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Angel Flight West: Bridging the Gap Between Home and Healthcare

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Sometimes, a patient needs care your facility can't offer. So you refer them to a specialist. Their insurance -- private or public -- will cover the

treatment but they have no way to get there. And when the destination is hundreds of miles away, getting there can seem impossible.

That's what happened to the "Palmer" family in Eureka. One-year-old

Kita Palmer was suffering from an apparent gastrointestinal disorder that had her local doctors baffled. They referred the little girl to Lucille Packard Children's Hospital, but her single mom's car was in no shape to make the long drive, and



Patient Jean G. with Angel Flight West Volunteer Pilot John Ferrell

her low-paying job left no room in the budget for expensive air travel.

Fortunately, Kita's case manager knew about Angel Flight West (AFW). She made a phone call and AFW found a volunteer pilot to fly Kita and her mom to Palo Alto. After their appointment was done, another pilot flew them home again. All for free.

The National Institutes of Health acknowledge "some patients may forgo needed treatment because of problems with transportation." Dr. Stephen A. Somers, President of the Center for Health Care Strategies, adds: "Access to health care means much more than having an insurance card in hand. Unfortunately, simply providing insurance coverage does not automatically guarantee the delivery of vital health care services. A myriad of barriers contributes to this problem, including . . . transportation issues."

Angel Flight West bridges the gulf between home and health care, and gives hope for a better future to patients and their families.

Through our network of volunteer pilots and partnerships with commercial airlines, Angel Flight West provides more than 4,000 flights each year in California and 13 other Western states. Besides flights to

access health care, we can arrange transportation for other needs as well -- individuals and families escaping domestic violence; injured military personnel taking part in therapeutic programs; prospective parents hoping to adopt a child; and flying youngsters and teens to special needs camps like those for burn survivors or kids with cancer.

And yes, it's all free. There's no charge to the passenger, the hospital, or the requester.

Why do we do what we do? The answer comes from our passengers, our pilots, and the health care providers that are our partners.

"Angel Flight West has helped to give me the one thing I've learned to cherish the most: time. Time with friends, time to fight my disease, and most importantly, time with my three beautiful daughters. One more hug, one more kiss, one more I love you Mommy. I embrace each moment with appreciation and love in my heart for the wonderful people at Angel Flight who helped give me . . . a little more time!" -- Michelle, cancer patient

"To be able to do something we love and help a fellow human at the same time is a wonderful gift. When I glance back occasionally during a flight to check on my passengers and

see mother and child, husband and wife or others, and I see them resting comfortably, it is quite a reward. Or when a 6-year-old girl was bragging about getting her leg braces off and sang on the flight until falling asleep. Long and short of it is, we can help make some people's lives a little easier using our beloved air machines." -- Don M., California pilot

"There are very few organizations that assist patients in the way AFW does and even fewer who do so with such compassion. I feel very fortunate to have this resource to offer my patients and will continue to do so in the future. Please accept my thanks and praise for your continued good work!" -- Cynthia C., Medical Social Worker, Cedars-Sinai Cancer Center

Keep in mind, this is *not* an emergency airlift service. It's for individuals who need to get to appointments scheduled in advance.

To learn more about how Angel Flight West can help, please call (888) 426-2643 or visit the website, www.angelflightwest.org. In the words of a mother whose son was a veteran of 120 Angel Flight missions, "Even the most brilliant doctor cannot save a life if the patient isn't there."

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