



Wings of Hope

Where There are Wings—There is Hope

LIFT

Volume 1* Spring 2015

A Message from our President

The New Year is off to a fast start since I arrived on January 1st to take over as president of Wings of Hope. As I look forward to 2015, I see my role as servant leader to you. This means leading with love and compassion for our team, those we serve and our donors. The book, Lead with Luv, by Ken Blanchard and Colleen Barrett, (former Southwest airlines president) detail how Colleen and Herb Kelleher practiced servant leadership at Southwest. They go on to describe the leadership part of servant leadership as having two parts, 1)strategic vision/direction (what we do) and 2) operational leadership (how we do what we do). So updating the Wings of Hope strategic plan and strengthening our culture, will be key activities for us at Wings of Hope in 2015.



Wings of Hope has a strong foundation with our current vision to help promote hope and peace and our mission to come alongside those we serve on a journey to self-sufficiency. I think we have an opportunity to: clarify the scope and breadth of our humanitarian services, update our strategic plan goals and add core values on how we operate. My preliminary thoughts on core values are based on my discussions and interactions you, the Wings of Hope team. The proposed core values are: servant leadership, service excellence, safety, sustainability and fun. Fun was described well in Lead with Luv as we want to enjoy our work life as much as our home life. We take our mission seriously but we don't take ourselves too seriously, maintain perspective, celebrate successes, enjoy our work and are passionate team players.

I believe Wings of Hope should be: the volunteer service of choice for volunteers, the humanitarian service provider of choice in the communities we serve and be the charity of choice for our donors. I welcome your thoughts and input as we shape Wings of Hope for the next growth horizons in our future.

Field Notes : Nicaragua



On Feb. 6, TJ Stewart took over as field director for Wings of Hope in Nicaragua. For the past 18 months, TJ had been working as a mechanic in the hangar at our St. Louis headquarters. Everybody here loved having TJ around, but we all knew it was only a matter of time until he returned to his true love: flying humanitarian missions overseas.

TJ's main responsibility in Nicaragua is flying and maintaining a Cessna 172 to support medical air evacuations. But he views his role in much broader terms:

“Although being the pilot is my main responsibility, it will not be the only thing that I will be doing. In my few years of doing this work, I have learned that a humanitarian’s job description is ‘finding and meeting the needs of the people you are serving and living with.’ So whether it is flying a patient to receive proper medical care, organizing solar energy projects, or starting sustainable food projects - if it’s a need, and it can be met, I feel that it is my responsibility to do it.”

“After seeing the conditions of most of the roads over here, it's very easy for me to believe when I hear that a 15-minute flight can take up to 8 hours or more by either road or boat. Especially when you are working with the most critical kind of patients, minutes can be the difference between life and death. Of all the people flown, 80% percent of them would not have survived the trip if not by air.

“In sleepy little villages spread out over the desolate northeastern portion of Nicaragua, where the only form of transportation is these roads, or down the windy Rio Coco River, the airplane is their beacon of hope.”



To read more stories from the field, follow us on facebook at www.facebook.com/wingsofhopeinc

Medical Relief & Air Transport (MAT) Program



After many trips to the pediatrician, 2 year old Claire was diagnosed with HLH, a rare autoimmune condition that can be life-threatening. It began damaging her liver and spleen, and treatment required 9 months of blood transfusions, chemotherapy, heavy steroids and immune suppressant drugs to resolve her condition.

Claire’s family knew they had to act quickly. Cincinnati Children’s Hospital has the best doctors to treat the condition. But getting there on a commercial flight was impossible. Her mother said, “A commercial flight, with 200 people and someone might have a cold, could be devastating for Claire. We couldn’t take her to the grocery store, school, or even outside on windy days – much less take her on a commercial airplane.”

After months of transport to receive her care, a transformation is made again. Claire is back to as much of a normal life as possible, thanks in part to the pilots at Wings of Hope. “We have met 10 or so pilots and co-pilots during our trips. The pilots are excellent and make flying these small planes look so easy. The pilots are so generous with their time, and all the volunteers and administrative staff have been extremely kind, accommodating, and understanding.”



Calendar of Events 2015

May 25 - Closed Memorial Day
May 29 - Volunteers Luncheon
June 6 - GSLBAA Golf Tournament
June 19 - Women's Luncheon
July 17 - Appreciation BBQ
July 24 - Full Board Meeting
October 3 - Fall Party
December 18 - Holiday Luncheon



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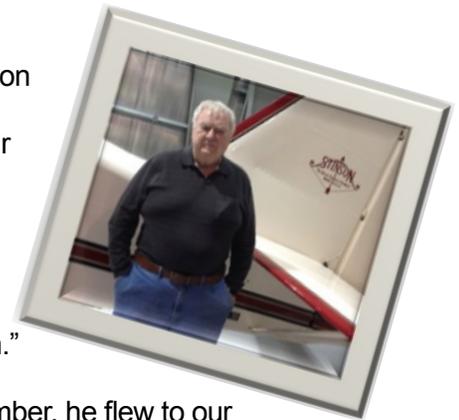
Save the date! On **May 5, 2015**, Wings of Hope is participating in Give STL Day – 24 hours of online giving for local nonprofits. Donate on this day and your dollars can make an even bigger impact for Wings of Hope as we compete for hourly cash prizes. Follow us on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/wingsofhopeinc> and check out our giving page at <https://www.givestlday.org/#npo/wings-of-hope>

Volunteer Spotlight

Frank Almeter has a lot of stories to tell. If you ever have time to sit down with this 79-year-old war veteran and longtime Wings of Hope pilot, ask him what first turned him on to flying. He'll tell you it could have been the yellow J-3 that landed near his farm when he was a boy or the jet contrail he saw in the sky while herding dairy cows one afternoon.

“Or most likely it was my English teacher, Mrs. Ryan, who saw an airplane drawn on every paper that I handed in,” said Frank. “One day, she gave me several flying magazines. When reading them, I saw a full-page ad that said, ‘You Can Be An Air Force Pilot.’”

That was the beginning of a lifelong love affair with aviation that would take Frank through 30 years of service in the military — for which he earned the prestigious Silver Star — and 14 years flying humanitarian missions for Wings of Hope, which he calls “the most gratifying contribution I have ever experienced in aviation.”



Even though he turns 80 this September, Frank is still flying. As recently as November, he flew to our base in Nicaragua to replace an engine on our plane there. Frank has flown dozens of flights for Wings of Hope, mostly in support of the Medical Relief and Air Transport Program, but his most memorable was not a typical Wings of Hope flight.

“The one that stands out was a grandmother who was stranded in a nursing home in Gulfport, Mississippi, after Hurricane Katrina,” he said. “She was evacuated from the nursing home and needed to be flown to Columbus, Ohio ... We loaded her onboard. She was frightened. I held her hand, gave her a big hug and told her that in four hours she would be with her children.”

The heat was so bad that the frail 95-year-old woman was fading fast. So Frank contacted the control tower and they were able to clear Frank for takeoff — with his passenger and all of her belongings. “That consisted of two small boxes and a 12-inch black-and-white TV,” he recalled.

When Frank landed, TV news reporters were everywhere. One asked Frank how he was feeling. He remembers crying and saying, “You don’t have to ask me, just look at her children.”

Thank you, Frank, for your years of selfless service to our country and to Wings of Hope. (And thank you, Mrs. Ryan, for giving Frank that stack of flying magazines!)

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Irish eyes were smiling at the St. Patrick's Day Parade in downtown St. Louis on March 14. Thanks to all of the volunteers, including the Sam's Club Maplewood store, who helped us fly our popular balloon float along the parade route to the cheers of thousands enjoying the wearin' 'o the green!



Four Star Charity Rated, Gold Charity Rating and
twice nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize

Email us at info@wings-of-hope.biz to receive this
newsletter electronically. Thank you!