
Founders' Story: Tina Gillies & Derek Pimiskern

In Loving Memory of Kadence Gillies

Tina Gillies and Derek Pimiskern are the founders of the Kadence Legacy Fund and its service dog initiative, *One Dog, One Life*. Both are retired Canadian Armed Forces veterans who served in Afghanistan. Tina served as an Imagery Technician and is a recipient of the Sacrifice Medal. Derek served as a Combat Engineer. Their leadership is shaped by lived service, integrity, and a deep understanding of the long-term impacts of trauma.

The Kadence Legacy Fund was created in memory of Kadence Gillies, Tina's daughter and Derek's stepdaughter, who grew up in Morinville, Alberta. Kadence attended Georges H. Primeau School and graduated from Morinville Community High School. She passed away on April 19, 2024, after a five-year battle with cancer. Known for her humour, compassion, and strong spirit, Kadence left a lasting impression on everyone who knew her, including her younger brother, Kurt.

Central to Kadence's story was her bond with her service dog, Sadie. Tina had accessed Sadie years earlier through Courageous Companions as part of her own PTSD support. During Kadence's illness, Sadie became a constant presence at hospital visits, medical appointments, and training sessions, providing emotional regulation, comfort, and stability for the entire family during an extremely difficult time.

Through this experience, Tina and Derek saw firsthand how one properly trained service dog could support not just an individual, but an entire family navigating trauma, illness, and grief. That understanding became the foundation of *One Dog, One Life*.

The Kadence Legacy Fund exists to provide ethical, community-rooted service dog support to veterans, first responders, and others living with trauma-related injuries. The organization is built on sustainability, accountability, and long-term impact rather than quick fixes or symbolism.

This work honours Kadence's legacy by turning love into action and loss into purpose. Every service dog placed through the program carries forward the values Kadence embodied: compassion, resilience, and the belief that no one should face life's hardest moments alone.

One dog. One life. One legacy.