

LIFT

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Where There are Wings, There is Hope

As I was pondering the theme for this newsletter, one word kept bubbling to the surface: GRATITUDE. I write it in all caps here, as it is so prominent in my thoughts.

I am *grateful* for your incredible response to our *Hope is Where the Heart* is gala. This was our 15th annual gala benefiting our MAT Program, and an unqualified success – both in terms of dollars raised and record attendance. But, from my vantage point, it was even more successful in the most human of ways. In the way it touched anyone who listened as the parents of two baby boys talked about how Wings of Hope is giving their sons a chance to walk ... or the way it moved anyone who saw Emilee, a young woman who could not speak on her own a year ago, speak about her journey back to health ... or the way it affected anyone who listened to Jonathan, a MAT pilot, talk about his experience for the first time as a passenger in a MAT plane, riding with his daughter to the Mayo Clinic. (See page 2.)

I am *grateful* for your generous response to our annual appeal. Every year, we ask you for additional help during the holidays when you inevitably have so many personal expenses and family commitments. Not only do you give, and give generously; but in the past four years, contributions have increased by 300 percent. You should know that as we discuss these results among staff and in the boardroom, it is no small thing. We are overwhelmed and humbled. (See page 3.)

I am *grateful* for your support of our airplane raffles. These have become so wildly popular – our fall raffle sold out in less than 12 hours! – that last year we started raffling off not just one, but two, planes a year. The money these raffles raise is invaluable in supporting our MAT program. The next raffle launches April 1! (See pp. 3-4.)

As much as I am grateful for your generosity, I am always struck by how generously you give of your time and talents. More than 80 volunteers worked tirelessly for months to pull off the huge event that is our gala. We count on volunteers to stuff the envelopes we use to mail out our annual appeal. Volunteer pilots fly for our MAT Program and internationally. If you want to understand how personally our volunteers take their work, just read TJ Stewart's blog. (See story page 3.)

On behalf of everyone here at Wings of Hope ... Thank You!

Laura Helling

Laura Helling, Interim President



HOPE

is Where the Heart is

2017 GALA SHINES!

Love was in the air for more than 400 guests at Wings of Hope's 15th annual *Hope is Where the Heart is* gala on Feb. 11 at The Chase Park Plaza. The evening boasted record attendance and raised significant funds to support our Medical Relief & Air Transport Program.

Kudos and gratitude to gala chairs Jack and Crista Taylor and Jim and Diane Moffat. Many thanks also to Mike Calcagno, Melanie Halley and the dinner auction council, as well as the more than 80 volunteers who worked to make this year's gala a resounding success. A special shout out to the 26 Young Ambassadors of Wings of Hope and Saint Louis University students who stepped up to volunteer in a number of roles.

Board Vice-Chairman Fred Meyland-Smith congratulated presenting sponsor Fabick Cat on its 100-year anniversary, noting that this places Fabick in the rarified company of less than 1 percent of U.S. businesses who achieve this milestone. He then recognized the Fabick family, who made a strong showing by filling two tables, including Jere Fabick, president of Fabick Cat and grandson of Wings of Hope founder, Joe Fabick. Mary Jean Russell, one-time director of development for Wings of Hope and niece of Wings of Hope founder, Paul Rodgers, was also on hand.

Guests were visibly moved as patients took the stage to share their stories of how Wings of Hope has made their journeys back to health possible. The families of two baby boys with clubfeet talked about how Wings of Hope made it possible for their sons to be treated by St. Louis Children's Dr. Matthew Dobbs, a nationally renowned expert on the Ponseti method of treating clubfeet. Emilee Williams, a young woman who brought the crowd to tears at last year's gala when she got out of her wheelchair to dance with her dad, returned to update guests on her ongoing recovery from Wilson's disease. Williams and her sister then presented Meyland-Smith with a check for \$750 – part of the proceeds from a walk they organized last fall to raise funds for research into a cure for Wilson's disease. Finally, Jonathan Raskas and his daughter, Jasmine, shared their gratitude for Wings of Hope's role in transporting Jasmine to the Mayo Clinic for treatment of Ehlers Danlos Syndrome. Jonathan talked about his unique perspective as a former MAT pilot – who had flown dozens of patients in Wings of Hope's planes – riding as a passenger with his daughter on her flight to treatment.

The evening kicked off with a cocktail hour, followed by dinner, silent and live auctions – emceed by Todd Morgan, former St. Louis radio personality – and dancing to the music of Mirage.

WINGS OF HOPE DELIVERS C-172 TO FALL RAFFLE WINNER!

On a sunny Friday in February, Chris Cookenmaster looked up to see his first plane landing on the runway at Walker County Airport. Chris was the winner of Wings of Hope's fall 2016 airplane raffle. He found out about the raffle on Facebook, and says a friend told him not to waste his money – he would never win. Good for Chris, he ignored his friend's advice and bought three tickets for \$125. Still, he was shocked when he received the call from Wings of Hope telling him he had won. "I've never won anything," he said. "Who wins an airplane?" Chris has been flying for about three years and recently got his pilot's license. This is his first plane. "It is a great plane, and it has all been redone – new paint, new interior, the motor overhauled and everything." Wings of Hope's fall 2016 raffle sold 4,000 tickets in less than 12 hours, raising more than \$170,000.

Wings of Hope pilot, Don Hoerstkamp, hands the keys of a C-172 to airplane raffle winner, Chris Cookenmaster. ►



THE DAY I FROZE

BY TJ STEWART

From the cockpit, I can see the sun setting as the plane starts descending into Dangriga, a small town on the coast of Belize. I am responding to a call about a boat that capsized with a young mother and her infant son onboard. Reportedly, the infant was under water for 20 minutes. The biggest goal is to get the patient onboard and airborne before dark.



...

Looking over, I see that the baby is secure in his plastic carrier and the medic is taking her seat as well. We're set to take off.

As I am performing my pre-start checklist, the medic tells me that the baby is responding to our care. The mother looks up at me and asks, "He's getting better?"

For the first time in my life, I freeze before starting up the engine.

...

I have done hundreds of flights with patients who are minutes from death – and never froze. I've disassembled

and reassembled an aircraft engine, installed it on an airplane and flown it without hesitation. In high school, with my basketball team down by one point – and me on the free throw line with seconds left to play – I didn't freeze. But with the sun setting quickly and the engine start checklist waiting, the care and love that this young teenager had for her son froze me. After I don't know how long, I mumble something along the lines of "Yea, he's getting better," while restarting my checklist. The engine fires up, and we takeoff toward Belize City.

A few days later, I step into the children's ward of the hospital in Belize City to check on the two patients. The mother has already been cleared, and I find her diligently adjusting the clothes of her baby in a hospital bed. She excitedly tells me that her son was removed from the breathing machine today and is expected to make a full recovery. This time, her voice is not only filled with the same care and hope that stunned me a few days before, but it has another element: pure, unfiltered joy. If I was frozen before, the joy on her face literally melts my heart.

TJ Stewart is a Wings of Hope pilot flying humanitarian missions in Belize. This is an excerpt from a blog TJ wrote in January 2017. To read the entire blog, go to <http://tjstewartwingsofhope.blogspot.com/>

Calendar OF EVENTS

March 11, 2017

St. Patrick's Day Parade
Downtown St. Louis

March 25, 2017

Greater St. Louis
Flight Instructors
Association Trivia Night
Helicopters, Inc.

April 1, 2017

Spring Airplane Raffle
Tickets Go on Sale
at 6 a.m. Central Time

April 8, 2017

GO St. Louis! 5K
Forest Park, St. Louis

April 22, 2017

Plane Wash
Wings of Hope Hangar

May 11, 2017

Give STL Day

June 3, 2017

GSLBAA Golf Tournament
The Landings at
Spirit Golf Club

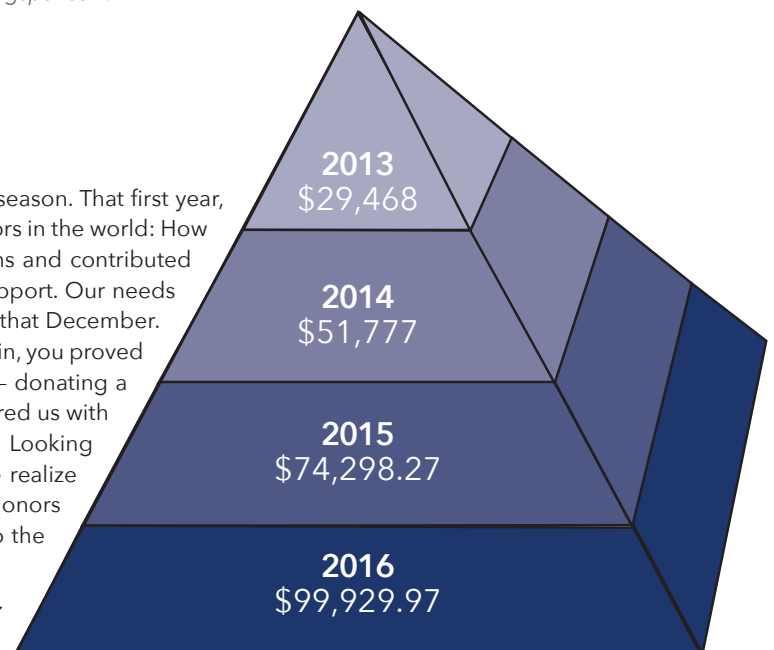
October 14, 2017

Taste of Hope
International Food Tasting
Wings of Hope Hangar

We Appealed to You ... AND YOU RESPONDED BIG TIME!

In 2013, we started mailing you an annual appeal during the holiday season. That first year, we kept our expectations low. We already had the most generous donors in the world: How much more could we ask? Well, you blew the lid off our expectations and contributed \$29,468. We were so grateful and humbled by your outpouring of support. Our needs continued to grow in 2014, so we sent out our second annual appeal that December. Again, we worried that you would grow weary of our appeals. And, again, you proved us wrong by donating \$51,777. In 2015, you continued to dig deep – donating a whopping \$74,298.27. Fast forward to 2016, and, once more, you floored us with your generosity – donating nearly \$100,000 (\$99,929.97 to be exact)! Looking back on the success of this campaign over these past four years, we realize that our first assumption was right: we do have the most generous donors in the world. Your generosity is a blessing to Wings of Hope – and to the thousands of people we serve every year all over the globe.

Thank you!





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No fooling...Wings of Hope *Airplane Raffle* Launches April 1st!



GRAND PRIZE: 1979 Piper Archer II

1 ticket
\$50
or
3 tickets
\$125

Tickets go on sale
**APRIL 1, 2017 at
6am Central Time**

Aircraft will be delivered with fresh overhauled Lycoming engine. This aircraft is being offered with 2350 hours total time and a fresh annual. White fuselage with yellow and orange accent stripes. Tail painted with matching yellow/orange colors. Matching stripes near wing tips and wheel pants. Interior features beige upholstery seats with leather/vinyl trim, light brown side panels, light beige background on instrument panel, gray carpet. Dual KX-175 NAV/COMM with G/S, KMA 24 audio panel, PS engineering intercom, KN-62A DME, Stratus ESG transponder ADSB, Stratus 2i ADSB In receiver, Piper Autopilot. **SECOND PRIZE:** a PPL or Advanced Training Scholarship.

For tickets, visit www.wingsofhope.ngo/airplane-raffle/

Raffle ends July 1, 2017 or when the 4,000th ticket is sold – whichever comes first!

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