



PRESS RELEASE

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More Information

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Angel Flight East Provides Access to Care for Rural Communities

Angel Flight East (AFE) is an organization dedicated to rural health by facilitating free air transportation to children and adults in need of medical treatment far from home. The service runs through the help of 400+ volunteer pilots who provide the aircraft and time to fly people from rural areas to larger hospital or clinic facilities for medical care. AFE's main office is located outside of Philadelphia, but it covers a 14 state territory.

An initiative AFE has is called Rural & Rare Reach, a program that executes outreach to underserved populations to broaden access to high-level medical care. Free air transportation is provided to support families in extreme health circumstances by lessening financial, emotional and/or logistical burdens which otherwise impede access to treatment.

When a patient needs medical treatment far from home, they and their families are often forced to make difficult decisions and choices. The financial and logistical considerations often force families to choose to forego treatment or to live apart, just when they need each other and a support network most. AFE provides a solution that allows these patients to get to treatments, without cost, and enables families to remain together as much as possible.

Angel Flight East has learned that the distance to medical centers is an obstacle facing many cancer patients in rural areas, who are often at a distance even to basic medical care. Patients in urbanized centers, too, may seek to travel long distances for treatment, particularly where cancers are concerned. Rare cancers include brain, pancreatic, ovarian, thyroid and stomach cancers; leukemia and lymphoma and all pediatric cancers. Out of known cancers, it is estimated that 50% of persons diagnosed are battling a rare cancer.

The types of patients who travel for serious care often require consultation and assessment from specialists that are not located where they live. In most cases, the treatment is ongoing. More than half of the people flying with Angel Flight need to fly more than once a year, a handful may need upwards of 20 trips. Adults, and many times children, being treated for bone disorders or burn care, may travel over the course of several years.

People in these situations are faced with family-stressing logistical challenges— the ability to coordinate transportation when it is needed, the amount of time to drive or fly commercially, and the ability of a care-giver to be with the person for treatment being but a few. In one AFE patient's situation, the family was considering having one parent move with the sick child closer to care and the other parent and children remain at home. Patients also encounter other

financial stresses – from the cost of time taken off from work, the duration of the absence, and the expense of travel – on top of the often significant medical bills.

Reduced insurance coverage and uncertainties surrounding federally funded coverage contribute to increasing financial constraints for all people in the healthcare system. For persons with complex medical needs the outlook is worse. In total, these factors contribute overall to an environment that threatens to cut people – the rural, the underinsured, and high-need, high-cost patients – from receiving care which could markedly contribute to improving or extending their quality of life.

For more information on Angel Flight East, please visit www.angelflighteast.org

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