

Letters Say Thanks for Flights of Hope



Four-year-old Chloe (R) flew with her mom, Janelle, to Cincinnati Children's Hospital for treatment of a serious esophageal disorder. Janelle says, "Our prayers were answered when we heard about Angel Flight."

Editor's Note: Every day, letters pour in from patients thanking you, the pilots of Angel Flight, for providing access to life-saving medical treatment. We thought you would enjoy these photos and excerpts from letters.

Michael was diagnosed with melanoma cancer, which first appeared on his face...he underwent surgery and had the tumor removed...he went to the doctor for hernia surgery...and found the melanoma had spread to both of his lungs and pancreas.

He felt his only hope was to try the cancer clinic in Houston...we knew we were going to be stretched to the limit for travel. When we got the call letting us know that three pilots had lined up to get us from Virginia to Houston, all I could do was cry.—Gail G.

Thank you for flying my 5-year-old daughter Aurora to see specialty doctors in Ann Arbor.

Without your help I could not afford to pay air fare...I am a single mother, and the 10-hour car ride from Upper Michigan is too much for us. Tears were in my eyes when I first called Angel Flight...We flew twice in 30 days to see specialists for oral facial surgery...you are a miracle to us!—Mickey S.

Words cannot express the gratitude my family and I have for your organization. Jackie T. of Duffield, Va., is alive with the breath of life without the assistance of bottled oxygen or machines, with the help of Angel Flight.

(Jackie, who suffered from pulmonary fibrosis, received a double-lung transplant at age 54. Neither he nor his family could afford the cost of a commercial flight.)—Tema HB.



Shown above in their Piper Meridian are Brett and Caroline Lunger. With homes in Delaware and Arizona, they fly for two Angel Flight regions.

Thank you for...getting me to the hospital for my son's transplant. I was able to fly with him, which was very important—Melissa D.

Angel Flight Gets Soldier Home for Christmas

He had been wounded twice before while serving in Iraq, but the third injury proved to be the most devastating.



Sgt. Montange receives a welcoming handshake from First Lt. Christopher Stolkey upon arrival at the Jackson County, Michigan, airport. Montange was flown on Christmas Eve from Walter Reed hospital by Angel Flight pilots Chuck Van Nostrand and Mike Pearson, standing left to right in the background. (Photo courtesy of Dave Weatherwax/Jackson Citizen Patriot.)

Army Staff Sgt. Michael Montange, 28, was with his regiment about 15 miles from Baghdad when an improvised explosive device detonated on Aug. 22, sending a projectile through his buttock and out the opposite hip.

After flat-lining several times and undergoing 38 surgeries, Montange pulled through, though not without losing nearly half of his intestines. Recovering at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., he will have to wear a colostomy bag for the rest of his life.

As Christmas neared, his father, Ron Montange, tried to figure out a way to get his son home to Chelsea, Michigan, for the holidays. It had been 10 years since Michael had seen his hometown. Ron decided to rent a van and drive to Washington and back, then do it all over again after Christmas to return

his son to Walter Reed.

Meanwhile, a friend, Frederic Leeman, was looking on the Internet for better options. He discovered Angel Flight and put Ron in touch with the organization. Missions director MJ Sablan contacted pilot Chuck Van Nostrand, who agreed to take the mission. Mike Pearson signed up as co-pilot.

VanNostrand is a co-owner of the Beechcraft Bonanza based in Manassas that has been used to fly patient missions since it was first purchased in 1977. Equipped with a LifePort stretcher system, the aircraft is well-suited for accommodating non-ambulatory patients like Montange who do not need medical assistance while on board.

The flight was delayed for two days because of high winds, but on Christmas Eve, the pilots safely brought Sgt. Montange to Jackson County Airport where he was greeted by a crowd of family members, firefighters and others. Later he was joined by his wife Amber and two young children who had traveled from Missouri.

In an article appearing in the *Jackson Citizen Patriot*, Michael's dad was quoted as saying, "This is very meaningful all the way around. This is the best Christmas present ever."

Volunteer Coordinator Joins Staff



Mary Ellen Miles, Angel Flight's new volunteer coordinator, looks forward to "spreading the word" about the charity and recruiting more

Community Representatives. With a master's degree in sociology and several years of experience working with nonprofits, including a long-term health facility and the March of Dimes, Miles is well-qualified to recruit, train, and provide supplies for the valued volunteers of Angel Flight.

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