

Angel in flight



Three-year-old Sydney Blanton touches down at Mt. Vernon Outland Airport Saturday morning with the help of her mother and father, Christina and Scott Blanton of Thomason, Ga. The three were preparing to continue the second leg of their three-stop journey home with pilot Rodney Mullinax, through an Angel Flight. TESA CULLI/REGISTER NEWS

Volunteer pilots deliver precious cargo

By TESA CULLI

tesa.culli@registernews.com

MT. VERNON — For Scott and Christina Blanton, seeing the King City from the air meant they and their 3-year-old daughter were one step closer to their home in Georgia.

For local pilot Rodney Mullinax, waiting for members of the Blanton family to land was a chance to use his talents to help someone in need.

The Blantons landed at the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport on Saturday morning to begin the second leg of their journey home from a doctor's

appointment in Iowa City for little Sydney Blanton.

The family is one of thousands in the Midwest who rely on Angel Flights — a non-profit organization which provides compassionate air passage to children and adults for medical reasons.

And Mullinax became one of thousands of pilots who volunteer their time, their aircraft and fuel to make sure those who use the service can get to the hospitals, doctors and family that need them.

"Angel Flights has been a God-

send," Christine Blanton said Saturday at the Mt. Vernon Airport. "I can't imagine trying to get Sydney through a commercial airport and on a commercial flight.

"All the pilots with Angel Flight are wonderful, so nice and understanding."

Sydney is a veteran of the skies, making more than 15 trips to and from Iowa City in the past few years to be treated for an orthopedic condition. "We tried all the local

see VOLUNTEER/Page 3A

VOLUNTEER

continued from 1A

doctors, and they couldn't treat the condition," Christine Blanton explained.

"One of our doctors referred her to the specialist in Iowa City, but we didn't know how to get her there," Christine Blanton said.

That's where Angel Flight came in.

"AFC volunteer pilots donate their time, aircraft and flight expenses to the program," according to information from Angel Flight Central.

"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, according to the provided information.

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, commu-

nity service and disaster response missions are also arranged in addition to flights for access to health-care."

Mullinax said he has been a pilot for about eight years, and after he signed up as a volunteer pilot for Angel Flights, he was approved in December 2007 to work with the program.

"My reasons for wanting to do this were very simple," Mullinax said prior to his flight with the Blanton's.

"I have a very personal relationship with my Lord and Savior. He's given me the talent and resources to fly, and because of that I want to share my talent to help others."

Sydney said Saturday she was ready to "go home."

At 3-years old, her favorite part of the trip so far had been getting to see snow in Iowa City.

"Lots of snow," Sydney said. "Snow is cold. No snow at home."

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

1-28-08