



Flights For You

Public Benefit Flying at its Best

By Sallie Caddell

It is said that if you do what you love, the money will follow. This precisely describes the hope, ambition and actions of Dean Durbin and Jill Weber—only the money benefits their 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, Flights For You. Based in Frederick, Maryland, Flights For You provides free air transportation to individuals in need, including patients of all ages, many of whom suffer from a variety of illnesses or diseases that require specialized medical treatment only offered at great distances from their homes. To fly these special missions full time—approximately 12 to 20 flights per month—is the ultimate goal of Flights For You, which is why the organization is undergoing major fundraising efforts to purchase a bigger and faster aircraft.

“Flights For You, to my knowledge, is one of the first organizations to provide charitable flights on a regular basis. But, there are major expenses to running an organization that offers public benefit flying,” explains Durbin.

Aircraft fuel and maintenance aside, Flights For You needs a new airplane capable of handling cross country, nonstop flights and inclement weather. The organization currently flies missions in Weber’s Cessna 182, but with only four seats, this aircraft restricts how far and how fast the organization can fly.

“Unfortunately, there are many missions that leave the Frederick area that we cannot help with. Dean and I always fly as a team and with only two seats in the back, our current aircraft can only fly two people at one time, which limits the number of missions we can fly. And, our Cessna lacks deicing equipment, so we’ve had to cancel flights due to bad weather,” says Weber.



Flights For You has flown this gentleman three times, twice with his guide dog.

For the comfort of the patients in the aircraft, Weber and Durbin keep the distance flown between legs approximately 250 nautical miles, which puts them only as far south as North and South Carolina, as far north as Connecticut and New Hampshire and as far west as Ohio and Tennessee. A bigger and faster aircraft would enable the organization to expand its efforts on a more national level. “Instead of a 250 nautical range, we could bump it up to 500 nautical mile range but still have the same timeframe in the airplane just because of the speed difference,” explains Durbin.

With its 501(c)(3) status from the federal government and its state tax exempt status in place, the organization currently receives missions from Angel Flight Mid-Atlantic. Its future goal is to attain missions from other community service organizations that coordinate public benefit flying, ultimately helping on an as-needed basis.

“After our first mission with Angel Flight in 2004, Dean and I had such tremendous feelings of satisfaction. We thought, ‘there’s got to be a way to do this and do it more frequently.’ So, we decided that if we put together a non-profit organization, we could get funding to do these missions on a more frequent basis as opposed to just three to four times per year. We want to be able to fly these people as much as we can,” says Weber. ■

For more information or to make a tax-free donation, visit www.flightsforyou.org or call 301-252-6731.