

# LIFT

FALL/WINTER 2021 | VOL. 7 | ISSUE 2

## *Dear Wings of Hope Family,*

Hanging on the wall in my office are a series of photos from visits I have made to our field bases around the world. Each picture tells a story about someone we have helped. Another life saved. Another life changed.

There is a picture of one-year old Jaden and his mother. I had the opportunity to spend time with them on one of our flights to Cincinnati where Jaden would receive treatment for burns at Shriners Hospitals for Children. In another, Mike Neville-Rolfe, a bush pilot for Flying Medical Service, our Tanzanian partner, is just about to vaccinate a Maasai infant. The baby's mother is holding the child with a look on her face that can only be described as equal parts love and concern knowing her baby will cry when it is jabbed with the needle containing the vaccine.

As you read the pages of this edition of LIFT, you will encounter other people who have touched our lives. Our Young Ambassadors did a terrific job raising funds through our annual Taste of Hope event to help make it possible to carry out lifesaving work in Haiti, Zambia and Ecuador. You will read about the young people who participated in our STEM activities and how we hope, in our own way, we helped change their lives by exposing them to humanitarian aviation.

You will also meet our new partner, Mercy Air. Working with Mercy Air, we will reach people for the first time in villages in South Africa and Mozambique where more than 900,000 people face food insecurity and lack easy access to basic health care.

The faces that stare back at me from the framed pictures on my office wall uplift me as I reflect on the positive change we have made in their lives. Those faces also remind me that there is much more to be done... many more lives to be saved and changed.

Thank you for being a part of that change.



Flying Medical Service pilot prepares to vaccinate Maasai baby in Tanzania.



*Changing & Saving Lives  
Through the Power of Aviation*

Bret Heinrich,  
President & CEO



# Event RECAP



## Taste of Hope Raises \$43,000 to Support Programs in Haiti, Ecuador and Zambia

On Sept. 25, Taste of Hope returned to the Wings of Hope hangar as an unprecedented success. The approximately 250 patrons enjoyed a stellar lineup of culinary choices, silent auction, 50/50 raffle, music by DJ Carlos Suarez and a special performance by Dances of India. The sold-out foodie fundraiser raised more than \$43,000 — \$13,000 more than the 2020 event. All proceeds benefit Wings of Hope's work helping communities in Haiti, Ecuador and Zambia.

In Haiti, Wings of Hope is supporting one of our newest partners, Haitian Christian Outreach, with shipments of medical supplies and food. Long-term support includes plans to establish a medevac service. In Ecuador, we are helping our partner Alas de Socorro del Ecuador provide medevac services to indigenous communities by funding improvements to the organization's air strips and radio services. In Zambia, we support FlySpec, an organization that flies surgeons into rural communities to perform orthopedic and reconstructive surgeries.

Thanks to all participating vendors: 2nd Shift Brewery, Alpha Brewing Co., Balkan Treat Box, BLT's, Charlie Gitto's, El Burro Loco, Jenny's Diner, Mission Taco Joint, Nothing Bundt Cakes, One Dish Wonders, Rozanna, Salt + Smoke, Smoothie King, Switchgrass Spirits, Thai 202, The Donut Stop and Vito's in the Valley. Starbucks and Anheuser-Busch also donated to the event.

Thank you to our presenting sponsors: Dierbergs, AVMATS and Moneta. We are also grateful to the following sponsors: West Star Aviation, The Triangle Company, Adonis, Health from Within Family Chiropractic, Bret Heinrich, Citizens for Policy Reform, Aero Charter, Mulligan's Grill, Loni Rodgers, Tiffany Nelson, Majd Jmeian, The Rehabilitation Institute of St. Louis and Brad Rafferty.





Summer interns work on a plane in the Wings of Hope hangar.



Soar into STEM students enjoy discovery flights with Elite Aviation.



Wings of Hope hosted two drone camps over the summer. Campers learned about humanitarian aviation, the use of drones in medicine delivery – and they practiced flying small drones in our hangar.



Soar into STEM students and interns take a private tour at Soar into STEM sponsor, Boeing, to get a firsthand look at how planes are made.

## Education & Experiences for Youth

### Taking STEM & Aviation Education to the Next Level

This past year we faced the unique challenge of delivering our hands-on Soar into STEM programming within the constraints of a virtual learning environment. The result is a more structured, in-depth curriculum that will continue to provide students a robust learning experience whether it is delivered virtually or in person.

“We were so determined to provide our Soar into STEM students a virtual experience that was as engaging and exciting as our in-person experience that we ended up with a curriculum that is stronger than ever,” said Tiffany Nelson, director of programs and evaluation for Wings of Hope. “Our instructional designers really knocked it out of the park.”

Twenty-six students participated in the two virtual Soar into STEM sessions we offered over the summer. They were supported by 16 volunteer mentors.

Each four-week session was designed around a specific weekly focus. Week one focused on pilots, the physics of flight and an introduction to Wings of Hope. During week two, students learned about airplane mechanics and built a model V8 engine using an at-home kit. In week three, students learned about the engineering involved in airplanes, and got hands-on by creating their own Lego designs. Flight simulation and navigation activities were the focus of week four. Throughout the program, students connected with mentors, coaches and guest speakers via Zoom to learn about STEM and aviation career paths.

Students who completed at least 75% of their assignments were eligible to take discovery flights in August. Of the 14 eligible students, eight went on discovery flights in small aircraft under the close supervision of certified flight instructors from Elite Aviation.

“As we head into 2022, we’re continuing to enhance the Soar into STEM curriculum by adding a drone component, a first for the program,” said Nelson. “Drone education is really exciting because it connects to the new work Wings of Hope is doing using drones to deliver supplies and resources to underserved communities in places such as Ecuador and Colombia.”

Wings of Hope also hosted seven interns during the summer of 2021. Interns could specify an area of interest when applying to the program. Three used their time to learn more about becoming a pilot, and four explored their interest in the mechanical aspects of aviation. All seven completed hands-on projects working alongside experienced mentors and took discovery flights.

In 2022, Soar into STEM will return to our hangar with two, four-week sessions — one in April and one in November.

For more information about Soar into STEM and our aviation-focused internships, camps and field trips, contact [stem@wingsofhope.ngo](mailto:stem@wingsofhope.ngo).



# Program NOTES

## Wings of Hope Partners with Mercy Air in South Africa



Wings of Hope has a new partner in South Africa. Mercy Air, founded in 1991, uses four aircraft — a Cessna 310, a Quest Kodiak 100, and two Eurocopter AS350 helicopters — to provide humanitarian services to Mozambique and other South African countries. Relying on a large volunteer network of doctors, dentists, teachers and other specialists, Mercy Air uses its small fleet of aircraft to fly into remote villages to provide mobile medical, dental and eye-care clinics; education, including literacy programs; food; supplies; agricultural support; medical and emergency evacuation flights; and help with disaster-relief efforts. Wings of Hope's initial support is providing parts and supplies to keep the organization's fixed-wing aircraft flying. Learn more about our new partner at <https://www.mercyair.co.za>.

## Gracin: From Braces and Crutches to Cleats and Championships

Thirteen-year-old Gracin was born with one leg shorter than the other. Wings of Hope flew her more than three dozen times from her home in Kansas to Shriners Hospitals for Children-St. Louis for bone-lengthening surgeries and therapy. Thanks to the excellent pediatric orthopedic doctors at Shriners — and Wings of Hope flights to and from appointments — Gracin was able to ditch her braces and crutches for her softball cleats. On July 7, she pitched six innings and led her recreational team to the league championship. Gracin is now in the eighth grade and playing volleyball. This scholar athlete is a straight A student with big plans for her future: Gracin wants to be an orthotist and prosthetist when she grows up. As someone who wore leg braces for the better part of three years, Gracin has a special empathy for children who find themselves in a similar situation. As her mom Traci says, "She wants to make braces for legs and arms more comfortable for kids."



Gracin in October 2017: her first Wings of Hope flight.



Gracin in July 2021 after pitching six innings and leading her softball team to the league championship.



## IN THE *Spotlight*

### New Sign Marks Wings of Hope Entrance

*Materials, design and construction 100% donated*

On June 1, we welcomed Wings of Hope staff and volunteers to fully return to our headquarters in Chesterfield, MO — after months of limiting in-person visits due to the pandemic — with the dedication of our new entrance sign. We are grateful to everyone who generously donated their materials, time and expertise to create this beautiful marker: John J. Smith Masonry, Midwest Block & Brick, SPEC MIX, Raineri Building Products, Gillick Brickwork, Goodwin Brothers Construction, Caliber Cast Stone, 3DiQ, Mason Contractors Association, Frisella Landscape Group, Frisella Outdoor Lighting and Frisella Nursery. Special thanks to volunteer, Carolyn Hampel, for spearheading this effort.



Members of the Wings of Hope fun committee celebrate the new entrance sign.



### Greater St. Louis Flight Instructors Association Honors Former Board Member Butch Giessman

Dick Horowitz, former chief pilot for Wings of Hope and vice president of the Greater St. Louis Flight Instructors Association, presented the James G. Byrnes Award posthumously to A.C. "Butch" Giessman. Butch was a longtime Wings of Hope board member who passed away in 2020. His son, Justin Giessman, is now on the Wings of Hope board and accepted the award recognizing his father for outstanding contributions to the aviation community.



### Local Business Owner Donates Hangar Door Repairs

When one of our mechanics noticed a hydraulic leak on the south hangar door this past spring, our hangar crew was quick to act: A hydraulic failure could cause the door to fall. We contacted Hyspeco, a St. Louis-area company with expertise in hydraulic systems.

After inspecting the door, Hyspeco owner Dwayne Smith recommended replacing all the hydraulic hoses and fittings on the hangar door. While at Wings of Hope, Smith was so impressed with our work that he offered to complete the job for free.

"We are incredibly grateful for Mr. Smith's generosity and reminded that safety is critical to everything we do at Wings of Hope," said Tim Long, director of operations for Wings of Hope. "As of September 30, 2021, we've achieved 692 days accident/injury free. No pun intended, but safety is no accident. It's a culture and a mindset that our staff and volunteers embrace."



# Partner SPOTLIGHTS



## Wings of Hope Houses Samaritan Aviation Float Plane

*Two new pilots will complete flight training on plane before heading to Papua New Guinea*

In September, Mark Palm, CEO of Samaritan Aviation, delivered a brand-new float plane to the Wings of Hope hangar. The plane, which will be the third float plane in Samaritan Aviation's fleet, will remain at Wings of Hope for the next few months while two new pilots complete their flight training in it before heading down to Papua New Guinea to fly medical missions for Samaritan Aviation.

"This float plane is a lifesaver for the communities it will serve in Papua New Guinea," said Wings of Hope President and CEO Bret Heinrich. "It will reduce what could be a 14-hour boat ride to medical care to a 30-to-40-minute flight."

Wings of Hope's long partnership with Samaritan Aviation dates to 2001.

"We bought our first plane from Wings of Hope and used it to fly doctors to Mexico to provide medical care for the migrant workers down in Baja," said Palm.

From 2006-2008, Wings of Hope helped prepare a Cessna 206 that Samaritan Aviation would use to fly medical missions in Papua New Guinea —

where the organization continues to operate today.

"Having partners like Wings of Hope allows us to save lives and to reach remote communities," said Palm.

Most recently, Wings of Hope provided Samaritan Aviation funding to train trauma nurses — local to Papua New Guinea — and outfit them with medical equipment that includes stethoscopes, oximeters and blood pressure cuffs.

"That allows the nurses to do their job better so when they call us into an emergency, they have the information we need to triage the patient," said Palm. "To have a partner like Wings of Hope that's willing to help us with the training is a big deal."

While Palm is grateful for Wings of Hope's support of his work in Papua New Guinea, he appreciates the collective work of the organization's many partners around the world.

"For me to come to Wings of Hope and see the global impact that the organization is having — it's really cool to be part of that."

Samaritan Aviation CEO Mark Palm in front of new float plane destined for Papua New Guinea.

## New BERT Pilot Gives Back to His Home Country

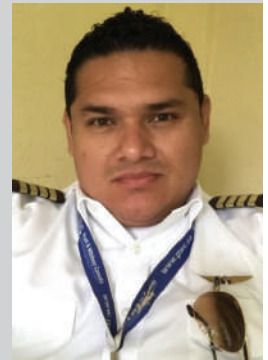
*"Being a pilot is more than a profession, it is a passion — and this may be the best way I can give back to the development of my country, Belize."*

This past spring, Belize Emergency Response Team (BERT) — our partner for more than 30 years in Belize — hired Henry Salgero, a lifelong native of San Pedro, Belize, as the organization's new pilot in command.

Salgero, who has long dreamed of being a pilot, was drawn to his new position due to the humanitarian nature of the work. BERT provides nationwide medical air evacuation coverage using a Piper Cherokee supplied by Wings of Hope.

Salgero expressed his feelings about flying for BERT in a May 31, 2021, blog post:

"I am grateful to have been given this opportunity to be part of a humanitarian lifesaving service, more so to be able to give back and contribute to the development of my country. The Belizean people are constantly in need of our help. They depend on us for hope when crises arise, and I am honored and privileged to be able to assist our citizens in providing that hope. The few flights we have conducted thus far has allowed me to experience the monumental task BERT undertakes daily to make a difference in Belize, especially as we fight to minimize the impacts of Covid-19 in Belize."



Henry Salgero, pilot in command, Belize Emergency Response Team (BERT)



# Thank You

## FOR SUPPORTING WINGS OF HOPE

We are so grateful to the corporations and foundations who support Wings of Hope, and the many donors for their thoughtful and generous tribute gifts honoring family and loved ones.\*

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