



*Association for Workplace Tragedy Family Support*

## **BACKGROUND**

Threads of Life is a charitable, national, not-for-profit organization that is dedicated to helping Canadian families along their journey of healing who have been affected by a workplace tragedy, life-altering injury or occupational disease. It provides a network of hope and healing to more than 700 families through one-on-one peer support, links to other community support services and the opportunity to take action to help prevent similar tragedies to other families.

Threads of Life was created in 2003 to fill a major gap in Canada's health and safety and social systems. There is no well-known "number" to call or place to go to find the kind of emotional support and caring often required to make it through the aftermath of a workplace fatality or severe injury/illness in Canada.

The long-term emotional, societal and financial consequences of this gap are enormous and evident. These consequences include psychiatric problems, stress-related physical health problems, substance abuse treatment, family stress, marital breakdown, suicide, loss of productivity, loss of personal income, increased social welfare costs, and more. This is a substantial and costly burden for every citizen and taxpayer, but one that can be significantly reduced.

Threads of Life is a place where people can turn to help find the "cure" for injuries, which can only be accomplished through prevention.

### **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 and illnesses are morally, socially and economically unacceptable.

### **WHAT WE DO**

Threads of Life provides families with one-on-one peer support assistance, links to community support agencies and the opportunity to promote public awareness and accountability for workplace health and safety. It is supported by a group of volunteers from across the country who have been personally touched by a workplace tragedy.

Threads of Life helps families by providing

- a Family Support Program which offers the only one-on-one peer support program in the world to family members and friends who have suffered from a workplace tragedy. The support is provided by trained Volunteer Family Guides who have also experienced a workplace tragedy.
- a support network to those who have experienced similar pain and suffering
- links to community support services
- advisory support regarding the workplace investigation and inquest process and

- opportunities to promote workplace injury prevention and awareness within their own community.

## **CURRENT PROGRAM SERVICES**

### **1. Family Support offers**

- personal and sustained interaction with a trained peer to facilitate a sharing of experiences
- an opportunity for families and workers to meet each other and create communities of support
- mechanisms through which common knowledge gaps or needs are identified and addressed and
- material resources to assist in understanding grieving or traumatic emotional processes and experiences.

### **2. Partnerships provide**

- families with answers to procedural questions from interaction with Volunteer Family Guides
- links to individuals working with government, agencies and other organizations that can help with case-specific question/issues
- material resources to orient families to the administrative processes that follow a fatality or life-altering injury/illness and assist them in understanding those processes.

### **3. Community Action**

The Threads of Life **Speakers Bureau** consists of volunteer members who offer personal testimony on the impact of workplace injuries, fatalities or occupational disease in their lives. Members are sought after for conferences, health and safety events and community events. *Since 2005, speakers have presented to more than 15,000 people who have heard the injury prevention message.*

**Steps for Life – Walking for Victims of Workplace Tragedy** is a 5K walk that showcases the personal impact of a workplace tragedy. Steps for Life is an event that families can meet other families who have suffered similar pain and loss and help raise awareness of the national issue of workplace injuries/illnesses and death. It is also a unique opportunity to honour the memory of their loved one in a proactive manner.

Steps for Life will take place in Hamilton, Sudbury, Thunder Bay and Toronto on Sunday, May 4<sup>th</sup> 2008. Over 500 people from across Canada are expected to help raise awareness of workplace tragedies and its ripple effect on families, workplaces and society as a whole

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