



# Newsletter

[www.wingsofmercymn.org](http://www.wingsofmercymn.org)

**This issue focuses on our increasing need of pilots and planes. The following article was submitted by one of our pilots and board member, Steve Nelson.**

Recently, Greg Thoraldson and I had the opportunity to fly Hope, a young girl from International Falls, MN to Pontiac, MI. At Pontiac, a crew and plane from Wings of Mercy - Michigan would meet us and continue transporting her to Montreal, Canada. There she would receive specialized surgery to alleviate problems due to her brittle bone disease. According to her father, the delicate surgery on her legs had been attempted months ago at another hospital, but had to be aborted after several hours due to its complex nature. The doctor who pioneered the procedure is based in Montreal, so Wings of Mercy got involved to transport the 4 year old to the medical care she needed.

To fly from our home base at Airlake Airport (LVN) near Minneapolis and make our scheduled 07:30 am pickup at International Falls (INL) required an early start, but flying at altitude and watching the sun rising through cloud layers is always a reward for these crack of dawn flights (picture above).



At INL we got to meet our young passenger, her parents, brothers and several other family members and friends who were also there to see her off. It's unfortunate that everyone contributing to WOM can not be present as we pick up or deliver our special passengers. Many times we get the privilege to also meet their friends and family who provide vital local support to the patient and their family.

These people often help them before they leave, then take care of their homes, other children, chores and pets while they are getting treatment, and continue their support after the patient arrives back home.

Support can also arrive from other sources, and that's where this story continues. Since it was going to be a long, over water, multi-state flight, we topped-off our Barron's tanks to replenish the fuel used during the first leg from Minneapolis to International Falls.

Our twin engine Barron was ideally suited for the number of passengers, our patient's physical condition and the long length of the flight. However it does consume 30 gallons per hour and we wanted to make sure we would have more than enough fuel on board in case we needed to divert due to bad weather.



As Greg finished loading the remaining luggage, I went back inside to pay for the fuel. A friendly gentleman whom I later discovered was Mr. Thor Einarson, the owner of the Einarson's Flying Service, was standing behind the counter. When I asked for the bill he said the fuel was "no charge". I was at a loss for words. It is not unusual for Wings of Mercy missions to receive reduced fuel rates from courteous FBO's, or have landing and parking fees waived, but for the FBO to pay for the fuel out of their own pocket is extraordinary.

I did not want to minimize his reason for the donation, but I explained since WOM is a non-profit organization we would gladly send him a donation receipt if he would supply a fuel invoice. He completed one, but I could see the tax benefits were not even on his mind. From what I could determine, Mr. Einarson does not personally know the family we were carrying, nor do they know him. However, like everyone involved with Wings of Mercy, as well as Hope's family and friends, his gift is from the heart to help a neighbor in need.



## Dr. Van's Corner

The Rotary connection with WOM/MN goes way back to the early 90's when my friend Paul Haight, DO and I did a Rotary Project in Jamaica. He was the director of the Trewlany Project east of Montego Bay where the emphasis was on control of diabetes and hypertension. I assisted with the surgical part of the program. We conducted several trips together and got to know each other pretty well. It was he who told me about the Volunteer Pilot Group out of Holland, MI started by Pete Vandenbosh in 1991.

Intrigued by this organization, I was given the opportunity to fly mercy missions for one week. I then came home to St. Cloud and started the Minnesota Chapter of Wings of Mercy. Wings of Mercy, Minnesota Inc. was established and incorporated as a 501 (c) 3 organization in January of 1995, flying its first flight also in January of 1995.

Since that time we have had an ongoing relationship with not only my own Rotary Club in St Cloud, but with many other clubs around Minnesota. I have been giving talks about our group to many clubs over the years, but in the last year have developed a powerpoint presentation that combines a slide/talk show about the Wright brothers and WOM/MN. I had the opportunity to visit Kitty Hawk in late 2002, just before the centennial and took several photos of the national monument. Those of you who had attended our annual fundraiser of last year held at the Green Mill restaurant downtown St. Cloud were introduced to this powerpoint presentation. I have been able to give the talk to other rotary clubs, including one in St Paul and one in Cannon Falls this month alone, and it was very well received. If you know anyone with an interest in a presentation, just give me a call, 1-866-622-6332.

We continue to search out new pilots and planes to continue our mission. If we could all talk it up and influence our friends that have an interest in aviation it would be appreciated. Donna Purinton, WOM secretary and board member, recently was at a fly in at Alexandria airport and had a couple of planes suggested. One thing I know is that when pilots fly a mission, they just want to keep on "Giving back" to the community.

## A letter our executive director received in April of this year.

Dear Kate,

Flying Wings of Mercy missions combines two items that I believe make the world go around ... helping others, and flying aircraft. What other activity can possibly compare?

Due primarily to geography, most of the missions I have flown have been to or from rural areas of Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, or Nebraska, generally for treatment of patients at one of the Twin Cities hospitals or at the Mayo complex in Rochester. Sometimes the same patient is transported several times ... it is wonderful to see them improve, and heartbreaking to see when treatments are not going well ... especially since so many of our honored passengers are children.

In today's world it seems most people have forgotten how to say "thank you"; yet, I have never had a flight where the passengers have not expressed their gratitude profusely. Given the extremely tough times these passengers are personally experiencing, it is thanks enough that in a small way I can help ease their burden ... yet they are polite and gracious without exception.

An added bonus is being able to spend time with my friend and colleague, Gary Miller, during these missions. Gary and I are not related, yet my children have referred to him as "Grandpa Gary" for approximately the past fifteen years (as a recent grandfather myself, I realize just how important a title this is!). Gary is a retired trucker, and I a retired airline mechanic & technical operations manager ... but family and flying are what makes both of us tick. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to join the extended Wings of Mercy family!

Finally, thank you, Kate, and thank you, Glen, and many thanks to the balance of the Wings of Mercy staff for all you do!

Take care!

Nick Jilek  
River Falls, Wisconsin



## Mercy Missions Summary Report

### Total of 611 Mercy Missions

#### *Fly-In City Breakdown*

Twin City missions	368
Rochester missions	173
Northern part of MN missions	58
Out state missions	12

#### *Monthly Breakdown*

Year	Total	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
1995	28				3	1	2	4	2	7	6	1	2
1996	42	1	5	3	2	2	1	1	6	8	4	5	4
1997	50	2	2	5	5	9	4	4	4	1	4	4	6
1998	42	3	3	2	2	3	9	1	9	3	4	0	2
1999	60	4	3	6	4	7	8	7	3	7	4	3	4
2000	79	7	7	9	8	10	2	6	2	4	7	10	7
2001	61	1	5	3	5	7	2	6	6	7	7	7	5
2002	105	9	3	12	6	11	5	14	9	11	5	12	8
2003	69	11	8	8	7	0	3	4	9	5	3	6	5
2004	54	4	6	3	7	0	3	7	2	4	7	8	3
2005	3	2	2	4	3	7	3						
<b>Totals</b>	<b>611</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>46</b>

Total Beneficiary Mileage since beginning = 416,856.00

Total Beneficiary Mileage 2005 = 17,872.00

*Children account for 343 missions, adults for 239 missions.*

*All totals do not add up to total number of missions because earliest missions did not compile statistics.*

Wings mercy missions have transported patients to the following hospitals:

Mayo Clinic	179 trips	Milwaukee Cancer Place	15 trips
Children's / Msp	53 trips	St. Cloud Hospital	10 trips
Children's / St. Paul	8 trips	Bethesda	4 trips
Fairview Hospital	73 trips	Gillette Children's	3 trips
Parker Hughes	21 trips	Regions St. Paul	1 trips
Shriner's	98 trips	Others	18 trips

Testimonial: "Flying cargo is really getting depressing. This morning I put on that Wings of Mercy shirt and it makes me feel as proud as a boy scout in a new uniform. WoM is definitely what's right in my life! "

Tom, Wings Pilot

To send a tax-free  
contribution mail to  
the above address

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56 South 33rd Avenue  
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*Special Thanks* to the **Vocational Evaluation and Training program (VET)** for the collation, labeling, sorting and sealing of this newsletter. Between VET and **Coborns** for the printing of the newsletter, Wings cost has been drastically reduced in the producing of this informational newsletter.