

Canadian charity offers healing for families after work-related tragedy

Dean Maguire was always thinking of safety. He was reluctant to let his 12-year-old daughter sit in the front seat of the car because the back seat was safer. When his older daughter trained to be a heavy equipment operator, he asked about her boots, hard hat and safety glasses. At work for a sheet metal installation company, he was on the safety committee.

That made it even more of a shock when the phone call came that Dean had been killed at work.

“Try as I might, I could not reconcile this story with the Dean that I had known for so long,” says Dean’s wife Heather. “How could such a safety-conscious person die like this?”

Dean had worked in sheet metal for 30 years and was on a project at Billy Bishop airport in Toronto. He had been working at a higher level and came down to a lower walkway to continue. Without a proper place to secure his self-retracting lifeline, Dean let his line out about six 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 at the scene.

Dean and Heather were separated, so as she worked to help their two daughters through the tragedy, her own grief was complicated by guilt and uncertainty. Through the WSIB, she found [Threads of Life – the Association for Workplace Tragedy Family Support](#). For families like Heather’s, living in the aftermath of a work-related fatality, life-altering injury, or an occupational disease, Threads of Life provides information and connection. Heather attended a forum for families affected by tragedy, and found compassion and understanding – she knew she was not alone.

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.

Dean’s death changed Heather’s life forever. But through Threads of Life she has found healing and hope. She joined the [Threads of Life volunteer speaker’s program](#) and this year will be a spokesperson for her local [Steps for Life-Walking for Families of Workplace Tragedy](#) event. Her goal is to prevent work-related fatalities and injuries in the future.

“There are many things you plan for when you have two daughters,” Heather says now. “You plan for talks about love and puberty and schools and sports and friends – but this? This was something no mother can prepare for. 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.”

[Read more of Heather’s story on the Threads of Life blog.](#)

You can help families like Heather’s. [Learn more about how to get involved](#), or contact Threads of Life Director of Partnerships Scott McKay at 888-567-9490 or smckay@threadsoflife.ca.