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Healing Trauma Through Therapeutic Yoga

One family shares the gift of healing through annual scholarship

(Victoria, BC) In 2001, the Dennehys lost their teenage son Kelty to suicide after his complicated struggle with depression. Eight years later, they lost daughter Riley to a heart attack after taking medication for a shoulder injury. Riley had also struggled with depression following the death of her brother.

“After losing a sibling, Riley didn’t know how to deal with her grief,” says her mother Ginny. “Like many who suffer trauma, she struggled with addiction as she tried to soothe her pain. But then she found yoga, and she blossomed.” Riley had finally found peace, but was killed tragically at the age of twenty-three. Devastated by another loss, the Dennehy’s decided to take action to counter their grief.

In memory of Riley Rae Dennehy, the *Breathe Fore Life Scholarship* was founded: a \$1000 gift awarded to a yoga teacher committed to helping people heal as Riley had healed. The Dennehys want to increase access to resources like therapeutic yoga practices for those dealing with mental illness or trauma. The award will be presented at the 2016 Victoria Yoga Conference, (February 5-7th, 2016) in Victoria, BC. Applications are being accepted on the VYC website until December 15th, 2015.

“Yoga is often used as therapeutic treatment for people who have suffered trauma, including mental illness,” said Carlyne Taylor, conference organizer. According to the International Journal of Yoga Therapy, she adds, “research has shown that Yoga practices, including meditation, relaxation and physical postures reduces muscle tension, and blood pressure, decreases physical symptoms of emotional distress, and increases quality of life.” Nicole Marcia is an expert in trauma-sensitive and therapeutic yoga, and will be presenting at the 2016 Victoria Yoga Conference. Local teachers Taryn Strong and Carmen Spagnola will also be leading classes on loss, trauma, and addiction. Victoria-based teacher Ocean Lum will be leading yoga for anxiety and depression.

“I have people tell me they’ve never felt safe or comfortable in their bodies until having practiced this approach,” says Nicole Marcia. “Many of my students turn to yoga because of complex trauma, and for them, engaging in talk therapy is very difficult. What’s great about yoga is that people can process their story both on an internal level and through movement, without pressure to verbalize.”

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Tickets for the 2016 Victoria Yoga Conference are available online, at: <http://victoriayogaconference.com/>

To learn more about the Kelty Patrick Dennehy Foundation or to donate, visit <https://www.thekeltyfoundation.org/donate.php>

Backgrounder:

The Victoria Yoga Conference (VYC)

Event producer and community-builder Carlyne Taylor created the Victoria Yoga Conference in 2013. The fourth annual conference will take place on the weekend of February 5-7th, 2016. The VYC is a place for community gathering, education, and the practice of yoga. The February weekend caters to a broad audience, beyond yogis: everyone from the curious to the serious. The weekend line up includes yoga workshops and classes, meditation workshops, teacher talk shops, a marketplace, live music, and The Illumination Event which is a gala event dedicated to sharing inspiration with local luminaries.

<http://victoriayogaconference.com/about-victoria-yoga-conference/>

The Kelty Patrick Dennehy Foundation

This organization was founded in 2001 by parents Ginny and Kerry Dennehy, after losing two of their children who struggled with depression. The Dennehy's began the foundation to raise funds for mental health initiatives. Ginny and Kerry Dennehy run the organization, which includes a board of directors and a team of supporters and donors. They are determined to change the stigmatization of depression, and fund much needed projects and programs across the country.

<http://www.thekeltyfoundation.org/index.php>

Breathe Fore Life Scholarship: The \$1000 scholarship is dedicated to the memory of Riley Rae Dennehy. It is awarded at the annual Victoria Yoga Conference, which will take place February 5-7th, 2016 at the Victoria Conference Centre. Applications for the 2016 Breathe For Life Scholarship can be submitted on the VYC website until December 15th, 2015.

Nicole Marcia: Nicole Marcia is the founder of Fine Balance Yoga, and is an experienced teacher in therapeutic yoga and trauma-sensitive practice. She has a Master's degree in Yoga Therapy from Lesley University in Boston, and has worked for the Provincial Health Services Association to develop a yoga therapy program for individuals struggling with mental health issues and addictions. She has also completed the Trauma Sensitive Yoga Training Program at the Trauma Center at the Justice Resource Institute in Boston. As a survivor of severe personal trauma, Nicole brings a wealth of experience and knowledge through her own individual journey, along with her credentials.

<http://www.finebalanceyoga.ca/>

Taryn Strong:

Taryn is certified yoga instructor, and has experience teaching classes to those recovering from addiction or suffering with mental health issues. She has completed certificates through the International Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre In Yoga of Recovery and Yoga, Trauma, and Mental Illness and Yoga of 12 Steps Recovery training. Taryn is also trained in Reiki healing and addiction studies. She will be leading classes at the 2016 Victoria Yoga Conference.

<http://www.tarynstrong.com/>

Carmen Spagnola:

Carmen is a registered clinical hypnotherapist, who works with clients that are dealing with depression, anxiety, and addiction. She completed her training at the Horizon Centre School of Hypnotherapy, and apprenticed under Dr. Jonni Gray in Past Life Regression. She is passionate about helping others heal, and will be presenting at the 2016 Victoria Yoga Conference.

<http://www.carmenspagnola.com/>