

By Danielle Ray

If anyone knows how your life can literally change in an instant, it is teacher Amy Lebouf - her husband Chad, a nurse, was changing his tire in Holden on the breakdown lane of I-190 on January 13, 2012 when a car struck and killed him.

“The days following Chad's death were spent in shock and complete disbelief,” Amy recalls. “I didn’t sleep much after his death.” She had to soldier on for the sake of their three young children (ages 7, 2, and 7 months), but her heart was broken.

“Chad had a wonderful, energetic personality,” Amy said of her longtime love. They met in Leominster when she began working at the Weathervane restaurant and he trained her, and became good friends.

“I used to say to my friends he would make a great boyfriend,” she said. The Christmas after Amy started college they began dating, and were together ever since. Chad became a nurse, and had just started his first job when he went with friends to Mohegan Sun and won on a great hand of three card poker – he took his winnings and bought Amy an engagement ring, completely taking her by surprise.

“He was the type of person to make things happen,” Amy said fondly of Chad.

They were married on June 5, 2004 “in a beautiful ceremony fit for any princess, complete with a horse and carriage ride”, she said. They were married for 7 years before Chad passed away, and had three beautiful children together.

“He was the most amazing father and the kids were the light of his life,” Amy said of her husband.

“Everything he did he did for them. The hard work, determination, and sacrifice starting his own business took he did so for it to make a difference in their life. He wanted to give them a future full of happiness and beautiful family memories.”

Family and friends stayed with Amy at their home in the days following the accident and a classmate of Chad’s, Scott Haavisto, brought Greg Hill’s radio show and his Foundation to her attention. Amy asked her sister-in-law Dayna to call into the show “because I knew she had the strength to articulate what an amazing man he was”, she said.

“Listening to Greg Hill talk about Chad's beautiful life and hearing Dayna call in was fantastic,” said Amy of their initial contact with the Greg Hill Foundation. Amy was notified of donations pouring in that day, a fact that she could not really even grasp at the time.

“I just could not believe the generosity and kindness shown by people I didn't even know,” she said.

“The fact that strangers wanted to help and the organization matched their generosity is truly amazing.”

When Chad died, Amy was on maternity leave with their youngest child; the donations from the Greg Hill Foundation enabled her to focus solely on her kids and also give her husband the funeral services he wanted.

“To not have to worry financially at that time was such a relief. [Our youngest] Parker was hospitalized immediately after Chad's services. The money helped pay for the components of his treatment that our insurance did not cover. Also, when we returned home the refrigerator had completely died and leaked all its contents onto the floor. So, I also purchased a brand new fridge and completely replaced its contents.”

“The donations continue to help [our children] maintain as much normalcy in their lives as possible,” said Amy.

Amy said the Greg Hill Foundation “has restored my belief that people, even strangers, want to help in the most horrible of circumstances.”

“People from all over this community have given to our family to help try to ease the pain of his death; to have one less thing, a huge thing, to worry about after his death helped me focus on the children. For that I will be forever grateful to Scott, Greg Hill, the Foundation, and his entire listening audience.”

Although she will never fully recover from the pain of losing her husband in such a senseless and tragic way, Amy said in the months since his death she has been able to really focus on her children and their well being – a welcome distraction.

“Each day is a struggle of some sort,” she said. “Through the stability that the Foundation helped me maintain the children were given consistency. The older children speak freely about Chad and recall the amazing father that he was. They each have their special memories and most importantly can remember the times that he spent with them and his beautiful smile.”

“Parker was eight weeks old the day he died,” Amy said. “He won't recall the hero that Chad was like the older children. Parker has the same exact belly laugh Chad did. When he laughs I can hear Chad laughing right with him.”