

# Journal writing 2006

**Section editor's note:** *This is written by a mother whose son was diagnosed with cancer, had an amputation and, to date, is doing well. The planning committee asked her to present at the annual ENIG fall conference. The room was packed despite everyone needing to check out and get going. I asked this mother to write something about her experience and here is what she said. I also asked her to include some pictures.*

## Judy Skanderup

**Hello** - First, let me introduce myself and give you a bit of history about how our story made its way to these pages. Several months back, I was in the Alberta Children's Hospital with our 16-year-old son. It was one of many trips I've made to 'Emerg' over the years. As the nurse jotted down her intake notes, I began sharing a bit of medical history and was invited to share some of our story. Since I love telling stories about my family, I accepted. After a photo presentation to a small group of emergency nurses, I was invited to share some written thoughts for this journal.

**Family** - As a full-time mother to four, it's a hectic lifestyle and, over the years, I've seen my share of childhood mishaps, especially since all the kids have been active participants in numerous sports. There were skinned knees, split toes, fractures and sprains, all kinds of what I now call the routine injuries. In fact, after having gone through seven sets of stitches with the three oldest kids, when the fourth came along, as parents, we felt well-versed in the medical world.

**Diagnosis** - Little did I know that with our fourth child I would embark on such a serious medical journey. The little bit of background knowledge I had did not begin to prepare me for the new medical info and terminologies I would come to know. It didn't matter that I'd never chosen nursing as a career, I was about to get a lot of experience. Fate had determined cancer and the McRaes were about to become one. When our youngest son turned five he was diagnosed with Ewing's Sarcoma, bone cancer. The hospital became our new home, medicine

became our new world, the medical staff became our new best friends and uncertainty was the only thing I could count on with any certainty at all. It was a very frightening time.

When I talk to people about our experience, I often refer to surviving and getting through as something I was going through. Even though it's our youngest son who was touched by cancer, truly every single person in the family goes through it. No one goes through unscathed. One person is **AFFLICTED** by the disease, but **EVERYONE** in the family is **AFFECTED**.

**Care** - Carter received such great care. Compassionate people walked into our lives and left footprints forever etched in our hearts. Now, I often refer to these people, those frightening 52 weeks, and our completely interrupted and totally unpredictable life during the 18 rounds of chemotherapy, and yes, even the dreaded

amputation surgery as "Hidden Treasures". For looking back, I've grown so much in so many ways. I've gained a wealth of knowledge, albeit about a



Carter at age 5 with Sox, the family dog.



Carter McRae and his family, prior to surgery.

subject I'd rather have never been introduced to, but definitely I'm wiser because of it. I have become life-long friends with those who were once complete strangers having been similarly touched by cancer, and have been enriched beyond belief as a result.

It's true, as a result of the required treatment, Carter now lives life as a leg amputee, but he has moved on and now, almost 12 years later, he remains cancer-



Carter playing hockey following surgery.

free and inspires others with his determination and great attitude. He proved to us that he would continue to pursue sports with the same fervour and passion he displayed prior to surgery. Now an active amputee, his energy and time is divided between hockey and snowboarding in the winter and in summer he enjoys water skiing, wakeboarding and golf. He is a true sports hero who encourages others and

we are truly proud of him. It's important to point out our son's current active lifestyle since emergency and medical staff rarely know the life led by patients once they leave the hospital corridor. It's important to understand that caring for your patient today can make such a difference in shaping their future.

**Future** - I could share many stories of our medical experience, but there is one thing I want to be sure to urge each of you to reach for. Make a difference to the future by lending a hand today. I know it sounds very grandiose, but we can all make a difference. Just ask the family of Terry Fox. Did those who assisted Terry Fox in his lifetime ever imagine at the time the greatness to which they had

contributed? So many medical and business people, family and friends, countless others assisted him along his way. Some more so after his death than during his marathon of hope – the effects of which are still inspiring today, 25 years later.

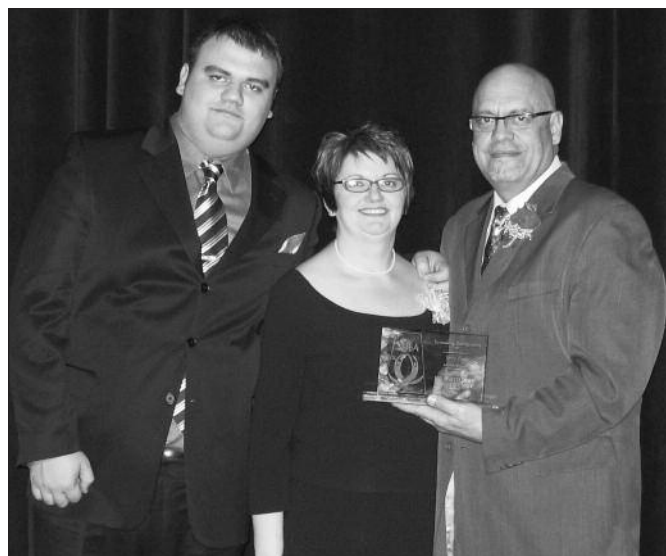
Medical staff, by going about daily tasks and aiding others as you do, perhaps without realizing the significance of it at the time, you just might be adding to someone's treasured memoirs. So many added to ours, so many touched our lives and helped shape our future. Not all patients will go on to accomplish greatness or be the likes of Terry Fox, but your career choice and the caring you show can shape the future, and to the family of the person for whom you are caring, your assistance makes a world of difference, no matter what they go on to do.

I hope you are forever encouraged to continue your great work in this industry and I thank those in the medical profession for helping our family grow into our present state, for allowing me to share with you a small part of our story and how we've been touched by medicine and, as a result, the hidden treasures we have come to know. 🇨🇦

**Sincere thanks,  
Cindy McRae**

## outlook

### Bouquets



✿ Congratulations to our own Jerry Bell for being awarded the Saskatchewan Excellence in Healthcare award. Jerry is seen here accompanied by his wife Cindy and his son Travis.

✿ Welcome to Sharron Lyons, BC Provincial Director, Tracey Norris, PEI, Provincial Director, and to Tanya Penney, NS Provincial Director.

✿ Goodbye and many thanks to Cynthia Bryanton, PEI, and Clay Gilrie, BC, for their leadership and their participation as provincial directors on the national board.

✿ We wish God speed to Linda Jackson as she has been deployed to Afghanistan. While Linda is on deployment, Tanya Penney will become Provincial Director for NS.