



Nova Scotia Firefighters' Burn Treatment Society ~ Helping adults and children



Firefighters are a philanthropic group Firefighters work beyond the call of duty

By Faye Mingo
Special Features Writer

Thanks to the humanitarian effort of the Nova Scotia Firefighters' Burn Treatment Society, patients who suffer so terribly from burns, now undergo the best treatment, have access to the best therapeutic equipment and have a burn team with first-hand knowledge of the most effective treatment techniques money can buy.

The Nova Scotia Firefighters' Burn Treatment Society sprang out of a commitment shared by a few firefighters to do what they could to ease the suffering they witnessed. What began as a handful of firefighters holding hotdog sales has changed to a province-wide organization of firefighters and associate members who, adopting the same commitment, have raised over \$1,000,000 to benefit burn patients.

"It all adds up," says David Collier, chairman, The Nova Scotia Firefighters' Burn Treatment Society. "We have car washes, barbecues, dances, bingos, hockey games, a bowl-a-thon, and a ladder-a-thon. Locally, an account has been set up for all funds to come into the same account from the various Boards of Directors throughout the province. Where the money goes is discussed by the Board of Directors, voted on in an informal way which honors the by-laws, and the funds are distributed."

Mr. Collier says the society has said "no" to the odd educational request but he can't recall anyone being refused a request directly related to burn care or burn education. Some people try to be creative, he says, to relate their issue to burns but most of the time, requests come from hospitals for equipment and social workers for patients.



Above: Firefighters at annual bowl-a-thon; Below: Annual ladder-a-thon at Halifax Grand Parade.

"Organizations have to have exhausted all other means of financial support before we contribute," says Mr. Collier. "It's the only way we can survive and not become the primary financier for certain burn needs. Necessary screening must take place by social workers for requests from patients who don't have insurance policies or need special pressure garments which are not covered by MSI."

Often patients are released from hospital still needing dressings. Or, family members may need financial support to come stay with the patient. A patient may need to come to outpatients every day and need transportation. Medications are only covered by MSI while a patient is in hospital. Burn patients often need an abundance of medications that can be very expensive. Even with insurance coverage, patients may have

deductibles which they may not be able to afford. The society provides funds for all these things.

"We have donated \$25,000 to the municipality to establish a school program and launched another project aimed at young arsonists," says Mr. Collier.

All of these donations are apart from the equipment, the staff training, the camps, and the skin bank the society established.

Last year, the Nova Scotia Firefighters' Burn Treatment Society raised \$75,000. As a result of their fund-raising efforts, the Nova Scotia chapter of the Canadian Society for Fund Raising Executives presented the Firefighters' Burn Treatment Society with a citation for their work in the category of Outstanding Philanthropic Group.



By Faye Mingo
Special Features Writer

A burn injury can be one of the most devastating and traumatic experiences a human being can go through.

For the Nova Scotia Firefighters' Burn Treatment Society, the commitment and dedication to the injured do not end when emergency calls are responded to and the trucks are back in the station.

As a matter of fact, members have done so much for burn care and education with \$1,000,000 in funds raised since its inception in 1983, that the QEII has recognized the Society as its second largest charity by engraving the Society's name on its centre's Wall of Honor. The burn unit at the VG site is also now called the Nova Scotia Firefighters' Burn Care Centre.

"Back in 1981," says Dave Collier, chairman of the society, "two or three Halifax firefighters wanted to do something beyond their duties for victims of fires so they had a hot dog sale and raised about \$1,000. They were encouraged by the amount of money they raised and decided to continue every year after that. By 1983, the Nova Scotia Firefighters' Burn Treatment Society was a registered charity."

To raise money now, the society, with the help and participation of firefighters throughout Nova Scotia, hold special fund raising events. The annual bowl-a-thon, where hundreds of firefighters, burn care nurses, burn support groups and their families travel to Halifax for a fund day of bowling, is just one. Another is the ladder-a-thon, where firefighters place a fire ladder strategically in town with a firefighter at its top and others go around to bars and restaurants with a firefighter's boot to collect donations.

The proceeds from the events are used to fulfill special requests from the QEII and the IWK - the two burn treatment centres in Nova Scotia.

"In 1988," says Mr. Collier, "with the assistance of the society, the only skin bank

facility in Atlantic Canada was installed at the VG with an initial \$55,000 donation.

"Once upon a time," he says, "pig skin was used on burn victims, but human skin is best. Donor skin isn't perfect. Grafts only last on a victim for two or three weeks but it does help the skin to heal and to prevent infections so it is a necessary part of a burn victim's recovery and is essential to check off on anyone's organ donor card. A victim's own skin may be best but that isn't always possible, depending on the extent of the burns. The next stage will be growing one's own skin."

Equipment purchased by the society includes Clinotron beds which aid in the healing of skin graft surgery and makes the patient as comfortable as possible. Heart monitors and a computer to assist occupational therapists design special pressure sensitive bandages to cover burned limbs are other equipment purchased with the help of the society.

"The Jobst pressure garment helps the skin to flatten as it heals," says Mr. Collier. "They are expensive and must be worn 23 and a half hours a day. Victims usually need two of them so they can be washed. Each garment

costs \$1,800. Firefighters' supply these because MSI deems them cosmetic."

The society is also involved with the Nova Scotia Burn Support Group which was formed in 1986 and is a volunteer organization comprised of serious burn survivors who share experiences and discuss how to cope with the physical and emotional needs resulting from burn injuries.

Meetings are held every second Wednesday and members will visit burn victims in the hospital to offer support if wanted. The group is currently placing district representatives in areas across Nova Scotia to help support the burn survivor and family after discharge from the hospital.

"Another objective of the Nova Scotia Firefighters' Burn Treatment Society," says Mr. Collier, "is to educate people about burn victims. The society responds to the requests for educational tools and has helped establish a burn library at the QEII by supplying books and audio-visual equipment. We have hosted professional seminars in the Atlantic region and have sent hospital staff from the QEII and IWK to seminars in other areas of Canada and



Sherry Carruthers, burn survivor, with former Vice-President Al Gore.

the United States."

Mr. Collier goes on to say that the Society's motto is "Taking Pride in Helping Others," but he adds, "we also need help. The society can't continue to fulfill its goals without the financial support of the community."

As well as sponsoring fund-raising events, anyone can make donations by contacting their local fire department or the Nova Scotia Firefighters' Burn Treatment Society.

Don Brentons

COMPLETE FIRE PROTECTION SALES & SERVICE

- SERVICING THE MARINE AND OFFSHORE INDUSTRIES
- INDUSTRIAL SALES & SERVICE
- PORTABLE FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

Systems: • FM200 • Halon 1301 • Carbon Dioxide
• Dry Chemical • Industrial • Kitchen • Fire Alarm • Foam

24 HOUR EMERGENCY SERVICE

Lakeside Industrial Pk., Halifax, N.S.
FAX 876-1976 • 876-7879

Jane Purves
MLA Halifax Citadel

Constituency Office
5475 Spring Garden Rd.
Suite 410
Halifax, N.S. B3J 3T2
(902) 492-4750
www.janepurves.ns.ca

If you would like more information, to get involved, or to send donations, please contact us at:

P.O. Box 481
Dartmouth Main
Dartmouth, Nova Scotia
B2Y 3Y8
1-902-835-0166
nsffbts@istar.ca

**NOVA SCOTIA
FIREFIGHTERS
SCHOOL**

**For all your Industrial, Commercial
and Fire Safety Training**

Telephone (902) **861-3823**
Telefax (902) **860-0255**

Email nsfs@ns.sympatico.ca Website www.nsfs.ns.ca

QEII Foundation extends a hearty
THANK YOU
for the continuing support of the
Nova Scotia Firefighters
Burn Treatment Society

Foundation

1278 Tower Road
Halifax, N.S.

**DARTMOUTH
METALS & BOTTLE
LIMITED**

*Dealers in Ferrous &
Non Ferrous Metals*

PETER GIBERSON
Bus.: (902) 468-1995
Res.: (902) 860-0604 • Cellular: (902) 456-1994

14 DAWN DRIVE
(across from Goodyear Tire, Windmill Road)

**ENVIRONMENT AND LABOUR
PUBLIC SAFETY
OFFICE OF THE FIRE MARSHAL**

**Phone: 424-5721
Fax: 424-3239**

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/enla/ofm>