



## Denise Bebenek, Founder Meagan's Walk: Creating A Circle of Hope Biography

Denise Bebenek is the founder, leader, and driving force behind **Meagan's Walk: Creating a Circle of Hope**. This special project is named in memory of her daughter, Meagan, who at just five years



old died from a rare type of cancerous brain tumour. From its humble beginnings 15 years ago, Meagan's Walk has raised an astounding total of more than \$4.5 million for paediatric brain tumour research. During that time it has remained a grassroots organization, focused on the well-being and empowerment of all children and families.

Meagan's diagnosis was the start of a devastating journey for the Bebenek family. After Meagan succumbed to her illness, Denise decided she must come back to the hospital, not alone, but with others. She envisioned a "circle of hope" as one hand joined another, surrounding the hospital and giving a clear and simple sign of support to the children and their families within. With the support of family and friends, Meagan's Walk was born. In addition to the yearly Mother's Day Weekend Walk, Meagan's Walk has expanded to include school programs, community fundraisers, a yearly Crane Ceremony, and third party events.

The spirit and purpose of Meagan's Walk is a combination of Denise's personal experiences and professional background. A graduate of the University of Western Ontario, she is a former school teacher and has worked with troubled youth and children.

Denise is a prominent and generous participant in broadcast fundraising campaigns including CTV's "Night of Miracles," and has been featured in many media articles. She is a tireless advocate for families who are touched by brain tumours, and for the empowerment of all children to help one another. She is honoured to have received numerous awards for her good works - including being named one of *Canada's Most Powerful Women: Top 100* by the Women's Executive Network; The Women's Post *Glass Slipper Award*; the Etobicoke *Urban Hero Award*; and the Province of Ontario *Volunteer Service Award*.

Denise is the recipient of Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Medal – she was nominated by people who felt she had made an outstanding contribution to her community and to Canada.

She now most recently has been invited to serve on the Board of Directors of De La Salle Oaklands- a well-known and established private school in Toronto.

Denise has a passion for music and family, and devotes her work days to her varied, hectic and rewarding duties at **Meagan's Walk: Creating a Circle of Hope**.