

## 2015 Barbara Knothe Burn Therapist Achievement Award

### *Helen D. Christians, MOT/L*



Helen D. Christians, MOT/L has been an Occupational Therapist for over 31 years and she has been practicing in burns continuously for the last 28 of those years. Helen obtained her Master's of Occupational Therapy Degree from Texas Women's University in 1983. She has been the cornerstone of the burn rehabilitation team at the Legacy Oregon Burn Center since 1986 and has left an indelible mark on the rehabilitation program as both a mentor to colleagues and inspiration to burn survivors. Helen has been fundamentally involved in every aspect of the burn rehabilitation program and currently coordinates the After Care Support Programs as well as the Behavior & Enhancement Skills Training (BEST) programs in conjunction with the Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors. She has been active member of the American Burn Association for over 27 years and has presented at both local and regional burn conferences continuously since 2006 in addition to Oregon Occupational Therapy conferences. Some of the topic areas of Helen's recent research and investigation include facial scar assessment techniques and the use of

a 3-D color digital scanner to assess face and neck scars. In addition to her numerous work responsibilities in burns, she has served on a volunteer mission to Zambia via the International Burn Outreach Program of the American Burn Association in 2011.

Helen has been a stalwart advocate for the burn survivor throughout her career and this is where her passion lies. In her early life, when she learned of a tragic fire in a local school where many children lost their lives, she was drawn to burns to be an advocate as well as a motivator – to help others survive and achieve beyond their potential no matter what the circumstances. She recognizes that recovery from a major burn injury is a lifelong process and she takes part in both leading and supporting throughout this often challenging journey. Helen makes a conscious and continuous effort to bring the family of the burn survivor into the rehabilitation process. She has been instrumental in pushing the envelope for activities – including annual wilderness rafting adventures and programs focused on effective adjustment to trauma for the burn survivor. Helen routinely takes the less traveled path and forges through the more difficult aspects of burn care – to address issues such as reaction to visible scars and the impact of intimacy and after care support mechanisms – to be an advocate and a guide along the way to helping both children and adult survivors' achieve their rehabilitation goals.

Helen is a take charge person and believes that the best way to get the work done is by rolling up your sleeves and getting involved. She is not one for seeking recognition but rather takes enjoyment in seeing the results of her efforts in the enduring, fully functional burn survivor. Moreover, Helen is a stalwart example of a perennial burn clinician and continues to be an inspiration to the community of burn survivors as a resilient beacon of burn rehabilitation success.