



Support Our Aging Religious, Inc.

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### **SOAR! Awards More Than \$1.1 Million in Grants**

Washington, DC – June 14, 2013 – At the May meeting of the SOAR! board of directors, members approved grants for a total of \$1,125,621 to 644 religious congregations of women and men in 19 states. These grants will benefit more than 3,600 women and men religious at a median age of 78. The SOAR! board of directors and the grant recipients are deeply grateful to all SOAR! contributors for making the grants possible. Members of SOAR!'s board of directors delivered grant checks to many congregations around the country.

The SOAR! grants will assist religious congregations in need of very basic help—the purchase of therapeutic equipment, the renovation of space for handicapped accessibility and structural safety, and the installation of fire alarms and wander guard systems. Through this fundamental assistance many more women and men religious live out the last years of their lives in dignity, safety, and with modest care.

The severity of need among religious congregations cannot be overstated. Today 86% of all religious women and men are over the age of 60, and more than 34,000 sisters brothers and religious order priests are over age 70. According to recent studies, the total under-funded retirement liability for religious congregations is more than \$11.6 billion. In addition to this shortfall, many religious congregations have limited capacity to build up resources to care for their elderly and infirm members. The current average annual Social security benefit for religious is \$4,670 compared to almost \$14,000 for lay recipients.

*“Those of us who benefit from the dedicated service of religious men and women are committed to ensuring that frail and aging Sisters, Brothers and Priests are provided with quality care in safe facilities. The elderly religious continue to bless us by their ministry of prayer,”* stated Michael Rodgers, chairperson of the SOAR! board. *“We owe it to them and to their communities to help men and women religious live out the last days of their lives with dignity and in peace.”*

SOAR! was formed in 1986 by a group of concerned lay people to help ensure financial stability of Catholic religious congregations in the care of their elderly and infirm members. Since its beginnings over 25 years ago, SOAR! has awarded over 1000 grants, totaling more than \$13 million, to congregations throughout the United States, Guam and Puerto Rico.

The organization is separate from the annual retirement collection coordinated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

For more information, please contact Deborah Hudson Vornbrock at 202.529.7627 or [dvornbrock@soar-usa.org](mailto:dvornbrock@soar-usa.org). SOAR!'s website is [www.soar-usa.org](http://www.soar-usa.org).

*SOAR! is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization committed to assuring financially stable and personally secure futures for elderly and frail members of Catholic religious congregations in the United States, augmenting the efforts of the institutional Church.*