



## **LIFEFLIGHT OF MAINE**

P.O. Box 811  
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E-mail: [cmmc@cmmc.org](mailto:cmmc@cmmc.org)  
For more information about LifeFlight, call toll-free 877-262-2525.

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## COMMUNITY HELIPAD PROJECT UP-DATE

By Darrell Gentry

As the comparative lazy days of summer come to a close, fund-raising efforts for the Community Helipad Project continue full-steam ahead. Meetings with businesses, civic organizations and community leaders are ongoing. Information about the project and its lasting effects, both medically and with respect to economic development, are being discussed at length throughout the state. The overall positive response to the concept and its benefits has been overwhelming. Hospitals are eager to begin local fund-raising efforts in order to attain matching grant monies and provide their communities with the best emergency and critical care services possible. A number of hospitals are ready to, or have already broken ground for, helipad construction.

The grant proposal process, which involves formulating information and support materials for application submissions, is a huge undertaking. The campaign is at a point where grant proposals may be accepted. Letters of support have been written, local hospital sites have been identified,

photos taken, site estimates received maps drawn, and status reports completed. Five foundations have been targeted for this project. Corporate entities are also in the mix, offering some exciting possibilities that would have an impact statewide.

Kiwanis members have designed a pin symbolizing their support of the Community Helipad Project. The pins will be sold not only to Kiwanis members, but also to anyone interested in supporting the helipad project. All proceeds, after expenses, will go to the project. The pins should go on sale sometime in late summer.

Watch for the next issue of Dispatches for more information on grant proposals, local fund-raising endeavors, and corporate grants.

It promises to be a great autumn for the Community Helipad Project, LifeFlight, and the citizens of Maine.

# DISPATCHES

A PUBLICATION FROM LIFEFLIGHT OF MAINE

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## FRANKLIN MEMORIAL INTEGRATES LIFEFLIGHT INTO RURAL EMS SYSTEM

Going north or west out of Farmington the roads narrow into ribbons cutting through forests and marshes and over mountains. Heading east is much the same, though there is more farmland and gentler swells to the earth. Perched on the edge of this vast expanse is Franklin Memorial Hospital. Located on Route 4 south of downtown Farmington, the 70-bed facility serves some of the most remote areas of Maine.

Delivering healthcare to rural areas is a challenge in any circumstance, but

doubly so in western Maine where rugged terrain and unpredictable weather make fast and safe transportation problematic. And for emergency medical service (EMS) providers, effective transportation is essential.

The transportation capabilities of the emergency care network headquartered at Franklin Memorial Hospital (FMH) was bolstered with the introduction of LifeFlight, the medical helicopter service created by Eastern Maine Healthcare in Bangor and Central Maine Healthcare in Lewiston nearly two years ago. By harnessing LifeFlight's ability to quickly penetrate into some of three most remote country in Maine, emergency care providers in FMH's service area can now move patients more effectively to hospital-based emergency care facilities.

Mike Luciano, formerly the supervisor of the five EMS services affiliated with FMH, says the are numerous barriers to reaching out to the most distant points of western Maine. Even with 12 ambulances and some 100 EMS employees, meeting the emergency care needs of such a large and rural area, especially on snow-choked and icy roads, is a formidable task.

Compounding the challenge posed by geography and weather is western



*Franklin Memorial Hospital in Farmington, the emergency medical resource for a large region of rural Maine, has developed a close working relationship with LifeFlight of Maine.*

*Continued on page 5 ...*

## Pilot Profile

### MISSION STATEMENT

To provide a statewide medical helicopter service that transports critically ill and injured patients. LifeFlight will provide the highest quality of care and follow rigorous safety standards.

**Norm Dinerman, M.D.,**  
Medical Director  
973-7250  
mdinerman@emh.org

**Thomas Judge,**  
Executive Director  
973-6706  
tjudge@ahs.emh.org

### CONTRIBUTORS

**Randall Dustin**  
Communications Director,  
Central Maine Medical Center

**Elizabeth Sutherland**  
Community Relations,  
Eastern Maine Healthcare

**Susan Y. Smith**  
Layout  
Communications Specialist,  
Central Maine Medical Center

**Darrell Gentry**  
Manager,  
Community Helipad Project



**LIFEFLIGHT OF MAINE**

## LIFEFLIGHT JOB LETS OLD TOWN NATIVE LARRY MILLER FINALLY “COME HOME”

By Elizabeth Sunderland

Old Town native Larry Miller has a quick smile and a gregarious, confident manner that makes folks he meets immediately sense that he's a man capable of getting the job done. And since December 1998 that job is piloting a LifeFlight helicopter.

After attending Army flight school more than 26 years ago, Larry spent his first three years as a helicopter pilot in Fort Polk, La. That was just the beginning. After his military service, he headed to the Gulf of Mexico where he flew people and supplies to offshore oil rigs. But the Gulf wasn't Larry's last stop.

With a wife and daughter living back in Old Town, Larry spent many years flying back and forth from stints piloting helicopters. Sandwiching precious time with his family between jobs in far away locations like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Mozambique, Croatia, Liberia and Trinidad, Larry flew helicopters for various oil companies, government agencies, and once, before coming home to work for LifeFlight, for another emergency medical flight program.

Larry was flying assignments for an oil company in Trinidad when he learned that Eastern Maine Healthcare and Central Maine Healthcare were joining forces to create LifeFlight of Maine. A spot on the pilot roster meant a chance for Larry to live at home year round for the first time in many years. It also meant a chance to help do some good for the people he considered his neighbors – the people

of Maine. Hot on the search for the company that had been awarded the LifeFlight helicopter contract, he made a couple calls and learned it was Keystone, an internationally known air medical management company located in Pennsylvania. Larry wasted no time getting in touch. "It was my chance to come home," he says.

And what does Larry think, now that he's here? He thinks that working for LifeFlight is pretty special. "It's a speedy way to get critically ill or injured people from where they are to



where they need to be," he says. When asked if being part of an impressive team of pilots, clinicians and managers is something he enjoys, Larry's also quick to answer. "Yes, yes I do, very much. And it's my intention to continue being part of the team for many years."

... Franklin Hospital continued

Maine's status as a destination for skiers, snowmobilers, fishermen, hikers, campers and others seeking recreational opportunities. With all these factors coming together, the western Maine wilderness is bound to be the site of accidents and emergency illnesses.

"Sometimes we start the call 30 miles in the woods on a snowmobile trail," Mr. Luciano says. "So having the ability to have [LifeFlight] come in so fast is wonderful." In a region served by circuitous secondary highways and dirt roads, he says there is a great advantage offered by a medical transportation vehicle that can travel "160 knots in a straight line without hitting any potholes."

Mr. Luciano says that a strong relationship has developed between EMS providers in western Maine and the LifeFlight staff. "LifeFlight has the trust of the people who work up here," he says. This trust between the direct care providers and the effectiveness of the medical helicopter in assisting with the transport of several seriously-injured or -ill patients has led FMH to commit to the development of a permanent landing pad.

Greg Loewen, R.N., director of the FMH Emergency Department, relocated to Farmington from North Carolina, where he worked for an EMS system that operated three medical helicopters. With this experience under his belt, Mr. Loewen is qualified to offer an educated opinion about the quality of the service provided by LifeFlight to western Maine EMS providers. His determination: LifeFlight's service is "excellent, excellent."

Mr. Loewen evokes the "Golden Hour" principle when he discusses the importance of the support offered by LifeFlight to FMH's EMS providers. The Golden Hour is an axiom of emergency medicine that states that the first

hour of response to an emergency is the most critical. Though most emergencies, whether involving accidents or the transport of critically ill patients, can be handled effectively with conventional ground transportation, a certain percentage of such situations are better managed with air transport.

He points out that a ground transport from an emergency scene in western Maine to FMH can often take much longer than an hour. Ground transfers of critically-ill or -injured patients from FMH to other hospitals can take longer than an hour as well. If the Golden Hour principle implies that a patient's life or future health status depends on the fastest transport possible, EMS providers in western Maine can call in LifeFlight.

*"LifeFlight is a great service in a rural area,"*

*Mr. Loewen says*

LifeStar Ambulance Director Peter Wade says that his employees have established "very positive" associations with the LifeFlight crews. He adds that he has found the evolution of LifeFlight's role in western Maine's EMS system to be both "reasonable and adaptable."

"It's been a learning process, but we're pleased. We all know what we are doing, both from our end in the field and from LifeFlight's end. We all speak the same language. It's good for the patients. It's good for the community," Mr. Wade says.

What has very much impressed Mr. Wade about LifeFlight is the way it

adapted to FMH's specific needs. Since the medical helicopter service was initiated two years ago, he says changes in protocol have made the service even more responsive. Decision-making capabilities for calling in the service have been given to those best informed about the emerging medical situation. Strict protocols continue to assure that the service is used appropriately.

LifeFlight of Maine Executive Director Tom Judge says the interaction between FMH emergency care providers and LifeFlight typifies the kind of relationship that LifeFlight hopes to establish with hospitals statewide.

"We have envisioned LifeFlight as an added layer of resource for EMS and hospital clinicians managing complex and critical patients. The use of LifeFlight levels the playing field for rural populations when it comes to ensuring access to trauma and tertiary care centers. The thoughtful and comprehensive integration of EMS and Franklin Memorial ensures this added value for the population they serve," Mr. Judge says.

Furthermore, he says the speed and clarity of communications and decision-making by EMS and hospital clinicians in identifying patients needing further transport to tertiary care is "very impressive, especially at Franklin Memorial."

"LifeFlight transport decisions are made quickly and accurately, making our job much easier. As an example, in one recent scene response, a patient was flown directly from the scene to one of the Boston hospitals for multiple digit reimplantation. The entire system was able to 'fast forward' due to the excellent coordination between the paramedic on scene, the clinician at Franklin Memorial, and clinicians at CMMC," Mr. Judge says.

## MEDCOMM PROGRAM DIRECTOR CHUCK MACMAHON MANAGES DETAILS THAT KEEP HELICOPTERS IN THE AIR

*Keeping Track of all the Pieces*

by Elizabeth Sunderland

With a bachelor's in zoology and a smattering of business courses since graduating from the University of Maine, Chuck MacMahon has worked in a variety of careers. Law enforcement and chief of Orono's Volunteer Rescue Squad are just a couple. In April 1999 he left a five-year tenure as a critical care transport paramedic with Bangor-based Capital Ambulance to become MedComm's program director. MedComm, a part of Affiliated Healthcare Systems and a member of Eastern Maine Healthcare, handles LifeFlight's flight logistics, an important aspect of the helicopter critical care service's operation.

When asked what brought him to the MedComm-LifeFlight team, Chuck laughs. "I think I was drafted," he says before admitting, "I came into the job because I had both the technical, computer-based background and the clinical experience." These skills and experience have helped make LifeFlight an important statewide resource for the residents and visitors of Maine.

Chuck's primary responsibility is to oversee MedComm's communication specialists who take incoming requests, connect callers with the appropriate clinical coordinator and arrange the resources LifeFlight will need to care

for someone critically ill or injured. MedComm's staff handles a flurry of details in the first critical minutes of an incoming flight request. MedComm's tasks range from alerting the flight crew to confirming details like refueling options and ground ambulance transportation support, to relaying patient information to the flight crew once they are in the air.

"Our job is to get the crew off the ground as fast as possible, but with everything they need," Chuck says. "It doesn't do any good to fly them if there's no one to meet them or there's no place to refuel."

Chuck is also responsible for myriad details that make the daily operations of the 12-person call center a reality. From training new staff, to monitoring quality, to implementing new processes and protocols designed to make dispatching LifeFlight safer and more efficient, his work keeps him



busy. And that's okay with him. "I miss the clinical part, but this is one of the challenging pieces keeping critical care in the air a reality," he says.

What does the future have in store for Chuck? He wants to find the time for some personal growth. "I'd like to get my MBA." Chuck mentions, "and I'd like to get recertified and bring my skills back up to at least the paramedic level. Hopefully, I'd like to work part time for a ground ambulance service." And he plans to stick with MedComm and LifeFlight, "I could apply my computer and business skills to any call center, but this makes a difference. It's a worthwhile endeavor."

## FAST RESPONSE BY GREENVILLE EMS PROVIDERS AND LIFEFLIGHT HELPS BOY SURVIVE DEVASTATING INJURY

by Elizabeth Sunderland

Greenville is a pretty little community spread around the southern tip of Moosehead Lake in Piscataquis County. It's a great place to be a kid – lots of opportunities to fish, swim, and just hang out in the big, wide out-of-doors with your friends. And that's just what 15-year-old Ed Warman had in mind last summer while visiting his mother.

In Greenville to celebrate the fourth of July with his mom, Ed was hanging out with the guys at the Greenville Junction wharf, when friends encouraged him to light a homemade pipe bomb. "When I lit it, it blew up. I flew a couple of feet off the ground," Ed recalled. The exploding bomb sent shards of metal up to 6 inches long tearing through his right shoulder, penetrating an artery.

One of the first responders to the accident, John Owens, knew Ed was in trouble as soon as he saw him. "I saw he was covered with blood . . . bleeding heavy. I called to my daughter to bring me some towels. He had this hole under his arm, we packed it with four towels and the blood was still pumping out."

Geno Murray, who is a paramedic as well as C.A. Dean Memorial Hospital and Nursing Home's vice president of Ambulatory and Diagnostic Services, was on duty and also responded to the scene at the wharf. The Delta ambulance arrived at the scene within four minutes of being called. The EMS team treated Ed on the spot and then transported him to C.A. Dean's Emergency Department.

"Every minute of assistance counted for this boy. We had a heightened awareness of the need for rapid transit mode. When we realized Ed's total blood loss we called our medical control doctor, Dr. Underhill, and asked for LifeFlight," Mr. Geno remembered.

It wasn't long before LifeFlight crew, paramedic Sue Shorette, flight nurse John Macone, and pilot Don Dorsey, arrived in Greenville.

Ed received blood at C.A. Dean, onboard the LifeFlight helicopter that took him to Eastern Maine Medical Center in Bangor and finally in the operating room at the Bangor hospital. By the time his condition had stabilized, Ed's blood volume had been replaced one and one half times.



Ed Warman

Folks involved with Ed's care at C.A. Dean describe his survival as nothing short of a miracle. One Emergency Department staff member remembers swallowing hard when the boy asked if he was going to die. No one was sure he would make it. "This was exactly the kind of situation where I wonder what we ever did without LifeFlight," said Mr. Geno.

Donna Blythe, Ed's mom, also believes it was only because of the extraordinary medical attention Ed received at every step of the way from just moments after the explosion, that he's here today to tell this story. "I didn't want Ed to die over a stupid dare when he had his whole life ahead of him. It was the quick response of the ambulance and of LifeFlight that saved Ed's life," Mrs. Blythe said.

Describing the episode as a "stupid" mistake, Ed is grateful for all the help he received. He recalled his thoughts as the local EMS crew and the LifeFlight team readied him for the flight to Bangor: "I just prayed that I wouldn't die."