

New Nobles In 2008

Aleppo Shriners welcomes these new members who became Nobles during 2008. We hope you take the opportunity to participate in the many functions and activities that Aleppo has. This would also be a great time to look into joining one of the many award winning Units at Aleppo.



ALLEN JOHN N
ANDERSON DAVID A.
ASBURY ROBERT C.
BAKER JAYME K.
BAKER JEFFREY S.
BOWDOIN JON M.
BROWNELL JOHN S. JR.
CARPENTER WILLIAM
COFFMAN DALLAS W.
CONSOLETTI DANIEL
COSME DANIEL G.
COUTOUMAS DONALD A.
COX JEFFREY M.
D'ANGELO RICHARD J.
DOHERTY MICHAEL R.
DUKAS KEMON A.
ELLIOTT DAVID A.
FIGUEIREDO ANIBAL C.
FORSLUND RAYMOND E.
GANTER KARL E.
GARGAS MICHAEL
GARGAS STEPHEN
GUSTOFSON ROBERT K.

HELME GORDON T.
HESTAND BRUCE K.
HOWE JEFFREY D. JR.
JOHNSON SCOTT G.
JONES JAMES A.
JONES JEFFERSON S.
JUDSON MALCOLM B.
KASZANEK JOHNNY JR.
LABRAICO JAMES M.
LEVALLEY MICHAEL E.
LOPEZ ANTONIO
LYNCH THOMAS J.
MAIHOS JOHN J.
MCGONAGLE JAMES M.
MCNAMEE MICHAEL F.
MCPHEE WILLIAM J.
MELANSON JAMES A. III
MERCIER FREDERIC R.
MILLER TIMOTHY M.
MOISE RODINY J.
MORRISON DONALD P.
MORSE RONALD L.
MUHAMMED ALI Y.

MURPHY ARTHUR J. III
NELSON JOHN L.
OWOC THADEUS J.
PETIT MICHAEL J.
PHILLIPS PATRICK E.
PIKUL STANLEY J. JR.
PLAVNICK LAWRENCE R.
PLUMER RALPH M.
POLLEYS ERIC T.
RASHID ROBER G.
RAYMOND GEORGE H.
REED WAYNE S.
REID RAYMOND A. II
RICCARDI MICHAEL H.
ROSE EDWARD D.
SALOIS PHILIP A.
SARANTOPOULOS NICHOLAS D.
VERVILLE LEONARD R.
WAKEM RICHARD G.
WALLING ROBERT G.
WRIGHT RUSSELL D.
WRONKOWSKI JAMES A.

Station Fire Victim Thanks Shriners for Saving Her Life

By **BARBARA POLICHETTI**
PROVIDENCE JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

FOR 11 weeks after the 2003 tragedy, **Russo** lay in a medically induced coma at the Shriners Hospital in Boston while teams of doctors worked to keep her alive with more than 40 percent of her body burned, her head scorched with fourth-degree burns and her lungs so damaged by toxic smoke that they were barely functioning.

Now, more than five years after the fire, Russo has a pretty good idea of what those first weeks of her long recovery were like. She has copiously reviewed her medical records and listened to family members tell how they ached when they leaned against the protective glass window of her room and stared at her bandage-swathed form, no more identifiable than a mummy.

Her doctors have told her that she was given the last rites on the Sunday after the Thursday night fire, and that they hooked her up to an experimental respiratory machine in a last-ditch effort to cleanse her lungs and stop her organs from failing. Her sister has talked about becoming so panicked over the chance that the person beneath the bandages might not be Russo that she made the nurses

unwrap layers and layers of gauze until she could see the tattoo of a small heart entwined with vines that had long decorated Russo's right ankle.

Last night, however, Russo, 40, did not need anyone else's words but her own as she stood before more than 150 Shriners at their local headquarters in Pawtuxet Village to thank the members of the fraternal organization for supporting the hospital that saved her life.

"It was just my blessing that I was brought to Shriners," Russo told the audience seated in clusters around dinner tables. "It was at Shriners that my new journey, my new life really began."

On Tuesday, seated in the cozy pine-floored kitchen of her home in Cranston's historic Oaklawn Village, Russo admitted to being very nervous about speaking before a large crowd, but said, "If it's for the Shriners, I'll say yes to anything."

"They have become my mission," she said. "I will never be able to adequately express my thanks to them for saving my life. If I can do anything in any small way that helps the Shriners grow and continue to be able to support the hospital, then I'll do it, because without them I just would not be here."

She said that she not only received cutting-edge care at Shriners but also that the staff took care of her family, including her two sons, who were 6 and 9 at the time. The hospital gave her family a place to stay in Boston so they could be near her, she said, and her sons were slowly introduced to the grueling healing process for burn victims through their participation in play groups with children at the hospital.

The Shriners Boston hospital is dedicated to the treatment of pediatric burn victims, but after the Station fire it accepted four of the most severely injured people who were pulled from the blaze that claimed 100 lives.

Frank DiMascio, potentate of the Rhode Island Shriners, said that that is only the second time that the Shriners have opened any of their hospitals to adults. The first time, he said, was Sept. 11.

Both DiMascio and Shriners public relations chairman **Wayne Sutton** said that having Russo speak to them makes their charitable fundraising real and reminds them of the lives saved every day at the Shriners Hospital.

"To have Gina come talk to us overwhelms me with joy and gives me great pride to be a Shriener," Sutton said before her speech. "It is moving just to see this person who has survived one of the greatest tragedies this state has ever seen."

Russo, who has endured 49 surgeries and is facing more, said that her life is full of joys. Although her fiancé, **Alfred Crisostomi**, died in the fire, she did find love again and last year married Steven Sherman. Her boys, **Alex** and **Nicholas**, are growing and every day she does tasks — whether it be driving or tying her shoes — that the doctors said she would never do.

"Life is good," she said last night, "and it's because of the start I got at Shriners. I am truly grateful."

There was one thing Russo did not share with the crowd. She did not show them the tattoo that reaches up her left calf.

It is done entirely in fiery reds and yellows. And it shows a Phoenix, wings unfurling, as it rises out of the flames.



CRANSTON, RI -- **Gina Russo** has had to rely on other people's words — doctor's notes, family members' recollections — if she wants to piece together what she lived through the three months after the Station nightclub fire.

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