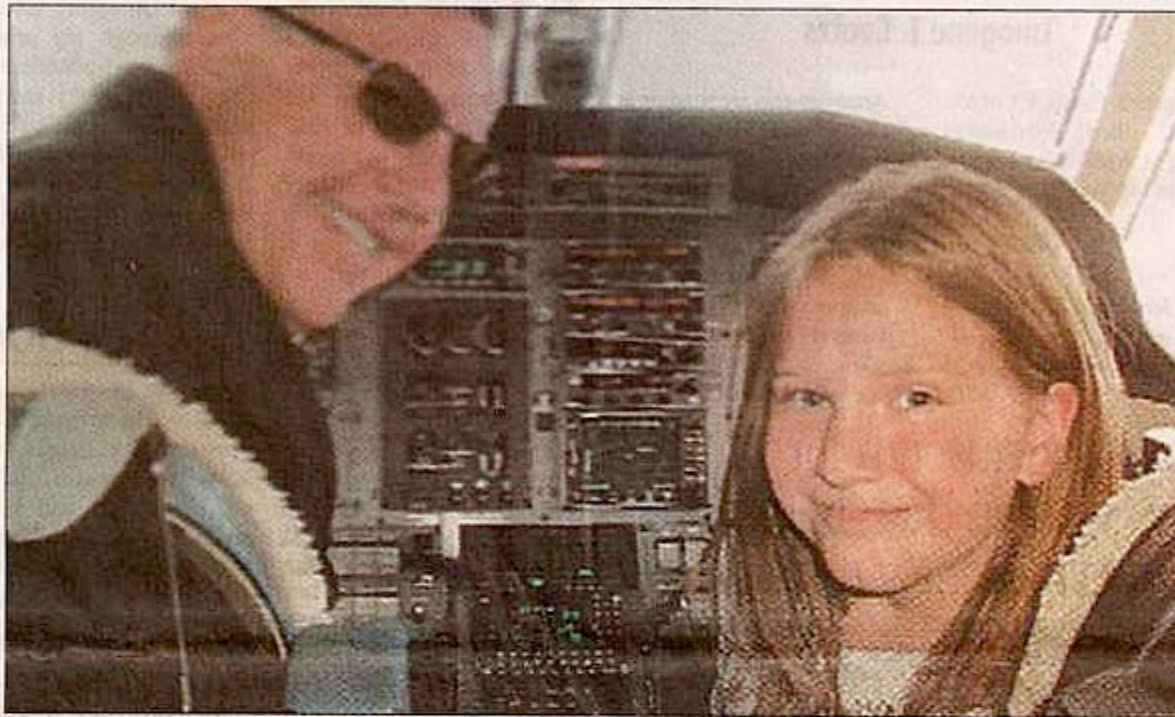


Helping others



One of the young recipients of an Angel Flight and her volunteer pilot smile after completing a flight. Angel Flight is a non-profit organization which provides compassionate air passage to children and adults for medical reasons. A Jefferson County pilot will be making his first Angel Flight this weekend from Mt. Vernon Outland Airport.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

Angels on board

By **TESA CULLI**

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MT. VERNON — Last week, a young woman from Springfield Mo., landed in Mt. Vernon on her way to Philadelphia, Pa., to see her father who is in the hospital.

This week, two others will also be making stops at the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport on their way from getting medical treatment and to go to hospitals for medical treatment.

All the flights are possible due to a volunteer program called Angel Flights.

"Just out of the Midwest Angel Flight Central headquarters in Kansas City, Mo., we have over 1,000 pilots that look and watch for the flights,"

AFC Ambassador Bernie Lallick of Mt. Vernon said.

"They donate their plane, their time and their gas to do this for people in need."

Last week, 19-year-old Rochelle Thompson had a St. Louis pilot which picked her up in Springfield, Mo., then a Paducah, Ky., pilot met her at the Mt. Vernon airport.

From there she caught another flight from Ohio which delivered her to Pennsylvania. Thompson will be returning from her visit with her father on Saturday and will be again getting a connecting flight to her home in Missouri.

Saturday will be an inaugural Angel Flight for local pilot Rodney

Mullinax, Lallick said. Mullinax will be flying his first mission, which will be to take a 3-year-old girl and her parents from Mt. Vernon to Huntsville, Ala., on her way home from receiving medical treatment in Iowa City, Iowa. The girl received treatment for a club foot and is returning home to Georgia, Lallick said.

The mission of Angel Flight is to serve people by arranging charitable flights for access to health care and other humanitarian purposes, according to information from Angel Flight.

"AFC volunteer pilots donate their time, aircraft and flight expenses to the program," the information states.

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"Pilots must be certified by the Federal Aviation Administration and agree in writing to comply with FAA regulations. ...AFC helps hundreds of children and adults with different challenges, conditions and needs. AFC passengers must be outpatients, ambulatory and sit upright in a standard aircraft seat. Financial need, as well as a legitimate reason to request long-distance air transportation is also necessary. Compassion, community service and disaster response missions are also arranged in addition to flights for access to healthcare."

Additional information about Angel Flights is available by calling 877-621-7177 or by going to www.angelflightcentral.org.