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## Founders' Story: Tina Gillies & Derek Pimiskern

### *In Loving Memory of Kadence Gillies*

Tina Gillies and Derek Pimiskern are the heart and vision behind the Kadence Legacy Fund and the **One Dog, One Life** program. Both are retired Canadian Armed Forces veterans who proudly served in Afghanistan — Tina as an Imagery Technician and Derek as a Combat Engineer. Tina is a recipient of the Sacrifice Medal, a symbol of courage, dedication, and service in the face of adversity.

While they've faced the hardships of war, nothing could prepare them for the profound loss of Kadence — Tina's daughter and Derek's stepdaughter, affectionately known as "Daddy Derekins" by Kady. Kadence's light, humor, and one-of-a-kind spirit touched everyone she met, including her little brother Kurt, whose life she shaped in countless ways. Her passing left a void that could never be filled, but also sparked a mission to transform grief into hope.

Both Tina and Derek live with **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)** — from their military service and the heartbreak of losing Kadence. Their grief is real and ongoing, but so is their commitment to healing, advocacy, and helping others. Tina has been in active therapy for over five years, and together, they are passionate champions of mental health awareness, trauma-informed care, and community support.

Through the Kadence Legacy Fund, Tina and Derek have turned personal pain into purposeful action. They created a program where veterans, first responders, and anyone facing trauma or grief can receive professionally trained PTSD service dogs — a lifeline of support, connection, and independence. Their belief is simple but powerful:

**"One dog, one life — that's all it takes to change everything."**

This work is about more than placing service dogs. It's about honoring Kadence's legacy — her compassion, her boundless spirit, and her ability to light up a room. Every service dog placed through the program carries a piece of Kadence's heart, helping those struggling with PTSD or grief rediscover hope, joy, and resilience.

Tina and Derek are committed to shining Kadence's light forward, ensuring that no one faces trauma, PTSD, or loss alone — and inviting donors and supporters to be part of that transformative journey.