

Canadian charity offers healing for families after work-related tragedy

It was a regular working day in March when Leica Gahan's world stopped.

Leica's older son Jordan was in Alberta, far from their New Brunswick home, working as an excavator operator. Late that night in March, Leica and her husband were awoken by car doors slamming outside their house. The RCMP had arrived to tell them Jordan was dead. He had been operating the excavator in an ice-covered borrow pit. The ice hadn't been tested properly and his excavator fell through. Jordan made it out of the machine but never made it to the top of the water. His hard hat floated up and then his body.

"My husband, my son and I were all hysterical," Leica says. "I thought, there is just no way this could happen to me and my beautiful family. Unfortunately, it was not a mistake and on Thursday, March 20, 2014, six days later, my beautiful son's body was flown home in the belly of an Air Canada plane. There are just no words to articulate the feelings when you see your handsome, young, vibrant 21-year-old son lying in a casket. That week, month and for years later, I had to come to terms with the fact that the family I loved so much and had poured my heart and soul into was changed and would forever be changed."

As she emerged from the shock of those first weeks and months, Leica started looking for support in her grief.

"This is such a terrible time, and this is where Threads of Life changed my life," she says.

For families like Leica's, living in the aftermath of a work-related fatality, life-altering injury, or an occupational disease, [Threads of Life-the Association for Workplace Tragedy Family Support](#), provides information and connection. Leica was connected to another mom whose son had been killed on the job, and who was a trained volunteer listener.

"She listened to me, she answered my questions, we cried, and there were even times that we laughed despite the horrible grief I was feeling. She was my lifeline."

As a national Canadian charity, Threads of Life counts on the leadership of companies and organizations committed to health and safety and to Canadian families. They assist by:

- spreading the word to people who need support,
- increasing participation in Threads of Life programs and events,
- facilitating volunteerism, and
- growing Threads of Life's funding.

Jordan's death changed Leica and her family's life forever. But through Threads of Life she has found healing and hope. She now volunteers to share her personal story through the Threads of Life speaker's bureau and contributes to Steps for Life, an annual fundraiser that raises awareness of the importance of workplace health and safety.

"We need to be 100% confident that the people making decisions are qualified to do so," Leica says today. "We also must ensure that our employees are qualified and have the experience and knowledge to perform the work they are doing and that they are actively participating in the decision making. It is

only then that we can reduce the probability that a severe injury or fatality will occur on our jobsites. We are all imperfect people but if our workforce is experienced and qualified, we have a better chance of ensuring the health and safety of all our employees.”

You can help families like Leica’s. [Learn more about how to get involved](#), or contact:

Regional Development Coordinator, Western Canada – Shari Hinz, 888-567-9490 ext 112,
shinz@threadsoflife.ca