

altered lives project

Debbie's Story

Debbie is a worker who wanted to make a difference in her workplace. Through her employment at a meat processing plant in the GTA, she got involved in health and safety and on Union committees. Debbie enjoyed her work and the relationships she built with her co-workers. She dedicated herself to improving working conditions and to be a voice for others.

She enjoyed her work and had no plans to stop. At home, Debbie led an active life. She enjoyed spending time with her grandchildren and often went camping and fishing. Other hobbies for Debbie included crochet, baking, and bowling night with her husband.

While Debbie worked in several different departments at her workplace, her job in the sanitation department began to take its toll on her health. A lack of proper lifting equipment led to a slip and fall on a wet icy floor which pulled Debbie's tendon in her knee. Another fall, which led to multiple injuries, resulted from an uneven floor. "These incidents were all preventable," said Debbie. "But the company wasn't listening."

Despite her injuries, Debbie wanted to keep working and be productive. She tried to return to work on modified duties working in different areas but she couldn't continue. She went through several surgeries to repair her knee and hand, and she had regular cortisone shots for her shoulder. She went to physical therapy often as well. All of this took place while Debbie waded through many WSIB appeals.

All of this took a toll on Debbie's emotions and finances. Her life had changed forever. She couldn't enjoy the things that were important to her active lifestyle. She became just a spectator at her regular bowling night. This left Debbie quite depressed.

"If it hadn't been for the support of my husband, family, and friends, I would've been lost," said Debbie. "My quality of life sucks since my surgeries."

But Debbie tries to concentrate on that strong support system. She thanks her family for doing the simple things she took

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for granted, like cleaning the house or baking. She credits her good friend Sandy for being her driver and getting her to all her appointments and WSIB meetings.

"If I didn't have the Union's support through the battle with WSIB, I wouldn't have received the positive result on my claim after 10 long years," Debbie added. "I'm so grateful to the Workers' Compensation department at Local 175 for their dedication and hard work."

Debbie knows her golden years will be much different than what she'd always planned. She will be dealing with the effects of all her injuries for the rest of her life. "I'm grateful though that I can now put the battle for my benefits behind me," she said. "I want to move forward the best I know how to."

Debbie's advice to other workers is to keep telling your employers when hazards need to be addressed. "What bothers me the most is that my employer didn't listen and didn't correct things. I don't want anyone else to go through what I did. They could have prevented my injury and others."

**The Workers' Compensation
department supports Members
who are injured or made ill
on the job through their
WSIB appeals.**

Contact them at workerscomp@ufcw175.com
or at 1-800-565-8329.