



Foundation History

The Kees Brenninkmeyer Foundation is a non-profit resource for alpine industry professionals seeking orthopedic medical care. The foundation is inspired by and created in memory of Kees Brenninkmeyer, who passed away while actively pursuing a career as an alpine ski and mountaineering guide. It is established to financially assist alpine guides, patrollers, or instructors who require surgery in order to continue their career.

In his own career, Kees injured his knee while working as a heli-ski guide in Alaska. He was able to finish the season on an injured knee, however his condition deteriorated to the point that reconstructive surgery was required in order for him to continue working. Kees elected to have his surgery performed at the Steadman Clinic in Vail Colorado specifically because of Dr. Steadman's record of enabling athletes to return to and even prolong their careers after surgical treatment. Kees' surgery was successful and after diligent reconditioning he was able to return to work and pursuing certification through the Canadian Mountain Guide Association. At the same time that Kees was grateful to return to full participation in his career, he was conscious that many of his colleagues lacked the financial resources or medical coverage to benefit from the same opportunity. He was keenly aware that surgical treatment presented a significant financial burden to many career professionals who relied on a healthy body to thrive as alpine guides, patrollers or instructors. He genuinely regretted that the outstanding treatment he received at the Steadman Clinic was not available to others with similar career aspirations and experiences as his own. The foundation aims to relieve the financial burden of alpine industry professionals seeking similar care as that which Kees received. To that end, the foundation accepts candidates with demonstrated financial need seeking treatment at the Steadman Clinic.

In 2007, Kees and his girlfriend Claire Dixon passed away in a mountaineering accident while volunteering as hut custodians in the Wapta Icefield of the Canadian Rocky Mountains. Kees and Claire were each accomplished mountaineers and skiers. They met on an expedition to summit and ski Mt. McKinley and particularly enjoyed spending time together in the mountains. While they pursued many challenges in alpine environments, they also conscientiously developed the necessary skills for successful careers; Kees as a professional mountaineering guide and ski instructor, and Claire as a physical therapist. Kees positively affected many individuals by sharing with them his talent for embracing challenge with enthusiasm. He overcame obstacles through diligent preparation and in doing so inspired great confidence in strangers, clients and friends alike. His passion for the alpine environment always involved sharing it with others and helping others to derive the same joy he experienced from successful adventures. In honor of these qualities, the Kees Brenninkmeyer Foundation aims to help those with passion and dedication similar to Kees' to fulfill their career ambitions.