

To those affected by pulmonary fibrosis,

My name is Heather Davidson, wife of double lung transplant recipient Robert Davidson who is President of the Canadian Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation. I am someone who has lived with pulmonary fibrosis (PF). I am writing today to share my story.

Robert was diagnosed with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF) in 2007. At its height, Robert's disease was my disease; we were both deeply affected by his condition. His ups were my ups and his downs were my downs. Dealing with this disease can bear a significant weight on families and relationships. Personally, Robert and I struggled most with excessive tiredness, lack of sleep, coughing, irritability. There was also a lack of public understanding about the disease. For instance, there were a couple of times when we ate at restaurants and people were rude to Robert because of his constant coughing. In particular, I found it incredibly stressful that, although I could help Robert with the day-to-day issues, I could not breathe for him.

Fortunately for us, Robert received a double lung transplant in 2010. Technically, I was Robert's primary caregiver, but in reality, I was simply a wife taking care of her husband at a time when he needed me most. Whether it was helping with showering, dressing, daily chores, driving him to appointments, driveway clearing and yard work, we were – and continue to be – a team. Each day, we took on this disease together, supporting each other throughout.

I'm sharing my story on behalf of all Canadians who care for someone living with PF. Being a caregiver is a 24/7 job, and although it can be incredibly fulfilling, it comes with its own set of challenges. Caregivers don't hesitate for an instant to set their own needs aside when learning their loved one is sick. They are parents, children, partners or friends, and I'm writing to thank them for their tireless work and dedication, and to give something back. On behalf of the CPFF, Robert and I want to introduce the **Take a Breather Caregiver Recognition Program**.

This program honours and recognizes the significant role of those who care for someone living with PF. It is generously funded by an unrestricted grant from InterMune Canada. Applicants are encouraged to submit their personal stories online at www.cpff.ca and have their names entered into a random draw for a 'Breather' – a gift that lends assistance or provides respite for those who selflessly put others before themselves. Whether you are someone living with PF who wants to recognize the incredible work of your loved one, or a caregiver who wants to help motivate others in this important role, this program is for you. Visit www.cpff.ca to share your story for a chance to win.

The truth is, PF doesn't impact one person; it impacts the entire family. In Canada, there are thousands of people who have taken on the challenging and unplanned role of being a caregiver. Responding to the unexpected needs of someone they love, these unsung heroes share in carrying the weight of this disease, however, their personal struggles may not always be apparent. The emotional stress of living with PF can be profound, and can lead to dramatic, and sometimes corrosive changes in relationships and intimacy. Studies show that PF sufferers struggle with losing their independence, and becoming a burden on their spouses or children. Conversely, caregivers

report feelings of guilt and frustration when faced with the unexpected challenge of taking care of their loved one. For all of these reasons and more, the CPFF wants to give back and say thank you.

To learn more about the Take a Breather Caregiver Recognition Program, please visit www.cpff.ca, and join me in sharing this initiative with your friends and loved ones. Let's share the stories of these incredible people who deserve recognition for their hard work and dedication.

We are all one and the same, and we are all in this together.

Sincerely,

Heather Davidson