



Family Caregivers Unite!

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January 26th 2010: Family Caregiving and Lou Gehrig's Disease

Melanie York, who has Lou Gehrig's disease, and Colleen Smailes, whose husband Clayton died from it in 2009, share their experience with and insights into family caregiving for this devastating, incurable disease. Also called ALS and motor neurone disease, Lou Gehrig's disease attacks the brain and nervous system. It affects around 33,000 people in North America. Progressing in phases, it destroys the brain's ability to start and control movements. It causes loss of strength and the ability to move the arms, legs, and body. It brings failure of the muscles in the diaphragm and chest and

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Colleen Smailes

Colleen Smailes Colleen first became aware of Lou Gehrig's disease when her husband Clayton was diagnosed in 2003 at the age of 31. He died in the summer of 2009. Her project for 2010 is becoming a coordinator for a Walk, a first for Kamloops, BC, her hometown, to raise awareness of the disease and funds for research to determine its cause and to find its cure. She lives on a small hobby farm with her two sons Nolan (7) and Justin (6). Currently an Elementary Teacher, she holds the Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in Geography, minor in English and the Bachelor of Education, with a concentration in Early Primary Literacy. In addition to teaching, she coaches volleyball and b

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Melanie York

Melanie York Diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease in September 2008, Melanie left her position as Executive Producer at YTV in February 2009. She no longer has the use of her arms and has a full-time caregiver to help her with daily activities. She is working to increase awareness of the disease. She holds the ECE degree from Ryerson University in Toronto. She began her career as an educator working with pre-school children. She then taught English as a Second Language in the community college system for six years. She transferred her child-care skills to the television world when she began her second career producing award-winning Public Service Announcements on bullying. Her s

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