

LIFT

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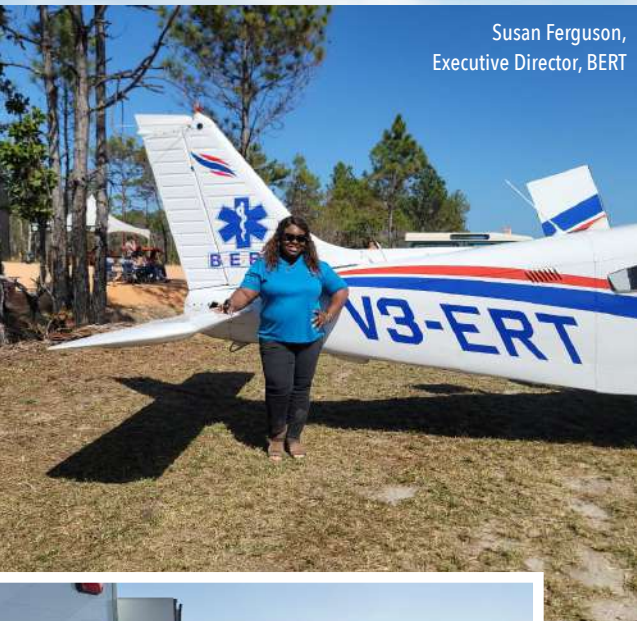
Susan Ferguson,
Executive Director, BERT

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: Global Programs

SOUTH AFRICA Mercy Air

In January, southern Mozambique experienced its worst flooding in more than 20 years, impacting an estimated 700,000 people who were cut off from food, supplies, and medical care. Wings of Hope partner Mercy Air immediately responded to the disaster by providing aerial surveys, conducting medical evacuations, and dropping high-protein dried food packs to the flood impacted areas. It cost Mercy Air about \$2,000 per flight to deliver 1,700 food packs — each feeding a family of five. Wings of Hope supported the delivery of food and containers for the affected communities.

Boxes of food packs ready for delivery



BELIZE

Belize Emergency Response Team (BERT): Flight Evacuation Case

Wings of Hope has been partnering with the Belize Emergency Response Team (BERT), a nonprofit that provides emergency medical services and ground and air ambulance transportation in Belize, for over 40 years. On a bright, sunny afternoon this past January, BERT was called to the town of San Pedro in Ambergris Caye when a middle-aged couple encountered a life-threatening emergency while scuba diving in the Hol Chan Marine Reserve. During the dive, the wife's mouthpiece became dislodged, and she nearly drowned at a depth of about 30 feet. By the time she was brought to the surface, she was clinically unresponsive. Fortunately, the dive master successfully resuscitated her. BERT quickly responded, airlifting the couple to Belize City, where she received further treatment and recovered. She was deeply grateful for a second chance at life.



Flood-impacted people waiting to be evacuated



BERT Medical Evacuation



Loading food packs onto plane for delivery



*Changing & Saving Lives
Through the Power of Aviation*

Meet Austin

Fighting for mobility — and praying for a miracle

Thirteen-year-old Austin was diagnosed with hypotonia, which is a weakness of the muscles, and severe pediatric scoliosis as an infant. Since then, his mom, Kristi, estimates that he has had more than 60 spinal surgeries.

The family, who lives outside of Montgomery, Ala., began Austin's treatment at Children's of Alabama in Birmingham before inserting traditional growing rods in his spine which required surgical adjustments every few months. Finally, they consulted with an orthopedic surgeon at Children's Hospital of Atlanta at Emory University who inserted growing rods which could be magnetically controlled without repeat surgeries. But Austin's spine continued to cave in on itself.

"It got to the point where he couldn't breathe well and he wasn't eating, so we knew spinal fusion was coming," said Kristi.

The family was told that spinal fusion would be the last step when Austin had stopped growing at 18 or 19 years of age.

"But in Austin's case, he was 12 years old when we had no other options," said Kristi.

So the orthopedic surgeon at Emory referred Austin to Shriners Children's St. Louis for halo-gravity traction, which reduces spinal curvature by attaching a metal ring (halo) to the skull and using weights to lift the head.

"Austin's case was so severe that he had up to 43 pounds hanging from his head 24 hours a day," said Kristi.

This increased his oxygen intake by up to 60%.

"It was the first time we've ever seen him eat good, and he was putting on weight and growing," she said.

After about six weeks in traction, Austin endured an 11-hour spinal fusion surgery that left him with 24 screws, four hooks and two titanium rods.

When he returned to Shriners in November 2025, the doctors told him he needed a second spinal fusion on the lower part of his spine. Reluctant to



Austin's second Wings of Hope flight (shown with pilots and mom, Kristi)

give up his last bit of mobility, Austin decided to continue physical therapy — and delay getting another spinal fusion surgery for as long as possible.

"We are just praying for a miracle that would mean not having another fusion," said Kristi.

From a punishing drive to a quick flight

Before they learned about Wings of Hope, Austin and his family had been making the 584-mile, one-way drive from their home to St. Louis.

"It was horrible on Austin's back," said Kristi. "Austin's a fighter. He will never let you know he's hurting — and he has the best, most positive attitude. But when we drive, it's tears just rolling down his face."

Austin made his first Wings of Hope flight in January 2026 — turning what was a grueling 11-hour drive into a 3-1/2-hour trip. This means less school missed for Austin. It also relieves the family of the expense of traveling and the wear-and-tear they had been putting on their older cars.

"It has been such a miracle," said Kristi. "Words cannot express the gratitude that we have for what Wings of Hope does for our family — and what it means for us to not drive and the physical toll that goes along with that."

Austin will continue physical therapy — twice a day, every day. And he will keep working with his physical therapy team at Shriners, returning to St. Louis every few months, until his doctors determine that another surgery is needed. No matter how many trips it takes, Wings of Hope will continue to fly Austin to Shriners.

Kristi gets emotional when she talks about "the angels we have met through Wings of Hope."



Austin's first Wings of Hope flight (shown with dad and sister)

Grateful for Your Support!

THE BOEING COMPANY

In February, Monique Bynum, Boeing's Senior Community Investor and Education Relations leader, presented Wings of Hope with an \$80,000 donation in support of our SOAR into STEM program. The Boeing Company has generously supported this program since its launch in 2019, impacting the lives of hundreds of local students who are eager to explore futures in aviation and STEM-related careers. We are incredibly grateful for Boeing's partnership — and for their genuine passion for empowering, serving, and investing in students.



(Left to Right) Lee Ann Nolte (education programs manager), Melissa Skriwan (development manager), Monique Bynum (Boeing), Amy Cole Buehler (former president, Wings of Hope)



Austin's first Wings of Hope flight

"It's not just the pilots, but everybody involved. They have a heart for it, and they're so loving and compassionate. That's why I wrote this poem. I just needed to somehow express our gratitude — and it's never going to be enough — but these people are angels and people need to know that."

Excerpt from "Wings of Hope," a poem by Kristi Cochran

The heroes behind the scenes
 The ones who give their time
 To prepare the airplanes, coordinate the schedules,
 And work not for a dime.
 The amount of preparation, the funding to make it run
 Thank you will never be enough
 To express all that they have done.
 They treat us like we are royal
 When they are the admirable beings
 Skilled, compassionate, and loving
 Humility that is worth seeing.
 Every person that they employ
 Has a set of angel wings
 Whether pilot, nurse, or driver
 Each play a role in the HOPE they bring.
 So from now on when you look in the sky
 And see a spark of white
 Just know it might be Wings of Hope
 Blessing another family with a flight.



Metropolis of Chicago Philoptochos members Pat Gerbanas, Marilynn Jemas, Brittini Snidle (Wings of Hope), Kathy Katrakas, Angela Wallemann (Wings of Hope), Marilyn Izakis and Vonnice Karafotias.

METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO PHILOPTOCHOS

The Ladies of Metropolis of Chicago Philoptochos visited our hangar in March to present a \$15,000 check to Wings of Hope. The donation represented proceeds from the group's Annual September Luncheon: Spirit of Hope, Soaring Through God's Strength. Our Director of Development and Communications

Brittini Snidle spoke at the luncheon, reflecting on the two organizations' shared missions of easing suffering and improving the quality of life for vulnerable populations. Thank you, Ladies of Metropolis of Chicago Philoptochos!

JMC CHARITIES

So grateful to JMC Charities for donating \$15,000 to Wings of Hope from the 6th Annual John "Mike" Cordell Children's Charity Golf Classic which benefits Wings of Hope and Shriners Children's St. Louis. The tournament was started by Bob Sudholt to honor his late friend, John, whom many at Wings of Hope knew as the big guy behind the wheel of the red van that drove our Medical Relief & Air Transport (MAT) patients to their Shriners appointments. What an amazing legacy and tribute to John's commitment to helping children. Thank you, JMC Charities!



Amy Cole Buehler (former president, Wings of Hope), Angela Wallemann (interim president, Wings of Hope), Bob Sudholt (JMC Charities)

SOAR into STEM:

Making an Impact One Student at a Time

Ever since he can remember, Titus Matheny has envisioned a future in missionary work. Titus and his family moved to Africa when he was six, where they lived for five years providing foster care and formula ministry (feeding babies formula) for children in orphanages.

“Growing up there is where I got my love for mission and travel,” said Titus.

Titus first became interested in aviation around the time he began high school. He started flying drones, eventually earning his commercial drone pilot license.

“I was going to try to start a business flying drones. That didn’t happen. But I had to study a lot for that test — and I learned a lot about aviation.”

The more Titus learned about aviation, the more he realized he “didn’t just want to watch aviation from the ground.”

“I wanted to be up there flying planes,” he said. “That’s how I decided I wanted to be a pilot.”

This past spring, Titus spent the last semester of his senior year in high school working as an intern supporting the SOAR into STEM program at Wings of Hope. Titus participated in the program as a student in the spring of 2025.

“The SOAR into STEM program was my first exposure to a real organization that did mission aviation work,” he said.

Titus said he learned a lot talking to the volunteer mentors about their experiences — and he especially enjoyed the hands-on activities. As an intern, he prepared activities for the students who participated in the program.

“It was a lot of fun,” he said. “I got to test out the activities, build drones, cut out wood pieces for a project where you build a wing rib, test out flight simulators.”

Up next for Titus is attending Moody Aviation in Spokane, Wash., where he will spend five years training to be a missionary pilot. While he’s not exactly sure where he’ll end up after college, Titus said he will probably work for a large mission aviation organization flying humanitarian missions, such as search-and-rescue and medevac flights.

“It just seems like a really cool way to combine my faith and my passion for aviation,” Titus said.



Titus Matheny

SPRING RECAP: Hands-on Activities, Young Eagle Flights and an Impressive Slate of Guest Speakers

For five Saturdays from late March through early May, Wings of Hope welcomed 22 students into our hangar for the spring 2026 SOAR into STEM session. The immersive aviation and STEM curriculum guided students through a range of aviation topics including: the principles of flight and airplane basics, mechanics and engineering, aircraft navigation and communication methods, and uncrewed aerial vehicles (aka drones). Students worked alongside mentors on hands-on activities such as performing essential aircraft maintenance tasks, practicing communicating with air traffic control, honing their stick and rudder skills using flight simulators, and flying drones.

Guest speakers included an A&P/IA aircraft mechanic, a mechanical and structural engineer from Boeing, a retired U.S. Navy Rear Admiral, a former air traffic controller, and a charter jet pilot. The program culminated with an Aviation Career Exploration Fair — allowing students to meet directly with representatives from the aviation industry and higher education institutions — and EAA (Experimental Aircraft Association) Young Eagle Flights courtesy of EAA Chapter 1675. Students flew in aircraft provided by EAA Chapter 1675 and were accompanied by EAA volunteer pilots. These flights, which were the first in a general aviation aircraft for most, were the program highlight for many students.



Student and volunteer pilot prepare for Young Eagle Flight

Meet our new board members and staff!

The Wings of Hope Board of Directors elected two new members at its March 2026 meeting.



MARIANNE BIANGARDI is no stranger to the Wings of Hope family. Her daughter Claire, now 16, is a former MAT patient whom we flew to Cincinnati Children's Hospital from 2013-2015. When Claire was 3, she was diagnosed with hemophagocytic lymphohistiocytosis (HLH), a rare, life-threatening immune system disorder that required specialized treatment not available in her hometown of St. Louis. After two years of treatment, Claire went into remission and has been healthy ever since.

"Wings of Hope helped us so much when Claire was really sick," said Marianne. "I just want to give back, fundraise, and help Wings of Hope however I can."

Marianne, who works in marketing and business development at UHY Advisors, spends a lot of time out and about at professional, networking, and fundraising events. She hopes to use her visibility and connections to bring awareness to Wings of Hope and drive interest in our events. As a Wings of Hope Board Director, she looks forward to "thinking outside of the box and trying to raise more money."

Marianne said Claire is just as passionate about helping Wings of Hope and Make-A-Wish, the other organization that helped Claire when she was little.

"Maybe Claire will be a future board member, too," she said.



VIJOY RAO, creative strategy director at 5BYFIVE Creative, found his way to the Wings of Hope board through his oldest son, Gavin, who started showing an interest in aviation a couple of years ago. As he and his wife started researching opportunities for Gavin to explore this interest, they came upon Wings of Hope. When Vijoy reached out to his high school friend, Patrick Bowen, who was on the Wings of Hope Board — and is now chairman — Patrick told him about the SOAR into STEM program.

"This past fall, Gavin did the SOAR into STEM program and absolutely loved it," said Vijoy. "My family and my in-laws, we all went out there and watched him fly the plane that final weekend — and it was fantastic."

Patrick subsequently invited Vijoy to a fundraiser in the Wings of Hope hangar — and Vijoy was sold: "The mission and the purpose and the energy really resonated with me. So when I was invited to join the board, it was a no-brainer."

Vijoy loves creative problem solving which he describes as "bringing creativity to either the mission or vision and being able to think outside the box" in determining "what we need to achieve and then exploring creative ways on how we can get there."

Vijoy also admires the passion Wings of Hope staff and volunteers bring to their work serving others.

"It's profoundly special when you're able to take something you're passionate about and turn that into something that helps other people."

BEAUX DARNELL, A&P MECHANIC

Beaux Darnell joined Wings of Hope as an A&P mechanic in February. This is Beaux's second job since graduating from the Aviation Maintenance Program at State Technical College of Missouri. She had been working at St. Louis Lambert International Airport, when she learned about the position from fellow State Tech graduate, Luke Polson, who is also an A&P mechanic at Wings of Hope. Beaux said she has always loved planes and working with her hands, but the Wings of Hope mission has "pulled my heart into it a lot more."

"I love contributing to the cause of this place and the things that we do here to help others," she said.

She also likes the challenge of working on the whole plane, and the "learning and troubleshooting" her new position demands.

"Instead of being just one little cog in the machine, like I was at the airline (Lambert), I'm now the machine," she said. "Whenever there is an issue, we have to figure it out ourselves — and do a lot more of the work."

Beaux said she loves her new job — and one reason is the people.

"Everyone's extremely welcoming, and they're all so willing to help me and take me under their wing. I've learned a lot."



STEPHEN LONG, A&P MECHANIC

Stephen Long's first day as an A&P mechanic at Wings of Hope was April 6, but he's been part of the Wings of Hope family for years. His mother, Beth Campbell, is Wings of Hope's chief financial officer — and Stephen has volunteered at many Wings of Hope events, including the annual plane pull.

Stephen calls aviation "the family business."

"My grandpa was a pilot, my uncle is a pilot, another uncle is an A&P mechanic, and mom's a pilot and CFO here," said Stephen.

After 20 years in the restaurant business, Stephen started getting serious about a career in aviation in 2021 when he joined Big River Aviation as an apprentice before earning his A&P certification in 2023. Next, Stephen worked at St. Charles Flying service for a couple of years, before making the jump to Wings of Hope.

"I've been volunteering here for years, so when a job opened up and I was qualified for it, it just seemed like it was meant to be."

Stephen said working at Wings of Hope is "a legacy."

In addition to his mom's long-term support of the organization, first as a volunteer and then as CFO, Stephen's uncle was also a huge Wings of Hope supporter before he passed away. And two of his four brothers work in the medical profession: one's an emergency medical technician (EMT) and the other's a paramedic.

"The medical field and aviation is just where I'm supposed to be," Stephen said.



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 tasks, we depend on them to do mission-critical work that keeps our wings in the air and our operations running smoothly.

REMEMBERING JIM DeVRIES

Jim DeVries could fix just about anything.

As a sheet metal and aircraft maintenance support volunteer for Wings of Hope since 1990, Jim logged over 7,300 hours in the Wings of Hope hangar. Sadly, Jim passed away from cancer this past April.

Wings of Hope CFO Beth Campbell remembers Jim as “a big presence in the room with a heart of gold.”

“I’m going to miss him personally and Wings will miss his skills — because he could fix anything,” she said.

He could also build anything. Wings of Hope volunteer John Heilmann said he was “very impressed with his sheet metal skills.”

One day, Jim told John that he was going to make a lower cowling for an airplane in the hangar.

“I said that’s almost impossible to do. There are multiple curves. It’s very, very difficult,” said John. “A couple of days later, I came into the hangar, and it was on the airplane. I couldn’t believe it.”

John McManamee, a former Wings of Hope pilot and friend of Jim’s for



Jim DeVries

more than 20 years, called Jim “a brilliant engineer — but with no degree.”

“I couldn’t believe how talented he was.”

As Jim’s cancer progressed this past spring, he told John McManamee he’d love to make one last trip to Gaston’s fly-in restaurant in Lakeview, Arkansas.

“That was his favorite place, and it’s beautiful. It’s right on the White River,” said John McManamee.

So he called Lena Pak, director of administration at Wings of Hope, to see if she could tap into the Wings of Hope family to help make it happen. Lena approached John Heilmann, who also happens to be president of the local EAA Chapter 1675, and he had the idea to make Gaston’s the chapter’s next monthly fly out.

“There was a time in the past where I was asked to do something similar



Group that made the trip to Gaston’s

and I thought I had more time, but the individual passed away — so I said, “We’re going to jump on this quick,”” said John Heilmann.

A member of the St. Louis Flying Club, John Heilmann knew they could use the club’s Cessna. But he still needed someone to fly the plane.

“All of the sudden, Damian (Mahoney) walks into the room,” he recalled. “He’s an EMT, and he’s bigger than I am so he could help get Jim (who was in a wheelchair at that point) into the plane.”

Damian, a volunteer pilot for Wings of Hope, was happy to help. Gaston’s was already on the chapter’s list of future fly outs, and the timing couldn’t have been better.

“We had a meeting coming up, so I gave a little presentation on getting in and out of Gaston’s because it is grass — it’s a unique airport to get into,” said Damian.

All told, six planes and 14 people, many from Wings of Hope and others from EAA Chapter 1675, made the trip to Gaston’s.

“Jim had a blast,” said Damian. “He was having a good time, talking, telling stories.”

“When we got there and were all sitting at the table, he dinged his glass and said, ‘I’m just really overwhelmed that all you guys would come down for this,’” said John Heilmann. “I’m glad it worked out, and that we did it when we did. It was a beautiful day.”

His friend John McManamee, said, “Jim was just about as happy as I’ve ever seen him.”

MIKE AND CARIE SHANNAHAN

By any definition, Mike and Carie Shannahan are an aviation family. Mike is a pilot, and two of their three children have their pilot’s license.

“My son soloed the same week he got his driver’s license, and my youngest is taking her FAA commercial next week — she wants to be a commercial pilot,” said Carie.

When all three kids “flew the coop,” Carie started volunteering as a driver for ITNGateway, a nonprofit that provides transportation for older adults and people with mobility challenges. Eventually, she wanted to do more — and she was familiar with Wings of Hope.

“I had been buying raffle tickets for about 10 years, hoping to surprise Mike with a plane — but I didn’t win,” she said.

When she was looking for a new volunteer opportunity, “I just pulled up

their website and saw they had a need for a receptionist — and I'm on my third year."

Carie quickly got her husband involved helping with special events such as the annual plane pull. Last fall, she told him about a guest speaker she thought might interest him who was coming to the SOAR into STEM program.

"I came to listen to the guest speaker and stayed the whole day," Mike recalled. "Then Lee Ann (Nolte), who runs the program, asked if I would want to be a mentor."

Mike signed on as a volunteer mentor for the spring 2026 SOAR into STEM program. As a pilot who owns an engineering and design company, he is ideally suited to offer his advice to students exploring STEM and aviation careers.

"Some of these kids are going to be pilots, and some are going to get engineering degrees," he said.

His favorite part of being a mentor is sharing words of wisdom that he wishes someone had offered him when he was younger.

"I went the path that a lot of these students are going to go," he said. "I got my mechanical engineering degree before working at Boeing and then in the private sector. I look back, and I would have done a lot of things differently had I known one thing or another. They may or may not listen, but I can at least tell these kids, 'Here's what you're going to see, here's what's going to happen, here's what I could have done better.'"

Mike said working with the students bolsters his faith in the future of aviation.

"They're teenage kids, but they're motivated to come here — and there's a lot of value in that. They know what they want to do and where they want to go, and that's a great start."

As for Carie, she finds it rewarding helping people in their time of need, whether it's greeting patients and families as they come in for a medical flight or providing support over the phone.

"A lot of times when people call in, they're crying because of their



Mike and Carie Shannahan

situation," said Carie. "But if I listen to them for 10 minutes, I might turn their day around."

In addition to volunteering at Wings of Hope, Carie volunteers in a memory care center.

"I'm a better person when I'm busy," she said.

Matching Gifts Motivate Donors to Show up Strong on Give STL Day

Wings of Hope supporters showed up in force on Give STL Day, the annual day of giving benefitting St. Louis-area nonprofits. Wings of Hope has long participated in the online giving event, but 2026 shattered previous fundraising totals and surpassed this year's \$140,000 goal by raising \$151,547. The campaign's success was driven by matching gifts that helped double the impact of every donation. Thank you to our incredibly generous matching donors and all who made a gift. Your generosity will help us continue changing and saving lives through the power of aviation.

THANK YOU!!

\$151,547

RAISED ON GIVE STL DAY





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& Saving
Lives
Through the
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Aviation*



4-Star Rating on Charity Navigator,
GuideStar Platinum Rating

SAVE THE DATE!

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2026



Enter a Team of 12 to Pull a Plane!
Music | Kids Activities | Food Trucks | Spectator Viewing Area

**4TH ANNUAL
PULLING
for**

Hope

wingsofhope.ngo/pulling4hope/