

## AMY ACTON

*Grand Rapids, Michigan*

### MY STORY:

“The summer before I planned to attend college and study to become a nurse, I suffered an electrical burn injury at my job at a marina. The injury resulted in a two-and-a-half-month stay at a burn center. At the burn center, I saw an incredible team of health care providers come together to support families like my own. When I recovered, I attended college and returned to my aspiration of nursing with a newfound focus on burn injuries.

Later, working in a burn center and then at Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors, I gained a new passion for burn prevention. Part of the healing for myself and many others is advocating for prevention so a burn injury does not happen to others. The Phoenix Society was already advocating for fire sprinklers, adding its voice to the conversation from the perspective of its burn survivors who understand and have felt the impact when fire sprinklers are not present. We are the WHY that demonstrates the importance of fire sprinklers. We have the fire prevention education and technology at our fingertips, but a strong, collaborative effort of many organizations is needed to combat the opposition to fire sprinklers in new construction.”



### ADVOCACY PORTFOLIO

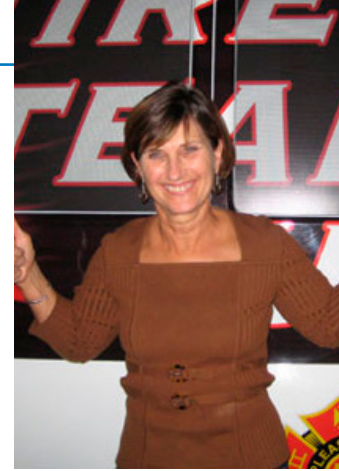
- Extensive work in burn prevention and burn recovery services as executive director of the national nonprofit Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors since 1998
- Board member of National Fire Protection Association and Home Fire Sprinkler Coalition
- Testifies with other advocates at numerous local, state, and national code hearings
- Provides resources for state-based fire sprinkler coalitions' education and advocacy efforts
- Phoenix Society connects trained burn survivor and family advocates with partners in prevention such as Common Voices, National Fire Protection Association, National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, and other fire service organizations across the country

## BONNIE WOODRUFF

*Raleigh, North Carolina*

### MY STORY:

“Sunday, May 12, 1996, was graduation day at the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill, as well as Mothers Day. It was a beautiful day with Carolina blue skies, however, it also was a day that changed my family’s lives forever. My only son, Ben, and four other students died in an early morning fire, which was caused by carelessly discard smoking materials, at the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity house. Even though the smoke alarms activated, there simply was not enough time for them to escape. I learned from Chapel Hill Fire Chief Dan Jones that fire sprinklers could have saved them, buying them the extra time they needed to escape while containing the fire to a small area.



In fact, two years before the fire, Chief Jones had alerted town and university officials that the old fraternity houses presented significant fire risks and recommended retrofitting them with fire sprinklers. They felt it was not a cost-effective decision and that Chief Jones may have been overreacting to the dangers.

After having experienced the ultimate loss of my son, Ben, I knew I had to speak out to bring attention to this national tragedy and promote lifesaving fire sprinkler protection. My mission was to save lives and prevent other parents from experiencing what my family had to experience. With the help of Chief Jones, I became an advocate that spoke at many colleges and universities, promoting progressive legislation for fire sprinklers wherever possible. From this tragedy, I have been able to make positive changes in fire protection efforts, unifying my voice with other advocates through Common Voices to make an even bigger impact. We bring the ‘unexpected messenger’ into the fire sprinkler conversations at the local, state, and national levels.”

### ADVOCACY PORTFOLIO

- Actively engaged with fire marshal’s fire safety training program for Greek organizations at University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill
- Lobbied U.S. Congress during multiple attempts to pass Fire Sprinkler Incentive Act
- Testified in Wisconsin state hearings which led to legislation requiring fire sprinklers in college dormitories
- Serving on the board of the North Carolina Residential Fire Sprinkler Coalition, lobbied the North Carolina Building Code Council to support fire sprinklers in homes and apartments
- Speaking engagements at various fire service and fire safety organization conferences and colleges nationwide

## DONNA HENSON

*Leawood, Kansas*

### MY STORY:

“In the early morning hours of May 8, 1999, I received a phone call telling me that my youngest son, Dominic Passantino, had been killed in a fraternity house fire at the University of Missouri. At that moment, my life and the lives of those who knew and loved Dominic changed forever. How could a young man who was so full of life have his life cut so short? I never dreamed that the room I envisioned as a safe haven would contribute to my son’s tragic death. There was not a working fire extinguisher on his floor, no batteries in the smoke alarm, and no fire sprinkler system; there were no safety devices in place that could have helped save my son’s life. Had a fire sprinkler system been present, the candle that ignited the bedding in Dom’s room would have been controlled or extinguished. Ironically, most fire deaths occur in the very place we feel safest – our homes.



Since that tragic day, I have worked with the city of Columbia and the University of Missouri to distribute a public service announcement video, “Dominic’s Story,” to hundreds of colleges across the country, educating both parents and students on fire safety, specifically in college living quarters. I continue to press legislatures, city councils, educators and fire service professionals nationwide to enact new laws that require fire sprinklers not only in college housing, but also in all new single and multifamily residences. With changes to fire and building codes requiring fire sprinklers, along with fire prevention education we can work toward creating a fire-safe environment for everyone.”

### ADVOCACY PORTFOLIO

- Supports the Dominic L. Passantino Foundation, whose mission is to increase awareness and foster educational efforts in order to prevent fire-related injuries and deaths of children. The foundation hosts The DOM Golf Tournament annually, having raised over \$300,000 for the Burn and Trauma Unit at Children’s Mercy Hospital in Kansas City, Missouri, and other charities
- Produced a college fire safety PSA, “Dominic’s Story,” with Columbia (Missouri) Fire Department
- Successfully lobbied city of Columbia (Missouri) to pass an ordinance to protect all Greek housing at University of Missouri with fire sprinklers by March 2016
- Lobbied U.S. Congress during multiple attempts to pass Fire Sprinkler Incentive Act
- Lobbied Jefferson City (Missouri) city council to adopt building codes that require fire sprinklers in new multifamily residences

## GAIL MINGER

*Clemson, South Carolina*

### MY STORY:

“My son, Michael, was only a sophomore in college when he was killed in an arson fire in his residence hall at Murray State University in Kentucky. Someone had poured gasoline in the hallway and lit a fire. The antiquated fire alarm was not what woke him from his sleep, but rather the screams of other residents. Due to a non-verbal learning disability on the Autism spectrum, Michael did not fully understand the directions that were being yelled to him by other residents. He was unable to escape and died in the doorway of his room. Fourteen others were injured in the fire. There was an earlier arson fire in Michael’s hall but it had not been reported to the residents and their parents, so they did not know to be on the lookout.



After Michael’s death, I chose to honor his legacy by looking out for the well being of students on college campuses nationwide, founding the Michael H. Minger Foundation. The goal of the Foundation has been to raise awareness and standards for campus fire safety, along with addressing fire safety needs for students with disabilities. Due to my work with the Foundation, I was invited to join Common Voices as a means to have a collected voice to combat fire and the threat of fire in our nation and on our college campuses. In order to prevent future fire deaths, we must educate and focus on ways to change our culture and the general public’s attitude about fire. The dangers and devastation of fire are very real, but they can be prevented.”

### ADVOCACY PORTFOLIO

- President of the Michael H. Minger Foundation, which works with colleges and universities to raise awareness about campus fire safety and fire safety for students with disabilities
- Helped enact the Michael H. Minger Act in Kentucky, which requires public colleges and universities as well as private institutions licensed by the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education to report campus crimes to employees, students and the public on a timely basis
- Assisted with the production of “9 Fires,” a documentary that explains the impact of nine campus-related fires that happened within three weeks in 2012
- Lobbied U.S. Congress during multiple attempts to pass Fire Sprinkler Incentive Act

## JEFF & TINA JORDAN

Madison, Wisconsin

### MY STORY:

Jeff: “When I was only six weeks old, I was severely burned by a fire that occurred when my unsupervised three- and four-year-old brothers got a hold of a lighter and lit some bedroom curtains on fire. My siblings fled the scene and there was a delay in rescuing me from the fire. The fire was so intense that it caused third- and fourth-degree burns over 38 percent of my body and burning through a portion of my cranial bone. The incident led to an initial hospitalization of four months. Since then, my burn injuries and recovery have been part of my life, shaping it and the way in which I interact with people. In my first 25 years of life, I’ve dealt with the challenges of being legally blind and have undergone approximately 89 reconstructive surgeries in four states, accumulating well over \$10 million in medical costs. Now I try to give back to the burn community by volunteering at the burn camp I attended for 11 years. And since many people do not give much thought to fire safety in their daily lives until it’s too late, I advocate for fire sprinklers and fire safety to help others avoid similar injuries to mine. Residential fire sprinklers, in particular, are valuable protective devices that can protect one’s family.”



Tina: “While working in a burn unit in 1992, we received word of a horribly burned six-week-old boy arriving by helicopter. It was that day that I met Jeff (though that was not his name at the time). After months of surgeries, discharge planning began for Jeff. The planning was complicated because he still needed ongoing medical care with frequent returns to the hospital or specialty clinics, and also because his birth family had become almost entirely removed from the situation. The social workers’ best solution was to place him in a pediatric nursing home. It was a heartbreaking feeling for those of us who worked so hard to get him to that point; we thought he may regress. It gnawed at my every thought until I came up with a better solution – to become Jeff’s medical foster parent and bringing him home. Later, our family legally adopted him. For me, it has been an eye-opening journey. My patients typically get to a certain point of recovery where they transfer out and we do not hear from them again as they get their lives back. Helping Jeff through his recovery taught me how much there was to still learn about the continuing care needed for a burn survivor. It took a lot of research and legwork, even for a healthcare professional, but now my experience can help others better navigate the journey. My occupation and experiences have led me to become a firm believer in flame arresters and fire sprinklers. Flame arresters would benefit people of all ages who are burned each year in gasoline fires. And installing fire sprinklers in new homes can prevent and eliminate an overwhelming number of fire disasters.”

### ADVOCACY PORTFOLIO

- Volunteers for the Alliance for Fire Safety (part of the Professional Fire Fighters of Wisconsin Charitable Foundation), as well as the organization’s Summer Camp for Burn-Injured Youth
- Spoke at legislative hearings for Wisconsin state law that requires fire sprinklers in new multifamily residences with three units and greater
- Spoke at Wisconsin legislative hearings during multiple attempts to ban the sale of novelty lighters to minors and prohibit the display for retail sale of these lighters

## JUSTINA PAGE

*Houston, Texas*

### MY STORY:

“On March 7, 1999, my life and my family were changed forever by a horrific, four-alarm fire in our house. In the middle of the night, I awoke to smoke in the house. My husband, James, was able to rescue our four older boys, but a burning bookcase fell on me and pinned me down as I attempted to rescue our twin 22-month-old boys. James got me out from under the bookcase and out of the house, then went back through a window and rescued one of the twins before the roof collapsed. Six weeks later I awoke from a coma in the local hospital’s burn unit with third-degree burns to more than 55 percent of my body. Even worse, I discovered my other 22-month-old twin boy, Amos, could not be rescued after the roof collapse and passed away. The fire caused varying degrees of burn injuries for all of us and we were informed that our home and all our possessions were lost in the fire. I spent over two months in the hospital and then a year and a half in physical therapy. Prayer helped me get through it.



There are moments in life that change you forever; the death of Amos was such a moment for me. Nothing in life makes any sense unless there is something positive that comes from such as tragic loss. The pain has been turned into compassion, the loss has been turned into understanding, the emptiness has been turned into a life of renewed purpose. I have dedicated myself to help other families who have been affected by burn trauma. I founded The Amos House of Faith, named after the son I lost, and I work with the Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors and local hospital to teach, help, and inspire others who are battling their burn injuries. It’s my way to give back to the burn community that helped me through my long and arduous recovery. In honor of Amos, I chose to join Common Voices in an effort to teach people about a solution – fire sprinklers – to preventing these types of tragedies.”

### ADVOCACY PORTFOLIO

- Founder and executive director of the Amos House of Faith, a nonprofit established to provide post-burn support to children and families affected by burn trauma
- “Faces of Fire” Advocate for NFPA Fire Sprinkler Initiative
- International speaker and award-winning author of “The Circle of Fire”
- Involved with Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors
- Support group leader for the John S. Dunn Burn Center at Memorial Hermann-Texas Medical Center
- Testified in front of Texas House of Representatives for high-rise fire sprinkler legislation that passed for Bexar County

## PAM ELLIOTT

*Winston-Salem, North Carolina*

### MY STORY:

“Just a month after my fifth birthday, my life changed forever. My mother put me down for a nap and she walked to my aunt’s house to borrow a vacuum cleaner as my grandmother and great-grandmother sat outside on the porch swing. Not long after my mother left, a fire began. I screamed for help, prompting my grandmother to run into the house, but the stairwell to my second-floor bedroom was ablaze. As she went outside the house to another door to the second floor, a teenage boy who had been driving by, stopped to help her and rescued me from the flaming inferno. At that point, I had already received third-degree burns over 50 percent of my body.



At the hospital, I endured endless skin grafts, dressing changes, and much more. I underwent physical therapy to relearn to walk and other activities most people take for granted. I simply would not eat and, as a consequence, I had to have feeding tubes placed many times, each time pulling them out because they were bothersome.

After nearly four months in the hospital, I was able to return home. After a few month of being at home, I entered the Shriners Hospital for nine months to go through several more procedures. Until I was 16, I would be in and out of that hospital for periods of three to six months at a time.

I had to carry an umbrella with me everywhere, which drew more attention to me. I didn’t understand why people stared, mostly because my mother made me believe I was just like any other girl and did her best to made sure I felt comfortable around other kids and that they felt comfortable around me. Fortunately, my small country community also was a blessing as no one at school ever made fun of me or called me names.

Fire disfigured me but it has also given me purpose. As a result of my time spent at the hospital, I became a registered nurse and have been able to give comfort to others. My work lobbying with the American Burn Association led me to Common Voices, which has given me further opportunity to tell my story and become a strong advocate for home fire sprinklers. Fire sprinklers should be installed in all new homes because of the dangerous speed of today’s fires. It is my hope that my story and advocacy efforts will help prevent similar things from happening to others, especially children.”

### ADVOCACY PORTFOLIO

- Lobbied U.S. Congress during multiple attempts to pass Fire Sprinkler Incentive Act
- Spoke to North Carolina building code committee in support of home fire sprinklers and other fire safety measures such as Arc Fault Circuit Interrupters (AFCIs)
- Spoke to various city councils in support of home fire sprinklers
- Involved with Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors

## ROB FEENEY

*Plymouth, Massachusetts*

### MY STORY:

“I was burned on February 20, 2003, while attending a show at the Station Nightclub in West Warwick, Rhode Island. Pyrotechnics that were set off by the ‘80s band, Great White, caused polyurethane foam used as soundproofing to catch fire. The building was quickly engulfed in flames, ultimately killing 100 people and injuring well over 200 others. My fiancée, Donna Mitchell, and two other friends, Mary Baker and Pam Grudadauria, were among the victims. Another friend, Kathy Sullivan Pelchat, survived but with severe burns. I was hospitalized for a month and spent 12 days in an induced coma with inhalation burns and burns to my hands, face, and shoulder.



Early on in my recovery, I was introduced to the Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors and first attended the organization’s annual World Burn Conference in 2003. Along with learning the tools I needed to rebuild my life as a burn survivor and become comfortable rejoining society, I was taught how to become an advocate. One of the main focal points of the advocacy training I received was to fight for fire sprinklers in high-risk occupancies, such as nightclubs, to prevent another deadly fire like the Station Nightclub fire from happening again.

While at one of the World Burn Congress events, I attended an educational session about fire sprinklers facilitated by Shane Ray, then fire chief of Pleasant View, Tennessee, and Vickie Pritchett, who were there on behalf of FireTeam USA. Later, Vickie called me and asked me to testify in front of the city council in Chattanooga, Tennessee, to get the city’s nightclubs retrofitted with fire sprinklers. Through my testimony the measure passed and I since have continued my fire sprinkler advocacy efforts nationwide.

History has proven time and time again that one common denominator in prevention was missing in tragic fires – fire sprinklers. Had the Station Nightclub been equipped with a fire sprinkler system, there would have been zero deaths and most likely zero injuries. Many fires in high-risk, high-occupancy buildings that resulted in multiple deaths could have been prevented had there been fire sprinklers. Thousands of lives are lost each year to fires. Whether in a home or business, a fire sprinkler system gives the greatest chance of survival and can save the lives of those thousands of people each year.”

### ADVOCACY PORTFOLIO

- Lobbied for fire sprinkler legislation on behalf of Common Voices in Washington, D.C.; Chattanooga, Tennessee; and many other cities
- Member of The Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors and trained volunteer for its S.O.A.R. (Survivors Offering Assistance in Recovery) peer support program
- Co-facilitator of Survivor’s Guilt and PTSD support groups at The Phoenix Society’s World Burn Congress event
- Recipient of The Phoenix Society’s 2013 Advocacy Award
- Member of Burn Survivors of New England
- Blogger for NFPA Fire Sprinkler Initiative
- Speaker at various fire safety events nationwide
- Firefighter/Assistant Fire Prevention Officer at Onset (Massachusetts) Fire Department



## SHER GROGG

*Ferry, New York*

### MY STORY:

“In January 2015, I lost my invincible brother, resourceful sister-in-law, and their four precious grandchildren to a fire that was too fast and furious to escape. While they were sleeping, the smoke alarms sounded. Only three minutes later a neighbor reported fire shooting through the roof. Fourteen minutes after the smoke alarms sounded, the firefighters arrived but were not able to enter as the fire also vented through the windows and the front door.

The house burned to the ground and couldn't be entered for two days due to the intense heat and dangerous condition as it smoldered. It was a torturous waiting period as the bodies were discovered one by one over the following week. Investigators later discovered that an electrical fire ignited the live Christmas tree that had been left up after Christmas, which led to the extreme speed and rapid spread of the fire. Even though there were exits nearby for each of them, they simply didn't have enough time to escape. It didn't matter that their alarm system alerted fire authorities. The only thing that could have saved them would have been a fire sprinkler system, which could have bought them the extra time needed to escape. It's important that all residents practice their fire escape plans, listen for their smoke alarms, and install fire sprinklers. Fire sprinklers should be mandated in all new home construction.

I will mourn this tragedy until my dying day, but I will do everything possible to educate the public about the dangers and speed of fire, Christmas tree safety, and the importance of fire sprinklers so that this doesn't happen to someone else. My brother and sister-in-law would want me to warn others to avoid further loss of life. I reached out to Common Voices and joined as I realized I could accomplish more as a part of a team than I could alone.”



### ADVOCACY PORTFOLIO

- Assisted in defeating House Bill 19 in Maryland, which would have repealed the requirement for home fire sprinklers in all new home construction
- Worked with National Fallen Firefighters Foundation to produce a video promoting home fire sprinklers in Maryland
- Lobbied for Fire Sprinkler Incentive Act in Washington, D.C.
- Worked with United States Fire Administration on a holiday and Christmas tree fire safety campaign
- Developing a Christmas tree safety labeling program for 2017 launch
- Member of Maryland State Firemen's Association

## VINA DRENNAN

*Jersey City, New Jersey*

### MY STORY:

“While fighting an apartment building fire in Lower Manhattan, New York City, on March 28, 1994, my husband Captain John Drennan and two other firefighters were searching for residents on the second floor while it appeared that the fire remained on the first floor. Suddenly the fire broke through a door on the first floor and climbed the stairway to the second floor, trapping John and the other firefighters. The fire turned to flashover and they were engulfed in flames.



One of the firefighters died on the scene while the other succumbed to injuries the following day. John experienced third- and fourth-degree burns to 65 percent of his body. He fought hard to stay alive at the hospital burn unit, however, after 40 days of struggling to survive skin grafts, organ failures, and other procedures, his body could fight no more. I lost my husband at the young age of 49.

Had there been fire sprinklers in the building and properly insulated bunker gear for the firefighters, John would still be here with me today. While fire sprinklers protect occupants of buildings, they also protect the firefighters who risk their lives when responding to fires.”

### ADVOCACY PORTFOLIO

- Secretary of the Board for the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (NFFF)
- Founding member of NFFF's Fire Service Survivors Network
- Lobbied U.S. Congress during multiple attempts to pass Fire Sprinkler Incentive Act
- Testified for fire safety on national, state and local levels
- Involved with the FDNY Fire Foundation
- Worked with the New York State Task Force of Fire Safety Teacher Training Curriculum