

SOAR Now Offers Support Through 48 Hospitals Across U.S. and Canada

By Pam Peterson, RN, BSN

As we reflect on the Survivors Offering Assistance in Recovery (SOAR) program's growth since its development in 2001, the word that comes to mind is "amazing." SOAR is a program that provides peer support to burn survivors and their families. It was developed in 2001 by a handful of individuals with a variety of experience in the burn community. The members of this group, called the SOAR National Advisory Committee, poured their knowledge and talent into creating a program that would offer peer support to burn survivors and their families in any stage of recovery. A SOAR pilot program was initiated in 6 hospitals in 2001. The program has grown from the initial 6 to 48 participating hospitals across the United States and Canada, from 12 coordinators to 280, and from 35 peer supporters to 460. This amazing network of dedicated professionals, burn survivors, and families of survivors have made thousands of visits to burn survivors and their families. They are what makes SOAR so successful.

HOSPITAL STAFF SHARE THEIR PATIENTS' ENTHUSIASM FOR SOAR

"Prior to SOAR, we had been facilitating peer visits on an informal basis. Our director, Dr. Sood, learned of the SOAR program and appreciated its value. It has been a natural fit, and compliments our mission of maintaining a best practice and holistic approach in serving burn survivors and their loved ones," explains Marti Feichter, a social worker at Richard M. Fairbanks Burn Center, Wishard Healthcare, in Indianapolis, Indiana.

"Recovery is more than medical treatment," adds Marti, who also serves as a SOAR coordinator.

"Patients and families alike report the program is invaluable, stating peer visits have increased their hopefulness and sense of belonging, as well as reduced some fears they were having. Our satisfaction surveys reflect positive feedback, with all of the responses ranging from 6.3-6.9, on a 7-point Likert scale."

Marti credits the SOAR program with "adding a new dimension" to the burn center's support services.

"Staff members can educate and assist with emotional and psychological aspects of a burn injury," explains Marti, "but there is nothing like talking and sharing with someone who's been through a similar experience. The Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors has expanded our program base, assisted in developing additional tools for recovery, promoted ongoing support, and created networking opportunities for burn survivors, loved ones, and healthcare professionals. The partnership with the Phoenix Society benefits everyone in the burn community."

Mary Smith remembers how, a few years after her son's burn injury, her family wanted to find a way to



Phoenix Society's SOAR peer supporter training at the Society's 2010 World Burn Congress.

“give back.” Through Shriners Hospital for Children—Cincinnati, they heard about the Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors and the SOAR Program. The family realized that this was a great opportunity for them to get involved. They wanted to be able to provide the support to others that they felt was missing when they were going through tough times.

“It has been a blessing for us to be part of the SOAR program” says Mary, who is a peer supporter, “knowing that we are helping others and giving someone the availability of time to be able to talk to someone.”

“We realized we were making a difference when someone shared that they didn’t feel alone anymore; that their thoughts are not alone,” she adds.

She especially remembers a visit with another mother, who was worried about her son not being able to do “normal” things that boys do—that his abilities would be limited. Mary was able to share the experiences she had had with her son Michael, who was burned at age 3 but wanted to play football.

“We just kept on encouraging him to play and give it his best,” Mary said of her now 17-year-old son who plays on the varsity team and is finishing his senior year in high school.

And what has Mary gotten out of the experience with SOAR?

“It’s very rewarding when people [from group] who you haven’t seen in a while come up to you, and tell you how much of a difference you made in their life,” she explains.

The SOAR program continues to grow and exceed our expectations. We are grateful for the opportunities and partnerships that have been and continue to be

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developed through this program. We are excited to be working together with the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation and the IAFF Burn Foundation to explore the unique needs of burn-injured fire fighters and their loved ones as it pertains to peer support after a burn injury. With our partners, we are hoping to develop a module of the SOAR program specifically for the fire service.

Continue to watch for developments on the Phoenix Society and our partners’ websites at www.firefightersupport@phoenix-society.org as we strive for continuous improvement and increasing the SOAR network.

Pam Peterson is the Associate Director of The Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors. She currently manages Phoenix Society’s programs, focusing on SOAR and World Burn Congress.

Phoenix Society’s SOAR coordinator training participants at the Society’s 2010 World Burn Congress.



SOAR HOSPITALS

CALIFORNIA

Community Regional Burn Center, Fresno, CA
Grossman Burn Center at West Hills Hospital and Medical Center,
West Hills, CA
Santa Clara Valley Regional Burn Center, San Jose, CA
Shriners Hospital for Children - California, Sacramento, CA
UCSD Regional Burn Center, San Diego, CA
University of California Davis Regional Burn Center, Sacramento, CA
University of California Irvine, Orange, CA

COLORADO

Children's Hospital Burn Center, Denver CO
University of Colorado Hospital Burn Center, Denver, CO

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

The Burn Center at Washington Hospital Center, Washington, DC

FLORIDA

Tampa General Regional Burn Center, Tampa, FL

GEORGIA

Grady Memorial Hospital Burn Center, Atlanta, GA
The Joseph M. Still Burn Center, Augusta, GA

ILLINOIS

Loyola University Medical Center Burn Center, Maywood, IL
University of Chicago, Chicago, IL

INDIANA

St Joseph Regional Burn Center, Fort Wayne, IN
Wishard Health Services, Indianapolis, IN

IOWA

University of Iowa Burn Center, Iowa City, IA

KANSAS

Via Christi, St. Francis Regional Medical Center, Wichita, KS

MARYLAND

Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center, Baltimore, MD

MASSACHUSETTS

Brigham - Women's Hospital, Boston, MA
Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, MA
Shriners Hospital for Children - Boston, Boston, MA

MICHIGAN

Spectrum Health Regional Burn Center, Grand Rapids, MI
University of Michigan Trauma Burn Center, Ann Arbor, MI

MINNESOTA

Regions Hospital Burn Center, St Paul, MN

NEW JERSEY

Burn Center at St. Barnabas Medical Center, Livingston, NJ

NEW YORK

Nassau University Medical Center Burn Center, Long Island, NY
New York Presbyterian Hospital/Cornell Burn Center, New York, NY

NORTH CAROLINA

North Carolina Jaycee Burn Center, Chapel Hill, NC
Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center, Winston-Salem, NC

OHIO

Ohio State University Center for Burn Care, Columbus, OH
Shriners Hospital for Children - Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH
St. Vincent's Mercy Medical Center, Toledo, OH
University Hospital Burn Center, Cincinnati, OH

OREGON

Oregon Burn Center, Portland, OR

PENNSYLVANIA

Lehigh Valley Hospital, Allentown, PA

RHODE ISLAND

Rhode Island Hospital, Providence, RI

TEXAS

Memorial Hermann Hospital, John S. Dunn, Sr. Burn Center,
Houston, TX
Parkland Memorial Hospital Regional Burn Center, Dallas, TX
Shriners Burns Hospital - Galveston, Galveston, TX
University of Texas Medical Branch Blocker Burn Unit, Galveston,
TX

UTAH

University of Utah Burn Center, Salt Lake City, UT

VIRGINIA

Virginia Commonwealth University Medical Center, Richmond, VA

WASHINGTON

University of Washington Burn Center at Harborview, Seattle, WA

WISCONSIN

Columbia St. Mary's Hospital Regional Burn Center, Milwaukee, WI

CANADA

Calgary Foothills Medical Center, Calgary, AB
Entraide Grands Brules, Montreal, PQ

TAIWAN

Sunshine Foundation, Taiwan



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