



# FLIGHTS OF HOPE

Quarterly newsletter for Angel Flight West's members and friends

## Our Passengers: Our Mission(s)



Pictured above are No. CA Wing pilot Bob Brahm with passenger Chana L. on the last of a 2-leg mission that began in her hometown of San Diego, CA. The 1st leg was flown by So. CA Wing pilot Jim Coleman to Bakersfield, CA. The 2nd leg ended in Palo Alto, CA, where Chana visits her oncologist at Stanford Medical Center for treatment of an ovarian tumor and intestinal cancer that require frequent isotope injections and scans. Chana is a 47-year-old single parent of four who is on social security disability. ➔

Pictured right is an AFW mission carrying two of our passengers. Laurie B. is receiving chemotherapy for rectal cancer, and passenger Michael D. is being treated for advanced prostate cancer. They are part of a 3-leg mission. The first 2 legs were flown by pilot Dennis Shogren, So. CA Wing, from Paso Robles, CA to Medford, OR, where Laurie boarded, and on to Portland, OR. Norman Rittenhouse, WA Wing, flew the final leg to Seattle, WA. Michael is on limited income and Laurie is struggling to meet living expenses with two children, a single income household, and accumulating medical expenses. ➔



Seven-year-old Jaime O. on one of 100 flights from San Diego, CA to Santa Monica, CA, where he received a small bowel transplant at UCLA and subsequently was diagnosed with cancer. Jaime lost his courageous battle on April 19th, just five days after his baby sister, Sofia, was born. Jaimie's family is very grateful for AFW and said they could not have continued his treatment without the organization's help. AFW pilots all expressed the great joy they received from flying Jaime and his mom, Soledad. ➔





## Flight Plan *Alan M. Dias, Executive Director*

As this is being written, we are actively recruiting a full-time Development Director for Angel Flight West and the Angel Flight West

Foundation. This individual will be the principal staff person responsible for implementing our fund development strategy.

This is a significant step for AFW and the Foundation. As a not-for-profit, AFW is fairly small with an annual cash budget of just over one million dollars. It is unique for a not-for-profit of our size to employ a full-time Development Director. Not only will the Development Director fundraise for AFW, but they will also be growing the Angel Flight West Foundation.

The mission of the Foundation is to support AFW in perpetuity. Our goal is to have enough assets in the Foundation so that the organization can accomplish its mission through the interest earned from Foundation investments. The existence of the Foundation along with the organization, provides the Development Director with the opportunity to present options to philanthropic investors looking to support a growing, successful volunteer pilot organization.

You may be asking yourself, in this challenging economy, how can AFW afford to invest in a Development Director? Actually, it's been on the "to do" list for several years. What makes it possible now is the vision and generosity of a long time supporter, volunteer pilot, and Board member, Kevin Kauffman, and

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Passenger 17-year-old Amanda M. from Phoenix, AZ, with pilot Bob Howe, AZ Wing, on her way to nonprofit Laurel Winter Family Camp, a camp for families affected by a life-threatening illness. There are many such camps throughout the U.S. that cater to kids and adults with special needs. AFW pilots like Bob Howe fly over 300 camp missions each year to make sure that people like Amanda get an opportunity to enjoy a few weeks amongst peers who share the same health challenge. For some, the cost of getting there would be prohibitive.



L to R: Passengers brother and sisters nine-year-old Sara N., eleven-year-old Jack N., and eight-year-old Rosie N., enjoying the amenities of So. CA Wing pilot Alan Vaught's plane. Pilot Mike Jesch, So. CA Wing, came along as mission assistant/copilot. Mike said, "Great flight today! The weather was terrific, the kids were great, so polite and appreciative for the lift that Alan gave them. Alan's got a beautiful airplane, exactly built for this sort of flight, and he flies it real nice. Thanks, Alan, for letting me tag along!" The kids were on their way home from San Bernadino, CA, to Tucson, AZ, where they had fun at the nonprofit Laurel Winter Family Camp for children and families with a life-threatening illness.



L to R: Mom Maria, pilot Cheryl Hall, So. CA Wing, and passenger seventeen-year-old Salvador M. who has been flying with AFW since he was six! Salvador's mom is on limited income and the costs of either driving or flying to his regular visits would be prohibitive. He travels from San Luis Obispo, CA, to Santa Monica, CA, where he is regularly being seen at UCLA medical and dental centers for treatment of congenital anomalies of the skull. Los Angeles Earth Angel Terry O'Shaughnessy provided the ground transportation.



Passenger Melinda F. and pilot Bob Brahm, No. CA Wing, on his first AFW mission flying from Oakland, CA to Melinda's home in Crescent City, CA. Melinda is being treated for breast cancer and was traveling to UCSF Medical Center for an appointment with her oncologist and radiologist. She is an unemployed, single mother of three with no finances for travel to her treatment.

## Flight Plan *...Continued from page 2*

the Kevin and Elaine Kauffman Family Foundation. Kevin wanted to continue to support AFW, but in such a way as to help assure our long term sustainability.

The Kauffman Family Foundation has donated \$25,000 toward employing a Development Director. They also issued a challenge grant, a first for AFW. For every dollar donated as part of the challenge, the Kauffman Family Foundation will match it up to \$50,000.

We have raised \$25,000 in the first quarter of this year, and are now working on the second \$25,000 which must be raised by the end of June. The seed money to pay our Development Director is in place. And now you have an opportunity to make a contribution that immediately doubles and goes towards

sustaining the organization in the future. When you make your next gift to AFW, indicate that you want it to go toward the Challenge Grant.

This is an exciting growth step for AFW and the Foundation, and only one of several changes in store for 2012 that will provide our crucial service to more passengers in need.

Thanks for all you do. It's a privilege to be your Executive Director. ✈

Blue Skies and Tailwinds,

Alan M. Dias  
Executive Director



## Angel Flight West Welcomes New Board Chairman Laura Long

AFW is very fortunate to welcome Laura Long as the new Chairman of the Board of Directors. Laura has been AFW's treasurer for the past six years and a member since 2000. She has served on many other boards in her community of Bigfork, MT, and has previously worked as Chief Financial Officer for small companies in the semi-conductor and medical equipment sector. This vast and varied experience gives Laura a vital perspective to the job of helping lead AFW through the next two years. She came to AFW when she and her late husband, pilot/member Jim Long, became newly retired owners of an airplane. They decided that they wanted to do something more with their plane, and so it was AFW's good fortune that they happened to "pick up an AFW brochure at a little FBO somewhere in eastern Montana"

while on a cross-country trip. They both immediately became involved flying missions and Jim joined the Board. As a non-pilot, Laura says when Jim joined AFW, "I sort of came along as a package deal." After Jim's passing in 2004, Laura says, "When AFW called and said they needed a treasurer, I was thrilled."

When asked how it feels to be the first female and non-pilot Chairman of AFW's Board of Directors, there is a short silence before Laura quips, "Since I've never been a man or a pilot I don't really know the difference." A seemingly witty response until you realize she genuinely doesn't give the gender issue much attention at all. "It never occurs to me that because I am a woman I can't do the same things a man can do. I just look at it that I'm the chairman. That's my job." And as far as not being a pilot she says,

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## Air to Air Communication

- ✈️ Congratulations to Bill Ayer, AFW Member and AFW Foundation Board Member, on his retirement as CEO & President of Alaska Airlines! Bill will continue on as Chairman of the Board of Alaska Airlines.
- ✈️ AFW welcomes Ivan Martinez as a Missions Operation Coordinator to their staff. Emmet O'Conlon, AFW Administrative Manager, joins Josh Olson and Erin Gardner in helping to get our missions in the air!
- ✈️ **Amazon Shoppers!** Each time you shop at Amazon, AFW can receive a contribution. In order for AFW to receive a portion of your purchase, you must go to or click on <http://www.amazon.com/?tag=afw-homepage-20>.
- ✈️ Learn about the AFW Foundation on our website and find out how you can help support the AFW mission with Planned Giving.
- ✈️ As always, we would like to thank Fred Hulem, AFW pilot, So. CA Wing and Ventura Group's Business Manager, its employees including Brian Farrar, Jennifer Shade and those at Mail Manager, Ventura, for donating their time, materials and expertise to the printing of this and our previous newsletters. We thank them deeply for their continuing generosity in helping to spread the mission of AFW.
- ✈️ If you would prefer to continue to receive the newsletter by snail mail and haven't done so, please send an e-mail to [newsletter@angelflightwest.org](mailto:newsletter@angelflightwest.org) or call us at (310) 390-2958.

## AFW Welcomes Laura Long

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"I do have a working knowledge of what they do, and the many incredible pilots on our board can fill in those things I don't understand. I see my job as leading really. It doesn't mean I'm out in front, I'm just helping them with the tools to do their jobs, to smooth the way."

Laura is sensitive to some of the formidable challenges facing AFW such as "a vulnerable economy, rising fuel costs for pilots and the struggle to keep pilots invigorated with the mission of the organization." For the present she says, "Our membership has risen, which is great. Cheri, Josh and the staff are terrific with a committed and professional approach to their jobs. Alan's depth of understanding of the organization makes him a great ED, and I am confident in his ability to keep us in the right direction."



L to R: Passenger Buddy H. and pilot Ken Kopek, NV Wing, on their way from Yerington, NV to UC Davis Medical Facility in Sacramento, CA. AFW has flown Buddy 76 times for his ongoing and frequent treatment of cancer that has left him unable to work.

For the future Laura says, "Better outreach is near and dear to me—to get the word out, especially in rural areas both for patients and pilots. I would love to see us work on rural and underserved areas being better represented. I would love to see AFIDS 2.2 up and running. We are so blessed to have Stephan [AFW's webmaster]. He is an amazing angel that does so much and asks for nothing back. AFIDS is not just for us, but for other organizations around the country to serve our patients and pilots so everyone gets the care they need."

She is extremely proud that "we are very fortunate to keep going without any major cuts in our services or layoffs. That is due to the foresight of the Foundation, our safety net that sets us apart from other charitable organizations." As AFW faces those formidable challenges, Laura is nothing but optimistic, extending praise for such "a great organization!" And one that is in very good hands.✈

### Letter from an AFW Passenger

AFW passenger Linda H. works as a teacher's aide, and her husband is a teacher. She is receiving radiation every few weeks for endometrial cancer and deep vein thrombosis. They have limited income and now their medical expenses, including cost of meals and lodging for the 300 mile trip from Arcata, CA, to Oakland, CA, to UCSF, are very high.

She writes:

Feb 5<sup>th</sup>

Dear Josh,  
Thank you so much for arranging my flight for Feb 4<sup>th</sup>. Each flight means I don't have a six hour drive in the car, which leaves me with more energy for the important things. You and all the people at Angel Flights make such a difference in patients lives. Thanks for all you do.  
Linda

## Why We Do What We Do

*Cheri Cimmarrusti, Associate Executive Director*

Why do we do what we do? The answer is because people *do* like helping others. In this day and age of negative news and constant online bullying (you'll know what I mean if you read many online news stories and check out the blogs that follow them), the truth is that people are generally good and like making a difference in other's lives. Those of us fortunate enough to work for AFW see this day after day.

We recently received very sad news that 23-year-old Yadira O., who had battled leukemia for years, passed away. Yadira has flown with us nearly 100 times over the past four years. While many think that Yadira and her family are the beneficiaries of our services (and they truly feel they are), our volunteers feel that *they* are the ones who are benefiting. This fact is made palpable when reading the following responses upon learning of Yadira's passing from those who flew her and knew her:



Twenty-three-year-old Yadira O. with mom Amelia on one of 100 AFW missions flown for her over the past four years. Yadira recently lost her battle with leukemia.

*"I will never forget her big beautiful brown eyes... I have many wonderful memories of discussions about her nephew and family. Thank you for the opportunity to getting to know all these wonderful people."*

—Lois Orfuss, Earth Angel

*"She was a brave young lady. It was an honor to fly with her and be a small part of her life. Rest in peace, Yadira."*

—Doug Winston, So. CA Wing Pilot

*"Yadira was one of the sweetest, most gentle, happy souls I've ever had the privilege to fly."*

—Jim Coleman, So. CA Wing Pilot

*"I was blessed to fly with her and take her home."*

—Randy Swetman, So. CA Wing Pilot

*"She and her mom were such an inspiration to me. I am just so incredibly sad. She was a beautiful person, inside and out."*

—Ann Greenspun, Earth Angel

*"I have been blessed to have had the pleasure to get to know Yadira and Amelia. It was truly my pleasure to have had them as passengers on flights."*

—Mike Evans, So. CA Wing Pilot

Space constraints restrict printing many more of the comments that we have received about Yadira, and how she touched the lives of those who knew her through AFW. Please let her be a reminder that the efforts of everyone involved with this wonderful organization make a difference in countless lives—both to passengers AND pilots!

Thanks for what you do! ✈️

*Ciao, Cheri*



## In the Hangar Erin Gardner

One of AFW's newer staff members, Erin Gardner, arrived in August 2011. She immediately went to work as one of the two Mission Operations

Coordinators under Director of Mission Operations Josh Olson. Besides helping to coordinate missions, Erin is also in charge of the Earth Angel program, matching volunteer drivers who provide ground transportation with passengers who fly into Santa Monica Airport and need to get to westside treatment centers like UCLA and Cedars-Sinai. Erin says, "It's really such a wonderful thing for those who cannot afford to pay for taxi rides, etc. and to make sure there's one less thing for them to worry about."

Originally from Orange County, Erin was previously employed in the area's nonprofit

health care sector working behind the scenes in advocacy and funding. Although she enjoyed the work, Erin says her position put her "one or two steps removed from direct service." Now, at AFW, she "feels more connected to the outcome." Sometimes the sorrow of "losing passengers" and "having to say no" to mission requests is "really tough." But the flip side of being able to see "when it works out and the passenger is doing better" makes her "feel like I played a role in it." This connection for her goes further as pilots and passengers whom she communicates with mostly by phone come into the Santa Monica headquarters. She says, "It's nice to put a face to the names."

When asked how she feels about flying Erin says, "I used to like it as a kid, but now it's definitely something I have to get used to." The irony that she is now working with aviation doesn't escape her. She chuckles, "It's a little ridiculous." Maybe if she can get away from her desk once in a while, flying a mission or two might help. *Note:* Since this interview, Erin has "actually had a really lovely flying experience, which has been beautiful and exciting. I can see why the pilots love to fly so much!" ✈

### TURNING POINT The Angel Flight West Story

Watch the Angel Flight West story on TURNING POINT. Visit our web site [www.angelflightwest.org](http://www.angelflightwest.org) and you'll find the link in the lower right corner of the home page, or go to <http://tinyurl.com/7opye7c>.

Angel Flight West Thanks  
Our Major Contributors

*Alaska Airlines*

and

The Elaine W. and Kevin P.  
Kauffman Family Foundation

## AFW's 18th Annual Golf Tournament

Save the Date!

Monday, October 8, 2012

Angel Flight West's 18th Annual Golf Tournament will be held on October 8th, 2012. This year we will be at the **OAK CREEK GOLF CLUB** in Irvine, CA. Here's the opportunity to support the mission of Angel Flight West while enjoying a day of golf on a beautiful course with dinner to follow. If you've joined us before you know this is a premier event with a chance to experience the AFW camaraderie, meet new friends, entertain clients, and the opportunity to shop at a silent auction offering items you don't often see. Save the date and watch for registration information coming soon.



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#### ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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L to R: Sandy T., foster sibling, passenger 23-year-old Clayton J. and his legal guardian Shirley H. Clayton travels with AFW for both treatment of kidney disease and also to a nonprofit camp for children with kidney problems.



Three-year-old Katlyn has a form of eye cancer. Since 2009, AFW has flown her and her dad on nine round-trips from her home in AZ to Southern CA for treatment. Her flights are often two-legs and the multiple trips needed would be too draining on the family's finances. Pilot Dennis Phelan (pictured), AZ Wing, is one of the many AFW pilots who fly her at no cost to her family or the facility.

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