

threads of life

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PREVENTION

SUPPORT

PARTNERSHIP



We are all... *connected*

It's been such a pleasure to be back together in person this year at different events. But in person is not the only way we connect – at family forums we've seen families who've met online through FamiliesConnect, gather like old friends face-to-face. Each of us has many connections: the family we're born into, the family we create, and the family that gathers around us through experience – which includes your Threads of Life family. The stories in this issue reflect the importance of the many different types of connections.

Photo by Tyler Nix, Unsplash



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Bill Stunt

2022 has been quite a year – for most of us, a series of highs and lows. As if the tragedies we cope with personally weren't enough, there's so much going on in the world that adds a layer of worry and sadness. But there have been high points too, as events and places open up again. No matter how you

may choose to celebrate, mark or ignore the approaching year end, please know that all at Threads of Life are your fellow travellers. I personally find hope in the support I see families giving one another, and in those who manage to be positive in spite of everything. From all at Threads of Life, may you find comfort, rest, and even a little joy in these last days of 2023.

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The Safety Dance

by Heather Maguire

The Last Time; March 2018, Belleville, ON

Dean pulled into the parking lot in his trusted Toyota Corolla, late. This was no surprise; Dean was never really all that good at being on time for stuff – except for work, that is. He was rarely late for work. I could see our daughter, Mae, just turned 12, sitting in the front seat. Dean had been upset that she was old enough to sit in the front seat; he didn't think it was safe on the highway. "She is safer in the back, Heather, she is just safer," he said. We had met in this parking lot every other Sunday for the past four years since we had separated, shuffling our youngest daughter between our two houses – his in St. Catharines, mine in Ottawa.

I can still see him standing there, wearing a new plaid shirt tucked into his jeans, his greying hair carefully styled – he was always careful with his hair. He looked healthy and happy, his eyes sparkling as he told me about his latest favourite music that he and Mae had been listening to on their drive. That's the thing with Dean – you could always count on him to talk – about our kids, music, politics, and hockey. Go Leafs Go! We said goodbye, he gave Mae a big squeeze, and we headed off in our respective directions on the 401. Little did I know, that was the last time I would see him.

The Beginning; Winter 1988, St. Catharines, ON

Dean walked into the lecture hall wearing a hand-knit sweater with a motorcycle on the back – one that I later learned was knit by his mom before she died. He sat next to me, and we started to chat. We were in a first year Political Science class held every Monday night – he because he loved school and squeezed it in after work, me because I hated school and put off registering until the last minute, leaving night school as my only choice. Before long, we were talking regularly, and not long after that, he was baking me



Dean Maguire

chocolate chip cookies and proposing. He was 31 when we met, and I was 19. He worked for a sheet metal installation company, often working at heights. He loved his job because he loved being outside, he loved the fact that it never got boring with always being at a different jobsite, and he loved that there were always new and interesting people to talk to. He hated his job because, not long before I met him, he'd gotten his little brother, Tim, a job with his company for the summer, to help Tim pay his university tuition. Tim had fallen at work some 24 feet off a roof and was very seriously injured. Dean lived with that guilt, and he told me that he never forgave himself for not keeping his little brother safe.

The Safety Talk; April 2016, Lindsay, ON

Our eldest daughter, Connor, has just graduated from the Heavy Equipment Operator course in Lindsay and has landed a job at a local excavation company. She is

excited and nervous. She calls to tell her dad; he is concerned that she has proper safety boots. She tells him about some of the places she is working; he tells her she should always be wearing a hard hat. She sends him a picture of her working a concrete saw; he asks about her safety glasses. This is the safety dance they do. She, excited for a new adventure; he, ever cautious that there are no shortcuts on her jobsite. He tells her that he is on the safety committee at work, and that nothing is more important than her safety. She believes him.

The News; March 27, 2018, late morning, Ottawa, ON

Connor is living in Orillia working at Shopper's Drug Mart. We are on the phone as we often were, when she gets a phone call from a "No Caller ID" number. I tell her she had better answer the phone because you just never know. Two minutes later she calls me back. "It's Dad," she cries, "it's Dad." She tells me that the call had been from a policeman

in Toronto, and that Dean had been hurt at work. I ask Connor for the name of the policeman and his phone number. I tell her to leave work, go to her apartment, and wait for me to call her.

Dean had worked in sheet metal since before I had met him - for more than thirty years - and he was always so safe. So when I spoke to the police, I actually asked if they were sure, because there was no way that the Dean I knew could have fallen. In a calm, steady voice, he told me that Dean had been working at Billy Bishop Airport in Toronto and had fallen off the roof. Although there were paramedics on site who attended to him immediately, he suffered catastrophic injuries and died at the scene. He said he was very sorry. He sent two police officers to my house.

The immediate aftermath of moments like that, contrary to what people say, are not a blur. Those moments exist in my memory in a permanent state of sharp relief, playing like a video in my head, keeping the details vivid. First, I called Connor back and talked her through what she should do, step by step, until I could get her. We lived four hours apart - a distance that never felt further. Then, I sat in complete silence on the couch and waited for the police. After they left, providing me with no new information at all, I emailed my work and cancelled my class. Stepping away from my desk, I slowly climbed the stairs, walked into the bathroom, and threw up. Then, more waiting, this time for Mae to get home from school.

There are many things that you plan for when you have two daughters - talks about love and puberty and schools and sports and friends - but this? This was something no mother can prepare for. As straightforwardly as I could - and as gently - I told Mae that her dad had died. Those words crushed her.

Court; January 2020, Toronto

Dean's company, Vixman Construction, had been found guilty of failing to ensure measures and procedures of the Occupational Health and Safety Act were carried out. In other words, he didn't have the proper safety equipment to carry out his job safely.

Try as I might, I could not reconcile this story with the Dean that I had known for so long. The man who lived with the guilt every day of his brother's accident; who was constantly talking to our daughter about being safe on her jobsite; who couldn't even manage to let our 12-year-old ride in the front seat of the car. How could such a safety-conscious person die like this?

Through these court proceedings, I learned that Dean had fallen 3.5 metres - only 11 feet - off a building at Billy Bishop Airport. They had been working at a higher level and had come down to this lower walkway to continue the work. He was wearing his self-retracting lifeline (SRL) and a full-body harness. However, there wasn't the proper place for him to secure it, and so Dean let his line out about 6 metres from the anchor point and wrapped it around an upright column. As he moved about the roof, the block of his SRL somehow went over the side of the building, and because it wasn't anchored properly to a horizontal anchor, it pulled him off the roof. He died instantly.

That day in court, my daughters and I read our Victim Impact Statements, asking the judge to make sure his death was not in vain. If the most safety-conscious person we know could die, just like that, then it could happen to anyone. The judge, kind as he was, stated in his decision that he was, "compelled to render a decision which deviates from the conventional deterrence and fine paradigm." And so, in addition to a fine and probation, the company was ordered to make training videos and publish an article in a national safety magazine in Dean's memory. This decision was overturned on appeal in 2022, leaving the fine intact, but not the health and safety materials. Our hope, through it all, is that nobody should ever die this way, and no family should ever have to go through what my family has endured. This was entirely preventable.

The Aftermath; Today

Little Wilson Dean, now two, runs around Connor's house. He is a busy boy - one who loves excavators and tractors and pretty much anything with wheels. Connor reads him a book, 'Goodnight, Goodnight, Construction Site'. He will never know his namesake, his grandfather. But we keep Dean's memory alive. We tell stories, we talk about him, we make sure he is a part of all of our lives. When Dean died, I carefully sealed his T-shirts in Ziplock bags so that I could keep his smell on them for Mae (now 16), who still wraps herself in her dad's t-shirts at night. I watched Connor's life become unmoored; she was lost without her dad, and she has had to work so hard to rebuild her life. And our losses are endless. Anyone who knew Dean would say that he had an incredible memory, and it's true. He had such a mind for detail, remembering things like particular plays in one of Connor's hockey games from years ago, or a specific song that Mae was learning

to play on the piano. He recalled such an incredible amount of detail about their lives, that it's hard to even explain. When Dean died, so too did those infinite small moments of our lives, the funny stories, the big plays, the things that most people, me included, forget about.

On Grief

They say that grief comes in two parts. The first part is loss, and the second is remaking life. As we work to remake ours, each in our own way, it becomes more and more important to me that no other family goes through this. And so, I want to end with something that I hope you will remember.

Grief takes hold of us all, its tentacles long and relentless. I was devastated when Dean died and yet I didn't know how to express that pain because we had separated. I didn't feel like I had a right to be so broken, and yet here I was, shattered, trying my level best to hold tight to my daughters through their pain and yet not knowing how or where to place my own. My grief is complicated and messy, and it wasn't until I attended the Threads of Life Family Forum that I found acceptance and compassion. Once you receive acceptance and compassion from others, you can begin to give it to yourself. So begins the healing.



Dean Maguire

Workplace tragedy is like a spiderweb; it 'doesn't just affect one person'

by **Canadian Occupational Safety magazine**,
reprinted with permission.

In November 2000, Josh Rene's father, Jamie Barker, was part of a team painting the Ambassador Bridge. During one of the traverse procedures, the scaffolding collapsed and three people – including Josh's father – fell into the water. Only two of the workers made it back to shore. Barker was missing for five months, eventually his body was found in LaSalle.

"That was probably one of the worst times of my life. There's so much more technical stuff, but to this day I don't really understand it. All I know is that when I was 10 years old, I lost my dad."

22 years later, he says that it doesn't get any easier.

"I remember him being a big kid, it was great," says Josh. He remembers that his dad was really into wrestling, and had a soundtrack for all the big wrestlers' opening theme music. "We would wrestle on the back porch, and he played the soundtrack, and we'd all come out to different wrestler music."

"He also used to own this small red car. I remember playing outside, and he drove up and rolled down the window and started squirting water at us. My grandma – his mother – bought me a remote control car very similar to the car he had."

In 2011 when Josh was living in Windsor, there was another incident on the bridge. A man, Kent Morton, was working on scaffolding when it collapsed. Morton drowned; he was 28 years old – the same age as Josh's father.

"The morning it happened, I remember going and sitting by the river and watching the coastguard helicopters and all that

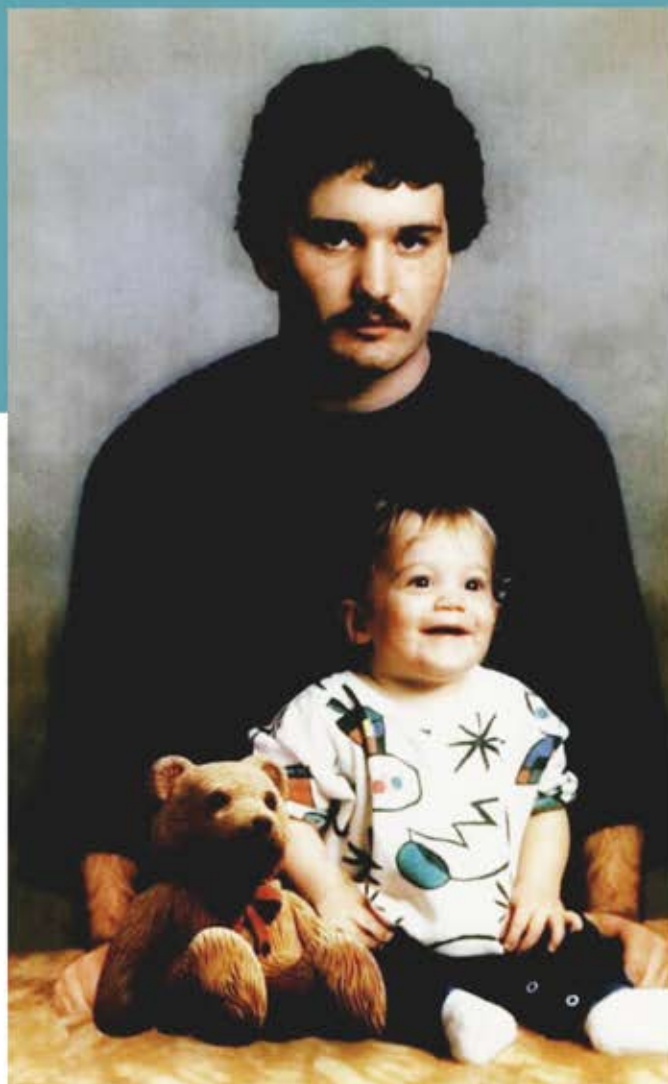
commotion going on," says Josh.

As he was only 10 when his father died, Josh says that a lot was kept from him, and his family sheltered him from a lot of what was going on. So this fresh tragedy brought a lot to the surface. "I had been toying with the idea of bringing my dad's story to people, because I didn't want him to have died for nothing. And it sounds corny, but it's important to me that people understand he wasn't just a statistic. He wasn't. He was a dad. People loved him. People cared for him."

So after the second tragedy, Josh reached out to Threads of Life and got involved as a speaker. "Throughout the years, I've been bringing my dad's story to quite a few audiences, and for me that gives me purpose."

Josh will be a spokesperson at the Windsor, ON, Steps for Life walk this year (2022). The event will be once again virtual due to the pandemic. (Editor's note: For 2023, Windsor hopes to hold a full in-person Steps for Life walk.) "This year we're really focusing on awareness. Because I think too many people still brush off health and safety or think it's not important until it happens to them."

Far too often, families of victims of workplace tragedies are not given adequate support. Threads of Life offers victims and their loved ones a community. "Threads of Life has just been amazing," says Josh. "I count



Josh and his dad Jamie Barker

them as a second family, they're supportive. They're there when you need them. I can't say enough wonderful things about them."

Josh says that he wants to drive home the point that workplace tragedy doesn't just affect one person. "It's like a spiderweb, it's a person's father, or even as far away as that person who brought you coffee every morning. It affects so many people."

While a lot of progress has been done to ensure better worker safety, there's still a long way to go. "We need to break down the walls, we need to put the face to tragedy to help people understand, because you shouldn't go to work and not come home. Your paycheck is not worth your life."

Organizations need to do more to ensure worker safety, so that preventable workplace tragedies don't happen, leaving the victim's family to pick up the pieces. "It's so easy and quick for something to happen," says Josh, "but then it's a lifetime of pain because grief doesn't go away. Time just numbs the edges."

Finding Plan B to mark a milestone

by Donna Van Bruggen

October 17, 2012 and October 17, 2022, have a unique commonality. October 17, 2012 is the date my son David was killed at work. October 17, 2022 marks the 10th anniversary of David's death. While October 17 is always a difficult day for me; October 17, 2022, was especially challenging. You'd think the anniversaries would get easier with the passage of time. After all, I've had 10 years on my healing journey to learn to cope with David's passing.

Perhaps the difficulty I was experiencing this year had to do with the denotation and connotation of words. I remember when I celebrated my 25th birthday. Twenty-five is a young age. However, when I turned 25, I was acutely aware that I was now a quarter of a century old. The denotation, or dictionary meaning, of the phrase "quarter of a century" meant that I was a young 25-year-old adult. However to me, the connotation – the implication, nuance, inference and association – of the phrase "quarter of a century" meant that I was ancient. Turning 25 was not my favorite birthday.

As I anticipated the 10th anniversary of David's death, the word "decade" came into my mind. The denotation, or meaning, of the word "decade" is "10 years". David has been dead for 10 years. And each year since David's passing has meant that I am further along in my healing journey and can now focus on the love and joyous times I had with David, and not just on his death. But at the same time, the connotation – the implication and association – of the word "decade", has meant that I have now had 10 years to forget the sound of David's voice and his laughter, to forget how he moved and walked, to forget how it felt to give him a hug, and to forget how wonderful it was to have David and his family in my home on a regular basis. A decade is a long time to forget so many details about David.

This year on David's decade anniversary, I decided to do something special and take advantage of the sunny, warm weather. When David was a teenager, he was very involved with the Scouting program and one of his favorite activities was to go hiking. I had located a natural conservation area not too far from where I live, with 18 km of hiking trails that include some steep climbs. I had already done several hikes there during the summer. I planned to do a long hike on October 17. I knew David would love it there as much as I did. There are no bears or cougars in the natural area, so I felt quite safe hiking alone. However, there are moose and it is exciting to come across a moose near the trail. My plans for remembering David on October 17, 2022, were set.

But then something happened. On October 14, I had dental surgery. It was much more invasive than I had thought. The inside of my mouth was full of stitches and my face and roof of my mouth were swollen. My dentist strongly suggested that I not do any strenuous exercise for a week. That meant it would not be wise to go on a long hike on October 17, the decade anniversary of David's death. Was I disappointed? Oh, yes. Was I totally crushed? No. Because I didn't want to postpone my dental surgery and I wasn't totally sure how I would be feeling afterwards, I had prepared a plan B in case my hiking plan A did not occur.

David was my youngest child and the last one to leave home. After his sisters had flown the nest, one of the things David and I enjoyed doing together was watching really cheesy, low budget science fiction and horror movies. We'd laugh hysterically at the campy dialogue,



Donna hiking in Peace Hills Park near her Alberta home

poor acting, amateur special effects and unbelievable plots. I had previously recorded my plan B movie about gigantic mutant carnivorous rabbits, who attack humans to get revenge on those who culled the over population of regular size rabbits. As I watched that movie on October 17, I laughed hysterically at the campy dialogue and cheesy special effects. My favorite line was when the sheriff told the town people to flee to safety because "a herd of killer bunnies is headed this way". I wondered how many takes were necessary before the actor saying that line could do so with a straight face. And as I laughed loudly at the campy dialogue, the cheesy special effects and the unbelievable plot, in my mind I could hear David laughing with me. On the decade anniversary of David's death, all of a sudden, I remembered what his laugh sounded like. How grateful I was for that blessing. When plan A fell through, plan B brought me more than I could have imagined. It's amazing that while the universe did not give me what I wanted, it did give me what I needed. And after a decade, I needed to hear David's laughter and remember the sound of his voice. Life is full of small miracles. And on the most difficult day of the year, one of them came my way.

A minute for mission

by Erin Pitruzzella

At each Threads of Life staff meeting and board meeting, we take turns offering a “minute for mission” – a reflection on Threads of Life’s mission or vision statement and what they mean to us. Board member Erin offered this reflection at a meeting earlier this year.

The theme for our meeting was ‘Back to the Future’. According to Google, the expression refers to the time when one has to stop (over) thinking the things they could, or could not have done in the past so that what happened wouldn’t have happened.’

What does this mean to me? Do not dwell on the past. We all have those moments of ‘woulda, coulda, shoulda’. We go over in our minds what has happened in the past but it is out of our control. I sometimes think, if I had not taken my husband’s phone call the day he died, would he be alive?

We now have the opportunity through Threads of Life to focus on how we react to our situations, and what we can control in the future. We provide support through Family Guides, Family Forums, connecting with peers and sharing our stories through our Speaker’s Bureau. We focus on self-care; what makes us stronger.

I remember the moment I reached out to Shirley by email for support. It was a significant moment in my journey of healing. It was a confusing time and I needed to connect with those who understood what I was going through. I received the support I needed as time went on. I was moving forward.

I am so grateful for Threads of Life. The organization has done so much for me and my family – it is why I wanted to be on the Board of Directors. It is time to give back to Threads of Life and help with its future.

I was looking at Facebook the other day and a friend had posted a quotation from Sarah Krycinski:

“ One morning she woke up different. Done with trying to figure out who was with her, against her, or walking down the middle because they didn’t have the guts to pick a side. She was done with anything that didn’t bring her peace. She realized that opinions were a dime a dozen, validation was for parking, and loyalty wasn’t a word, but a lifestyle. It was this day that her life changed. And not because of a man or a job but because she realized that life is way too short to leave the key to your happiness in someone else’s pocket. It was the day life began!



Photo by Rodolpho Zanardo, Pexels

sarahkrycinski.com/2017/03/14/one-morning-she-woke-up-different/

Today, I choose to learn from the past. I choose to accept the things I cannot change; I choose to focus on having those conversations promoting and representing Threads of Life and making a change. I choose to be the voice for those whose voice has been silenced due to a workplace tragedy. Today will be tomorrow’s past – embrace the future and make a positive change today.

SPECIAL REQUEST: Searching for stories for 2023

Are you ready to share?

Next year will be the 20th anniversary of Threads of Life. We’re planning a project called 20 Faces, 20 Stories to reflect the range of family members who are part of this organization, from every region of the country, with different experiences. Your story would talk about your experience of workplace tragedy, your healing journey and how Threads of Life has helped. We will share a variety of your stories in a variety of ways over the year. If you’re interested in sharing your personal story, please contact Susan Haldane at shaldane@threadsoflife.ca.



FamiliesConnect workshops for 2023

FAMILY
SUPPORT

The schedule of online FamiliesConnect workshops is nearly final for 2023. We're looking at a wide variety of topics to suit every question, need or interest you may have. Each session is led by a fellow Threads of Life family member or one of our skilled guest facilitators. Each FamiliesConnect workshop is just two hours out of your day, but offers a lot of the connection and sharing you love from Family Forums. Why not give it a try? You can register at threadsoflife.ca/familiesconnect.

JANUARY Thurs. 26 Jan. 2023 6 - 8 pm ET	Sleep! How sleep affects our mental and physical well-being, the effects of poor sleep and how we can improve our sleep habits
FEBRUARY Wed. 15 Feb. 2023 6 - 8 pm ET	Chocolate Jeopardy How to take a break from grief; how to laugh again
MARCH Wed. 15 Mar. 2023 6 - 8 pm ET	Putting the Pieces Back Together Through Journaling Find yourself a notebook and a pen and join us for this workshop to explore how incorporating the practice of journaling can assist you in your journey of healing.
APRIL Wed. 19 Apr. 2023 6 - 8 pm ET	Secondary Losses and Milestones
MAY Wed. 17 May 2023 6 - 8 pm ET	The Art of Resilience
JUNE Wed. 21 June 2023 6 - 8 pm ET	How Does Your Garden Grow?
JULY Wed. 19 July 2023 6 - 8 pm ET	Survivor Guilt and Dealing With Guilt
AUGUST Wed. 16 Aug. 2023 6 - 8 pm ET	Resilience ...even when the very worst happened This talk will look at resilience and little mini steps toward how to get it if yours is depleted.
SEPTEMBER Wed. 20 Sept. 2023 6 - 8 pm ET	Self-Reflection During Celebration Times & Holidays
OCTOBER Wed. 18 Oct. 2023 6 - 8 pm ET	Topic TBA
NOVEMBER Wed. 15 Nov. 2023 6 - 8 pm ET	Who Am I Now? Taking the Next Step What is the next step in the midst of grief and loss? In this workshop we will talk and share about taking the next step while holding space for our grief.
DECEMBER Wed. 13 December 2023 6 - 8 pm ET	Pet Therapy

VOLUNTEER PROFILE:

Marj Deyell

Learning new things and having a project underway are two of the key motivations for Marj Deyell as one of Threads of Life's long-time volunteers. Marj comes from a family of teachers, so learning is an important part of her life. And she loves to have a project on the go, so she appreciates tackling a new task – whether preparing a presentation or leading a workshop.

Marj's first volunteer role was as a member of the Speaker's Bureau, which she joined in 2006. While her start was a bit rocky – she did many presentations, got “a bit overwhelmed” and got sick – ultimately she feels volunteering to share her story as a Threads of Life speaker has been good for her, and helped her to honour and remember her son John, who was just 23 when he was killed on the job at a worksite in Detroit. John was a mechanical engineering technician, working for a millwright firm. He was helping to unload a large conveyor system, when the head fell off the deck of the truck, crushing him underneath.

“I think being a speaker has been good for me,” Marj says. “It improved my confidence. I liked just being around young people, and speaking to co-op students. Some classes that I would go into, gave me a glimpse back into what John maybe would have been like.”

In the years since, Marj has been involved in many of Threads of Life's volunteer programs. She was a member of the board of directors, involved with Steps for Life, and became a Volunteer Family Guide. She completed advanced training for facilitation skills and has since led workshops both in person and online through FamiliesConnect.

Facilitating an online session can be challenging, Marj says. “In person you can read peoples' body language a lot better, and if you feel like somebody needs a hug, then you're there to do it.” But online



Marj and Brian Deyell

presents opportunities to meet and learn without having to drive somewhere, especially into a city which she prefers to avoid. And through FamiliesConnect and other online sessions, she's met and connected with people across the country.

Marj also volunteers with Bereaved Families, sits on the board of directors for a non-profit housing organization, runs a book club and helps with catering for local events in her community. She quilts, participates in aquafit classes and reads a lot, so her days are full. While her volunteer roles have evolved over the years, Marj believes the experience has been positive and has helped her heal and become a better person.

“I think when you go to different events, you see the new families – even what they look like – and you realize how far you've come,” she says. “It's certainly helped in our healing. It's not that you don't miss John because I miss him every day, but overall, volunteering has been a very good experience.”

OHS professionals, **did you know?**

If you work in occupational health and safety, did you know that volunteering with Threads of Life can count towards your CRSP and CRST recertification credits? Threads of Life is a partner of the BCRSP (Board of Canadian Registered Safety Professionals), which sets certification standards for the occupational health and safety profession. Both the Canadian Registered Safety Professional (CRSP) and Canadian Registered Safety Technician (CRST) programs require that members maintain their certification through professional development. A volunteer role with Threads of Life – participating on a Steps for Life committee, for example, or as a member of the Speaker's Bureau, earns credits towards recertification. If you are working towards recertification, contact us so we can help you track your volunteer hours and provide documentation.

DONORS LIKE YOU: Sharon Lesko

Christopher Lesko's life is continuing to make a difference for others, even after his death, thanks to his mother's love and generosity. In Christopher's honour, Sharon Lesko has established the "Let's Go Lesko" foundation, which donates annually to Threads of Life and two other charities.

Christopher died in 2019. He had been working in road construction, and was struck by an asphalt roller. Sharon knew her son was kind-hearted and helpful and after his death she wanted to make sure he was remembered, and that she continued to do the kinds of things he would do.

"Christopher had a heart that if somebody needed something, he'd give it," Sharon says. At his funeral visitation, she couldn't believe the number of people who came and shared stories of how he'd helped them. She doesn't really know what happened the day of his death, but a co-worker insisted Christopher had been helping a pedestrian get out of the way of the paving equipment. That would be typical of the kind of man Christopher was.

He had a number of challenges both to his physical health and mental health, throughout his life. As a result he was small for his age, and was bullied in school. As an adult, he supported anti-bullying organizations.

Christopher was a mature student by the time he was able to attend college. He wanted to become an activation coordinator, working on therapeutic programs for seniors in long-term care. He had volunteered at old age homes, Sharon says, and had a particular connection with older people. He graduated from the program but later took a job in road construction to earn more money.

In his off hours, Christopher loved sports: "hockey, baseball, soccer, volleyball, swimming, tennis and anything else that came his way," Sharon says. He loved music of all kinds, and had a very large collection of music and CD's. But what many remember best about him is his interest and compassion for other people. Sharon shares a story:

"My niece lived with Christopher for a few years. She had a dog called Mocha and Christopher and the dog bonded completely. He took her all over the neighborhood. My niece laughed and said 'your walk should be about a half hour, but you go for a couple of hours.' He said, 'we meet a lot of people along the way and talk to them. They love Mocha.' She said Christopher was the only one she knew who would go for a walk and come back with five or six new friends."

As a single-parent family, Sharon and Christopher were very close. After his death, she wanted to do something special with the money that had come to her from his estate, so she talked to her lawyer about establishing a foundation, called "Let's Go Lesko", his favourite saying. She learned it would be easiest to set this up within a larger charitable giving foundation. It was a bit involved to establish, she says, but now she knows that Threads of Life will receive money annually, even after she dies.



Chris Lesko

Sharon has also designated a gift to Threads of Life in her will. She has been a family member of Threads of Life since 2020. She is a Volunteer Family Guide and has participated in virtual Family Forum and FamiliesConnect sessions.

"I'm really happy that I can give something to Threads of Life," she says, "because in the short time I've been with the organization, I've seen how much you help people."

Sharon feels Christopher would want her to have a purpose in her life.

"Christopher was all about helping other people ... so what I'm doing is exactly what he would do."

Christopher's legacy, through Sharon's generosity, will ensure other families like hers can find support after tragedy.

Threads of Life is honoured to have many loyal funders and donors. If you'd like to become a monthly donor, please visit www.threadsoflife.ca/donate and click "monthly" under "frequency" or contact Scott McKay, Director of Partnerships and Fundraising - smckay@threadsoflife.ca or 888-567-9490 extension 104.



Christopher loved helping others

PARTNERS PROMOTE SAFETY

For The Next Generation Of Workers

High school and college

students can be a tough audience. A guest speaker needs to be engaging and relevant, and Threads of Life's volunteer speakers are always keen to take on the challenge if it means the chance to influence tomorrow's workforce and prevent other families experiencing tragedy.

Thanks to the support of a number of our partners and funders, Threads of Life is launching a marketing campaign to promote our speaker's bureau with high schools and colleges, particularly co-op, shop and trades classes. Presentations on young worker safety have always been part of the speaker's bureau, but we hope to ensure more schools are aware of the service and able to take advantage of it.

A new partnership with TC Energy will contribute to this campaign, bringing more volunteer speakers into high schools and colleges in Alberta, New Brunswick and other communities and regions. A \$10,000 grant from TC Energy supports the costs of school presentations and also helps to train new speaker volunteers. A number of other partners are also long-time supporters of the Threads of Life speaker's bureau, and particularly young worker presentations, including the provincial compensation boards and ministries of labour.

"This funding helps us build a safer future workforce," says Scott McKay, Threads of Life's Director of Partnerships and Fundraising, "and it also supports our family members as they heal through sharing their stories. We feel so fortunate to have partners who share our commitment to health and safety."

”

The students were moved by your presentation... it's been three days, yet there is still a seriousness about their disposition. They seem more appreciative of their existence, and more focused on pursuing their career goals and enjoying the passage of time. I know the day was difficult for you ... but your presentation is powerful and sincere. It's always a challenge to get the attention of the teens, even good students, but you had a captive audience who really felt your pain (or a small portion of it) ... Thank you so very much for sharing your love for your child and the pain of losing him with my classes. If you are able to repeat this presentation at other schools I highly recommend you do so.

-High School Teacher, Ontario

Threads of Life... is an important educational foundation for preventing future incidents and negative outcomes. Your down-to-Earth, honest and accessible presentations are just what our kids need to hear and see...a strong dose of reality that speaks more than textbooks ever can. Just wanted to ask that you keep me on the mailing list and keep up the great work you are doing!

-Parent and Teacher, Nova Scotia

In classes, we learned about the possibility of events occurring like this, but to hear it from someone affected really brought a new understanding

-Student, Alberta



Memory Lane at Steps for Life walks honours those affected by workplace tragedy

• What is Steps for Life?

Steps for Life is formally named Steps for Life-Walking for Families of Workplace Tragedy and that really explains the event's dual purpose: it raises money to ensure Threads of Life can continue to support families affected by tragedy, and it emphasizes how important health and safety are, to prevent future tragedies.

Most Steps for Life events are 5-kilometre walks, but many communities plan other activities around their event – they may host fundraiser events before or during the walk, some have music, games and kids' activities at the walk, and all have an opening ceremony with speeches that explain the importance of the day and recognize the faces behind workplace tragedy.

Last year, Steps for Life raised more than \$800,000 to help those affected by work-related fatalities, serious injuries and disease. This year, Steps for Life events are planned for more than 30 communities and sites across Canada.

• Why should I get involved?

Many Threads of Life families find participating in Steps for Life helps in their healing – it's helpful to be in community with others who've experienced a tragedy and with businesses and individuals committed to preventing them. And there are ways to honour that experience as part of the Steps for Life event: many people gather friends and family to come with them. There's a Memory Lane honouring those who have been killed, injured or made ill on the job. (To request a Memory Lane sign for your family, please contact shaldane@threadsoflife.ca by Feb.12.) And at most walks, a family member shares their story in the opening

PAVING THE PATHWAY FOR STEPS FOR LIFE 2023

A Steps for Life primer for Threads of Life families



Steps for Life combines serious reflection with celebration and fun

ceremonies to help everyone understand the consequences of a workplace tragedy. Somehow, Steps for Life manages to combine serious reflection with celebration of the shared commitment participants share, and the fun of being together.

• What can I do to help?

Threads of Life family members benefit from Steps for Life, but you can also contribute! Register to walk yourself, or get a team of your family and friends, give it a memorable name and participate all together. Registration opens in February, but start planning now! If there's no community walk near you, you can still participate as part of our national online event – just choose a date and location to do your own Steps for Life walk. You and your team can fundraise, knowing those dollars will help other families like yours cope with tragedy. And you can also volunteer for your local walk – each Steps for Life event is planned by a local committee. There are volunteer roles on the committee working months ahead of the walk, and volunteer roles on the day of the walk too.

• Where should I go to get more info?

All the details about Steps for Life are on the web site at www.stepsforlife.ca. you can also call the Threads of Life office at 888-567-9490 if you're not sure about something or have a question.

See you at Steps for Life 2023!

Upcoming Events

- **Families Connect online workshops**
threadsoflife.ca/programs/families-connect-workshops
 - **Sleep** - January 26, 2023
 - **Chocolate Jeopardy** - February 15, 2023
 - **Putting the Pieces Back Together Through Journaling** - March 15, 2023
- **Steps for Life** - May 2023
www.stepsforlife.ca for details



FAMILIESCONNECT
THREADS OF LIFE WORKSHOP SERIES

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

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Family Support - Threads of Life
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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 injuries or occupational disease. Threads of Life is the Charity of Choice for many workplace health and safety events. Charitable organization business: #87524 8908 RRO001.

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.

How you can help

Like you, we envision a world in which work-related tragedies no longer happen. But while we're working together towards that vision, there are families and individuals who need our help to cope with the pain and grief of a fatality, serious injury or occupational disease.

Here's what you can do:

Spread the Word - Tell someone who needs support about Threads of Life.

Volunteer - Organize a fundraiser or join a Steps for Life planning committee.

Participate - If you're a family member, come to a FamiliesConnect workshop or Family Forum. If you're a supporter, sign up for Steps for Life.

Donate - A monthly gift of as little as \$13.46 will print and mail our newsletter to 20 families. Just \$26.66 per month could send one volunteer to speaker training for a day.

