

First off, thank you to the Lindsay Leigh Kimmet Memorial Foundation, The Rotary Club of Cochrane, and Cochrane Search and Rescue for organizing this event and for having us tonight. We really appreciate it; we hope everyone had a great day on the links.

In all honesty, I am not accustomed to speaking about something personal to a group of 100+ strangers, so forgive me if I stumble at times. But, as we all know, there are times that call for one to bear the uncomfortable in support of exceptional people; people deserving of acknowledgement. There is no better example of a time to do this than now, and no better example of people deserving of acknowledgement than CSAR, as I have seen them, many times over, bear uncomfortable conditions for the sake of others.

Now, to give you some context to who I am and why I have crashed your dinner, allow me to share the root of our experience with CSAR. Admittedly, I was only vaguely familiar with CSAR as a volunteer organization prior to 2013. When I heard the words “search and rescue” I often associated it as being synonymous with operations involving only fire, police or military. My knowledge of SAR as a volunteer organization was virtually non-existent, and what I did know was informed only by what I may have seen in passing in the news or read in the media. And then things changed, and my knowledge of SAR was no longer ill-informed by mere sideline stories; it became first-hand, lived experience.

My dear, eldest sister, Sara, has been missing since 2012. In the fall of 2013, her vehicle – along with many of her possessions—were found in a remote area just west of Cochrane. It was in the following months and years that my family and I became acquainted with the many individuals that make up CSAR. CSAR was there, and has been there, alongside RCMP, in the continued search for my sister.

I remember the crushing news that although Sara’s van and possessions had been found, there was no sign of her or her remains. It was a hopeless feeling felt by my family and me. And then we arrived for a large scale coordinated search, with CSAR leading the way. Believe me when I say this: we were floored by how many individuals were there, sacrificing their time, expending their energy and efforts, and applying their expertise, all on behalf of a stranger. For the first time in what felt like an eternity, we had hope.

There have been several searches in the area since 2013. Let me tell you, it is not easy terrain nor is it always in pleasant conditions when conducting searches. I have seen CSAR combing the woods in the blistering heat; I have observed members bearing the wet, the cold, and the downright mucky, all on behalf of my sister. I’ve seen members waist deep in boggy ground, enduring conditions which most people would consider far beyond the threshold for being inhospitable. But, steadfast in their values, each search, regardless of conditions, has been conducted with respect and dignity; each member showcasing an unwavering level of professionalism that must be seen to be believed.

Although we still don’t know where Sara is, we have a good idea of where she is not; this, oddly enough, provides at least some solace in the state of perpetual ambiguity that comes with having a missing family member. We have CSAR to thank for offering at least some clarity to the many unknowns and wonderings of where she may be.

To all CSAR members: your efforts are noticed, your sacrifice of time, respected. You have provided hope to what often feels like a hopeless situation. This surely transcends my family’s experience to the many others who have relied or may rely upon your supports. Through your generous pursuit of giving

back to the community, you sacrifice and volunteer the most valuable commodity of all: time. And for that, we are forever grateful. You have been an instrumental support in my family's grieving process; I am sure the same sentiment is shared by all those who have relied upon you in similar circumstances.

Let me finish by saying the level of expertise of CSAR is truly remarkable for a not-for-profit volunteer organization. I believe the services provided to the community through CSAR are not only a public good, but a public need, deserving of continued support to ensure training and resources are available to equip these folks with the required tools to do the invaluable work I have come to know them for. Having CSAR walking alongside us on this journey has been incredibly important and impactful. In fact, at some of our saddest moments, CSAR has served as a source of inspiration and courage. Having people like you – and the many others volunteering their time to support us and others in need – has tremendous value and impact. With that said, I would be remiss not to acknowledge the SAR partners who have made contributions; your efforts have not gone unnoticed. Calgary SAR, Didsbury, Badlands, Foothills SAR, and to any others not mentioned, thank you. Truly. Thank you.

On behalf of my family, and most importantly, on behalf of my sister and the many others who are missing or in need of your services, thank you. CSAR, thank you for all that you have done and for all that you do. We are forever grateful to each and every one of you.

Thanks,