

LIFT

FALL/WINTER 2025 | VOL. 11 | ISSUE 2



Garmin team pulls to a third-place finish



First place:
Team Moneta

Pulling for Hope Is New Fall Tradition

When it comes to fall traditions, pulling a giant plane ranks right up there with watching football and picking apples — at least for the 16 teams (five more than in 2024!) that participated in Wings of Hope's 3rd Annual Pulling for Hope on Oct. 4, 2025.

Each team raised a minimum of \$1,000 for two tries to clock their fastest time pulling a 25-ton Gulfstream III jet 60 feet across the taxiway outside the Wings of Hope hangar. The competition was fierce, with less than a second separating the top five teams. Team Moneta came in first at 15.09 seconds, followed by the AVMATS Afterburners at 15.13 seconds, and Garmin at a speedy 15.28 seconds.

"This year's Pulling for Hope was incredible," said Brittni Snidle, Wings of Hope's Director of Development and Communications. "We had 16 teams giving it their all in friendly competition, and it was amazing to see so many families, friends, and community members come out to cheer them on. The energy was nonstop — from the music and food trucks to the kids' activities and the excitement of each plane pull. It was truly a day of fun, teamwork, and community spirit — all in support of Wings of Hope's mission to change and save lives through the power of aviation."

We're grateful to all who made this third annual event a success including our generous sponsors: Dierbergs, Fabick Rents, Moneta, Secure Data Technologies, Garmin, Husch Blackwell, AERO Charter, St. Luke's, SFW Gives Back, Amy Cole Buehler, Simmons Bank, UHY, West Star Aviation, and Spirit of St. Louis Airport.



*Changing & Saving Lives
Through the Power of Aviation*

PARTNER *Spotlight*

Pilot Cliff Schisler with
volunteer dentists



Global Programs: Paraguay

Our partner in Paraguay, Iglesia Centro Cristiano Siloh, has brought more than a few smiles to people in five departments (or states) within the South American country.

In 2024, the group made 21 flights transporting volunteer dentists into communities for a full day of free dental care — conducting approximately 2,000 procedures including extractions, cleanings, filling cavities, controlling infections, and even creating dentures.

The team also sent doctors into these communities, providing medical care that included vaccinations, maternity checkups, and prescribing and administering medication. All told, these medical clinics assisted about 500 people in 2024.

Wings of Hope supports these efforts by helping to offset the costs of airplane fuel.

In addition to dental and medical care, the group also makes monthly trips by land into indigenous communities, providing food, clothing, and other assistance.

In 2025, the team expanded its outreach to a new indigenous community in northern Paraguay.

"We had the opportunity to serve in a hard-to-reach boarding school where we provided dental care to many of the 180 students," said

Cliff Schisler, pilot and program coordinator in Paraguay. "Most of them come from the surrounding farming and cattle areas, but other students must travel four to five hours by land and sometimes go for an entire month without seeing their parents."

As Cliff and the team of volunteer dentists fly into indigenous communities to provide free dental care, they are doing more than brightening smiles; they are transforming lives.

Cliff shared the example of a 15-year-old boy who was extremely self-conscious around others due to the deformity of his front teeth.

"We saw him smile and literally undergo a personality change as a result of the reconstruction of his front teeth," said Cliff.

An older couple had so many missing teeth that neither could chew food well. After both received dentures, they were not only able to smile again but also properly digest their food.

Another child in constant pain experienced immediate relief after volunteer dentists removed infected teeth.

"Both he and his parents were very happy," said Cliff.

These stories, and so many more, demonstrate the power of our mission in action around the globe. Your donations to Wings of Hope help make this and more possible.



Dental clinic



Dental clinic



Testing student-built gliders



Inspecting aircraft



Using flight simulator



Installing electrical system on foam aircraft

SOAR into STEM Fills Hangar With Biggest Class Yet!

The fall 2025 SOAR into STEM session was the biggest class to date, with record turnout and an impressive 94% attendance during the five-week, hands-on STEM and aviation educational experience.

Each Saturday session brought students into the Wings of Hope hangar to learn about the basics of flight, mechanics, engineering, aviation navigation and communications, and uncrewed aerial vehicles (aka drones).

The session kicked off with students getting an up-close look at airplanes in the Wings of Hope hangar, with volunteer mentors by their side to answer questions about the planes and their role in our mission. Multiple guest speakers provided engaging presentations that sparked lively discussions about a number of aviation-related topics. After Juan Cajigas, MQ-25 Chief Engineer at Boeing, explained his work leading the design and testing of the MQ-25 uncrewed aerial refueling drone, students asked him many questions about how the autonomous drone refuels naval combat planes from aircraft carriers.

Hands-on activities included building gliders, practicing communicating with air traffic control during a simulated exercise that mirrors airport traffic patterns, installing an electrical system on a foam aircraft, and working with aircraft mechanics on some of the essential skills used in maintaining planes.

The program featured a dedicated maintenance day — extremely popular with students — which provided students practical experience installing and removing Cleco fasteners, adjusting control cable tension, gapping and testing spark plugs, applying safety wire, inspecting aircraft for defects and corrosion, and flying drones. Students also built catapults for launching Halloween-themed plastic bats.

The five-week session culminated with the students taking Young Eagle flights, courtesy of local EAA Chapter 1675, and an aviation career exploration fair.

To learn more about SOAR into STEM and the other educational experiences we offer students including field trips, internships, and speaker visits, visit wingsofhope.ngo or contact Lee Ann Nolte at LeeAnn.Nolte@wingsofhope.ngo.



YOU are the reason our mission takes *flight!*

MEET ABRIYA

When Belinda learned that her newborn baby girl was born with one leg shorter than the other, a condition known as limb length discrepancy, she took her to a specialist in Virginia near where she and her family were living at the time. After the specialist couldn't offer much support, she found a Facebook group of parents whose children have the same condition. She learned from other parents in the group that Shriners Children's was the best place for her daughter's care.

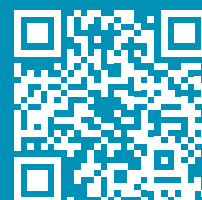
For the first six years of Abriya's life, Belinda and her husband, who move and travel frequently in their work as ministers, scheduled their travel around Abriya's appointments at Shriners Children's. When they learned she would need major surgery that would result in her not being able to walk for weeks while recovering,

Belinda knew making the nearly 9-hour drive to and from St. Louis would not be easy. That's when Shriners Children's told her about Wings of Hope. Abriya and Belinda made their first Wings of Hope flight in May 2025. On the flight from their home in Louisiana to St. Louis, Abriya and Belinda were joined by Wings of Hope's volunteer medic, Jeannie Meyer, who made sure Abriya was safe and comfortable on the flight.

"She was an angel straight from heaven," said Belinda. "She went above and beyond. She wasn't just on the flight to do her job and make sure we got there safely. She actually became a friend and someone I needed when I was at the end of myself."

Abriya will return to St. Louis in April 2026 to prepare for a second surgery in May, which will mark the beginning of her leg lengthening process.

To learn more about
how your gift will
impact patients
like Abriya, visit
[wingsofhope.ngo/
givehope](https://wingsofhope.ngo/givehope)



Wings of Hope Helps Former Teacher Seek Answers at the Mayo Clinic

Kacey Booth was working full time as a high school teacher and had just earned her license to be a K-12 principal, when her life went into a tailspin.

"I was working and living life when I had four asthma attacks — and the next thing I know my central nervous system started causing a lot of neurological issues," said Kacey.

That was Christmas Day 2023. In the nearly two years since, the 40-year-old said she has seen "every neurologist in the St. Louis metro area, and none of them know what to do."

Kacey has had an autoimmune disease for 10 years, but it was manageable. Whatever she's battling now is nothing short of debilitating.

"There's not one system in my body that's not affected by whatever this disease is," she said.

Kacey has experienced a significant decline in her mobility and fine motor skills, and she hasn't driven a car in two years.



Kacey and Dixie Booth

"I've had to quit my job — I couldn't go back to teaching — and I've moved back in with my parents. Instead of being a school administrator or a teacher or a professor, I'm now on a fixed income with Social Security."

Her frustration with the lack of answers from local doctors led Kacey to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., where she finally received a diagnosis of Behcet's Syndrome for her autoimmune disease.

"We still don't have a diagnosis on the neurology side," she said.

Kacey and her mom, Dixie, made their first flight to the Mayo Clinic with Wings of Hope in July and their third, and most recent, flight in October. They learned about Wings of Hope through Judy and Ned Koprowski, who attend the same church and volunteer at Wings of Hope.

"When Judy learned of Kacey's medical condition during one of the Women's Day Guild meetings at our church, we helped Kacey's family

apply to the medical air transport program," said Ned, who recently joined the Wings of Hope Board of Directors. "We are deeply grateful to Wings of Hope for all they have done to assist Kacey and her family."

Flying with Wings of Hope has made traveling to the Mayo Clinic easier on many fronts, said Kacey.

"As someone on a fixed income, it's a huge blessing. Also, my mom and dad are older so driving for eight hours with all my conditions and pain issues would be really difficult for everybody."

Traveling with Wings of Hope also eliminates the stress of navigating a busy airport.

"I have sensory overload," said Kacey. "To try to go through the hustle and bustle of an airport, I don't think I'd make it through."

Kacey praised Wings of Hope's staff, volunteers, and flight crew for their kindness and concern: "When you first get here, they come out with blankets, with a stuffed animal, with snacks. It's like they're rolling out the red carpet, because they know you don't feel good, they know you're scared, and they know you've got some possibly life-changing medical appointments coming up."

Dixie shared the story of trying to get a ride from the airport to their hotel near the Mayo Clinic. The nearest cab was an hour away and Kacey wasn't feeling well. Dr. Greg Kwasny, the Wings of Hope medic who had accompanied them on their flight, took it upon himself to book them an Uber.

"Not only did he order us an Uber," said Dixie, "but he wouldn't let me pay for it. This is the kind of people who are volunteering at Wings of Hope and helping others."

Kacey's father, Ray, summed up how the family feels about Wings of Hope: "Wings of Hope is like a walking group of guardian angels. They're looking out for everything and willing to help. It's unusual in today's world."



Luke Polson

Wings of Hope's Newest Mechanic

Luke Polson, 24, joined Wings of Hope this past summer after graduating from the Aviation Maintenance Program at State Technical College of Missouri with his Airframe and Powerplant (A&P) certifications.

Given the shortage of A&P mechanics, Luke could have found a job almost anywhere — but he chose Wings of Hope.

"I thought I wanted to work on jets, but there's something so intimate about being able to work on the full plane. And there's a lot to learn here that you don't generally get to do at other general aviation shops," he said. "Here, you're kind of doing the whole nine yards."

Luke especially likes the problem solving: "If there's an engine misfiring or something like that, you as a mechanic have to figure out why it's doing that, locate it, and find the solution."

And if he needs help, he turns to his fellow mechanics.

"It's super helpful to have them as mentors," he said. "Each one of them has skills they're really good at — and if you know which one to go to, you can just cherry pick the best information from each one of them. That is honestly one of the best things about working here."

As much as he loves working on small aircraft, Luke said what really makes Wings of Hope stand out is the mission: "I already love aviation but to do it and have that feeling of you're doing it for good — that was unreal to me."

After four months on the job, Luke said he knows he made the right choice in coming to Wings of Hope: "It's probably one of the best things I've ever chosen to do. I'm happy here, I love what I do, and I love what I do it for. It's very rewarding."

VOLUNTEER *Spotlight*

Our volunteers are the lifeblood of Wings of Hope. Whether they are in the hangar working on planes or in the front office managing administrative and financial tasks, we depend on them to do mission-critical work that keeps our wings in the air and our operations running smoothly.

STEVE KRIETEMEYER POST-FLIGHT TEAM

Steve Krietemeyer flew planes before joining Wings of Hope, but his journey to becoming a pilot started in an unlikely place: "In high school, I had a summer job pumping gas at a gas station."

A regular customer suggested Steve check out a job pumping gas at the airport. "One thing led to another, and I learned to fly there," he said.

Steve went on to work at that FBO (fixed-base operator) as a chief flight instructor, an FAA examiner for the flight school, and a charter pilot. His aviation career eventually landed him at Peabody Coal (now Peabody Energy) flying the corporate jet.

"I went to work for them on my 40th birthday and worked for them for 25 years," said Steve.

That's where Steve met Dick Horowitz, who also flew for Peabody and recently retired as Wings of Hope's Chief Pilot.

"Dick retired from Peabody about a year-and-a-half before I did," said Steve. "When I retired, Dick got after me to fly for Wings of Hope."

Steve had decided his flying days were over but, in 2012, he joined Wings of Hope as a volunteer on the Turn & Taxi Team, which was tasked with periodically starting and moving donated aircraft which, at that time, numbered in the dozens.

"We had about a half dozen people and, about once a week, we would start several airplanes and run them up and down the runway," said Steve. "You've got to exercise airplanes, just like cars."

When a dedicated turn-and-taxi team was no longer deemed necessary, Steve joined the Post-flight Team which checks out each Wings of Hope plane when it lands after a patient mission.

"Without a post-flight system, if there's a problem, it may not be caught until the next day when the flight crew is getting ready to fly again," said Steve. "That's not the time to do it. You need to catch it the night before."

After each flight lands, the Post-flight Team asks the pilots if they noticed any issues on the flight.

"If something needs attention, we'll make the mechanics aware," said Steve.

If there were no issues on the flight, the Post-flight Team completes the pre-flight checklist to prepare the plane for its next flight out.

Steve said he volunteers at Wings of Hope for two reasons: "It's a good organization — they do a good thing — and it's a chance to make 47 years of aviation background of some worthwhile use."



Steve Krietemeyer

SUE HARRISON VOLUNTEER FULFILLMENT

February 2026 will mark 10 years since Sue Harrison began volunteering at Wings of Hope.

"I retired 10 years ago," she said. "I was looking for something to do, and I found Wings of Hope on Volunteer Match."

Almost immediately after retiring from a career in commercial lending, Sue started volunteering as a receptionist at Wings of Hope.

"I didn't necessarily love being a receptionist, but I stuck around because they needed me," she said.

Longtime volunteer Bernie Schmidt knew Sue wanted to get more involved, so he asked her to join the Volunteer Fulfillment Team.

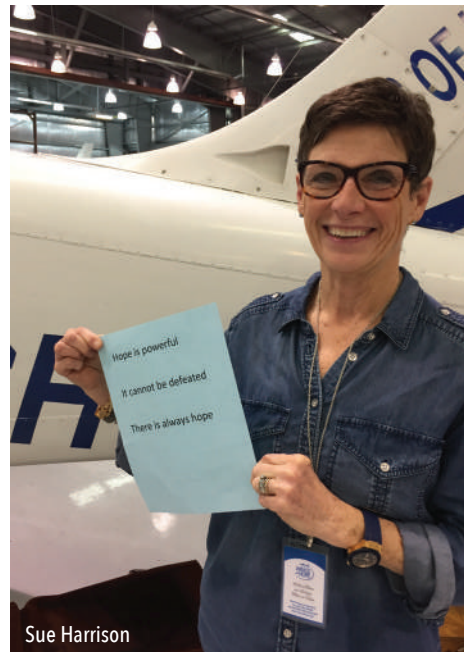
"That got me going," said Sue.

Sue said she has loved being part of Volunteer Fulfillment, especially working with "all the wonderful people."

"Every one of them, I just love," she said. Not only does she love all the volunteers, she wants to make sure they're having fun. Sue was instrumental in starting the Fun Committee, which is dedicated to putting on special events for volunteers throughout the year, such as happy hours, bakeoffs, chili cookoffs, and daily treats during National Volunteer Week. The committee also hosts monthly birthday celebrations for volunteers and staff, including cake, at the Wings of Hope hangar meetings.

"It's fun, and I get a lot of satisfaction when events turn out well," said Sue.

Although volunteering at Wings of Hope



Sue Harrison

has been her longest retirement gig, Sue also volunteers at Girls on the Run and the Foster and Adoptive Care Coalition. She and her husband have two adult children, three grandchildren, and frequently travel to their home in Florida.

"Family, friends, I work out almost every day — I'm busy," said Sue

And she has no plans of slowing down.

"I can't stand to be idle."

GLEN WHITTAKER eBAY TEAM

Glen Whittaker joined Wings of Hope as a volunteer selling donated goods in the eBay department about three years ago, but he had known about the nonprofit for more than a decade.

"My first experience with Wings of Hope was about 15 years ago when AOPA (Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association) was having a pilots' safety seminar here," said Glen. "While I was here, I learned a little bit about the organization and thought, 'These guys look like they're doing some very worthwhile work.' I like the mission of providing medical air transportation to patients, so when I retired, I contacted Wings of Hope. I've been working here ever since."

Glen retired after 43 years at Boeing where he worked in ground support equipment designing test equipment for F-15 and F-18 fighter jets. He also has his private pilot's license, but aviation isn't Glen's only interest.

"I'm a wildlife photographer," he said. "I like being out in the natural environment and seeing



Glen Whittaker

the different types of life forms that are out there."

His hobby takes him around the world.

"I've traveled to Africa several times," said Glen. "I've been to Botswana, Zimbabwe, Madagascar."

Glen has even been known to take photos of Wings of Hope volunteers working in their "natural habitats," including the Garden & Grounds Team beautifying the landscape surrounding Wings of Hope's headquarters.

Glen said he enjoys the people he volunteers with and working in the eBay department.

"The whole idea of the eBay department is to bring in revenue to support the organization," he said. "Every dollar we earn helps support Wings of Hope."

Although Glen has been selling personal items, such as photography and computer equipment, on eBay for 20 years, he enjoys the challenge of selling donated items on eBay for Wings of Hope.

"Part of the fun is when we get items that have been donated, sometimes we don't even know what these things are. We have to research them," he said.



Photo courtesy of Glen Whittaker

Raffle Winner Never Thought He'd Win a Plane



Scott Neville

Scott Neville learned to fly in Australia before moving to the San Francisco Bay Area, where he took advantage of three major airports as a recreational pilot.

"It was a lot of fun," said Scott.

But since he moved to Phoenix, the Aussie hasn't done much flying: "I had grand plans of getting back into it. Now I've got a reason to."

That reason is the grand prize 1964 Piper Cherokee 235 he won in the Wings of Hope fall 2024 airplane raffle — the plane he never dreamed he'd win when he purchased three tickets.

"I thought maybe I'd get a third-place prize one of these years, but nobody ever thinks they'll win one of these planes," he said. "It took me by surprise."

Scott participates in a quite a few charitable raffles: "I like to combine giving to good causes with a chance to win something cool."

Now that he is the owner of his first plane, Scott has some thoughts on how he'll put it to use.

"I have friends who want to learn how to fly, and this might not be the best starter plane — but once they've had a bit of experience building hours, it will be great for them."

Scott's also excited to build up his own flight time, and he's looking into joining a local flying club.

With the four-seater's capacity for carrying people and luggage on long-distance flights, Scott sees some fun excursions in his future: "I want to do a little traveling myself."



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