



MEMORIAL HERMANN

WINTER 2014

LifeFlight®

A Newsletter for First Responders

Welcome to Memorial Hermann Life Flight's quarterly newsletter for first responders. We hope you find the information contained within this publication interesting and informative. Our goal is to provide you with helpful articles about our services, case studies relevant to clinical protocols practiced on a daily basis, information about available educational opportunities, and any other updates that you as a first responder may find useful. We value the work you do and are grateful for your partnership as we work together to serve the people of Houston and its surrounding communities. Thank you.

Memorial Hermann Life Flight's Advanced Capabilities:

- Pre-hospital blood product administration
- LVAD
- ECMO
- Intra-aortic balloon pump
- Portable blood warmers
- Ultrasound diagnostics
- Double-load capability
- Larger cabin (allows for CPR in the aircraft)
- Clot-busting agents for STEMI
- Direct access to Cath Lab for STEMI
- Direct access to CT for strokes
- ISTAT portable blood analyzer
- Video-assisted intubations
- Hemostatic agents for blood clotting
- Direct contact with physicians
- Night vision goggles for all crew members during flight to improve safety
- Twin-engine aircraft for patient and crew member safety and extra weight-loading capabilities
- Pediatric and neonatal transport services

Memorial Hermann Life Flight® Now Conducting Flights Under IFR



In honor of the founder and medical director of Life Flight, James "Red" Duke, M.D., administrators applied for and were assigned a worldwide call sign of "Red Duke." All Life Flight communications with Air Traffic Control while on IFR flights use the "Red Duke" call sign.

Memorial Hermann Life Flight®, the only hospital-based air ambulance serving Houston and surrounding communities, has added another groundbreaking innovation to its already long list of "firsts," becoming the first air-ambulance program in Southeast Texas to be granted authority to conduct flights under instrument flight rules (IFR) by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). This new capability allows Life Flight crews to utilize aircraft flight instruments and advanced navigation systems rather than relying solely on visual cues or what is referred to in aviation as visual flight rules (VFR).

"By becoming IFR-certified, we are now able to operate safely during the en route phase regardless of visibility and cloud ceilings," said Christopher "Todd" Grubbs, ATP, chief pilot of Life Flight. "This capability allows our crews to serve the community when

weather conditions might restrict flights under VFR. We can go above the clouds or in the clouds using our autopilot and/or our navigation instrumentation. Every airline conducts flights using IFR, and now we are operating under the same conditions."

According to Grubbs, Life Flight has been missing an average of 600 flights annually due to inclement weather, affecting close to 15 percent of patient flight requests. While some flights may still not be possible in cases of very bad weather conditions, the use of IFR will significantly expand Life Flight's ability to safely serve the community, he said. "Being IFR-capable, trained and equipped offers much higher levels of safety during every flight we conduct by giving our crews options when un-forecast weather is encountered."

In addition, weather decisions for flight

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Life Flight's IFR Certification Provides Multiple Benefits to Community Hospitals and Pre-Hospital Providers

Since Memorial Hermann Life Flight® made its debut as the first air ambulance service in Texas and only the second in the nation in 1976, more than 130,000 critically ill and injured patients across the region have reaped the benefit of what is often the quickest transport available to receive life-saving care. Even under the most difficult and chaotic of scenarios – from a multiple vehicle car crash in the furthest outreaches of Harris County, to the Superdome after Hurricane Katrina where Life Flight crews were the first to arrive to transport the sickest of the sick – the unmistakable red and black helicopter descending from above is a welcome relief for first responders and hospital workers when critical transport is needed most.

However, even as the most storied and experienced air ambulance program in the region, Life Flight has missed, on average, at least 600 flights per year because of weather. “It’s a difficult situation for everyone on our team when we have to abort a flight because of unexpected weather during visual flight rules (VFR) flights, particularly if the conditions are safe for operations using IFR,” said Christopher “Todd” Grubbs, chief pilot. Now, as the first program based in Southeast Texas to receive authority to conduct flights under instrument flight rules (IFR) by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the team expects to slash that number of missed flights by up to 40 percent.

“Being IFR-certified is not a perfect solution, and there will still be instances when we

cannot fly,” Grubb said. “But, we are now able to fly in conditions that previously we could not using VFR. By achieving this certification, we are poised to make an enormous stride in safety and have a great effect on the helicopter emergency medical service community in Southeast Texas.”

For outlying hospitals and emergency responders who rely on Life Flight as the premier patient air transport service for the critically ill or injured, the new certification provides a host of benefits. Most importantly, said Grubbs, Life Flight is now simply able

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Life Flight Adding Proprietary GPS Procedures to Further Enhance IFR Capabilities

In an effort to maximize Life Flight’s new instrument flight rules (IFR) capabilities and further reduce patient transport time, the program is adding its own proprietary global positioning system (GPS) procedures to several of the hospitals and heliports in the Greater Houston area. These procedures will allow for direct takeoff and landing at multiple locations that historically might be restricted to use under visual flight rules (VFR) only.

The new system will be a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) approved IFR approach network, which will include most hospitals within the Memorial Hermann Health System, the Life Flight fueling sites and a number of emergency medical service (EMS) rendezvous sites.

“This FAA-approved system allows us to fly approaches to a number of facilities, and can dramatically reduce transport time,” said Christopher “Todd” Grubbs, chief pilot of Life Flight. “If you are in the clouds and can’t fly visually, you have to do an approach procedure approved by the FAA. By creating our own approach network, we can land directly at Memorial Hermann-Texas Medical Center and other locations instead of landing at Hobby Airport and ground transporting the patient from there.”

The new, proprietary system allows for much more flight flexibility, said Grubbs. “By implementing an instrument approach network with our hospital and EMS partners in the community, we will also be authorized to depart from those facilities using IFR and transition into the safety of the Air Traffic Control system,” he said. “It coincides perfectly with our System’s vision to be innovators, promote growth, enhance patient safety and achieve operational excellence.”

Life Flight's IFR Certification – Frequently Asked Questions

Below are some common questions from EMS providers, first responders and outlying hospital care providers. If you have additional questions about the new certification or any other Life Flight question, please email lifeflight@memorialhermann.org.

Q. Can Life Flight now fly in all weather conditions?

A. No. While IFR allows us to fly when weather might prevent VFR flight due to cloud height and decreased visibility, we are limited during thunderstorms (rain showers are not thunderstorms), icing conditions and extremely low visibility (fog).

Q. How can EMS use Life Flight for scene calls?

A. Many locations where we routinely respond to scenes are near airports that would allow us to rendezvous with EMS. During the request for Life Flight, our communications personnel will advise EMS if we would require meeting at a nearby airport.

Q. Does it take longer to respond for flights using IFR?

A. It may add initial time for liftoff due to flight plan filing and more detailed run-up procedures. However, that time is made up en route since IFR allows for high-speed flight above bad weather conditions.

Q. Will Life Flight be able to communicate with ground crews while on IFR flights?

A. Yes. The medical team will continue to handle all communications with hospitals, EMS, fire and law enforcement



during IFR-conducted flights. The pilot will be focused on air traffic control communications.

Q. What airports can be used to meet Life Flight in case of bad weather conditions?

A. There are dozens of IFR-capable airport locations throughout Southeast Texas. See the complete list here. IFR Airports in Southeast Texas:

- Brazoria – Texas Gulf Coast Regional Airport (Angleton/Lake Jackson)
- Brazos – Easterwood Field (College Station) and Coulter Field (Bryan)
- Burleson – Caldwell Municipal Airport
- Calhoun – Calhoun County Airport (Port Lavaca)
- Chambers – Chambers County Airport (Anahuac)
- Colorado – Eagle Lake Airport
- Dewitt – Yoakum Municipal Airport
- Fayette – La Grange/Fayette Regional Air Center (La Grange)
- Fort Bend – Sugar Land
- Galveston – Scholes International (Galveston)

- Hardin – Hawthorne Field (Kountze)
- Harris – Numerous (Tomball, Baytown, LaPorte, Houston has five airports)
- Houston – Houston County Airport (Crockett)
- Jasper – Jasper County-Bell Field (Jasper)
- Jefferson – Beaumont Municipal and Jack Brooks Regional (Port Arthur)
- Lee – Giddings-Lee County (Giddings)
- Liberty – Liberty Municipal and Cleveland Municipal Airports
- Madison – Madisonville Municipal Airport
- Matagorda – Bay City Municipal Airport and Palacios Municipal Airport
- Montgomery – Lone Star Executive Airport (Conroe)
- Orange – Orange County Airport (Orange)
- Polk – Livingston Municipal Airport
- Robertson – Hearne Municipal Airport
- Victoria – Victoria Regional Airport
- Walker – Huntsville Municipal Airport
- Waller – Houston Executive Airport (Brookshire/Houston)
- Washington – Brenham Municipal and Navasota Municipal Airports
- Wharton – Wharton Regional Airport

Alvin ISD Dedicates New Elementary School in Honor of Renowned Trauma Surgeon Dr. James “Red” Duke

Representatives from Alvin ISD, Memorial Hermann, UTHealth Medical School and the Pearland, Alvin and Manvel communities gathered on Sunday, Sept. 7 to celebrate the official dedication ceremony of Dr. James “Red” Duke Elementary. The school is named in honor of renowned UTHealth Medical School trauma surgeon James H. “Red” Duke, Jr., M.D., who is affiliated with Memorial Hermann-Texas Medical Center and founder and medical director of Memorial Hermann Life Flight®.

“I’m such a fortunate man, I can’t even try to put dimensions on it,” said Dr. Duke. “I honestly don’t know why I was ever picked for the privilege of having this school named after me; I’m humbled beyond words but I am grateful beyond words as well. And the fact that the school is an elementary school is extra special. This is such a formative time in children’s lives, when they begin to really perfect those things you learn about courtesy, respect and honesty. And that’s what it’s all about.”

Approximately 500 people attended the 45-minute program, which featured a performance by Alvin ISD’s cast from “Peter Pan, the Musical,” two Duke Elementary students – Courtney Van Auken and Kennedy Wiltz – who sang the National Anthem, the presentation of colors by Boy Scout Troop 414, a brief video on the history of Memorial Hermann Life Flight, and a special video tribute



to Dr. Duke from the students of Duke Elementary.

The cafeteria was decorated with balloons and yellow roses, the official flower of Memorial Hermann Life Flight. Refreshments of punch, fresh fruit and vegetables, sandwiches, cheese and crackers, and Life Flight-themed cookies were provided by Pearland H-E-B plus! and Memorial Hermann, in addition to a large helicopter-shaped cake provided by Create a Cake. There was also an indoor “photo booth” where participants young and old were invited to put on wire-rimmed glasses and red mustaches, a playful reference to Dr. Duke’s iconic visage.

“For more than 50 years, Dr. Duke has saved lives and inspired others to do

the same,” said Craig Cordola, CEO of Memorial Hermann-TMC. “A colorful personality, he has lived a robust life of service and extraordinary accomplishments. In addition to his dedication to serving patients, he has always been passionate about teaching and now his legacy will be known to generations to come.”

In addition to the guest of honor and Cordola, there were a number of notable attendees at the ceremony, including: Tommy King, interim superintendent of schools for Alvin ISD; Fulvia Shaw, principal of Duke Elementary; Cheryl Harris, school board president for Alvin ISD; Alvin Mayor Paul Horn; Manvel Mayor Delores Martin; Pearland Mayor Tom Reid; Richard Andrassy, M.D., chair of the department of Surgery at

UTHealth Medical School and surgeon in chief at Memorial Hermann-TMC; John Holcomb, M.D., professor and director of acute care surgery at UTHealth Medical School and director of the Memorial Hermann Texas Trauma Institute; leaders representing Memorial Hermann Southeast Hospital and Memorial Hermann-TMC; crew members from Memorial Hermann Life Flight; and Gregg Knape, D.V.M., veterinarian at Gulf Coast Large Animal Clinic, who gave a moving speech recounting how Dr. Duke saved his wife's life.

Duke Elementary is a two-story campus with a total enrollment of 852 students, as of September 5. Located in Manvel, Texas, the campus serves students in grades pre-kindergarten through fifth and includes areas for physical education, art, music and special classes. The school has adopted a bulldog mascot and the official colors of maroon and white, in honor of Dr. Duke's beloved alma mater, Texas A&M University. Duke Elementary opened its doors for the first time on August 25 for the first day of the 2014-2015 school year.

"This campus is named after a great man who has made a significant impact on our community, and has definitely left his mark in history," said Shaw. "We will work to ensure that the students who come through the doors of Duke Elementary will be inspired to be innovative, develop a passion for learning, and make a commitment to improving their community. They will be encouraged to reach their full potential, and have a clear understanding of the importance of Dr. Duke and all that he stands for."

Dr. Duke is a world-renowned trauma surgeon known for his extraordinary

efforts to train medical students, residents and surgeons, improve outcomes for injured patients and educate the public about important health issues. As one of the first faculty members of the UTHealth Medical School, he established the trauma service at Memorial Hermann-TMC, the school's primary teaching hospital. In 1976, he was instrumental in developing the Life Flight helicopter program, the only hospital-based air ambulance serving Southeast Texas. As a result of the nationally syndicated Texas Health Reports, which educated millions about topics ranging from kidney stones

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FULVIA SHAW, PRINCIPAL OF DUKE ELEMENTARY

to injury prevention, he became one of the most recognized personalities in his field.

A Korean War veteran, Dr. Duke earned his medical degree in 1960 at The University of Texas Southwestern Medical School in Dallas. He completed his residency in general surgery at Dallas' Parkland Memorial Hospital, where he helped save the life of wounded Texas Gov. John Connally in 1963. Before joining the faculty at UTHealth Medical School, Dr. Duke served on the

faculty at UT Southwestern, Columbia University and Nanghar University School of Medicine in Afghanistan.



Memorial Hermann-TMC Achieves Magnet Recognition for Nursing Excellence

On Oct. 21 Memorial Hermann-Texas Medical Center received news that it had achieved one of the highest levels of recognition a hospital can receive – Magnet® recognition for excellence in nursing services by the American Nurses Credentialing Center’s (ANCC) Magnet Recognition Program®.

Magnet recognition is the highest possible organizational credential granted by the ANCC, the largest and most prominent nursing credentialing organization in the United States, and fewer than 7 percent of hospitals in the country have achieved Magnet status since the program’s inception in 1994. In order to earn Magnet status, hospitals must excel in several areas, including nursing standards and practices, patient care, and innovations in nursing leadership and management. This is Memorial Hermann-TMC’s first Magnet recognition.

“This is a major milestone for our Campus and we are delighted and so proud to add Magnet recognition to our growing list of achievements,” said Victoria King, chief nursing officer at Memorial Hermann-TMC. “This status is the top honor in nursing,

It not only recognizes the excellent work our nursing staff does every day, it also rewards their unwavering commitment to provide the highest quality care possible for our patients.”

Before a hospital is selected for Magnet recognition, ANCC completes a rigorous, extensive evaluation process that includes onsite visits, reviews of written documentation, staff and patient satisfaction surveys and interviews. Initial Magnet recognition is valid for four years and during that time hospitals and nursing staff are closely monitored, evaluated and surveyed to ensure they remain in compliance with the program’s high standards. At the end of the four-year period, hospitals must reapply and again undergo the challenging evaluation process.

Studies have demonstrated that Magnet-recognized hospitals typically provide a higher quality of patient care, including lower mortality rates and better patient satisfaction. Magnet hospitals also experience lower turnover and lower rates of burnout



among nursing staff. The recognition is also directly linked to a hospital’s ability to attract and retain qualified, highly educated nursing staff.

Craig Cordola, CEO of Memorial Hermann-TMC,

says the recognition is also linked to increased consumer confidence. “Magnet status is synonymous with innovative, high-quality health care,” he said. “When patients see that your Campus is Magnet-recognized, they know they are going to be in good hands. But Magnet is also more than just a nursing credential; it is an honor given to the entire team, working collaboratively with our nursing staff, in order to reach this impressive level of achievement.”

Of the 5,000+ hospitals in the U.S., only 391 are Magnet facilities. Memorial Hermann-TMC now shares its Magnet status with two other hospitals in the Memorial Hermann Health System: Memorial Hermann Memorial City Medical Center and Memorial Hermann The Woodlands Hospital.



Memorial Hermann-Texas Medical Center Wins 2014 UHC Quality Leadership Award

In late October it was announced that Memorial Hermann-Texas Medical Center won the prestigious 2014 University HealthSystem Consortium (UHC) Quality Leadership Award. The annual award is given to academic medical center members that have demonstrated excellence in delivering high-quality patient care, as measured by the UHC Quality and Accountability Study.

In 2005, UHC launched the study to define attributes associated with high performance in both quality and safety. The study ultimately identified the following five attributes of high-performing organizations: a shared sense of purpose, leadership style, an accountability system, a focus on results and a culture of collaboration. To determine the Quality Leadership Award winners, UHC completes an extensive evaluation process that ranks member organizations' performance in six key domains: patient mortality, effectiveness, safety, equity, patient centeredness and efficiency.

This year the award methodology was refined with enhanced measures related to the safety domain, including measures for hospital-acquired infections from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Healthcare Safety Network and new metrics on venous thromboembolism based on The Joint Commission's National Quality Core Measures.



Representatives from Memorial Hermann-TMC, including Campus CEO Craig Cordola, back row center, attended the UHC member awards ceremony in late October to accept the 2014 UHC Quality Leadership Award.

Award recipients were announced at the 2014 UHC Annual Conference in Las Vegas. Memorial Hermann-TMC was one of only 12 member hospitals across the country chosen as a 2014 UHC Quality Leadership Award winner.

"UHC commends these academic medical centers for their strong commitment to providing high-quality patient care throughout their clinical enterprises," said Irene M. Thompson, UHC's president and chief executive officer.

Craig Cordola, CEO of Memorial Hermann-TMC, was quick to give credit to hospital staff. "This is one of the most prestigious awards in the industry, and I am thrilled that Memorial Hermann-TMC is included on this year's list of top-performing academic medical centers in the country," he said. "Because our Campus is built on a long-term affiliation with UTHealth Medical School, along with our dedicated private physician partners, we are able to bring together a world-class team of clinicians, researchers and educators under one roof. I want to personally thank all of the members of that hardworking and talented team for helping us achieve this incredible honor."

Memorial Hermann Life Flight Hires Medic Trained in Joint Program with U.S. Army

For U.S. Army veteran Thomas De La Fuente, EMT-P, FP-C, every day lately seems to be a good day – especially on the days when he is flying. As one of the newest employees of Memorial Hermann Life Flight®, flight paramedic De La Fuente is still getting to know his fellow crew members, but his training in the Army Flight Medic Program prepared him for his career and for working in the Memorial Hermann Health System.

De La Fuente never planned to join the military. While he pursued a more academic path, his older brother became

a firefighter in the Army. Their different paths didn't really register with the younger De La Fuente until a few months later when his brother came home to visit, in uniform. It was then that the younger De La Fuente decided that the Army was much more appealing to him than his college classes.

From that point forward, he moved quickly from being newly enlisted, to becoming a flight medic, to attending para-rescue training in New Mexico. After that, he went to Philadelphia where he did ride-alongs with a fire department and clinical rotations at a hospital. All of

this led to him volunteering to be a part of the Army Flight Medic Program when it launched at Memorial Hermann-Texas Medical Center in 2013.

The two-week program provides training for flight medics and was originally created as an optional pre-deployment training for Army reservists. Reservists are placed in clinical rotations that consist of classroom lectures regarding medical and trauma aspects of patient care, patient and aero medical safety briefings, invasive skills practices and hands-on experience with caring for the severely ill in the acute phases of medical management.



U.S. Army veteran Thomas De La Fuente, EMT-P, FP-C, is the first reservist to be hired by Memorial Hermann-TMC after participating in the Army Flight Medic Program.

De La Fuente's unit was preparing to deploy when he heard about the Flight Medic Program. "I thought, 'maybe I can learn a thing or two from the people who do this all the time,'" he said. "I don't think anywhere has patients as sick as the ones here, or at such a high volume."

Memorial Hermann-TMC is one of the busiest Level I trauma centers in the country, and Life Flight has the highest volume of any air ambulance service as well. For De La Fuente, the Flight Medic Program offered him the chance to learn from those he feels are top in their field who could prepare him for his role as a flight medic in the military. "Everything that I've had to work at learning, these guys have just been able to put together."

"The Army uses this program to set the bar higher for its flight medics," said George Tarver III, EMTT-P, FP-C, EMS-1, flight paramedic and clinical educator for Life Flight. Some reservists are EMTs or paramedics, while others may have combat medic or clinician backgrounds. To date, 34 students have gone through the program. Each class has four students. Some, like De La Fuente, have attended more than once – De La Fuente volunteered for the program three times.

"He stood out from the rest," said Tarver, who called De La Fuente "a perfect hire."

Memorial Hermann-TMC is one of the busiest Level I trauma centers in the country, and Life Flight has the highest volume of any air ambulance service as well.

Earlier this year, De La Fuente's range of experiences helped prepare him for the flight medic exam, which requires 18 months of flight experience and critical care training, the latter of which he gained through the Flight Medic Program. He hoped to join Life Flight but when an opening became available this spring, he still had several months before his time was up with the Army.

"I didn't want to apply for a job and if I got it, have to say that I couldn't start work for three or four months," he said. Luck would have it that closer to his Oct. 1 separation date, another flight medic position was posted. De La Fuente quickly applied for and was offered the job.

"He tells me every day we've flown together how happy he is to be here," said Life Flight clinical educator Rodolfo "Rudy" Cabrera, B.S.N., CFRN, EMT-P, who served as De La Fuente's preceptor.

De La Fuente is the first reservist to be hired by Memorial Hermann-TMC after participating in the Army Flight Medic Program. Of the 74 people employed by Life Flight, 18 of the 21 pilots and several nurses and paramedics are veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces.



Continuing Education

Memorial Hermann Life Flight® offers the following classes and more. For a schedule, visit trauma.memorialhermann.org/ems-education. For more information or to register, contact Kelly Murphy, Life Flight education coordinator, at 713.704.6151 or Kelly.Murphy@memorialhermann.org.

- Advanced Burn Life Support (ABLS)
- Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS)
- American Heart Association Heart Codes
- Aortic Aneurysm Management
- Blood Product Administration
- Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) License Provider
- CPR-Heartsaver Non-license
- Emergency Nursing Pediatric Course (ENPC)
- Instruction on Difficult Airways
- Landing Zone classes
- 12-Lead Interpretation Course
- Metabolic Emergencies
- Multi-System Trauma Care
- Neonatal Resuscitation Program (NRP)
- Pediatric Advanced Life Support Course (PALS)
- Pediatric Airway Management
- Respiratory Emergencies
- STEMI Protocol Instruction
- Tourniquet Use
- Trauma Nursing Core Course (TNCC)

Memorial Hermann Life Flight Wins 2014 EMS Air Medical Service of the Year Award

Memorial Hermann Texas Trauma Institute is proud to announce that Memorial Hermann Life Flight® has been named the winner of the Texas Department of State Health Services' 2014 EMS Air Medical Service of the Year Award. This prestigious award honors a public or private air medical service in Texas that has demonstrated the highest standards in providing patient care, leading the way in innovation and commitment to patient care.

Winners in 13 different categories were announced Nov. 25 at the annual Texas EMS state conference in Fort Worth. Each category honors a person or organization

that exemplifies the best that the Texas EMS and trauma system has to offer. This year marks the third time that Life Flight has achieved this recognition, winning previously in 2001 and 2004.

"We are so grateful and humbled that our esteemed EMS colleagues around the Lone Star State have elected to honor us with this significant award once again,"



This year marks the third time that Life Flight has achieved this recognition, winning previously in 2001 and 2004.

said Tom Flanagan, chief operating officer of Memorial Hermann-Texas Medical Center, home to the Texas Trauma Institute. "It reinforces and rewards the amazing work our Life Flight teams do every day, providing the highest quality of in-flight care possible while helping to revolutionize the air medical field by constantly introducing new advancements and technologies."



Texas Medical Center Hosts Breakfast to Recognize Newly Hired Military Veterans

The Texas Medical Center (TMC) hosted a breakfast on Nov. 7 to honor military veterans who have joined the TMC workforce in the course of the past year. TMC leaders, steering committee members and military veterans who are employed as a result of TMC's "Hiring Red, White & You!" initiative were in attendance. The program featured remarks from William McKeon, executive vice president, chief strategy officer and chief operating officer of TMC; and retired Army Col. John B. Holcomb, M.D., co-founder of the veterans' hiring initiative and director of the Memorial Hermann Texas Trauma Institute, as well as chief of the division of Acute Care Surgery at UTHealth Medical School. During the event, the veterans in attendance received challenge coins from hospital leadership in recognition of their service.

Superheroes Unmasked at Action-Packed Pearland Event

More than 1,400 kids of all ages showed up channeling their inner superheroes to meet real life heroes such as firefighters, emergency medical personnel, police officers, military service members, and the Memorial Hermann

Life Flight® team at Memorial Hermann Convenient Care Center at Pearland’s “Superhero Day” on Nov. 8. The fun-filled afternoon featured music, games, prizes, giveaways, food and a flag presentation by the Glenda Dawson High School Color Guard.



IFR Certification... *continued from page 2*

to fly more in varying degrees of inclement weather. “In almost 100 of the 600 missed flights in the past year for Life Flight, we had to abort because the weather worsened unexpectedly. Now, we are authorized to depart under IFR from charted IFR runways. Our systems allow our aircraft autopilot to be engaged shortly after takeoff is performed.”

In addition, flights under IFR can go at the maximum cruise speed and are not limited by cloud heights or visibility during en route segments, so transport is quicker and any lost time can be made up, added Grubbs. “IFR gives us the certainty of arrival that VFR does not,” he said.

For many outlying hospitals, this means air ambulance service at times when it couldn’t exist before, as Life Flight can now retrieve patients during inclement weather in regions that are only served by VFR air ambulance services locally. “As one example, we can now fly to Beaumont during inclement weather conditions and provide service to all patients. If the community needs to transport a patient by air to the Houston area, we may be able to respond when their nearest air ambulance service cannot.”

According to Eric von Wenckstern, administrative director of Life Flight, the program’s new capabilities because of IFR certification have the potential to positively affect patient outcomes across the region by allowing air transport versus ground transport in many cases. “Many physicians rightfully worry about the length of time it takes a critically ill patient to be transported by ground, and they are forced to carefully weigh the risks and benefits. We aim to make that decision easier by continuing to expand the services Life Flight offers.”

Life Flight Now Conducting Flights Under IFR

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requests can now be made with greater certainty, he said, adding that healthcare and pre-hospital providers across the region can now depend upon Life Flight's much-needed service even more. "Flights conducted under IFR are highly structured and further enhance safety by ensuring constant communication and radar contact with air traffic control," he said. To achieve the prestigious IFR certification, Life Flight pilots undergo rigorous training and are required to achieve airline transport pilot (ATP) licensure, which is the same required of pilots who fly commercial airplanes. The didactic and practical portions of the IFR training curriculum take approximately one month to complete and involve meeting the most challenging standards in aviation. "Each training flight is conducted with numerous instrument takeoffs, approaches and emergency simulations," said Grubbs. "We use extensive line-oriented flight training, or LOFT, scenario-based training and hands-on flight operations to ensure that our aviators are unflappable, proficient and exacting. All of the flight training is in the actual helicopter while flying in the Southeast Texas airspace for thorough familiarization."

Grubbs said that Life Flight pilots are all required to have their instrument-rated license upon hire, and ATP licensure within at least two years of hire. Of Life Flight's 21 pilots, 17 are ATP-licensed and the other four are currently undergoing IFR training. "It is the highest standard in our field, and fewer than 5 percent of helicopter emergency medical service pilots across the country are IFR certified," he said. "The maximum benefit of flying under IFR is to avoid the risks associated with flying during those conditions. The safety of our crew and patients is our No. 1 priority."

The Life Flight fleet, which completes more than 3,000 missions each year, consists of six Airbus EC-145 helicopters, all of which are equipped and certified for single-pilot IFR operation. The John S. Dunn Helipad at Memorial Hermann-Texas Medical Center can accommodate four helicopters at one time, and is considered one of the busiest helipads in the United States. In addition to the 21 pilots, the nationally acclaimed Life Flight team includes 21 flight nurses, 18 paramedics/dispatchers and eight mechanics. Each helicopter is inspected and serviced daily.

According to Grubbs, the Life Flight fleet's technology, capability and avionics are among the most advanced in the industry. "These helicopters have dual autopilots and GPS units, weather radar, 3X color moving-map displays, terrain and obstacle warning systems, traffic avoidance systems, and XM Satellite Aviation Weather," he said. "Each system on every aircraft has a backup, and some of our avionics and flight instruments have two backups. Our helicopters are capable of flying instrument approaches directly to runways at a height of 50 feet while coupled to the autopilot system."

Founded in 1976 by James "Red" Duke, M.D., who still serves as medical director of the program today, Life Flight retrieves critically ill and injured patients in the Greater Houston area and beyond, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Most locations are accessible in less than 15 minutes, within a 150-mile radius of Houston, including Harris County, Southeast Texas and part of Western Louisiana. Provided as a community service by Memorial Hermann, Life Flight operates as a hospital-based, not-for-profit organization. It costs approximately \$3 million annually to support the program, none of which comes from tax dollars.



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Questions, comments or suggestions about this publication? We'd love to hear from you! Email us at lifeflight@memorialhermann.org

To transfer a patient, please contact the Transfer Center at 713.704.2500.

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