

On October 25, 1980 at age 13 Joe Bates of Union, SC was severely burned over 90% of his body. Fumes from a gas can ignited when a nearby hot water heater's pilot light came on and caused a tremendous explosion. Unaware what had happened Joe was trapped in a smoke and flamed filled utility room. His best friend Kevin Silvers was inside the house and heard the explosion and ran outside to the carport to see flames shooting out of the top of the roof. Kevin, age 13, heard Joe screaming from inside the utility room and immediately ran into the flame filled room and grabbed Joe and pulled him to safety. As Joe rolled on the ground Kevin used a hose to extinguish the flames still on Joe's body.

Local and regional doctors told Joe's parents, Ruth and Keith Bates, that he would most likely not survive through the weekend. Doctors said the only hope for their son's survival was to send him to the Shriner's Burn Hospital in Cincinnati, Ohio. In a matter of a few phone calls they were speaking to Shriner's Potentate Carl Patrick. Just a couple of hours later Joe was in a Lear Jet on an emergency flight to Cincinnati, OH. The Shriners immediately responded with their love, expertise, medical facilities by extending maximum and essential life saving emergency and treatment freely to Joe.

Joe spent 9 months in the hospital fighting for his life. After multiple skin graft operations, intensive care, and therapy Joe was released to go home on July 31, 1981. When the small plane landed him at Union airport hundreds of people were there to welcome him home. Unable to walk, Joe had to be moved from the plane to an ambulance on a stretcher. At the Home coming ceremony the mayor and council of the City of Union proclaimed July 31st Joe Bates Day.

Joe lost most of his fingers on both hands and his right foot had to be amputated due to infection. He continued to have reconstructive surgery for 9 years after his initial release, in all over 100 surgeries. At age 16, after spending 3 years in a wheelchair, Joe finally learned to walk again after additional reconstructive surgery at The Shriner's Hospital in Greenville, SC.

Because of the quality care of Shriners and the support of his family, friends, and community Joe has gone on to live a happy and productive life. Despite the amputation of his fingers Joe plays guitar, piano, and sings.

Joe was married to his soul mate Erin Hartman Bates on June 17, 2000. They have two children, Luke 9 and Josie 6. As a family they volunteer and help organize benefits and fundraisers to help others in need.

This year they are planning a benefit for The Shriners Hospital for Children. The benefit is called The SOS Bash (Support Our Shriners). On July 31, 2010 "Joe Bates Day" a big day of fun, music, food, games, plus much more is planned. The goal is to bring the community together to have fun, and raise money, support, and awareness for The Shriners Hospitals for Children.

The day event is from 12 PM – 5 PM. It is free to the public and plans to include an outdoor stage with live bands and a Kid's Karaoke contest. There will be a Jumpy Castle and Jumpy slides plus other amusements for the kids, dunking booth, The Hill Billy clan, Food and drink vendors, Hejaz Warriors, Fire fighters smokehouse, face painting, balloons, plus much more. There will be a Shriner's Hospital for Children information booth so people will have an opportunity to learn more. T-shirts, bracelets, etc. will be for sale...all proceeds benefit Shriners Hospitals. Local celebrities, political figures, and local police have volunteered to sit in the dunking booth. Give a donation to Shriners for your shot at dunking them!

The evening event is from 7 PM – Midnight. The SOS Concert & Dance inside Shady's featuring The O'Kaysions performing their infamous hit "I'm A Girl Watcher" and DJ Motown Bobby spinning all of your dance favorites.

Ambient Media of Columbia, SC is donating decorative lighting to transform the venue into a visually stimulating atmosphere. Shady's will be decorated with centerpieces on every table. The centerpiece will be a single bottle in a pile of sand with sea shells. Inside each bottle will be a special message from the children of Shriners Hospitals. Also planned is a special video presentation with clips of the children of Shriners Hospital writing messages and putting them in a bottle.

The children are sending a message in a bottle to our community to help save Shriners Hospitals. Our hope is that the guest will feel a personal connection with the children of Shriners and be moved to do something more...donate, volunteer, and/or host their own fundraising event for Shriners. The tickets for this event are \$15 or more donation in advance or \$20 at the door.

All are encouraged to celebrate Joe Bates Day with special appreciation to the ever present Shriners for their charity, compassion, and facilities freely given to children in need.