



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

JANICE COLWELL,
APRN, CWOCN, FAAN

Tending the Garden, Meeting Needs

Spring time is a season of new growth, and Friends of Ostomates Worldwide-USA continues to blossom as we carry on our important work providing education and ostomy products to those in need outside of the United States.

Our public relations committee led by Shelly Miller works to get the word out about our work via social media. This has allowed us

to speak to people around the world about the work we do - keeping us, our supporters and new folks up-to-date on our mission.

Our warehouse managers, Carol and Mickey Heideman, work with the warehouse volunteers to receive, sort and pack supplies to send to those in need - thanks to the many warehouse people who dig in and get the work done. Author and poet Ann Favreau (Vice President), has written many beautiful books and poems providing us with enduring supportive words.

Our education committee is planning how we can provide education to those who receive our product donations. Other board members help FOW-USA blossom by managing our monies, finding new ways to



raise funds, recording our meetings (minutes) and working on collaborative efforts with other organizations.

Like all good gardens, we find ways to figure out what works and what does not work, plan and replan new and more efficient ways to do our business. I am happy as the President to be the “master gardener”, facilitating the work; our board of directors make my “gardening tasks” easy because of their hard work and dedication to our mission. Thanks to them and our supporters for the product and monetary donations to keep our mission alive.

Janice C. Colwell
APRN, CWOCN, FAAN

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Ostomy Pearls: Healing Through Poetry

By Ann Favreau, Vice President of FOW-USA

In 1988, a teaspoon of blood, a diagnosis of colorectal cancer, and a sigmoid colostomy changed my life. In those early days, dealing with pain and despair, I was encouraged by a member of my local support group to write about my experiences. Poetry was the genre I used.

RECLAMATION

Illness, pain, and surgery.
I've been cut apart.
Left to cope with healing,
And sorrow in my heart.

But as my body starts to mend,
Self-care becomes mundane,
A little voice within my soul
Murmurs this refrain....
You're alive!

Some years after this poem was published in the Ostomy Quarterly magazine, I heard from a woman who said she placed a copy of it on her fridge and read it every morning to help her get through the day.

Four months after surgery, I went with a group of teachers to Australia. I have been traveling ever since and experienced toileting in various parts of the world from a palace and opulent hotels to a small shack with a porcelain covered hole in the ground with a pail of water, on a rocking boat with a hole in the floor, and in a field with an umbrella for privacy. Having an ostomy has not kept me from living an active life.

I was
encouraged
[...] to write
about my
experiences.
Poetry was the
genre I
used”

In 2012, I published It's Okay To Have An Ostomy.

OSTOMATES
Ordinary people
With lifesaving surgery
Coping with change

Fearful at first
Hope at last
Helping others

Displaying self-confidence
Concealing impairment
Sharing a voice

IT'S OKAY TO HAVE AN OSTOMY



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Volunteer Spotlight: FOW–USA Louisville, KY Warehouse Affair

By Pam Person, Retired WOC Nurse

Hi! I'm Pam Person, retired RN, WOC Nurse for 45 years. I have been having a love affair for the past nine years. I thought that would catch your interest! My affair is with FOW–USA Warehouse, VOLUNTEERING that is! Each and every day that I volunteer, I walk in the warehouse and see the millions of dollars worth of supplies neatly organized & stacked that could have been discarded but for an organization's drive & mission to provide ostomates around the world, outside the USA, with supplies they need at NO CHARGE! Donated supplies are new and unused. Volunteering is so fulfilling. Our 27 volunteers in Kentucky do 100% of the warehouse tasks for our global mission. We work as a team laughing, telling stories, catching up on trips, and making new friends all as we seriously work. I want to inspire folks reading this newsletter article to volunteer for FOW–USA. Our donated supplies to sort and pack are increasing! Why, our oldest volunteer is 97 (who is actually my mom). She works from home preparing ostomy belts for packing.

“Our 27 volunteers in Kentucky do 100% of the warehouse tasks for our global mission!”

Prior to retirement, he owned his own manufacturing company. FOW's warehouse reflects just that: organization, efficiency, value for each and every carton and product within, cleanliness, and timeliness of orders to be shipped. He displays respect for each and

every hard-working volunteer directing and guiding each to do their job for the day with friendliness, compassion and a drive to meet FOW's mission, providing ostomy supplies and educational resources as our labels reflect on each end & every individual package, “Free gift, FOW–USA”.

I'd like to share a quote Ann Favreau, Vice President of FOW-USA, wrote in the Fall 2025 newsletter when serving as secretary of the International Ostomy Association. She says; “I met with doctors from developing countries, who told me something I'll never forget: They could perform surgeries, but had no way to help their patients manage life after. No pouches, no barriers-nothing.” Imagine managing an ostomy without supplies.

I want people to know Mickey Heidemann, FOW–USA's warehouse manager. Mickey “ROCKS!” Since 2012 he has been volunteering and has shaped FOW–USA's warehouse into a “fine oiled machine”.



Mickey Heideman,
Warehouse Manager

To detail our warehouse duties, volunteers assist with box cutters opening shipped donation boxes, sorting, counting supplies, packing supplies and placement of packaged products into manufacturer's labeled storage bins according to size, shape or color, emptying trash bins, even sweeping the floor. Below I have detailed how an order is filled. Our WOCN and RN volunteers assist with all the above plus answer any questions regarding whether a product is for ostomy use or not. If products are not needed they are placed in a special bin to be shipped to another volunteer program to put to use. FOW-USA only deals with trusted medical recipients in overseas distribution of our supply shipments.



*FOW-USA Warehouse Volunteers



*FOW-USA Warehouse Donations



*FOW-USA Warehouse Volunteers



*FOW-USA Warehouse Volunteers

I'm sure many of you have heard of Kentucky's Bourbon Trail. Let me share with you FOW-USA's Product to Developing Country Trail:

- UPS drops off a large shipment of cartons (at times 10-20 a day) three times a week to our garage door opening. Cartons are neatly stacked on our roller carts and pushed to the cart stall area. The name and address of the person donating products to us is kept for a letter of acknowledgement that can be used for tax purposes.

- Volunteers safely and eagerly lift a carton onto a small cart to be completely sorted, counted, placed in zippered plastic bags and sealed shut. The

quantity is numbered & product labeled, as "Drainable pouches, 2-1/4 inches, red, 20 total". Our FOW-USA FREE gift sticker is attached. Then the packages are placed into labeled organized bins along the warehouse walls awaiting an order to be pulled, packed, sealed, weighed, addressed and shipped.

- Warehouse coordinator, Mickey, receives an online order from our website of an organization in a developing country and directs it to volunteers to obtain products needed from bins, pack the cartons and seal them. FOW-USA does not pay for individual product shipments. An individual's order is obtained from their country's local hospitals, healthcare clinics, ostomy clinics and ostomy nurses as well as ostomy support groups to meet their individual ostomy supply needs.
- Cartons are weighed and the shipping charge is figured to that country's port of entry. FOW-USA does not pay duties, custom charges or storage charges.
- The specific ordering country is responsible for securing all documents necessary to import the shipment as a duty-free charity donation, and pick up the shipment at the port of entry before storage charges begin.

Donations to FOW-USA are from monetary donors, product donors, volunteers, manufacturing companies, WOC nurses, local UOAA chapters. All donations are used to further FOW-USA's growth and help carry out our mission serving Ostomates worldwide.

FOW-USA has shipped over \$38,000,000 worth of supplies sent to people in need since 1986, over 589,000 pounds (that's 250+ tons!) of ostomy supplies to over 105 countries!

We're always ready for another affair at FOW-USA! That is VOLUNTEERING! Will you come and volunteer with us? And please spread the word! Check out our website www.fowusa.org; it is fantastic.

FOW-USA Since 1986
40 Amazing Years.



*FOW-USA Warehouse Volunteers



*FOW-USA Warehouse Volunteers



FOW-USA Warehouse Volunteers

- Warehouse Volunteers 2026**
- *Susan Buehner
 - Dennis Clark
 - *Johnda Conley
 - *Lisa Cover
 - *Joan Hardin
 - *Carol Heideman
 - *Mickey Heideman
 - *Henry Hopson
 - *Eula Kennedy
 - Leeann Kingsmith
 - Millie Krainski
 - Marian Lancaster
 - *Cheryl Leifer
 - *Josh Loeb
 - *Tom & Liz Loeb
 - *Kathy Loran
 - Kelly McKnight
 - *Pam Person
 - *Joy Rhodes
 - Matthew Richardson
 - Bob Roos
 - *Lina Woolbright
- *Pictured

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We Get Emails!

"Dear FOW-USA.

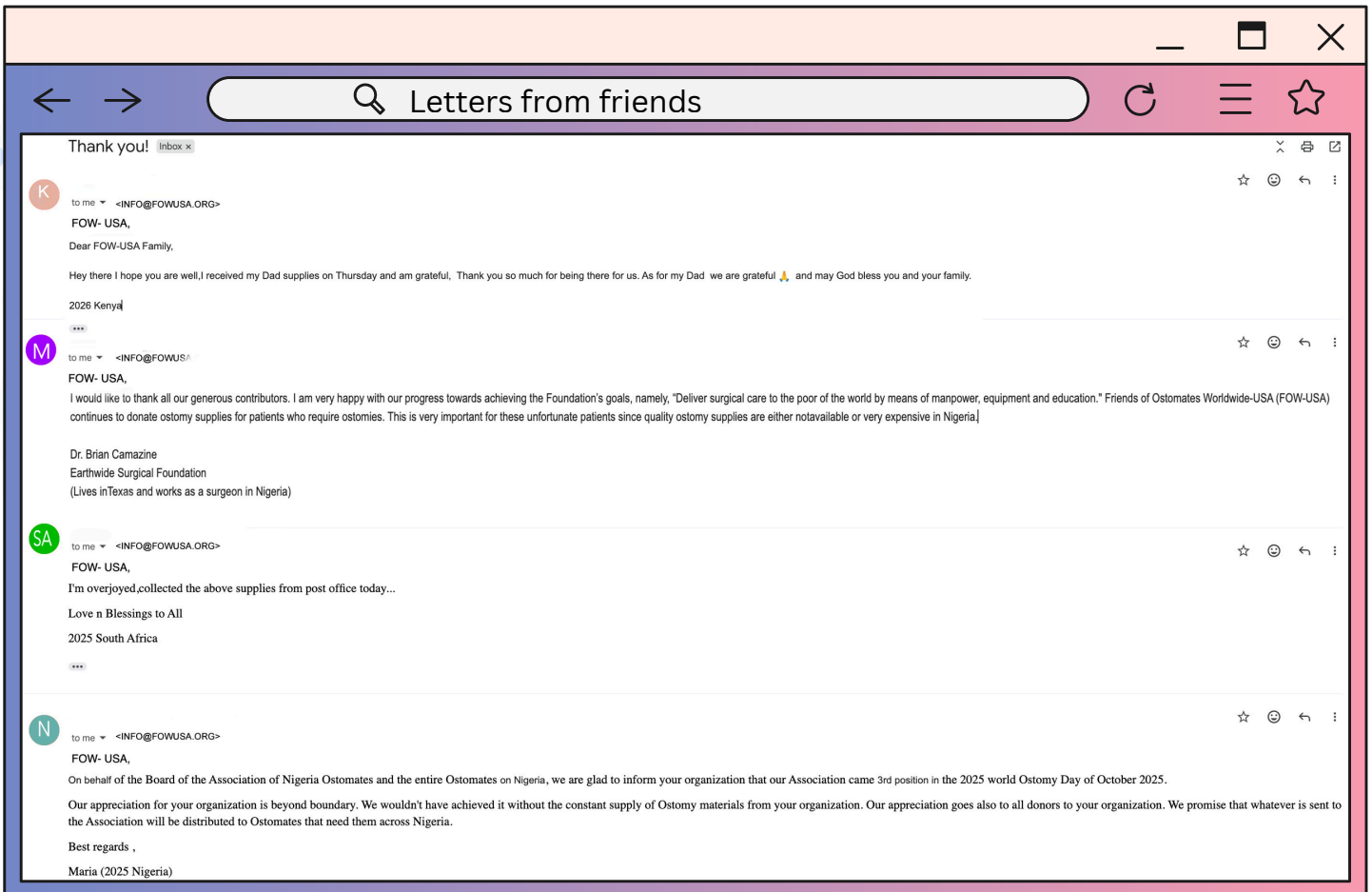
Good Day, we just got the parcel today, and we are very grateful for this will be a big help for Alexard daily needs. More power to Friends of Ostomates Worldwide. Thank you so much. "

~2025 Asia



"I am sending you a note to say thanks for all the urostomy supplies that you sent to us in Madagascar via Jeff Wilkinson. I am attaching a photo of one of our patients who underwent an ileal conduit for a bladder tumour. As she lives far away, it was great to be able to send her home with a good supply of bags.

Again thank you so much for all that you do."
~2025 Madagascar



Help Us Welcome Our Newest Board Member

Sharese Donaldson



Sharese has been a registered nurse for 14 years and a certified wound and ostomy nurse for 9 years. Since becoming a registered nurse in 2011, she completed a master's degree in nursing administration in 2015 from Governors State University and a doctoral degree in Advanced Public Health Nursing from Rush University in 2020.

Sharese has worked in a variety of healthcare settings including Medical - Surgical, neuro/stroke, dialysis, long term care, home health, psychiatric medicine, geriatric care, acute care rehab, and community integrated living arrangements for individuals with disabilities. She currently works in an inpatient/outpatient setting in Chicago on the colorectal surgery team as a professional wound and ostomy nurse. In her current role, she enjoys educating patients and serving as an advocate for patient health. She previously served as a board member for the Northern Illinois Affiliate of the Wound, Ostomy, and Continence Society. She has frequently attended WOCN conferences, seminars, and ostomy 5k's (The UOAA's annual Run for Resilience). Additionally, she is a former ostomy support group leader of a small group of ostomates at a cancer resource center. She says she has never felt more fulfilled since she began working within this amazing specialty field.

And if that isn't enough, she is a wife and a mother who commutes 1.5 hours daily to work! She enjoys traveling, attending concerts, spending time in nature, and participating in volunteer opportunities. After unexpectedly losing her mother in 2020, she grew to expand her love and excitement for gardening by starting a garden of her own, utilizing her mom's garden supplies. "Gardening has been very therapeutic for me", Sharese explains, "and it has taught me so much about the design of nature. When I'm gardening, I often think about my mother and how she would have needed an emergency ostomy to save her life. Daily, I reflect on my mother's memories, and it encourages me to plant seeds of motivation in my patients to help them to keep pushing through their circumstances. After recently finding myself on my own health journey as a brain tumor thriver and survivor, I've learned to cherish every moment of my life regardless of how big or small it is."

Sharese jumped in with both feet and became a part of the vibrant Public Relations Committee and has been assisting with all facets of PR including our social media and Newsletter. We are blessed to have Sharese as a new member to FOW-USA!

News and Events: Medicare Bidding, A Cautionary Tale

By Ann Favreau, FOW-USA Vice President

If you are an ostomate like me, you tried several different ostomy pouching systems and accessories until you found the ones that best fit you. You order them and know it's one less thing you have to worry about. However, this will change on January 1, 2028, when Medicare Competitive Bidding goes into effect. This program passed by Congress and intended to lower Medicare costs by having suppliers compete on price, could limit our access to the specific products we need. In addition, there may be only 8 contractors for ostomy supplies to cover all of the US, so if your current distributor was not awarded a contract, you will need to choose a new one from the list. Medicare will still pay for your supplies, but you may have to jump through hoops to get them.

The United Ostomy Associations of America website ostomy.org has a detailed document about What You Need to Know and Frequently Asked Questions. Wound Ostomy Continence nurses are worried that if we have limited access to specific products, it will lead to skin irritations, leaks, and odor.

What can you and I do?

FOW-USA joined WOC nurses and UOAA in a letter writing campaign to stop this action before it became law. Now we must insist that our legislators reverse this policy.

- **Visit** the [UOAA website](#) to learn more about the proposed legislation and how it might affect your supplies, read the FAQ sheet, and find additional advocacy resources
- **Call** and email your congress person. You can find your representatives' names and contact information [HERE](#).
- **Contact 1-800 MEDICARE** with your questions.
- **Share** this information with friends and family so they can advocate too!

Now is the time to make our voices heard!



Northern IL, Ostomy and Product Fair April 18, 2026



Pictured above, left to right
 Top right: Ari' and Sharese (Board Members) with donations from event participants
 Top Left: Bret (Ostomy Support Group of Dupage President and Youth Rally Rep)
 Middle Left: Charles (attendee and FOW-USA enthusiast!)
 Middle Right Sharese, Ari', and Elizabeth (CWOCN)
 Bottom Right: Sharese and Ari' at FOW-USA table Bottom Left: Sharese and Judy (Event Organizer)



Youth Rally 2026: July 6th-11th Boulder, CO

The Youth Rally's mission is to provide an environment for adolescents living with conditions of the bowel and bladder that encourages self-confidence and independent living. Each year the Youth Rally hosts roughly 200 campers ages 11-17 from all over the United States and beyond! Many of their campers grow up to become Youth Rally Counselors and/or find alternative means to support their Rally Community. Check out youthrally.org to learn more and register as a camper or volunteer.

YOUR SUPPORT CROSSES BORDERS from our warehouse to the world — your support travels far

[CLICK HERE TO DONATE](#)

[FOW-USA Financials & Annual Budget](#) are available upon request. For [Shipping History](#) go to fowusa.org

Thank you for reading!

Connect with us on social!



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