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Local Aviation Groups Sponsor Humanitarian Flight

6-year-old Reef Carneson was diagnosed with leukemia at 5 months of age, received a bone marrow transplant at 11 months, and over the course of his young life has spent nearly more time in the ICU than at home. After the transplant he developed graft-vs-host disease which meant that immune cells within the grafted bone marrow attacked Reef's body and organs as if they were foreign organisms. As a result Reef is severely underdeveloped and requires intense rehabilitation.

Originally from South Africa, Reef's family moved to the US in 2011 so Reef could undergo rehabilitation at Children's Hospital of Los Angeles. Because his parents cannot work due to visa restrictions, Reef's medical bills have reached astronomical levels. His story can be read in more detail at www.savebabyreef.com.

Recently, Reef needed treatment at Cincinnati Children's Hospital so his parents turned to Sky Hope Network to arrange a flight.

Sky Hope Network is a flight charity founded by Robin Eissler, an aviation professional who, through her business aviation connections, helped get relief flights to New Orleans after hurricane Katrina and to Haiti after the devastating earthquake in 2010. John Hinshaw is one of Sky Hope's pilots who owns an airplane and loves to fly it, and he regularly volunteers his time, aircraft, and operating expenses to fly medical and other charity missions. John, a roofing contractor in Frankfort, Indiana, flew from his home airport in Indianapolis to Long Beach to pick up Reef, his mother Lydia, and his sister Payten. Along the way he stopped for fuel at Rocky Mt. Metro Airport in Broomfield, where he met and spoke with Kandi Spangler, a board member of the Colorado Aviation Business Association (CABA), one of the sponsors of the mission. On the flight back to Cincinnati for Reef's treatments he made another fuel stop at Centennial Airport in Englewood.

In addition to arranging aircraft and pilots to fly its missions, Sky Hope also tries to secure donors to help offset the cost of fuel for the flights. For Reef's flight, several Denver-area aviation interests came together in support of the mission: CABA, AeroColorado, Carriere & Little Aviation Attorneys, and Landmark Aviation at Rocky Mt. Metro Airport joined forces to pay for all of the fuel, and Signature Flight Support at Centennial Airport donated food and provided the fuel at cost. The total for all of the donated food, fuel, and operating expenses of Hinshaw's Citation Mustang jet for Reef's flight was over \$12,000.

"It's so important for stories like this to be heard because all too often, aviation is portrayed in a negative context, yet we rarely hear about the good things it does for communities and individuals such as Reef and his family," said Mike Straka of CABA, who welcomed the flight and spoke with John and Lydia during the fuel stop at Centennial. "Contrary to popular perception, most folks in business aviation and general aviation are very approachable and ready to lend a hand in times of need. Think about this: John flies a charity mission about every 6 weeks or so for either Sky Hope or LifeLine Pilots, and his aircraft costs roughly \$1,000 per hour to fly, so it goes to show that he loves flying as well as volunteering his time and energy to those who need it. John is really a great guy, and all of us at CABA truly

appreciate what he does. Remember too, this is just one example of the many, many instances of pilots and aviation professionals answering the call for help when it's most needed."

Mike Straka is Vice Chairman of CABA, an aviation advocacy organization whose mission is to promote business and general aviation across the State of Colorado. Based at Centennial Airport (KAPA) in Englewood, Colorado, CABA represents nearly 400 corporate, individual, and student members in aviation and related businesses from around the state. More information can be found at www.mycaba.org. For more on Sky Hope Network visit www.sky-hope.org.



Reef's Sky Hope flight on the ramp at Signature Flight Support at Centennial Airport. (L-R) Payten on the stairs, John, Lydia, and Reef in front. Photo courtesy of Mike Straka



Reef's Sky Hope flight on the ramp at Signature Flight Support at Centennial Airport.
(L-R) Payten on the stairs, John, Lydia, and Reef in front. Photo courtesy of Mike Straka



John's Citation Mustang taxis from the Signature APA ramp for departure to Cincinnati – Lunken LUK
Photo courtesy of Mike Straka