



Lucas Rushton (left) loved Elvis and he always enjoyed attending Thane Dunn's concerts when he was in Truro. Lucas passed away last May and his mother Laureen (right) started #lukeslegacy in his honour. Thane Dunn (middle) has produced a calendar to raise funds for #lukeslegacy. The Calendars are available at Masstown Market or MacQuarries for only \$5.



Laureen Rushton displays one of the calendars available at Masstown Market for only \$5, with 100% of the proceeds going to #lukeslegacy fund, in support of a scholarship for local students to attend Neptune Theatre or to access Mental Health Programming. (Harrington Photo)



Photo: Portraits of migrant workers from No one is illegal — Halifax/Kjipuktuk "Status for all" community art project held September 12, 2021. (Submitted)

## Migrant Worker Rights Must Be Addressed

Last week as the Nova Scotia legislature prepares to return for its spring sitting, the migrant support organization No one is illegal - Halifax/Kjipuktuk (NOII-Hfx) called for provincial action on migrant worker rights.

A poll conducted by NOII-Hfx in August 2021 outlined the key changes migrant workers would like to see in Nova Scotia, including: a minimum wage increase which corresponds to a living wage; ten paid sick days; holiday pay; access to public healthcare for all; and access to permanent residence for all. According to NOII-Hfx, additional priorities that have been raised by migrant workers include better housing conditions and improved labour protections.

"Migrant workers regularly reach out to us about concerns such as cramped or poor housing, labour and human rights violations and so on," said Stacey Gomez of NOII-Hfx's Migrant Workers Program. She added: "Due to their temporary immigration

status, in practice migrant workers risk being fired, sent back to their home country and not able to work in this country again if they speak out, including lodging a labour standards complaint. We need a better system that works for migrant workers in Nova Scotia."

NOII-Hfx's Migrant Workers Program engages in outreach, education and mutual aid support with Temporary Foreign Workers throughout Nova Scotia. The majority are workers in the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP), who are permitted to work in Canada for up to 8 months of the year

depending on employer needs. According to the Nova Scotia government, approximately 1,500 migrant workers come to work on Nova Scotia farms, predominantly from Mexico and Jamaica.

This past year, NOII-Hfx supported eleven migrant farm and fish plant workers in situations of abuse throughout Nova Scotia to successfully apply for the Vulnerable worker open work permit. In addition, NOII-Hfx was one of the organizations providing support in a recent case involving 8 migrant workers which appeared on OMNI Filipino.

## Sale of Calendars Supports #lukeslegacy Fund

By Linda Harrington

It will soon be a year since eighteen-year-old Lucas Rushton passed away and his parents Laureen and Lewis struggle with the heart-breaking pain of losing their only son each and every day.

Lucas was a very talented singer, musician, and actor but he struggled with his mental health for years. His parents exhausted what meager health resources were available. "We would take him to the hospital after he tried to harm himself, only to be sent home," says Laureen, who talks openly about the last few years of Lucas's life, hoping she can help others. "From the outside looking in we were a happy family, and all was well, but inside it was heart breaking to watch Lucas trying to ease his pain with drugs, alcohol, cutting and more than one attempt at taking his own life."

Laureen doesn't believe Lucas meant to take his life this last time. He had been looking online for ways to ease his pain and had been trying different cocktails. "Lucas thought he was smarter than everyone and wouldn't listen to reason or warnings. He drank a mixture of alcohol, cannabis and methyl hydrate and there was just no coming back. He walked to the ambu-

lance on his way to the hospital and then it was just unbelievable we had to turn off his life support a few days later."

Struggling with such a tragic loss of their son, Laureen and Lewis were grateful Lucas was able to be an organ donor. "Three families were given hope and happiness through his organ donations. He was also a tissue donor and we've been told he helped an additional 60-70 people."

Laureen started a Facebook page "Memories of Lucas Rushton" where people flooded the posts with pictures, videos and memories of this talented young man. "Lucas always felt alone and didn't see the love that surrounded him," says Laureen, knowing very well this is often the case with people who struggle with mental illness. She started a memorial fund #lukeslegacy to raise money for local students to attend Neptune Theatre School, one of the places where Lucas truly felt safe and happy. "He started with Neptune 6 or 7 years ago, taking summer courses on March Break, and eventually was in productions of Les Mis and Frozen. He had been taking leadership courses to continue to be involved with Neptune."

Elvis was one of Lucas's favorite entertainers and over

the years he developed a friendship with Thane Dunn, who portrays Elvis Presley at sold out concerts. Thane was very saddened by Lucas's death and posted, "His Mother told me once that I was a role model for him believe it or not, and you will never know how proud I was and how proud I still am of that fact. We have made several friends over the years through our shows and Lucas was one of my very favourites. I always knew I would see him in Truro and always looked forward to it."

In honour of #lukeslegacy, Thane produced beautiful 2022 calendars. He had hoped to sell these at concerts early in the year, which were sadly

postponed due to Covid. These calendars are now available at Masstown Market and MacQuarries, Truro for a \$5 donation. 100% of the proceeds will be going to #lukeslegacy to offer a scholarship to students outside HRM to attend Neptune Theatre School and to access mental health programming at Neptune, as well.

Thane Dunn will be performing in Truro at the Cobequid Educational Centre on Friday, June 3rd, 2022. Tickets are available online at ticketpro.ca and Thane has promised if the auditorium is filled, he will be making a further sizeable donation to #lukeslegacy fund.

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