



# FLIGHTS OF HOPE

Quarterly newsletter for Angel Flight West's members and friends

## Spotlight on an Angel - *Roberta V.*

*Cheri Cimmarrusti, Associate Executive Director*

In my long tenure at AFW, I often meet passengers who I look forward to seeing at the Santa Monica office while they wait for their flight. One of these passengers is Roberta V. of Oakland, CA. Roberta has been flying with us since 2006 and has flown 168 missions. During that time, she has flown with 72 pilots—37 of those with pilot Victor Ninov!

Roberta has giant cell sarcoma, a non-malignant bone tumor. In her case, the tumor is in the sacrum, a

bone at the base of the spine. While the tumor itself is not malignant, its growth can cause considerable pain and is known to metastasize to lung cancer. She was diagnosed in January of 2005, and at the time was living in Ventura. Roberta received radiation treatment and was seen by doctors at UCLA. Near the end of 2006 she decided to move to Oakland to be near more of her children. The doctor there referred her to Dr. Chua in Santa Monica for a clinical trial

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Photo by Alison Buck

AFW frequent passenger Roberta V. enjoying herself with her daughter Mary Beth at the Endeavor Awards. Roberta has flown 168 AFW missions for treatment of giant cell sarcoma.



## Gaining Altitude *Josh Olson, Executive Director*

We are off to a great start in 2014! Our membership is up 10 percent. Total flights flown are up 17 percent. Flights requested are up eight percent. And most importantly, the number of passengers served is

up seven percent. Passengers like one-year-old Zohie M. from Ronan, MT, who suffers from a condition called synostosis, runs the risk of severely stunted growth and development without surgical intervention at Seattle Children's

Hospital because her bones are fused together. Her condition causes her pain, and causes her young parents a lot of fear and anxiety. Angel Flight West offers hope for healing and health by providing the gift of flight needed to help Zohie and family access the medical care they desperately need.

It is incredibly humbling to serve in my new role of Executive Director at AFW because I see stories of indomitable courage and strength like Zohie and her parents every day, and I admire our passengers. In the same way, I admire our amazing pilots and volunteers who generously give of their passion for flying to

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CELEBRATING PUBLIC BENEFIT AVIATION

ENDEAVOR  AWARDS™

The first annual Endeavor Awards launched “under the Space Shuttle Endeavour” at the Samuel Oschin Space Shuttle Endeavour Pavilion at the California Science Center in Los Angeles, Sunday evening, May 4, 2014. The master of ceremonies, air show ace Sean Tucker, presided over a glittering evening of entertainment, excitement and emotion as 380 rapt audience members celebrated Public Benefit Aviation. There were movie and TV stars, astronauts, legendary aviators, performing musicians, and an aerialist aloft who presented an ‘Adagio to Amelia Earhart.’

Three Endeavor Award winners were selected from nationwide nominations. Each Endeavor Award winner received his award from a person he had helped by giving the gift of flight. The three awardees were Joe Howley, from Patient Airlift Services, Joe DeMarco from Wings Flights of Hope, and Jeff Hendricks who donates flights for Veterans’ Airlift Command and Angel Flight West. Jeff is an AFW Command Pilot from

Anacortes, WA. (See photos page 3.)

When asked why he is a volunteer pilot, Jeff is quick to say that he feels very fortunate to utilize his own good fortunes and passion for flying to pay it forward to those who need to reach medical care, and to our veterans and their families.

Josh Olson, Executive Director of AFW said, “The purpose of the Endeavor Awards was to dramatically raise awareness for the work of all volunteer pilots and to raise funds for Angel Flight West.”

A video of gala highlights and new AFW video can be seen from the AFW home page or click here <http://tinyurl.com/nzppy59>. More photos from the gala are available through the Endeavor Awards web site: <http://tinyurl.com/knjlgon> along with video presentations shown at the gala about the awardees and about many volunteer pilot organizations across the county.

The date and location for the 2015 Endeavor Awards ceremony will be announced soon.

Photo by Evan Peers



Photo by Paul Bowen



Photo by Alison Buck



Photo by Evan Peers

Far left is the venue of the first annual Endeavor Awards at the CA Science Center Space Shuttle Endeavour Pavilion. Air show ace Sean Tucker (left) emceed the event. AFW poster child Taylor T. (above), who, as a younger child, appears on the wing of the plane on our web page, enjoying the USC marching band that ended the festivities.

## First Annual Endeavor Award Winners

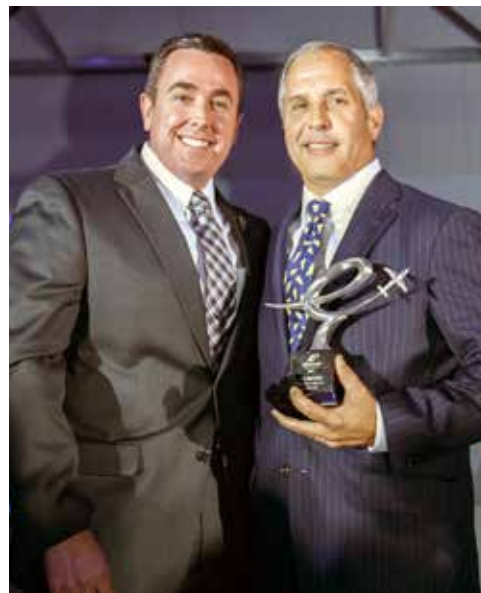
The first three Endeavor Award winners pictured below were volunteer pilots selected through nominations and votes by their peers around the country. Each winner was presented with his award from a passenger who he had flown. Photos by Paul Bowen.



AFW passenger James Sides presents Jeff Hendricks, a volunteer pilot for both the Veterans Airlift Command and Angel Flight West, his award. Jeff has provided free transportation to wounded service personnel like James and people in critical need of medical treatment. Like all volunteer pilots, Jeff also provides his aircraft, fuel and expenses when he volunteers for these humanitarian missions.



Joe DeMarco, Sr, a volunteer pilot who founded Wings Flights of Hope, has flown 1,165 missions in his 10 years of flying for public benefit. He was given his award by a young boy named Luke, who is one of the patients Joe flew, and who said that he would not have been able to get his new lungs if it weren't for "his pilot" Joe.



Joe Howley, co-founder, president and chairman of the board at Patient Airlift Services, was honored for his 15 years as a volunteer pilot and fundraiser for public benefit flight. Upon accepting his award from "Wounded Warrior" Michael Barrett, Joe told the audience that the true heroes are the patients he flies to treatment, those who bravely continue to fight for their lives.

## AFW wishes to thank the generosity of the following Endeavor Awards major sponsors:

Air Care Alliance  
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## AFW's Executive Directors Past and Present

AFW's Executive Directors all together. Pictured L to R: AFW welcomes Josh Olson, current Executive Director; Jim Weaver, Executive Director January, 1992–April, 2007; and Alan Dias, Executive Director May, 2008 through May, 2014. (Not pictured is Michael Nanko, Executive Director April, 2007–April, 2008). AFW's successful longevity and life-altering impact is in no small part a tribute to these committed and forward-thinking leaders.



Mom Patty with son and passenger Phoenix S. and daughter Nicole being flown to treatment by WY Wing Command Pilot John Larsen (pictured). They frequently travel from Sheridan, WY to Salt Lake City, UT for treatment of Phoenix's Larsen syndrome, a disorder that affects the development of bones throughout the body. Patty is a single mother supporting her two children, and the repeated trips have depleted the family's funds.



Co-pilot ten-year-old Jaymhen B. was flown home from Palo Alto, CA to Reno, NV by No. CA Wing Command Pilot Michael McDonald after a brain and plastic surgery follow-up. Jaymhen struggles with Pfeiffer and Kleeblattschadel syndrome, which affect the brain and skeletal structure of the head. His family earns low income with one part-time working parent. Long and frequent hospitalizations have drained their finances.



Five-year-old Isaac B., who lives in Yreka, CA was flown from Montague, CA to Palo Alto by WA Wing Command Pilot Thomas Ysasi. He is traveling to receive intestinal transplant consultations. He is cared for by his grandmother who receives SSI.

## Upcoming Wing Events

- 6-19-2014 San Carlos Pilot Seminar - Adventures in Crosswinds
- 8-9-2014 Oregon Wing Fly-In
- 10-8-2014 San Carlos Pilot Seminar
- 10-9-2014 Seattle Pilot Seminar - Aeronautical Decision Making

Please click on <http://afids.angelflightwest.org/calendar> for details and to sign up for each event.



Passenger Rene A. in the right seat flying from Santa Maria, CA to Hawthorne, CA by So. CA Wing Command Pilot Jason Chipkin. Rene's wife Gladys is accompanying him. Rene is traveling for treatment of leukemia. He and his wife are on a fixed income and live with their son.

## Gaining Altitude

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serve our courageous passengers. I also admire our committed, talented staff and volunteer leadership who balance the busy and sometimes crazy world of our passengers, pilots, health care partners, and patrons to accomplish our mission efficiently and effectively. Between our courageous passengers, our passionate volunteers, and our dedicated staff, we make an amazing team!

Our challenge as we move forward is positioning our organization to serve more people in need of our gifts of flight. We are working hard to evolve our services to make things easier for our passengers, pilots, health care partners, and patrons. As patients become more and more responsible for arranging their own healthcare, we are continually revising our request process to make it easier for our passengers and health care partners. We eliminated member fees and started directly advertising on social media to sign up over 100 new members last month. We created the electronic waiver to make the day of flight simpler for our pilots. We hosted

## Our Deepest Gratitude to our Command Pilots

AFW wishes to thank each and every pilot who generously donates their time, plane and resources in support of our mission to alleviate the physical and financial stress of traveling for health or other compelling reasons. Please log on to AFW website <http://tinyurl.com/qc3gmfk>, go to *Reports*, and then to *Mission Counts by Member* to view AFW Command Pilots who have flown missions this year.

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### • Help Angel Flight West Spread the Word

- Each year, the Lightspeed Aviation Foundation is proud to recognize a select group of deserving aviation non-profit organizations nominated from members of the aviation community. Help AFW spread the word about our mission and the opportunity to be awarded up to \$10,000. Click on the following link and vote for us:
- <http://tinyurl.com/mag7fue>

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the Endeavor Awards to raise awareness and patronage for public benefit flying. (See pages 2 & 3). We've revised our website to help us get information out that is relevant and timely. Later this year, we will be integrating Earth Angels as a user group in AFIDS. This will allow us to recruit volunteer drivers across our region to assist in transportation to and from healthcare, positioning us to offer "curb to curb" service for our passengers. And there is more to come.

Angel Flight West is adapting to the challenges surrounding us while keeping our eyes on our mission. While we are buffeted by winds, we will continue to gain altitude. As we pass 60,000 total flights flown, let's keep our communication open and the passion for our mission strong. Thank you for making this organization a source of such impact and inspiration. I'm really looking forward to what we can accomplish in our next 30 years!

Happy flying!

Josh Olson  
Executive Director



## In the Hangar *Daphanie Cooper*

This issue of *In the Hangar* highlights AFW's Accounting Associate, Daphanie Cooper. Daphanie came to AFW in April 2013 as a member of Pery Consulting Group,

the firm that prepares AFW's annual financials. She is responsible for AFW's accounts payable, payroll, donor entries and just about everything

financial for the organization. Prior to working in the AFW office, Daphanie worked for the entertainment industry in a similar capacity.

It is through her work at AFW that Daphanie finds herself "in constant gratitude" as she crosses paths with many of the passengers we fly and sees the many challenges they face. She says, "It has truly been a pleasure working with this amazing team and witnessing the heart-warming generosity displayed on a daily basis." Along with the AFW "amazing team" she describes, Daphanie plays an important role in carrying on the AFW mission and we are lucky to have yet another wonderful staff person on board.

## Air To Air Communication

- ➔ Congratulations to Executive Director Josh Olson on receiving his MBA from Marylhurst University!
- ➔ Save the Date! The Annual Planning Meeting (formally known as the Wing Leader Retreat and Board Meeting) originally scheduled for May 17th at Van Nuys airport has been re-scheduled to September 12 and 13, 2014. For details contact Cheri at [cheric@angelflightwest.org](mailto:cheric@angelflightwest.org)
- ➔ Congratulations to AFW Command Pilot Howard William Wolvington of Issaquah, WA, for achieving his Master CFI, and for being named the 2014 National Certificated Flight Instructor of the Year!
- ➔ AFW also congratulates Command Pilot Michael C. Jesch, a 1st-time Master and SAFE member, who also recently earned his Master CFI accreditation!
- ➔ AFW sends our deepest condolences to the families of passengers Norma Wellard (ID) and Jonathan Dorr (OR).
- ➔ Our sincere condolences also to the family of ID Wing Command Pilot George Simchuk.
- ➔ You can donate miles to AFW via Alaska Airlines at <http://tinyurl.com/993tk7s>
- ➔ AFW Merchandise Page! In conjunction with Land's End, AFW is offering a variety of men's and women's clothing and other merchandise for purchase. To use the service, click on the "Shop" tab on the AFW Home Page at [www.angelflightwest.org](http://www.angelflightwest.org) then click on the link Land's End.
- ➔ **Amazon Shoppers!** AFW will receive a portion of your purchase if you first click on the AFW homepage [www.angelflightwest.org](http://www.angelflightwest.org), which will take you to the Amazon page for AFW.
- ➔ If you would prefer to continue to receive the newsletter by snail mail and haven't done so, please send an e-mail to [newsletter@angelflightwest.org](mailto:newsletter@angelflightwest.org) or call us at (310) 390-2958.

## Spotlight on an Angel –Roberta V. ...continued from page 1

and they referred her to AFW. This solved her dilemma of getting to treatment once a month. She is part of a clinical trial provided through a charitable program by Amgen. The drug, Xgeva, is normally used to treat severe osteoporosis. At this point, they do not know enough about the drug to determine if and when she can ever stop taking it. For now, she will continue because if she stops and the tumor grows, she will not be eligible to return to the program. Roberta said that the most important thing about AFW is the confidence she has that she will get to this vital treatment every month.

Roberta cherishes the friendships she has made with pilots, Earth Angels and staff. She feels blessed to have the emotional support and genuine care and concern that she feels from all. I can say, from my heart, that she always brings a smile to my face when she walks in the door. Because of the ease of flying general aviation, Roberta is able to fly alone without help. At times, AFW flies her to either Lompoc or San Jose

instead of home to Oakland so she can visit her kids and grandkids. This allows her cherished time with family that is very important to her.

Roberta and her daughter Mary Beth were guests at the Endeavor Awards. When I asked her how the evening was, her response was, "Oh my gosh! Each time something happened, I thought it couldn't get any better. But the great things kept on coming right up to the USC marching band that concluded the evening." She said she was on a three-day high following the event! Many thanks to our Board Member, Charlie Finkel, for sponsoring a table for Roberta and other of our passengers.

As I look back on the past eight years, I find I'm also blessed to have a friend like Roberta!

Ciao,

*Cheri Cimmarrusti*

Cheri Cimmarrusti

Associate Executive Director



The Annual North Meets South Fly-in at Harris Ranch. Every year northern and southern CA Wing members reconnect with members and meet new ones at Harris Ranch hotel located midway between Los Angeles and San Francisco. This year's Fly-in guest speaker was AFW member Randy Bresnik, who entertained the membership and staff with stories of his 50-year career in aviation, his father's experiences with Amelia Earhart, and his son Randy Bresnik, Jr.'s experience as a current astronaut. A raffle and auction made nearly \$3,000 for AFW.



So. CA Wing Command Pilot David Hightower flying donated blood to the San Diego Blood Bank from San Diego, CA to Imperial County, CA.

**Angel Flight West Thanks  
Our Major Contributors**

*Alaska Airlines*

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**and**

**The Tom and Mary Kay Gallagher  
Foundation**



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NV Wing Command Pilot Justine Harrison flying Dr. Peter Sun from Reno, NV to Oakland, CA. Dr. Sun is on a mission to provide pediatric care to impoverished communities—an example of the many types of missions AFW flies.



Seven-year-old passenger Mia N. with her mom flying home from radiation treatment for leukemia. Mia flies between Calexico, CA and San Diego, CA to Rady's Children's Hospital. So. CA Command Pilot Dimitry Ashbel flew this mission. Mia's family has very limited resources.



L to R: NV Wing Command Pilot Daniel Turner flew Henry S. from Goodyear, AZ to Las Vegas, NV. Eighty-two-year-old Henry is on a fixed income and unable to afford travel for his frequent chemotherapy injections and infusions for multiple myeloma at the Cancer Treatment Centers of America-AZ.



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