



# LIFELINE PILOTS

the shortest distance between home and hope

## MELISSA'S JOURNEY

Until a couple of years ago, I had never heard of Lifeline Pilots. For the past fifteen years, I have struggled with medical issues that I never in my wildest dreams could have imagined. In 1996, as a freshman at Concordia University in River Forest, Illinois, I had my whole life in front of me. I dreamt of a career in Athletic Training and Sports Medicine, but didn't know that God had a very different plan for my life. The years to come would hold multiple shoulder surgeries and a diagnosis of a disease most people would never know even exists. As my college career continued my life was turned upside down with some unthinkable events. Also, by the time I earned my Bachelors degree, I would lose my best friend along with most function of my left arm.



**Melissa with Volunteer Pilot, Edward Cutler of Colorado**

I grew up as a competitive swimmer...I had goals and dreams, and knew my family would always be supportive of whatever I wanted to do with my life. That first week of my college career changed my life forever. As a student in an advance swimming and diving class, I dove in for a quick warm-up only to wake up the next morning unable to move my arm. Medical tests were done, incorrect diagnoses were made. As time went by my shoulders became extremely unstable and almost daily dislocations began. By the end of my freshman year I had already endured two shoulder surgeries and thought things would get better over time, regardless of the constant and increasing pain. Within my first month at Concordia, my Dad was also diagnosed with Multiple Myeloma, a terminal type of cancer.

Throughout the year to follow, my Dad and I each went through a long list of medical tests, treatments and procedures. I watched my Dad endure chemotherapy and waste away a little more every time I came home to visit. All I wanted to do was talk to him, hug him and tell him I loved him. At the same time, though, I was experiencing my own pain and repeat surgeries. Dad was there for me every step of the way, along with my Mom. He was always the last person I saw before surgery, and the first I saw when I woke up. Even to this day, I treasure the teddy bears I have from each and every surgery, which was a tradition he started. Many times I thought of giving up. I wanted to quit on my dreams and be at home with Dad. He never let that happen, though...even after the night we lost him in December of 1998.



**Melissa with Volunteer Pilot, Dr. Gareth Eberle of Illinois**

Against my desire to give up on my life and dreams, my Dad made sure I had adequate support and encouragement, both from my family and also the Dean and Pastoral staff at Concordia. I stuck with it though the pain and the depression after saying good-bye to my Dad, but without him the remaining year and a half of college was (what I thought at that time) the most difficult time of my life. Every shoulder surgery failed, six by my last semester of school. I even began to hear the word "amputation" from my physicians. One of my last and best classes, "Loss and Mourning," helped me get through each day and prepare for what was still to come.



**Volunteer Pilot, Dennis Mosberger of Colorado with Melissa**

For about eight years after earning my Bachelors degree, my Mom and I traveled to countless specialists around the country trying to find answers. I needed to know why six surgeries on the same shoulder had all failed. No one had the answers or knew what to do, but we knew there had to be an underlying issue. It was a very discouraging as even more surgeries continued to fail. Finally we found a specialist in Vail, Colorado, who was the first to suggest that maybe there was an answer! Maybe it would even explain the pain! I

was then tested and diagnosed with a very rare connective tissue disease called Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome. Although it wasn't good news, it was an explanation for the pain, the joint instability, the failed surgeries and even my desire to give up on my dreams.

The surgeries continued...before we knew it 18 had failed...then 28...then 35...On February 18th of this year I had surgery number 36 on my shoulder and at the same time had my ankle fused. One surgical team operated on my shoulder while another operated on my ankle. With my complicated medical history, the complexity of the ankle fusion and so many failed surgeries, my physicians suggested I stay in the Denver area for a few weeks. During that time, and as of today the ten weeks since these two surgeries, I have often thought of all the events in my life. People frequently ask "How do you keep going?" or tell me "You're such a strong person!" Honestly though, I don't feel like that "strong" person everyone else sees.

In fact, before going back to work, I sat at home day after day depressed. I did nothing but feel sorry for myself and wish that none of this had ever happened. It hurt to think of what my life could be if my Dad was still here...or if none of my surgeries had happened, if I didn't have Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome.

Today, though, I try to focus on all the good things that have happened in my life. I think of all the wonderful people I have met and the many lives I have touched and those who have touched mine. If it weren't for my supportive family and friends, I would not be here today. If it weren't for my surgeons and specialists in Chicago and Denver, I most likely would not have my arm today. Sure, I have had to endure more surgeries and pain than most people would in their lifetime...but I've learned a lot and now have an "extended family" of friends - my doctors, nurses, and even other patients.

I need to take the opportunity to thank a great number of people for helping me get through all of the challenges in my life. However, I honestly don't believe I can ever say "Thank You" enough to everyone who has played such an important role in my life. For the past couple of years, I have gotten to know another group of people who I now consider my extended family. I am now lucky enough to know that group of people as "Lifeline Pilots." In fact, I still have my left arm today because these talented and generous people have volunteered and cared enough about me to make sure I have access to the specialists and medical care that I need.

So lastly, Thank You, Lifeline Pilots. Thank you for being my "lifeline" to the doctors who know of and understand my disease best. I am here today, I am who I am and I have my arm today because you! I am incredibly blessed to call so many of you "friends" and only hope that I can successfully spread your message while encourage the countless patients around this country who need you as well.

For everything you do and for all the lives you touch.....THANK YOU!



Sincerely,

Melissa A. Neumann

***Lifeline Pilots would like to thank Melissa for being such a wonderful ambassador for the organization.*** She has shared the Lifeline Pilots' mission with those in her own community as well as providing outreach material to medical facilities in Denver, Colorado. Melissa also spoke of her experience at Lifeline Pilots' 1st Hope in a Hangar.

**Thank you to the following volunteer pilots for facilitating 53 missions since 2007:** Jeffrey Adler, Robert Benda, Mark Bellio, George Bracke, John Burke, Edward Cutler, Gareth Eberle, Jonathan Fuller, Harley Hazzard, John Hinshaw, Craig Loomis, Dick Miller, Dennis Mosbarger, Gary Rahmeyer, James Roukema, David Strosberg, Ross Wear, Lewis Young and Bob Zook.



**Volunteer Pilot, Lewis Young of Kansas,  
and Melissa**

**VOLUNTEER PILOTS COMPLETING MISSIONS**  
**FROM JANUARY TO AUGUST 2010**



Nevin Baker  
 Alan Bernard  
 Ed Bonifas  
 John Black  
 George Bracke  
 Edward Buckles  
 Glenn Burns  
 George Busha  
 Scott Butler  
 Don Cashatt  
 Bob Conrad  
 Ed Cutler  
 James Daubenmier  
 Norbert Dudek  
 Michael Dunn  
 Gareth Eberle  
 Tom Eisma

**Stephanie on her way home to Chicago, IL from her appointment in Maryland thanks to Volunteer Pilot, Brad Neihofer of Indiana**



**Volunteer Pilot, Dr. Eberle of Illinois, facilitated a flight home for Michelle & Justin from Omaha, NE to LaTrobe, PA**



Faisal ElAwar  
 W. Tad Foster  
 Edward Frederick  
 Jonathan Fuller  
 Daniel Fullerton  
 Carson Greene  
 B.J. Harris  
 Ed Harrison

**Volunteer Pilot, William Kroncke of Ohio, with Terra & Kendall traveling from Pittsburgh, PA to Plainfield, IL**

**THANK YOU!**

Harley Hazzard  
 Ron Henson  
 John Hinshaw  
 Bernie Hirsch  
 Reggie Holland  
 Kent Horsager  
 Jackie Jackson  
 Jeff Justis  
 David Kalwishky  
 John Klein  
 William Kroncke  
 John Kuebel  
 David Kuzava  
 Richard Lawrence  
 Tom Vander Linden  
 George Lorenz  
 Richard Lowe  
 Dick Miller  
 Wardwell Montgomery  
 John Nagy  
 Brad Neihofer  
 John Olson  
 Jeffrey Peterson  
 Phillip Powell  
 Grant Prellwitz  
 Gary Rahmeyer  
 Ken Reily  
 Matt Robinson  
 Robert Russo  
 Clark Schreiner  
 Jerry Thatcher  
 Monte Watt  
 Ross Wear  
 Charles Wehage  
 Jim Young  
 Lewis Young  
 Andy Zastrow  
 William Zink  
 Bob Zook



**Passenger, Debbie, on her way home to Michigan with Volunteer Pilot, David Kuzava of Michigan**



**David Kalwishky, Volunteer Pilot from Iowa, with his passenger, Pam, traveling from Rochester, MN to Effingham, IL**

***With the help of LifeLine Pilots' Director, Robert Benda and Jeppesen, volunteer pilots are now offered free charts for their mission. It is a fantastic resource for our volutneers.***

***Thank you Robert and Jeppesen for your support and generosity!***

**WELCOME NEW VOLUNTEER PILOTS**

Paul Anderson	David Purvis
Nevin Baker	Ken Reily
Dennis Carew	Robert Russo
Ron Crossman	Matthew Simpson
Lawrence Lawn	Steven Wilson
Doug Olmstead	Andrew Zastrow

## *MYLES, LIFELINE PILOTS' MASCOT*

In recognition of your \$50 donation or more, LifeLine Pilots will send you Myles to join your flight crew.

A Myles Donation form is available at [www.lifelinepilots.org](http://www.lifelinepilots.org) or by calling the office at 800-822-7972.

Thank you to Christine Paluska of Peoria, IL for naming LifeLine Pilots' new mascot.



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## *WHAT A DIFFERENCE 3 YEARS MAKES!*



Elijah in May 2007

A little over three years ago, Amber called LifeLine Pilots seeking help with transportation for appointments in Iowa City, Iowa from their home in Cincinnati, Ohio. Her son, Elijah, needed to see the specialist for his club feet. The doctors in Iowa City are special because they have developed a method to correct club feet that does not involve surgery. Elijah's treatment required a series of castings that needed to be recast with his growth which meant many trips. In May 2007, LifeLine Pilots started facilitating missions for the family. Not only is this family one of the organization's frequent flyers but they also appear in our DVD sharing their experience with LifeLine Pilots. It has been a pleasure for the volunteer pilots and staff to work with this family and see the wonderful progress Elijah has made. He is growing up to be a very active little boy.

LifeLine Pilots has facilitated 26 missions for Elijah and his family. Thank you to the following volunteer pilots for your generous donation: Nevin Baker, Bob Conrad, Larry Danyluk, Forrest Holly, John Klein, Lewis Martin, Peter Murphy, Grant Prellwitz, Jack Stull and Monte Watt.



Elijah, Amber and sister, Ava, on their most recent trip to Iowa City in August 2010 with volunteer pilots, David Kantor and Nevin Baker

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY**  
**FEBRUARY 2010 ~ AUGUST 2010 DONORS**

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Bernard Works

**THANK YOU!**

**4<sup>th</sup> Annual Poker Run**

Sponsored By



**FOMT**  
Friends of Michael Tom

**Friends of Michael Tom hosted their 4th Annual Poker Run on August 22, 2010. LifeLine Pilots was honored to be the recipient of this year's fundraiser. Thank you to Jennifer Neunteufel and her staff at FOMT for their hospitality at the Poker Run and for their generous donation! For more information about FOMT, visit <http://fomtrun.com>.**

Dear Supporters of LifeLine Pilots:

I want to make you aware of a new option for sharing your financial gifts with LifeLine Pilots. For a growing number of our supporters, giving is more consistent and convenient because we now have a system in which their gifts are regularly and automatically withdrawn through electronic funds transfer (EFT) from their checking or savings account.

**The Simply Giving®** Program endorsed by Thrivent Financial Bank—a program of automatic giving—now offers you the opportunity and convenience of giving your financial gifts automatically on the schedule of your choice

You may already be taking advantage of the convenience and simplicity of electronic funds transfer to make your mortgage or utility payments. Now you can use this same convenient, reliable method to make your gifts to LifeLine Pilots.

If you have any questions about the program or would like an enrollment form, please call our office at 800-822-7972 or email us at [mail@lifelinepilots.org](mailto:mail@lifelinepilots.org).

Whether you choose to participate in this program or continue to give as you have in the past, thank you for considering this new giving opportunity.

Sincerely,  
*Karen Halverson, Executive Director*

*LifeLine Pilots is a 501(c)(3) not for profit organization that facilitates free air transportation through volunteer pilots for financially distressed passengers with medical and humanitarian needs. LifeLine Pilots is funded entirely through the generosity of foundations, corporations and private donors. Program services and outreach initiatives are met through ninety-five cents of every dollar raised in support of our mission. Your generous, tax-deductible donation will enable us to connect more volunteer pilots with passengers in need. LifeLine Pilots sincerely appreciates your commitment to our mission.*

# HOPE IN A HANGAR 2010

On May 1, 2010, LifeLine Pilots held its 2nd Annual Banquet, Hope in a Hangar, at Byerly Aviation. New friends and familiar faces enjoyed an evening of sharing stories, eating a wonderful meal and participating in lively games and auctions.

Special recognition was given to Illinois Volunteer Pilot, Dick Miller, for his outstanding generosity and compassion for LifeLine Pilots' mission. Dick has flown over 150 missions and been a member of the organization since 2000. Jo Miller, his wife, often accompanies Dick on flights. She is as passionate about LifeLine Pilots' passengers as her husband. Their wonderful advocacy of the organization is appreciated beyond words.



**Karen Halverson, Executive Director, and Euel Kinsey, Chairman, presenting the Outstanding Volunteer Pilot Award to Jo & Dick Miller**



**David, Cassie and Pamela shared their experience as LifeLine Pilots' passengers**



**Karla Wegrzyn, Steve Barnes & Roman Wegrzyn shared their musical talent**



**Michael Peifer, Bill Kwon, Lori Peifer and Nancy Blake enjoyed the evening**



**Rick Stephenson, Master of Ceremony, and Shelly Livengood, Development/Mission Coordinator**

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**Gary Raymeyer**  
**Michael & Lori Samp**

## ENTERTAINERS:

**Roman Wegrzyn, Pianist**  
**Steve Barnes, Saxophone**  
**Karla Wegrzyn, Vocals**

## AUCTIONEERS:

**Kevin Palmer**  
**Todd Petri**

## MASTER OF CEREMONY:

**Rick Stephenson**



**3<sup>rd</sup> Annual HOPE IN A HANGAR**

**April 2, 2011**

**Doors Open at 4:00 p.m.**

**Prime Rib Dinner at 5:30 p.m.**

**Byerly Aviation Terminal**

**Peoria International Airport, Peoria, IL**

**Tickets: \$50 per person or \$75 a couple**

**Sponsorship opportunities available**

**For ticket and sponsorship information, please call**

**Shelly Livengood at 800-822-7972 or**

**email [missions@lifelinepilots.org](mailto:missions@lifelinepilots.org)**

**LIFELINE PILOTS  
WELCOMES NEW DIRECTORS**

On August 21, 2010, LifeLine Pilots' membership elected its leadership for a two year term. Executive Board Members are Michael Peifer, Morgan Stanley Smith Barney, Chairman; Gary Rahmeyer, Waters Funeral Home, Vice Chairman; Nancy Blake, Independent Contractor, Secretary and Jerome Mauer, Clifton Gunderson, Treasurer. Newly elected Chairman of the Board, Michael Peifer, is the first non-pilot to serve as Chairman of the organization in its 29 year history. Peifer stated, "It is such an honor, and very humbling to be chosen to lead such a great organization as LifeLine Pilots. I look forward to continuing our cause of facilitating free air transportation to those that need our help." LifeLine Pilots welcomes the following as Directors to serve three year terms:



**Robert Benda, II of Centennial, Colorado** is a Manager of Aviation Training Production at Jeppesen. Mr. Benda's team writes and publishes the written and on-line training material for the pilot and aviation technician under the Jeppesen name. He also has a background in teaching private, commercial, and instrument ground ratings; Single/Multi engine flight simulation; and the Certified Flight Instructor courses. As well as being an active volunteer pilot for LifeLine Pilots, Mr. Benda also is involved with the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association and has recently rejoined the Experimental Aircraft Association to become involved with the Young Eagles program.



**Thomas Harrington of Peoria, Illinois** is a Commercial Real Estate Broker for Devonshire Group Commercial Services. Mr. Harrington is a licensed broker in both Illinois and Florida. His background includes property management, construction layout and property surveys. He is a very active community volunteer serving on the CASA of Peoria County, the City of Peoria Traffic Commission, the Peoria Area Chamber of Commerce Advocacy Board, EDC Retail Strategy Group and the United Way-Generation United.



**Dick Miller of Washington, Illinois** is a retired business owner. In 1965, Mr. Miller founded Miller Welding and Iron Works where in their custom shop they manufacture heavy machined parts, metal assemblies and finished components. He has been flying over 40 years with instrument, commercial and multi-engine ratings. He has also flown over 100 missions for LifeLine Pilots in the past 10 years. At the LifeLine Pilots' Annual Banquet, Hope in a Hangar 2010, he was the recipient of the "Outstanding Volunteer Pilot" award for his generosity to our passengers and organization. Mr. Miller previously served on the LifeLine Pilots' Board of Directors with the founder, Wanda Whitsitt.



**Brad Neihouser of Francesville, Indiana** is a successful commercial farmer as well as owning and operating a real estate and auction business specializing in farm real estate. Mr. Neihouser has been flying for over 30 years and has flown many missions for LifeLine Pilots. He has also served in his local community on the Pulaski County Development Commission and is a Board Member of the Pulaski West Developers Corporation.

**MANY THANKS TO  
RETIRING DIRECTORS FOR THEIR  
WILLINGNESS TO SERVE AND GUIDE  
LIFELINE PILOTS**



**Volunteer pilots, Bud Bayward & Mike Auster with Preston & his family**

**Mike Auster**  
Mike joined the Board of Directors in 1997. He served as Chairman and interim Executive Director. As an Executive Committee Member, Mike spearheaded policy making efforts for mission criteria, insurance, staff job descriptions, pilot recognition and events. He also served as liaison with AirLifeLine and represented the organization on the Air Care Alliance Board. Through events and Chicago contacts, Mike helped to develop fundraising efforts. Mike has also been instrumental in outreach efforts by visiting hospitals and medical clinics in addition to working at LifeLine Pilots' booth at EAA AirVenture. Mike's generosity to the organization also included completing over 25 missions.

***Dr. Bruce Chien***

Bruce joined the Board of Directors in 1998. That year, he worked with a committee to find a centralized office facility which resulted in our office at Byerly Aviation at the Great Peoria Airport in Peoria, IL. This was the first central office for the organization. He served on several committees including endowment, finance, nominating, safety, and executive. In 2001, he received the President's Award for his service. He served as Secretary of the Board and became Vice Chairman in 2002, Chairman in 2004 and Assistant Treasurer in 2009. He personally has flown 31 missions.



**Dr. Chien & Kurtis  
Picture by Matt Dayhoff**



**Charlie receiving recognition for his service as Chairman from George Busha**

**Charlie Mueller**  
Charlie joined the Board of Directors in 2001. Through his efforts Northern Trust Bank sponsored the publication of the LifeLine Pilots newsletter as well as the publication of donation envelopes. He was Vice Chairman of the Board in 2004 and Chairman in 2005. As Chairman of the Endowment Committee, he guided and monitored the growth of the fund. He assisted at LifeLine Pilots' booths in the Chicago area functions and at EAA AirVenture. Charlie was responsible for the addition of LifeLine Pilots to the Donors Forum of Chicago. He developed a power point presentation and served on several committees including audit, office personnel and succession planning. Charlie has been an active volunteer pilot as well.

**LIFELINE PILOTS  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Elected Officers:

Michael Peifer, Chairman  
Gary Rahmeyer, Vice Chairman  
Nancy Blake, Secretary  
Jerry Mauer, Treasurer

Board of Directors:

Robert Benda	Dick Miller
Nancy Blake	Brad Niehouser
Richard Borovec	Michael Peifer
George Busha	Mark Pestal
Edward Cutler	Gary Rahmeyer
Thomas Harrington	Jim Svec
David Kantor	Christiansen von Wormer
Paul Kaufmann	Wanda Whitsitt, Founder
Euel Kinsey	
Keith Laken	
Jerry Mauer	

*Established in 1981,  
LifeLine Pilots'  
MISSION IS TO FACILITATE  
FREE AIR TRANSPORTATION  
THROUGH VOLUNTEER PILOTS  
FOR FINANCIALLY DISTRESSED  
PASSENGERS WITH  
MEDICAL/HUMANITARIAN  
NEEDS.*



LifeLine, Inc. dba LifeLine Pilots, has been granted tax exempt 501(c)(3) status by the IRS. All contributions are deductible to the fullest extent of the law. LifeLine Pilots operates solely on the contributions of private citizens, various foundations/corporations and donated aircraft and pilot expenses.



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**MAKING MIRACLES  
HAPPEN ONE FLIGHT  
AT A TIME**