

# NAA NEWS

National Aeronautic Association

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### NAA Names Winners of Public Benefit Flying Awards

**Arlington, VA** – The National Aeronautic Association named the winners of its five Public Benefit Flying awards last week, marking just the second time the awards were given. The PBF awards were established in 2003 to recognize often unheralded American individuals and groups who volunteer their time to flying for humanitarian purposes or who help advance public benefit flying.

**Dr. Robert Cleaves** of Los Angeles won the "Distinguished Volunteer Pilot" Award for founding Wilderness Conservancy's "Project CARE" in 2000, to fly humanitarian missions to Baja California, Mexico. Since its founding Cleaves has flown nearly 100 missions, funded personally, delivering medical supplies to village clinics and elderly homes, educational materials to rural schools and Christmas gifts to the children of indigent families. Cleaves founded the Wilderness Conservancy in 1986 and has furnished several aircraft to governments in southern Africa for anti-poaching patrols.

**Wanda Whitsitt** of Illinois won the "Distinguished Volunteer" Award for her work with Lifeline Pilots, the oldest volunteer pilot organization to carry patients in the United States. Whitsitt founded the organization in 1980 to help carry needy medical patients, medical supplies and organs for transplant. She has retired from flying missions but still serves actively on the board of directors for Lifeline, whose volunteers have logged more than 3 million miles.

**Wings of Hope**, a group in Missouri, won an "Outstanding Achievement in Support of Public Benefit Flying" Award for organizations. Wings of Hope won the group award for more than 40 years of humanitarian flight missions. Since 1962 the organization has provided aircraft and flown medical missions serving more than 39 countries. Wings of Hope has placed more than 140 planes in the United States and around the world to provide medical assistance to the poor and needy. **J. Craig Honaman** of Atlanta also earned an "Outstanding Achievement" Award for an individual, for helping pioneer the use of helicopters in civilian emergency medical service. In the late 1970s he established the United States' first hospital-based aeromedical program in a small city. Ever since, he has helped to promote and expand the use of aviation by hospitals, giving the American public greater access to urgent medical service.

The **Angel Flight America Mission Coordinators** won the "Public Benefit Flying Team" Award for their efforts in creating a national network for humanitarian flights across the United States. Angel Flight America coordinates its many regional offices to serve passengers more efficiently and to ensure no one in need is ever left behind. In 2003 alone, Angel Flight America completed 17,000 missions, a number that would not have been achieved without the cooperation of many different Angel Flight groups.

Arizona-based **America West Airlines** won the "Champion of PBF" Award for its work with three national non-profit organizations: the American Red Cross, the Make-A-Wish Foundation and Angel Flight. The airline's "Miles of Hope" program allows passengers to donate their frequent flier miles to the charities, and 55 million miles have been donated since 1998. In coordination with Angel Flight, 2,100 patients have flown on America West to receive medical care they may not have received otherwise.

The Public Benefit Flying Awards will be presented on September 7, 2004 at a ceremony on Capitol Hill; for more information contact NAA. The Public Benefit Flying Awards were established in cooperation with the Air Care Alliance, an umbrella group that supports charitable and volunteer-based flying throughout the United States ([www.aircareall.org](http://www.aircareall.org)). The National Aeronautic Association is a non-profit, membership organization devoted to fostering opportunities to participate fully in aviation activities and to promoting public understanding of the importance of aviation and space flight to the United States. Visit [www.naa-usa.org](http://www.naa-usa.org) for more information about NAA.