

# Heartfelt Appreciation

Couple learns that 30 minutes can be the difference between life & death

On the morning of January 8th, Janet Ainsworth was gardening while listening to the radio. "I don't know why, but I just had a feeling something was wrong," she said. "I took off my headphones and walked inside. My husband was taking a shower." Her sense of foreboding proved correct — when she went to the bathroom to check on her husband, Sidney Ainsworth had collapsed and lay motionless on the bathroom floor. Janet immediately called 911.

A Mercy Flights ambulance arrived on the scene; the skilled EMS crew assessed Mr. Ainsworth and immediately transported him to Rogue Valley Medical Center. He had suffered an aortic dissection.

An aortic dissection is a serious condition where a tear forms in the inner layer of the aortic wall. Blood

spills out and begins to separate the inner and outer walls of this large blood vessel. An aortic dissection that doesn't stop tearing will ultimately become a fatal rupture without urgent surgical intervention by an experienced physician.

"The Mercy Flights ambulance got to our house as

quickly as possible," Janet said. "Their speed and the care Sidney received before and during transport really made all the difference. The surgeon said if he had arrived 30 minutes later, it would have been too late to operate. He would have died."

*Appreciation Continued Inside*



**Grateful:** "My husband pulled through because of the professionals at Mercy Flights and RVMC," says Janet Ainsworth. "If one link hadn't been in place, he wouldn't have made it. We are grateful to all the people who saved Sidney's life."



**MERCY FLIGHTS**

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Answers About Your Mercy Flights' Membership

**Q** I understand there have been some changes to the Mercy Flights wheelchair transport program. Can you explain the details and why the service has changed?

**A** Mercy Flights recently changed its wheelchair transport program to offer extended hours of operation from 7am-7pm, 7 days a week. Due to a governmental ruling, we can no longer offer free transports. However, our members will still receive a significant reduction in rates (see *New Rates* on page 2).

**Q** I'm interested in providing my children with the added protection of a Mercy Flights membership. Does my membership automatically cover them?

**A** A family membership is an exceptional value: it protects you, your spouse, and all your dependents who reside in your household. If your children have grown and moved out, you may purchase a gift membership as part of our Angel program. Call our office to learn more: 1-800-903-9000.

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During the six-hour operation, the surgery team replaced Sidney's aorta with a Dacron tube and bypassed two coronary arteries with veins from his legs. He spent 21 days recovering in the intensive care unit before he was able to return home.

"I'm still really weak because I was in the hospital for so long," he said.

"But, I'm getting better everyday. I'm going three days each week to RVMC for exercise therapy."

"My husband pulled through because of the professionals at Mercy Flights and RVMC," Janet said. "If one link hadn't been in place, he wouldn't have made it. We are grateful to all the people who saved Sidney's life." ■

# Fast Facts

## The Mercy Flights Air Ambulance Teams

- ① Our air ambulances include both a fixed-wing airplane and a helicopter.
- ② Our helicopter is staffed with a 3-person flight crew: a trained flight nurse, a paramedic, and a pilot.
- ③ Mercy Flights' air ambulances have flown more than 11,000 patients throughout the western states.



Mercy Flights' B-105 Eurocopter provides service in a 150-mile radius from Medford.

## Surviving a Close Call

Fast action and Mercy Flights help prevent a fatal condition

The morning of February 9th, James McMeen woke up with an upset stomach and he felt nauseous. He told his wife he wasn't feeling well. At first they thought it was a touch of the flu. But as he got up and began to move around, Mr. McMeen began to feel much worse.

"When I put my hand on his stomach," says his wife, Marion. "I felt a

"The paramedics were very professional and efficient," says Marion. "They took his vitals and quickly loaded him into the ambulance." The Mercy Flights emergency team rushed James to Rogue Valley Medical Center.

Lucky for James, his family's quick response saved his life. His stomach pains were due to an abdominal aneurysm, a bulge in the abdominal aorta. Rapid attention in this condition is critical since an aneurism can lead to a fatal rupture. The surgeons worked on James for over four hours, repairing his aorta with excellent results.

He was able to return home a couple of days later. "James is up and around now," says Marion. "He's feeling a lot better. Everyone at Mercy Flights and the hospital are great. We really appreciate the excellent care."

The McMeens have been Mercy Flights members for years, but didn't ever think they would have to use it. Thanks to their membership, they saved significant money on Mr. McMeen's ambulance transport. ■



**A Very Close Call:** Mercy Flights members James and Marion McMeen know firsthand the exceptional value of a Mercy Flights membership.

lump and a pulsing heartbeat. That isn't right, I thought." She called her daughter and they decided to call 911. Within minutes, the Mercy Flights ambulance arrived at their house.

Lucky for James, his family's quick response saved his life.

## New Rates for Wheelchair Transports

Members .....	\$10
Non-Members: .....	\$20
Mileage: .....	\$2 per mile*

\*base fee includes 10 miles



# Flight Nurse

Flight nurses provide a vital link between emergency scenes and hospitals. Mercy Flights' nurse Lesa Cahill is part of our highly trained flight crew that transports patients throughout the western United States.

When the distinctive white, blue, and red Mercy Flights helicopter lifts off from its landing pad at the Medford Airport, it contains a well-trained crew of three who are ready to respond to any accident or illness. The pilot, paramedic, and flight nurse work together as a team to transport patients who are in critical condition.

Flight Nurse Lesa Cahill has been with Mercy Flights for almost four years. "We receive extensive training," Lesa says. "Medicine is complicated, so most health care providers specialize. But flight nursing requires a broad base of knowledge to be ready to treat the range of patients from a senior having a heart attack to a woman in premature labor to a pediatric trauma case."

When not flying, the flight crew receives a variety of training such as advanced cardiac life support, scene

management on 911 calls, and use of life-saving equipment. "We have to be critical thinkers," Lesa says. "We need to be ready for anything and use our training to problem solve during each incident. Nurses and paramedics each have different specialties. We complement each other in our skills."

Time is crucial for someone who is critically injured. The Mercy Flights helicopter can reach remote locations and quickly transport a patient to the closest emergency room. The medical care in the air can mean the difference between life and death, especially for patients who have had heart attacks, strokes, or head injuries.

Once the team arrives on the scene and picks up the patient, the helicopter becomes a flying intensive care unit. The flight nurse and the paramedic are strapped into their seat harnesses and

wearing headsets, working in harmony to stabilize their patient. In the tiny interior space, they can administer drugs, adjust oxygen, start an IV, and fill in the patient chart.

"The patients are very vulnerable and often scared," Lesa says. "We help keep them calm. I talk to them and hold their hand. We always do follow-up calls to see how they are doing after we take them to the hospital."

Lesa has been a nurse for more than 20 years and she is also trained as a paramedic. Along with the other flight team members, Lesa flies in both the helicopter and the Mercy Flights fixed-wing aircraft. Last year, Mercy Flights transported over 300 patients in its air ambulances. Thank you Lesa and the rest of the flight team for your dedication and excellence in patient care! ■

## Sprinters Hit the Streets

Keep your eyes open for the new Mercy Flights ambulances. The Sprinters may look different than what you're used to seeing, but these vehicles offer many advanced safety features and a more comfortable ride for patients and paramedics. The new rigs have better fuel economy than traditional ambulances and require significantly less maintenance. EMT Nick Barkenmeyer says the new Sprinters "have more get-up-and-go. They're a lot more maneuverable in traffic, especially when you're on call." ■



# in times of Need

Counselor and Chaplain Larry Blight helps emergency services personnel as well as patients and their families. He's even a trained hostage negotiator...

In October of 2001, Mercy Flights teamed with the Sheriff's Department and the Fire Department to fund a full-time emergency services counselor/chaplain. Larry Blight provides employees with counseling on a wide variety of topics including stress management, family and marriage issues, employment mediation, and grief. He is also trained as a hostage negotiator.

As a chaplain and the primary mental health counselor for the three agencies, Larry is on call 24 hours a day. He also serves as the jail chaplain, working with the officers and personnel there. He has volunteers who work on a regular basis providing counseling to the prisoners.

"I really enjoy my work," Larry says. "I have been trained for this and I have a gift for helping people." With a master's degree in religious education, Larry has 28 years of pastoral counseling and is a board-certified expert in traumatic stress. He provides non-denominational counseling and pastoral services. "I spend a lot of time studying different religions," he says. "So I can be available for everyone who needs my help, whether they are Christian, Jewish, Muslim, or another faith."

Larry has a wide variety of duties in his position. For example, he is often called to the scene of an accident or fire to help comfort family members and bystanders. He also will meet a crew at the hospital after a trauma to see how the crew is doing. "I help the EMS staff, police, and firefighters after an incident so they can process any anger, grief, or sadness they may feel," Larry says. "We want to help them have a long fruitful career and avoid burnout. I help give them the emotional tools to cope with the challenges they have to deal with on the job."

Larry is available for arbitration as a neutral party between supervisors and employees. The staff can ask him to meet outside of the office when they have a problem. "I'm not administration," he says. "I keep information confidential."

Larry's office is located at the Mercy Flights headquarters. When he first started, he said the staff was a bit hesitant to come in and chat. "I want people to feel comfortable just dropping into my office to chat," Larry says. "So, I started putting out one bowl of candy. Now, I have several bowls with candy, nuts, and bubble gum. Everyone comes by to say hello and grab a treat. It's a great way to keep in touch with the staff!"



Larry Blight, Mercy Flights' Counselor/Chaplain



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