



Angel Flight  
WEST

FALL 2020

# FLIGHTS OF HOPE NEWS



Eleven-year-old Mason and mom Stacey on their way for Mason to participate in a study that may save his life from an aggressive form of leukemia. (Masks were off for photo.)

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Angel Flight West delivers health and hope using donated flights to serve those with healthcare or other compelling human needs.

Angel Flight West links volunteer pilots and commercial airlines with people whose non-emergency health needs require air transportation to access care.

## “This is Our Last Hope”

*Thanks to you, many families can participate in the latest medical studies that may save their life.*

“My family has a mantra, it’s ‘Not cancer today!’” explained Jenn, the mother of 11-year-old Mason who is battling the most aggressive form of acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL). Mason was diagnosed in April 2019 when he was nine. He has endured eight months of chemotherapy at Children’s Hospital LA (CHLA) that helped him into remission only to relapse in June 2020.

The doctors at CHLA got him into a new FDA-approved study at Texas Children’s Hospital (TCH) in Baylor College of Medicine for Mason’s type of leukemia. The study took only 30

people, 12 years old or older, but they took Mason because of his aggressive type of cancer. Jenn says, “Mason on chemo didn’t work for him. This immunotherapy uses his own cells growing in the lab at Baylor taken from 30 vials of his blood so they can attack his cancer cells. We told Mason that his cells are getting knighted to be strong.”

Mason will spend four to six weeks in TCH while Jenn and Mason’s other mom Stacey will be staying in a nearby B&B. Mason will be an outpatient, but will go in every day for observation. If all goes well, Mason

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## ANGEL FLIGHT WEST EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*Josh Olson*

It has been quite the turbulent year. Fortunately for AFW, nobody handles turbulence better than pilots!

We are very grateful for the opportunity to serve through

the pandemic and be part of the solution to this health crisis. We continue to do what we do best: assist others in need. Transportation to health care is more challenging than ever, and for those who turn to us for help, we're happy to take to the skies (and roads!) to get them to treatment.

Over the past few months, we've flown hundreds of passengers from across our 12-state service area, and the requests keep coming in. A pandemic doesn't keep these patients from needing critical care, and we've been doing our best to meet the demand, one safe flight at a time.

Our amazing volunteer pilots have now also flown over 460 COVID-relief missions delivering medical supplies, family care packs, and other essentials, as well as KN95 masks to firefighters in Oregon, which you'll read about in this newsletter.

Our work is possible because of the contributions of all our volunteers and supporters like you. We'll never stop being thankful for your belief in AFW's mission and what your generosity allows us to do. If these trying times have taught us anything, it's that together we can keep flying to greater and greater heights.



## AFW Flies Brothers with the Same Disorder

*Thanks to you, families dealing with long-term illness can continue receiving medical care far from home for as long as needed.*



**Mom May with son and passenger Zaid who has been flying with AFW for 11 years for treatment of a life-threatening genetic skin disorder. (This mission was flown prior to COVID.)**

Having a child born with a serious disorder would challenge whatever emotional, physical, financial, and spiritual allotment any parent has. But when you have two such children, it would seem like a Herculean task just to get through a day.

May and Sam, parents of AFW passenger 17-year-old Zaid, had been caring for their two sons born with epidermolysis bullosa, an inherited disorder where their fragile skin is susceptible to widespread blistering and that can lead to many other major medical problems. Their oldest son, Deep, passed away four years ago from the same disorder.

AFW has been flying Zaid for 11 years. He flies to Stanford for many ongoing appointments. At first, the family would leave Visalia, CA at 3 a.m. for a 9 o'clock appointment, a nine-hour roundtrip drive. Then, a clinical coordinator at Stanford Hospital, told her about AFW. Their travel time is now around one hour and twenty minutes. May says how AFW "has made a huge difference in our lives."

May is not the only one who benefits from these flights.



## “This is Our Last Hope” ...continued from page 1

will face a bone marrow transplant that is the second step to his recovery.

Mason’s family found AFW through the non-profit the Young and Brave Foundation which helps young adults and children diagnosed with all forms of cancer. Jenn says “we were wondering how we would get to Texas. We couldn’t imagine a road trip with him not feeling good or a commercial flight due to COVID. We couldn’t afford the trip until we heard about AFW. Once we contacted them a week out from when we had to be there, they said, ‘hang on and we’ll get the word

out.” Command Pilot Leonard Rand whose own personal battle with leukemia compelled him to fly this mission taking them all the way from Burbank, CA to Houston, TX in his jet.

Jenn says Mason “is wise beyond his 11 years. I would say that he is not sad, but there’s a heftiness. He still smiles, jokes, and is planning on sticking around. He’s excited to be part of a study that can help other kids and is very proud of that. This is our last hope. Please give our deepest gratitude to the whole gang at AFW. You’ve given our boy a fighting chance!!”

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## West Coast Firefighters Receive AFW Deliveries

*Without your support, crisis like these would be even more devastating.*



**L:** Thank you so much to Command Pilot Louise Mateos for flying N95 masks to those fighting wildfires in Oregon! **Center:** Command Pilot Levi Maaia unloading N95 masks to be delivered to Oregon firefighters. **R:** More N95 masks flown by Command Pilot Johannes Weis.

As always when an emergency needs fast responders, you will hear the engines of many AFW airplanes revving up for takeoff. In times of crisis, it can be general aviation pilots who help play a crucial role in reaching outlying areas in need. AFW pilots volunteered to help get much needed supplies to firefighters and communities in Oregon. The West Coast has been hit hard this season with hotter and deadlier fires than ever. AFW took to the air immediately to help.

As part of a collaborative airlift effort with California Disaster Airlift Response Teams (CalDART), 23 planes landed in Santa Barbara of which 13 planes were volunteers from AFW. Southern California Wing Leader and AFW

Command Pilot Jeff Moorhouse was on the ground as AFW representative and coordinator for this mission. Mission Operations had quickly secured AFW pilots and Jeff checked them in as they arrived, helping to organize the supplies into AFW pilots’ planes. Assorted tubs of medical supplies and 100,000 KN95 masks were being transported.

Jeff says: “It was amazing to see our AFW staff mobilize volunteer pilots on such short notice. That day we demonstrated our ability to not only help patients on a daily basis, but also respond immediately and efficiently to just about any crisis presented to us. From our staff to our volunteer pilots and Earth Angels, AFW once again proves we are the go-to organization when crisis arise.”

## AFW Flies Brothers ... continued from page 2

Pilot Pete Bernadin, who has flown the boys often, says, "It takes me about a week to come down from the euphoria of these flights."

Zaid's hands have lost some fingers and some are webbed as a result of the disorder, but he has learned how to type proficiently on a computer. He attends regular school with the help of an aide. May says, "He is so independent and so smart and

so stubborn." His grades are high and "he wants to be an engineer."

Zaid sometimes worries that what happened to his brother will happen to him. May encourages him. "I tell him that they are raising millions in research and not everyone is the same. I say, try and enjoy your life even though it is hard."



Join us to kick off the global holiday season of giving by supporting Angel Flight West all month long from November 1 leading up to #GivingTuesday on December 1. We'll raise awareness and funds to deliver health and hope to serve those with healthcare or other compelling needs that require travel far from home.

We're transforming lives, one flight at a time, and we need your help!

### **Our goal this #GivingTuesday: raise \$45,000 to fly 244 missions!**

Your generous donation will allow us to reach and serve more people in need of our flights.

A few ways to support our #GivingTuesday initiative:

- 1. DONATE** - You can also make stock donations
- 2. SHARE OUR STORIES** - Follow our social media or forward our newsletters to your friends
- 3. BECOME AN AFW GT AMBASSADOR** - Lend your voice and start your own fundraiser
- 4. BECOME A MATCHING GIFT DONOR** - Pledge a donation to be matched

For more information on becoming a #GivingTuesday Ambassador or to donate go to:

<http://bit.ly/AFWGT2020>

Thank you for supporting Angel Flight West on #GivingTuesday!

## Thank You to Our Sponsors



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