

SOAR!: A Work of Gratitude

In 1986, SOAR! started with a newspaper story.

John Fialka, a reporter for the *Wall Street Journal*, began researching a story that intrigued him. What happened to the aging nuns – now in retirement – who had taught him in Catholic schools growing up?

Frank Butler, then with the Washington-based Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities, or FADICA, had a clue.

For many religious communities, vocations had dropped sharply. In the meantime, the older Sisters had worked for years for only a modest stipend. There were no provisions for their retirement.

Butler had helped secure a grant to research the retirement needs of religious Sisters, Brothers and Priests, and he was “flabbergasted” when he saw the results of the survey in 1985. The study showed a multibillion dollar retirement liability.

“The question was, what to do about it?” Butler said.

While Butler helped the National Religious Retirement Office get off the ground, he wanted to take more immediate action. He told Fialka the story over lunch, and their meeting ultimately led to the founding of SOAR!.

Although he had no background covering religion, Fialka started to research the story. In May 1986, he published a front-page article in *The Journal*, “Sisters in Need: U.S. Nuns Face Crisis As More Grow Older With Meager Benefits.”

The response was overwhelming. The phone rang off the hook for a week. The retired Sisters needed help now, and people were eager to contribute in many ways.



For 30 years, SOAR! has awarded practical grants – such as scooters – to aging religious like these two Sisters from the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood of O’Fallon, Missouri.



In 2015, SOAR! awarded a grant to the Sisters of St. Joseph of Springfield to install a handicap accessible lift. Sister Janice Molloy, SSJ, who fell and needed immediate access to supportive housing, would not have been able to live at home without this lift.



Dear
Friends
of
SOAR!

SOAR! celebrates a milestone this year – 30 years of ministry with our friends and benefactors, united by a shared concern for our aging religious.

The naming of SOAR! was a thoughtful and deliberate act of the founding board of directors in 1986. These visionaries named the organization Support OUR Aging Religious, not Support THE Aging Religious, for they knew in their hearts that the retired men and women religious are truly ours, a gift to us, our Church and the world. We celebrate religious professions and jubilees as a proud family, and we care for aging religious as a loving family.

You are part of the SOAR! family. I hope you know that you can always share your concerns and special prayer intentions with me. You can trust that the notes you send are treated with the same care and tenderness with which you corresponded. I may not be able to answer each one personally, but your messages are important. You and your needs are prayed for by me, our SOAR! staff and all the religious who are helped by your donations.

Thank you for being part of the success story of SOAR!. Your donations touch the lives of OUR aging religious. So let me assure you that YOUR aging religious thank you with grateful hearts.

In gratitude,

S. Kathleen Lunsmann, IHM

Sister Kathleen Lunsmann, IHM

Sharing Our Stories

"In a powerful passage from his letter, the *Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis invites Christians to peer into the heart of Saint Paul, to see what this great apostle's prayer-life looked like.

Francis says it was full of people!

He quotes Paul: "... I constantly pray with you in every one of my prayers ... because I hold you in my heart" (Phil 1:4,7).

Francis says that St. Paul is always expressing his gratitude for others in his prayers. "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you" (Rom 1:8).

And: "I give thanks to God always for you because of the grace of God which was given to you in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor 1:4).

Francis tells us that at the root of St. Paul's prayer is a deep faith that acknowledges what God is doing in the lives of others.

That is what comes to mind when I consider the wonderful people who, over the course of thirty years, chose to become involved in SOAR!'s uplifting work.

SOAR! is more than a well-organized charity.

SOAR! is a community of gratitude recognizing Christian women and men through whom God has worked for the betterment of humanity.

Thousands of elderly religious said "yes" to God's invitation to be his loving presence in a suffering world, and bring to that world good news, hope and joy. They labored among the poor, they taught, they healed, they prayed.

Now many are in their retirement years and SOAR! is able to celebrate these saintly people and together recognize how God has blessed the world through the ministry and faithfulness of religious women and men.

Like St. Paul, "I give thanks for God's grace, working in all who are associated with this noble cause."

Francis J. Butler is the principal and founder of Drexel Philanthropic Advisors. He served for over three decades as the President of FADICA, Foundations and Donors interested in Catholic Activities, a network of Catholic philanthropists. He received SOAR!'s Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton Award in 2013.



FRANCIS J. BUTLER



If you would like to share a story about how religious have nurtured you and why you support SOAR!, call (202) 529-7627 and speak with Eleanor La Prade or drop us a note at info@soar-usa.org.

Religious women and men have blessed our days with their wisdom and presence. For our 30th anniversary, the pearl anniversary, we've asked religious to share with us these pearls of wisdom. You can find these wonderful insights from those whose communities have been blessed by the generous support of SOAR! donors and friends online at <http://soar-usa.org/30years/>.



This year, SOAR! shared its message with exhibit tables at the National Catholic Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C.; the Catholic Health Association Assembly in Orlando, FL; The Orange Catholic Foundation Conference on Business & Ethics in Garden Grove, CA; and the National Catholic Daughters of the Americas Convention in Pittsburgh, PA.



SOAR! staff Kristen Wise (far left) and Eleanor La Prade (far right) met supporters Debbie Maestas and Catherine Collins at a walk in Pittsburgh to support the Catholic Daughters of the Americas' annual charities, including SOAR!.

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"We had this reaction and we didn't know what to do with it," Fialka said. "I never had this reaction to anything I'd ever written."

Fialka and Butler quickly organized a meeting to bring people together. In the summer of 1986, in the auditorium of Trinity College, SOAR! was born.

Fialka said it was like "lighting a spark."

"There were people in all walks of life, people who were active Catholics and people who had nothing to do with the church," Butler said. "They were all interested in participating."

At its basis, Butler said, SOAR! became "a work of gratitude" for the religious men and women and their lives of service.

From the start, SOAR! was a grassroots organization dedicated to helping address the practical needs facing the safety and care of aging religious Sisters, Brothers and Priests.

Butler said they soon raised enough money to hire SOAR!'s first director, Rita Hofbauer.

Today, Butler calls SOAR! "the work of the Holy Spirit."

"It's been awesome. When I was confronted with all of this, I have to say in all candor I was a little reluctant to wade into an area that I didn't know much about," he said.

Butler thanks the many people "who contributed to the formation of SOAR! and its success over the years and its enormous good that it's achieved."

Thirty years later, the mission of SOAR! remains focused and clear. As the number of religious over 70 increases, the need to provide practical assistance so they can age in place safely is even more urgent.

Fialka said that in a business like journalism, where most of the successes are day-to-day, the legacy of SOAR! is "mind-boggling."

"It's a delight to me and I'm sure it is to Frank ... to see the vigor and the spirit that was there when we started. And that was thanks in no small part to nuns who created this huge debt that we all feel."

At SOAR!, as we celebrate our past success, we look toward the future with a deep sense of gratitude to our donors, who continue to assure that religious age with dignity and grace.

Celebrate Our 30th Anniversary!

October 29, 2016 – DONOR RECEPTION – IHM Conference Center at St. Aloysius – Bryn Mawr, PA.

November 4, 2016 – AWARDS DINNER – National Museum of Women in the Arts – Washington DC.

For details, visit www.soar-usa.org/events or contact Sister Kate Clancy, IHM at kclancy@soar-usa.org or (202) 529-7627.

IRA Rollover

The IRA rollover offers Americans 70 ½ years or older the opportunity to give back to nonprofit causes they support, like SOAR!. Some taxpayers who meet the criteria for making direct charitable distributions from their IRAs may realize a tax benefit by making a contribution before the end of the year.

Here are some key points:

- You must be 70 ½ years or older at the time the distribution is made
- Your total IRA gifts to charity can be up to \$100,000 per individual taxpayer
- You must make the donation directly from your IRA custodian to a qualified charity, like SOAR!
- The provision applies only to IRAs and Roth IRAs

Please contact your IRA administrator to make a qualifying transfer. Transfers must be made by December 31, 2016 to be counted for 2016.



Did you know? SOAR! is a participant in the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). Federal employees and military personnel can designate Support Our Aging Religious (SOAR!) to receive their contributions to the CFC. Our CFC number is 10041.

**Please consider remembering SOAR! in your will or estate plans.
Our legal title is Support Our Aging Religious, Inc.
Our federal tax ID number is 52-1485481.**

A CATHOLIC ORGANIZATION SERVING ELDERLY SISTERS, BROTHERS AND PRIESTS SINCE 1986.



The purpose of this newsletter is to communicate the mission and needs of SOAR! and to express our gratitude to our donors.

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