

President's Report

The Sir Edmund Hillary Foundation



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Remembering William Francis (Zeke) O'Connor

May 2, 1926 – March 6, 2021

Philanthropist, Founder of the Sir Edmund Hillary Foundation, Devoted Family Man, Professional NFL and CFL Athlete, Retail Executive

This Spring, we mourn the loss of a beloved friend, our Founder, Zeke O'Connor.

My father, Zeke, passed away peacefully on the evening of Saturday March 6. I cannot express how deeply saddened my family and I are at his passing, and how at the same time we are so immensely proud of the impressive legacy he leaves behind. It was Zeke's passion to give back and his great love of the Sherpa people that gave him that opportunity. From 1976 he along with Sir Edmund Hillary began to ask friends for support to raise needed funds for Education, Health, and the Environment in the Solukhumbu. Throughout the years, the Foundation blossomed into a support system that the Sherpas could count on.

As the infamous moto, "help the Sherpas help themselves" began to take flight, many Sherpas became educated and returned to work amongst and for the SEHF. Over the past 45 years Zeke saw his dream come true, inclusive of Dr, Kami Temba becoming our Chief medical officer as well as other Sherpas making their way back to enrich and strengthen the community. His Sherpa friends were many as he worked with these leaders and continued to help when asked.

Leading to its opening in 2011, we all were so pleased to have the Rotary Club of Calgary offer to fundraise for the establishment of a STEM school in Phaplu and the additional honor of naming it, The Zeke O'Connor School. Throughout the last 14 years when I took over the Presidency of the Foundation from my father, I had the most amazing experience of working alongside him and with his large hands steering me through the ever-changing world. As challenges occurred, be it earthquakes or needed equipment for the hospital or school, Zeke rose to the occasion to make sure Nepal received needed financial support. In

2016 The Beyul Healing Garden was named in his honor and he was able to attend at 90 the opening celebration. It was a highlight of his life.

Due to financial circumstances, we have recently been in the process of downsizing our commitment to the Hospital in the Solukhumbu and are fortunate to have other foundations step in to take our role. We maintain our commitment to the ZOC school and focus on the children at risk. Zeke and Sir Edmund always understood that education was the way to not only help the child receiving it, but also their families and communities.

We look to **April 10th** where our “next generation committee- NextGen” is hosting its first fundraiser, ‘**Night IN for Nepal**’. Zeke lent his support to this event, and I have fond memories of them sitting around his table explaining to him the concept of an online event. He told me how proud he was of this committee stepping up to help and how he saw such a bright future for the Foundation. Co-Chairs Justin von Etdorf and Susie McEhinney with Diki McElhinney, Nicole Hopkins, Luke Dunlop, Michelle Leroux and Chef Harry Prosser, we thank you for your help in organizing what looks to be a fun virtual culinary event (see details below on pg. 3).

Our Board members whose names you see on the left (pg. 1), will enable us to take Dad’s passion and carry on, and I am continually grateful to have such a dedicated group. Bob Kolbuc who was Dad’s right hand and Martine and most recently Jeanne have been there throughout to support Zeke and this Foundation, I love them and thank them so much for their guidance. The celebrations of life in Nepal were wonderful to watch online and he would have been so touched. When we are able to, we will have a celebration here in Canada.

Most importantly, I thank all of you, friends of my father, who reached out with warm and wonderful words of comfort. To the many supporters of the Foundation, on behalf of my father thank you for the support over the years. I hope you will continue with us to carry on his legacy.

Namaste,



Karen O'Connor, President

OBITUARY: [The Globe and Mail](#)

<https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/theglobeandmail/obituary.aspx?n=william-francis-o-connor&pid=198004410>

The Zeke O'Connor Memorial Fund

Monetary donations will be dedicated in support of the ‘*Zeke O'Connor High School*’, located in the village of Phaplu, in the Mount Everest region of Nepal. This accredited School was established in 2011 and teaches approximately 150 students from grades 8 through 12, enabling local children to complete their secondary education close to home and family. It is the only High School teaching STEM (Science, Technology, English, Math) academic subjects in the Region.

To donate: www.canadahelps.org/en/pages/zeke-oconnor-school-fund

Or mail your contribution to:

The Sir Edmund Hillary Foundation

The Zeke O'Connor Memorial Fund

3-1750 The Queensway,

Suite 1107

Etobicoke, ON M9C 5H5

And please visit our website to view recent videos / photos of Memorial celebrations held for Zeke in Nepal at www.thesiredmundhillaryfoundation.ca

SEHF 2021 – A Focus on Education

Now in its 45th year of operation, the Sir Edmund Hillary Foundation remains committed to supporting Healthcare and Education in the Solu-Khumbu, Nepal.

This past year, however, pandemic-related requirements in all sectors have necessitated a hierarchy of financial support committed to Healthcare for front-line worker preparedness, PPEs, hospital kits and community awareness campaigns.

An uptick in financial support in our Education program is desperately needed.

On April 10, we welcome you to join us in a fun culinary, virtual Spring fundraiser entitled '**A Night IN for Nepal**', in support of the ZOC High School.

VIRTUAL FUNDRAISING EVENT

A Night IN for Nepal, April 10, 2021

For information and registration --- <https://nightinfornepal.com/>



PLEASE DONATE NOW
Visit our website www.thesiredmundhillaryfoundation.ca
for canadahelps.org
to see how you can HELP!