

The Thomas H. and Catherine D. O'Neil Charitable Foundation help bring virtual reality technology to Southcoast Health patients

Virtual reality technology is coming to Southcoast Health, courtesy of a gift from the Thomas H. and Catherine D. O'Neil Charitable Foundation. The technology will be utilized to help mitigate patient pain and anxiety both leading up to and during medical procedures.

The donation was presented by the grandchildren of Thomas and Catherine O'Neil at St. Luke's Hospital on the 76th anniversary of Boston's Cocoanut Grove Fire. Thomas and Catherine were among the 492 individuals killed on November 28, 1942 in the historic blaze. To honor their memory, in 2012 one of Thomas and Catherine's grandchildren, Chris O'Neil, created the Foundation as a way to honor the victims of the fire while also helping those suffering from painful injuries, particularly burn victims and pediatric patients. Chris says, "I wanted to bring some good where a lot of pain had once been, that the lives lost were not in vain. We can make an impact with the O'Neil Foundation."



The virtual reality system will be the first such technology utilized by Southcoast Health. The system will be used to manage patient pain, first at the Southcoast Health Wound Center at St. Luke's Hospital, with plans to incorporate its use into other service areas at Southcoast moving forward. "The opportunity for our Foundation to provide this technology to Southcoast has brought a lot of excitement versus a simple cash donation," Chris says. "We get a chance to be part of a new way of helping people."

"We are incredibly grateful to the Thomas H. and Catherine D. O'Neil Charitable Foundation for this generous and innovative donation of technology, which benefits our patients who are suffering from painful injuries and illnesses," said Keith A. Hovan, President & CEO of Southcoast Health. "As a not-for-profit healthcare system, we rely on the generosity of so many within our community to help provide our patients with the best care and attention possible. Virtual reality pain mitigation will be a great tool for our providers and physicians to offer to our patients."

Chris, a New Bedford native, is excited to be helping patients in his own backyard: "Southcoast Health is always investing in cutting-edge health technology and has been so supportive to our family over the years; it was time for us to help contribute in some way."

The O'Neil Foundation gift was made in memory of Dr. Charles Eades, one of the Foundation's most generous supporters.



Cut line photo Information:

Peggy O'Neil Verronneau tries out donated VR device at St. Luke's Hospital on 76th anniversary of Cocoanut Grove Fire.

O'Neil Family with CEO from Left to Right, Keith Hovan CEO of Southcoast Health, Chris O'Neil, Mark O'Neil, Andrew O'Neil, Catherine O'Neil Norton, Tom O'Neil, Ellie Potter, Peggy O'Neil Verronneau

O'Neil family joins Southcoast Philanthropy, CEO, and medical staff to mark occasion: Front Row Jack Dresser SVP of Southcoast Health Philanthropy, Chris O'Neil, Keith Hovan CEO of Southcoast Health, Dr. Robert Sanford Wound Center Medical

Director, Catherine O'Neil Norton. Behind left to right: Dr. Robert Caldas Chief Medical Officer, Ellie Potter, and Peggy O'Neil Verronneau. Behind Left to right: Mark O'Neil and Andrew O'Neil. Back row: Tom O'Neil (left), Tricia Grimes of Southcoast Health Philanthopy (center), and Tricia Verronneau (right)

Photo Credit Stephen Preston/ Southcoast Health

About The Thomas H. and Catherine D. O'Neil Charitable Foundation Inc.

The Thomas H. and Catherine D. O'Neil Charitable Foundation, Inc was established in 2012 by the grandchildren of Thomas and Catherine O'Neil of New Bedford, MA. who perished in the Cocoanut Grove Fire in Boston on November 28th 1942. The mission of the Foundation is to raise and distribute funds for the benefit of pediatric burn patients and their families in memory of the 492 victims of the Cocoanut Grove fire.