Families Connect online workshops**  
[threadsoflife.ca/familiesconnect](http://threadsoflife.ca/familiesconnect)
  - Putting the Pieces Back Together Through Journaling - March 15
  - Secondary Losses and Milestones April 19
  - Calm Your Body to Calm Your Mind May 17
- **Steps for Life – May 2023**  
[www.stepsforlife.ca](http://www.stepsforlife.ca) for details
- **Atlantic Family Forum –**  
May 26-28 –  
[www.threadsoflife.ca/ff](http://www.threadsoflife.ca/ff)
- **Western Family Forum –**  
September 22-24 –  
[www.threadsoflife.ca/ff](http://www.threadsoflife.ca/ff)
- **Central Family Forum –**  
October 27-29 –  
[www.threadsoflife.ca/ff](http://www.threadsoflife.ca/ff)

## 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  
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**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 in:

**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.

# Why you should become a monthly donor

When you become a monthly donor for Threads of Life, there are benefits for both you and us:

- **Easier on your bank account** - You spread your gifts out over the year, rather than making one or two larger donations.
- **Easier, period!** – Once you commit to being a monthly donor, you don't have to think about it. Your gifts come automatically. It's easy to set up on our website donation page or through our office.
- **Greater impact** – With committed monthly donors, Threads of Life can predict cash flow and better plan ways to carry out our mission of helping families and preventing tragedies.

If you'd like to become a Threads of Life monthly donor, please visit [www.threadsoflife.ca/donate](http://www.threadsoflife.ca/donate) or call our office at 888-567-9490.

