

SAMMY STILLWATER, Okla.—On Feb. 19, 2006, Oklahoma wildfires destroyed 600 acres, three homes and two barns. And it nearly cost Sammy Toland his life.



Sammy is the approximately three year-old terrier mix dog belonging to David and Krystal Toland of Braggs, Okla., a small rural community located southeast of Muskogee. He suffered severe burns to 30 percent of his body. Approximately one and one-half weeks following the fires, The Humane Society of the United States offered to partially sponsor Sammy's recovery and contacted the OSU Center for Veterinary Health Sciences' Boren Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital located on the Stillwater campus. Together, they launched a public campaign to help cover the cost of Sammy's intensive care.

"The first four to five days, the biggest challenge was keeping him stable," Dr. Jim Giles, small animal surgery resident, says. "We worked very hard to replace the fluids and protein Sammy lost through the massive burns on his back, shoulders, sides and thighs."

Sammy underwent multiple surgeries to remove dead skin, perform skin advancement procedures, and receive skin grafts. Unlike humans who can sometimes rely on a tissue bank for skin donations, animals don't have that option. The skin used for Sammy's grafts came from his chest, where more skin is available. His recovery included antibiotics and pain medication.



“If Sammy had healed without assistance, he may not have survived and certainly would not be able to make an adequate recovery,” Dr. Giles says. “He would have been disfigured but more importantly, the skin over his back and hips would have been scarred and less pliable. This would have greatly restricted his mobility to the detriment of his overall health.”

“The Tolands’ devotion to Sammy, even in the face of their devastating loss, is inspiring and a testament to the important role pets have in our lives,” says Cynthia Armstrong, State Program Manager for The Humane Society of the United States. “I know saving Sammy means everything to Krystal and David and his presence in their lives will be an important part of their healing and a new beginning for them.”



After 11 surgeries, numerous bandage changes and five weeks in the Veterinary Hospital’s Intensive Care Unit at OSU’s Veterinary Center, Sammy was reunited with his family. The couple is grateful for the care Sammy has received.

“I’m thankful for everybody who has helped,” smiles Krystal as she hugs Sammy. “I didn’t expect him to look this great (referring to his burns).”

"We couldn't have done it without the OSU Clinic," adds David. "It's a miracle what they did up here. Thank you to all the people who have helped and those who donated."

Sammy was released to his owners on April 4, 2006. He is no longer on pain medication and all sutures have been removed. The large skin graft performed by Dr. Jim Giles, CVHS Small Animal Surgery Resident, is healing nicely.

"We want to see Sammy in a month to check his progress," Dr. Giles instructs the Tolands. "His skin is still healing and sensitive. He should avoid long periods of sun exposure."

Even though Sammy has gone home, funds are needed to cover his medical expenses in excess of \$7,000. Donations can be made payable to the OSU Foundation with "Sammy" noted on the memo line. Mail contributions to: Oklahoma State University, 308 McElroy Hall, Stillwater, OK 74078.

Any amount raised in excess of Sammy's needs will be kept in the Brittany Fund, which is used to help seriously ill or traumatized pets from low income families receive appropriate veterinary care. For more information, call (405) 744-6740 or visit [www.cvhs.okstate.edu](http://www.cvhs.okstate.edu). From the Tolands, The Humane Society of the United States and the Center for Veterinary Health Sciences, a special thank you to all who have helped Sammy!