

Missions Include Transplants, Hurricanes



Bob and his wife Wendy are glad to belong to Angel Flight

Bob Bye began flying years ago. He knows his way around planes. And for the past three years, the Roanoke, Va., resident has been putting his skills and knowledge to work for Angel Flight.

Bob, who currently flies a Cessna 206, got his start in aviation when he spent two years on an aircraft carrier during his four-year stint in the Marine Corps, which he joined straight out of high school at age 17.

That was when he discovered he "liked being around" planes. Once he left the Marines, he used the GI Bill to earn his degree from the University of Nebraska and get the instrument and flight ratings he needed to fly.

Bob began piloting for Angel Flight nearly three years ago. It's a "good way to help people and keep my flying hours up. I wish I had more time to do it," he says, adding

that he's helped "people that very much needed the service."

One memorable flight was a "lifeguard" flight, meaning there were only a certain number of hours to get to the hospital. His passenger was a three-month-old baby needing a transplant. Though the call to fly came in the early hours of the morning, Bob was there to transport the patient to Cincinnati for the needed operation.

Another experience was less favorable. He recalls flying another transplant patient and being shocked to learn three weeks later that the man had died.

The experience was "morbid," says Bob, but it showed that the



Bob flew this Beech Baron before buying his Cessna 206 that's part of 'helpful force'

patients Angel Flight assists are "in dire need of help."

So far during his past year with Angel Flight, Bob has flown four flights, one of them in response to Hurricane Katrina.

For that mission, Bob flew a

Red Cross volunteer to the disaster area. The volunteer was in charge of setting up emergency response kitchens, a move Bob felt "really, really helped" the rescue effort.

He said he was astounded at the logistics involved with two rescue organizations, the North American Baptists and the Red Cross, as they distributed supplies and manned the emergency kitchens.

The volunteers were able to feed some 500,000 people right after the storm.

As an Angel Flight pilot, Bob realizes he's part of a helpful force, but also quick to acknowledge that he's not the only one. There are "others who have flown a lot more who are much more deserving" of being written up.

"The Angel Flight staff are really dedicated and hardworking," he says. It's "good to be associated with a group that makes a career out of trying to help people."

SAVE THE DATE!

October 21 is the date for this year's **Angel Flight Mid-Atlantic banquet**, so mark your calendar for 6:00 p.m.! We'll dine at the beautiful **Va. Beach Resort & Conference Center** on the Chesapeake Bay. Opportunities for table sponsorship will be available. Details to come next month.