

# Recovery Lane: One Family's Tragedy Helps Others Prevent Burn Injuries

(NAPSA)—Each year in America, more than 90,000 children are treated for burn injuries. From scalding water to a candle fire, burns can occur at any time, which is why it's important to be prepared.

"Burns are real, and they can happen to you," said Ann Duckworth of Michigan. "We were the best-planned family—changing the batteries in our smoke alarms and practicing our fire escape plan. You must continue to plan and make your family safe, but it's important to know that things do happen."

In December 1997, Duckworth's 6-year-old daughter, Lane, had on her dad's T-shirt as a nightgown and brushed against a candle. The shirt quickly caught fire. Lane panicked and ran. Her brother, Latham, threw her outside in the snow and rolled her around until the fire was out.

"Lane just looked like she had gotten smoky and needed to be cleaned off, but she was shaking, so we called 911," said Duckworth.

Paramedics airlifted Lane to Bronson Methodist Hospital in Kalamazoo. She had third-degree burns on 85 percent of her body and spent the next three months in a drug-induced coma, undergoing countless skin grafts.

"She literally had no skin left," said Duckworth. "At first they used cadaver skin. Then they used skin on her ankle to grow more of her skin cells.

"We didn't learn until much later that Lane had a 5 to 10 percent chance of survival."

After leaving the hospital, Lane's parents took her to an inpatient rehab facility, but Duckworth said the experts had trouble helping Lane because of her severe injuries.

"At the time, we didn't know



**The Duckworth family can celebrate their daughter's survival.**

where to find support," said Duckworth. "Our hospital had a school re-entry program but we had to figure out the rest on our own."

Then, another survivor told Lane about the Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering anyone affected by a burn injury. The Duckworths soon attended a Society-sponsored kids' camp, where Lane met children with similar injuries.

"The Phoenix Society works to connect peers with similar experiences and that's what I try to do, too," said Duckworth, who now works as a pediatric patient services coordinator at Bronson Hospital, educating families about the Phoenix Society and other resources. "When you're a mom, you want a mom to help you through this."

Now, 33 surgeries later, 15-year-old Lane is excited about beginning high school.

"Lane has always been very confident and outgoing and that didn't change after the injury," said Duckworth. "She wears shorts and short sleeves and talks freely about her burns. Lane's always been a teacher."

The Duckworths have spent the past nine years educating families about burn injury and prevention.

"Lane has taught kindergartners 'Stop, Drop and Roll,' and we emphasize having working smoke alarms and a fire escape plan, and using candles wisely," said Duckworth. "We decided to try and help keep others from experiencing what our family went through."

Families can help prevent burn injuries by following these fire safety steps:

- Install UL-listed smoke alarms in every room, including bedrooms. Battery-powered wireless smoke alarms, such as the Kidde Wireless System, communicate so that when one alarm sounds, they all sound. This immediate response helps provide early warning no matter where the fire starts, giving more time to escape.

- Test smoke alarms monthly and replace batteries as needed.

- Buy a multipurpose fire extinguisher, such as Kidde's Living Area Fire Extinguisher. Keep it within easy reach and know how to use it before a fire breaks out. Use an extinguisher only when the fire is small and contained, or to create a path to safety.

- Develop and practice an escape plan with the whole family. Plan two exits for each room, and practice at night and during the day. Designate a meeting place outside and never re-enter a burning building.

- Put out all candles before leaving a room or going to sleep.

- Place space heaters at least three feet away from beds and curtains.

- Lock matches and lighters in a cabinet out of a child's reach.

For more information on burn support, visit [www.phoenix-society.org](http://www.phoenix-society.org). To learn more about home fire safety, visit [www.kidde.com](http://www.kidde.com).