

# Looking Forward And Giving Back

## Making a Difference

By Kerry Cadden  
The Conduit

These days Dave Borowski is a busy man. As a Director of Accounting in Funding & Investments (F&I), Dave is responsible for OFHEO reporting for F&I and has been part of the re-audit for the last eight months. And in January he established Flicker Of Hope Foundation, a non-profit, charitable organization that assists burn survivors and their families. You know who Dave is, even if you don't know him personally.

Dave has been with Freddie Mac for eighteen years, working in Sales, Risk Management and Quality Control before making his way to F&I. He has also been a burn survivor all his life. When he was six weeks old, a small fire in his family's Buffalo, New York home caused him to sustain second- and third-degree burns to approximately seventy percent of his body. Despite the challenges of disfigurement, he has achieved a large measure of success, by anyone's standards. He attributes much of this success to three things: an innate sense of perseverance, a strong and supportive family and a scholarship to Canisius College provided by the New York State Office of Vocational and Educational Services. Later, he received another scholarship to SUNY Binghamton where he earned a Master's degree in economics and finance. Without those scholarships, he said, he could never have afforded higher education, which makes a disproportionate difference in the life a burn survivor. Now, he feels it's time to provide the same opportunity to others who share his burn experience.

To that end, Dave set up Flicker of Hope Foundation (FHF) to provide educational opportunities for burn survivors, offer emotional support and practical guidance to these survivors and their families, increase awareness of the social needs and issues of burn survivors, and give motivational reinforcement to the fire safety community.

Each year, there are 250 serious child burn injuries in the Washington, D.C. regional area. Thirty thousand are injured nationwide. A significant number of these children come from low-income and minority populations. Children from low-income families are at greater risk for a fire-related injury because their families tend to lack working smoke alarms, live in substandard housing, use alternative heating sources and have economic constraints on providing adequate adult supervision which leaves them vulnerable to dangerous influences. Minority children are more than three times as likely to be critically burned in a fire as other children. Adding a confidence-devastating burn injury significantly deteriorates their chance to have a meaningful and productive life. Such children often experience a lower quality of social interaction, education, professional development and, subsequently, life in general.

Without scholarship opportunity, many burn survivors are unlikely to receive post-secondary education or any kind of career training. And, there are very few scholarship programs that serve the burn community specifically and consider funding career training as an alternative to college. This can tether burn survivors to a lifetime of public support. FHF provides scholarships to burn

survivors to help them achieve their dreams and make them financially independent. FHF has already awarded its first grant to Jennifer, a 31-year old burn survivor living in Georgia who found the Foundation on the web.

Jennifer sustained serious burns to more than half her body at the age of eighteen months. She has been living on Social Security, which leaves her no discretionary income, yet she has dreamed of becoming a massage therapist who can work with other burn survivors who may feel awkward about exposing their bodies, and their scars, to someone else. She applied and was accepted to the Augusta School of Massage, then applied for a Flicker Of Hope Foundation scholarship. Dave and his board of directors determined Jennifer was a worthy candidate and he was delighted to call her this summer to tell her that the Foundation would cover the entire cost of her training. She has begun classes and expects to graduate in the Spring, then take her national certification test. By this time next year, Jennifer expects to be financially independent in the career of her choosing.

Dave is also working with burn centers to find future scholarship candidates who may be interested in receiving career training, like Jennifer, or pursuing an academic degree. In addition, Dave is working with the American Red Cross to establish a burn survivor support group to serve the Washington, D.C. area. His dream of guiding burn survivors into the American mainstream is well on its way.

Dave has served the fire safety community in a number of other venues. He is a volunteer with the Fairfax County Juvenile Fire Starters Program, gives motivational talks to members of the fire safety community, and emphasizes to students at area schools, during National Fire Prevention Week, the importance of having escape plans and working smoke detectors in their homes. He also participates in fundraisers to ensure that children have an opportunity to attend burn camps.

Dave feels a major contribution is his work as a counselor at area burn camps. There, children who have sustained burns such as his see what a burn survivor can attain. He tells the young campers who have been injured that “life is not about differences, but about different ways of doing things.” That anything can be accomplished with a little ingenuity. He illustrates his point by creating beautiful balloon animals for them, something few can do even with complete hands. Dave serves as a role model of what burn survivors can accomplish despite difficult challenges, all the while stressing to them the importance of education.

A legislative issue of great concern to Dave is restoring the flame resistant standard for children’s sleepwear. The standard was first enacted in 1972, and the number of children’s deaths from fire incidents while wearing pajamas decreased by ninety percent. Yet, in 1996 the Consumer Product Safety Commission relaxed the standard, allowing much of children’s sleepwear not to be flame resistant. The protection for babies under the age of nine months has been completely removed. Since Dave was burned at six weeks, he finds this particularly disturbing. Further, there is absolutely no flame-resistance required for pajamas that are considered “snug fitting.” This flies in the face of the common practice of purchasing larger sizes that allow for a child’s growth. Dave has appeared before the Consumer Product Safety

Commission and Congress, and participated in press conferences hosted by various members of the House and Senate in an attempt to restore the Flammable Fabrics Act to its original form.

On behalf of FHF, Dave has participated in a number of events and programs this summer. He attended both Central Virginia Burn Camp in Charlottesville and Mid-Atlantic Burn Camp near Harrisonburg. In July he spoke to a group of physical therapy doctoral candidates at Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center about the challenges they might encounter when treating burn survivors. He was keynote speaker at the annual Virginia Fire & Life Safety Coalition annual meeting in Old Town Alexandria and worked at the second annual 9-11 Arlington Police, Fire and Sheriff Memorial 5K Race by the Pentagon. Dave also participated in fundraisers for other burn survivor organizations.

Dave says his work in the burn community is furthered by the culture of volunteerism at Freddie Mac. “There have been so many co-workers and friends who have encouraged me and supported our efforts to set up FHF. And I’ve been inspired, in turn, by watching others around me participate in programs dear to their own hearts.” He also says volunteering helps keep the challenging times at Freddie in perspective. As long as he’s making a difference both at the office and in the hearts of young burn survivors, he feels he accomplishes something important every day.

If you would like to learn more about Flicker Of Hope Foundation and its scholarship program, visit [www.flickerofhope.org](http://www.flickerofhope.org).