

# The National Aeronautics Association and the Air Care Alliance



## Public Benefit Flying Awards – Teamwork Award Program Supplement

NAA Fall Awards Dinner  
Crystal Gateway Marriott  
November 29, 2017

### **The Public Benefit Flying Teamwork Award:**

In the fall of 2017 several national disasters, including hurricanes and wildfires, devastated enormous areas of South Texas, Florida, other states in the Gulf region, and many islands of the Caribbean, plus Northern California.

Massive and heroic relief efforts were conducted by tens of thousands of first responders, members of the military, relief agency teams, NGOs, and aviation companies such as corporate aircraft operators, passenger airlines, and cargo carriers, and by countless ordinary citizens.

In addition, within days and over the succeeding weeks many hundreds, perhaps thousands, of volunteers from public benefit flying and other general aviation groups created a significant supplemental airlift effort providing relief, rescue, and critical aid to those in need in communities large and small throughout the affected regions.

For these efforts, this year's Public Benefit Flying Teamwork Award is being presented to all volunteer pilots, other volunteers, leaders, supporters, and their groups in recognition of the immense value of their flights in providing aid and comfort to so many individuals and communities.

Members of the 2017 Public Benefit Flying Selection Committee were Jeff Bennett, 2016 Distinguished Volunteer Pilot; Linda Daschle, President of LHD & Associates, Inc.; Dan Meyer, Former Director, Air Care Alliance; and Jane Nicolai, 2015 Distinguished Volunteer Pilot.



Supplies Being Unloaded from Team Pegasus's Grumman Albatross  
St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands

## **A Brief Summary of some relief efforts conducted by Volunteer Pilots, Other Volunteers, and their Public Benefit Flying Groups during the fall of 2017:**

Because so many general aviation groups and their members as well as individual pilots organized and provided relief flights there was insufficient time to list them all or adequately describe their efforts on stage during the awards program. Thus this supplement is intended to provide a fuller but still brief overview of the groups, their members, and some of their accomplishments. However be advised this is partial information because we are certain there were other similar groups and efforts of which we have not heard, and many, many stories still to be told.

In addition, recognize that all the other groups and many thousands of individuals involved in the massive relief work must be honored too, and it is our hope that many venues are found so that all those who pitched in – from military, civilian, agency, commercial, first responder, or nonprofit groups – or as ordinary citizens – receive our nation's highest thanks for pulling together and providing aid during a season of major disasters and heartbreak for so many.

First, we must acknowledge the special roles played by the **Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA)** and the **National Business Aircraft Association (NBAA)**. AOPA and NBAA each provided important media coverage during the disasters and encouraged their members and other groups to pitch in. AOPA staff members volunteered to fly relief missions to Florida and the Caribbean and NBAA set up a central hotline for corporate operators to volunteer their planes and crews in support of relief work. Both worked closely with many of the groups shown below.

### **Here are some of the groups and their reports:**

**Patient AirLift Services (PALS):** Through our newly formed PALS **Sky Hope Disaster Relief Program**, we arranged flights for over 400 relief workers and relief supply deliveries. Many of our pilots and other volunteers pitched in. A couple of examples include Robin Eissler, Founder of the **Sky Hope Program**, who orchestrated the success of the first and subsequent flights into Beaumont, Texas. Paul Weismann, a PALS Pilot, answered the call to help out with a flight to Puerto Rico and was in the air the next morning. He continued to fly for 3 days to help out in the relief efforts. There are so many people who performed amazing deeds in the last 3 months. It is so good to see humanity at its best.

Note that PALS also provided vital safety recommendations to all the volunteer pilots and groups.

**Civil Air Patrol:** As of the 3rd of November 1,181 CAP personnel from 42 Wings and Regions have been involved in flying 3,030 hours on 1,339 sorties utilizing 131 aircraft to collect 511,983 photos for hurricane and wildfire response activities in California, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, South Carolina, Texas and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands.

The last two and half months have been incredibly busy for disaster relief operations that are still ongoing in California and Puerto Rico. The commitment of our volunteers to assist their Communities, States, and Nation has been incredible.

**Pilots n Paws:** Our volunteers responded and saved the lives of countless animals during these disasters. Supplies of food, water, medications, crates, collars, and leashes were delivered to Marathon, Big Pine Key, Texas, and Louisiana. Animals were flown to safe havens from all these disaster areas including the fires in California.

One of our volunteer pilots runs **Air Twiga Animal Rescue** and provided us a Hawker 700. In one day the Hawker made two trips from Hammond, Louisiana to Muskegon, MI and then a final trip from Muskegon to Long Island. Two weeks later they made the same trip again. Some of our

pilots' homes were also flooded or damaged though many of their planes were spared. In spite of all they had lost, they started the engines and took to the air to help others. This is just who volunteer pilots are!!

**AERObridge:** During the Hurricane Harvey response we worked with volunteer pilots, **NBAA** members, and other groups to transport more than 40 tons of cargo, which included meds that supplied a Houston Hospital as well as chainsaws, generators, and food to the first responders in Rockport TX and surrounding communities.

During Hurricane Irma, we were the first aid to reach the lower keys by landing on a private airstrip in Summerland Key. We and our partners such as **AOPA** pilots transported more than 120 tons of supplies that sustained the keys until assistance opened up from Marathon and Key West. During Hurricane Maria, we carried more than 100 passengers (inbound with SAR teams and med personnel and outbound with FEMA workers and passengers with medical issues) as well as transporting more than 140 tons of donated supplies into Puerto Rico, St. Thomas and Tortola.

We flew volunteer relief flights in Texas after Harvey, Florida after Irma, and Puerto Rico and the USVI/BVI after Irma and Maria. In Irma relief flights alone, we flew the equivalent of a fully loaded C-17 into Summerland Key. We worked closely with **AOPA** and **Sun n Fun** to make that happen.

**Angel Flight Soars:** Our volunteer pilots moved disaster coordinators and volunteers to Texas and Louisiana, volunteers as well. Our pilots picked up patients and volunteers from Florida and South Carolina. We restocked supplies for the St. Thomas hospital and took 8 generators to airport staff there. We sent medical supplies and water purification systems to the islands, and brought back people on the return flights too.

Our office staff picked up supplies, loaded them, and coordinated ground transport in St. Thomas and San Juan.

**Aviators Helping South Texas:** This impromptu group was organized largely through FaceBook and other social media by members of several chapters of the **Experimental Aircraft Association** to ask pilots and others to pitch in when Hurricane Harvey blew in on Texas. The effort soon involved hundreds of pilots and partner organizations who transported nearly 300 tons of fresh drinking water and about 50 tons of other relief goods into Beaumont and surrounding areas. Their airlift was greatly supplemented by generous support from **United States Army** units, from the **Civil Air Patrol**, and from pilots organized by **Operation Airdrop**.

**The Commemorative Air Force:** Working with other general aviation and EAA groups the CAF flew large quantities of supplies to the Houston area in their Douglas C-47 "Bluebonnet Belle" and B-25 "Devil Dog."

**Operation Airdrop:** Our group formed just after Hurricane Harvey hit Texas. We soon had 163 pilots volunteer to fly supplies to the Houston area, totaling approximately 250,000 pounds of cargo spread out over 500 flights over the span of one week. We had another 50 pilots volunteer to fly to Florida after Hurricane Irma, and had both the MBLPA Foundation through former Texas Ranger and MLB Hall of Famer Ivan 'Pudge' Rodriguez and Carmelo Anthony through his charitable foundation donate funds for cargo charter flights to Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria.

Generally, aviation solves a week-one problem for other disaster agencies. It takes them a few days to assess damage well enough to move ground transport into a disaster area, whereas

aviation, in particular light general aviation aircraft, can be into and out of a disaster area immediately. I think all of these groups have shown that general aviation is an under-utilized national resource during disaster relief efforts.

**Angel Flight Central:** Our pilots flew supplies and generators into Texas and flew medical personnel from Heart to Heart International and medicine into Florida. We coordinated our operations with **Angel Flight South Central**, based in Texas.

**Angel Flight South Central:** Our pilots provided relief by flying medical supplies, baby formula, diapers, and other requested supplies and by evacuating people from the affected areas.

**Mercy Flight Southeast/Angel Flight of Florida:** Our volunteer pilots flew more than 100 missions carrying supplies and medical staff to the hurricane victims and flying evacuees to safe havens. They flew aircraft as small as a Cirrus SR22 and as large as an ERJ 145 chartered with special donations. Alan Staats from **AERObridge** was a very big help to our mission as well.

**Angel Flight West:** We provided pilots to **Angel Flight South Central** and **Mercy Flight Southeast/Angel Flight of Florida** to fly relief efforts for the hurricanes. We also distributed tickets generously donated by **Alaska Airlines** providing transportation for relief workers in and out of the hurricane ravaged areas.

**Angel Flight MidAtlantic:** We understand that Angel Flight MidAtlantic volunteers also flew relief flights and will add information about that when we receive their report.

**SouthWings:** Our volunteer pilots responded to three hurricanes that hit the Southeastern United States during the fall of 2017: Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Mary, and Nate. In total, six different SouthWings volunteer pilots donated a total of more than 50 flight hours to enable our flight partners across seven states to survey for pollution and other environmental threats related to the hurricanes.

The **Cajun Airlift** deserves special recognition as an all-volunteer effort organized in the days after Hurricane Harvey by a group of coastal Louisiana pilots and friends who wanted to help their neighbors in coastal Texas and Louisiana. They partnered with other groups and flew many missions.

**Vital Flight:** First our volunteers collected supplies for medical and immediate personal care (medical, MRE, hygiene) at the Signature Flight Support office at Opa-Locka Executive - Miami International Airport. Then our pilots flew multiple flights to Key West, the Bahamas, and Puerto Rico. The Puerto Rico relief work was part of a larger airlift effort with **Cargojet** of Canada.

**Team Pegasus Grumman Albatross flying boat:** Sky Terry, a member of the **Emergency Volunteer Air Corps (EVAC)** and the **West Coast General Aviation Response Program (WCGARP)** and fellow volunteer Nachiket Deshpande were able to reach out to the flying boat group **Seaplane Crossings**, operating a fleet of three Grumman Albatross amphibian seaplanes. They introduced the group to **AERObridge**, whose leaders helped coordinate flights. Their

volunteers proceeded to load up a Team Pegasus Albatross flying boat and facilitated its delivering large loads of supplies to the hard-hit area of Saint Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Because of that first run another individual sponsor proceeded to sponsor two more runs. That particular seaplane delivered 15,000 pounds to Saint Thomas in three runs. It is worth noting that the online magazine **www.seaplanemagazine.com** helped by spreading awareness of this effort. They have also been encouraging better preparation of the seaplane and aviation community in light of the major earthquakes expected on the West Coast.

**NOTE: Some groups whose members responded may not be shown yet in this list.** The Air Care Alliance sent inquiries to all known general aviation volunteer pilot and similar charitable groups, plus other new groups we learned about through the media. More than 20 groups responded with information as shown above, and we added other information we learned about.

But it is likely some groups may be missing from this list. If you know of any please have their leadership provide a short summary of their relief work in 2017 and send it to us at [mail@aircareall.org](mailto:mail@aircareall.org).

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***"When we honor one, we honor all."***