March 20th marked LifeFlight’s one year anniversary at new base in Sanford

A young man with extensive facial injuries in Limerick. A 65-year-old woman with severe asthma at Southern Maine Medical Center—Goodall Campus. A man from New Hampshire with serious injuries after a motorcycle accident in Acton. A baby girl at Wentworth-Douglas with a dangerous respiratory infection. A retired gentleman suffering from a head injury in Cornish.

These are just a few of the patients LifeFlight of Maine has helped from its new base of operations in Sanford, which marked its one year anniversary on March 20. With a helicopter and critical care team permanently stationed in Sanford 24-hours-a-day, LifeFlight has been able to help a growing number of patients who need a higher level of emergency care.

LifeFlight was started nearly 20 years ago when Eastern Maine Healthcare and Central Maine Healthcare opened bases in Bangor and Lewiston. In recent years, changes in the healthcare landscape and shifts in the state’s population have resulted in a growing number of calls for help. LifeFlight answered that need with the addition of an airplane at our Bangor base in 2015, and then with the purchase of a third helicopter and the creation of the Sanford base last year.

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When a day starts at LifeFlight of Maine the crew never knows where they may end up. Some calls bring them to small rural hospitals, others to large urban medical centers. About 15% of the time, the crew is called to the scene of an accident. These are often the most unpredictable calls.

The crew may land in a remote region and have to climb onto a snowmobile or an ATV; they may have to hike up a steep mountain or even bushwack into the woods to rescue a patient. It’s hard to know what the crew will encounter as they travel to every corner of the state.

Being prepared for the unexpected is at the heart of LifeFlight. Each aircraft carries a set of winter and summer survival gear, and over water gear. In addition, the crew undergoes periodic survival training—water egress, safety management systems, working in remote areas, and winter survival. This is useful not only for unpredictable scene calls, but also necessary should the aircraft need to make an emergency landing in a remote area.

The winter survival training program is led by LifeFlight Paramedic Jon Tierney, who is also an internationally licensed mountain guide and long-time Lead Instructor for Wilderness Medical Associates.

The course helps participants become familiar with what it is like being out in the cold for extended lengths of time, which is different from experiencing the cold while skiing, sledding or shoveling your driveway.

Though it may not happen often, flight crew members need to be ready to trek long distances in deep snow. They need to understand how to prepare and dress appropriately, and they need to know how to use maps, compasses and altimeters. LifeFlight aircraft are equipped with the most current navigation technology, but the DeLorme Maine Atlas continues to be an invaluable resource for the flight team in some unexpected situations.

“The course is instructed in a way that allows people to learn and practice at their personal comfortable level,” explains Jon. “Some participants utilize full winter camping equipment and sleeping bags, while others choose to try the minimalist approach with just their flight suit, jacket and survival kit.”

The program includes strategies for choosing the best clothing to stay warm and dry; constructing snow shelters and debris huts; building fires and creating heat with various fire starters; finding and treating water; making snowshoes; and putting together personal survival kits. In addition, the flight team practices how to care for a very sick patient in difficult environmental conditions.

LifeFlight of Maine hosts these trainings on a regular basis and also extends the opportunity to local EMS colleagues, and other air medical and rescue programs around the country. The 2018 class, recently held at Grafton Notch, happened to coincide with Winter Storm Skylar. With strong winds and more than 2 feet of snowfall, this year’s group was really put to the test.

Although all of LifeFlight’s aircraft use advanced navigation technology in the air, participants hone their map and compass skills using the invaluable DeLorme Maine Atlas.
Since opening last March, the helicopter stationed at the Sanford base has transported patients more than 15,000 miles. One third of the transports completed by the Sanford team were for patients with traumatic injuries, while about 15% were for cardiac emergencies.

LifeFlight works closely with many southern Maine fire departments and ambulance services to transport patients to trauma centers when every minute counts. The helicopter and flight crew have also served as a critical link to the smaller community hospitals in southern Maine. Previously, transfers to larger specialty centers in Portland or Boston took hours by ground ambulance, but are now done in a fraction of the time with the helicopter. For example, the one-hour drive from Goodall to Portland can now be completed in about 12 minutes. That means patients get the care they need faster, giving them a better chance at survival and recovery.

That’s just what happened in the case of New Hampshire resident Dana Seaboyer. Critically injured and bleeding badly after a motorcycle accident in Acton, the flight crew gave Dana the blood he needed and got him to specialists at Maine Medical Center. Today, he’s back home and looking forward to getting back on his bike.

PARTNERS IN AVIATION
Southern Maine Aviation

On March 20th, 2017 LifeFlight of Maine began operations out of Sanford Seacoast Regional Airport, making it the third and southernmost base. Since that first day, the staff at Southern Maine Aviation have made it their mission to assist us with our mission of being ready to provide the highest level of care to those who need it most.

Whether it’s refueling aircrafts, plowing snow, or just sharing a friendly conversation in passing, the folks at Southern Maine Aviation have truly been great partners to LifeFlight of Maine.

In Your Words

Sometimes, our helicopters in Lewiston and Sanford answer calls for help in New Hampshire when our colleagues there are busy. Last summer, our Sanford-based helicopter answered one such call from a hospital in Dover, NH.

On August 9, 2017 one of your crews transported me from Wentworth-Douglass Hospital in Dover, NH to Mass General in Boston. I had suffered a massive hemorrhage after delivering my first baby via C-section the night before. While I can’t remember anything from the two days following her birth, my husband spoke highly of the crew that took care of me. I wanted to thank all of you for the work that you do to save lives day in and day out. There was a high likelihood that I was going to die, and you are part of the team that made it possible for me to see my daughter grow up. I’ll never forget that.

Thank you,
Amanda Nieves

CREW: Nurse Mike McDonough
Paramedic Jeremy Nadeau
Pilot Stephen Boatwright
CommSpec Terri Smith

“You helped make it possible to see my daughter grow up.”
Amanda Nieves, LifeFlight Patient

During the harsh winter months, SMA and the maintenance fleet of Sanford Seacoast Regional Airport made it a priority to ensure LifeFlight has safe and consistent access to the aircraft despite what sometimes seemed like never-ending snowfall. The crews worked around the clock to remove snow so that the helicopter was always not only accessible, but able to take off and land without compromise.

SMA also plays a large role in LifeFlight’s mission with their efficient and reliable refueling services. By communicating with the pilots prior to landing, Southern Maine Aviation dispatches their JET-A fuel truck so that the helicopter can be refueled immediately upon landing. Not only does this save time and add a greatly appreciated convenience, but it ensures that the aircraft will be ready for the next request as soon as possible.

Photos by Billy Stuart

“LifeFlight began operations out of Sanford Seacoast Regional Airport….”

On page 4
YEAR ONE
AT SANFORD SEACOAST REGIONAL AIRPORT
296 PATIENTS
15,000 MILES

Are you following us?
LifeFlight is on social media! Find us on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn. However you like to get social, look for us and become a part of our online community.

We post and tweet about Maine’s network of emergency medical services, as well as our upcoming events and training opportunities. We share great photos and highlight some of our favorite stories of patient survival and recovery.

We are creating an online community of people who share our vision of Maine as a place in which every person, in every community, has access to critical care and medical transport when they need it. And we want to hear your stories, see your photos, listen to your concerns and answer your questions.

To join the conversation, like us on Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/LifeFlightOfMaine), connect with us on Instagram (https://www.instagram.com/lifeflightmaine/), and follow us on Twitter (@LifeFlightMaine). We look forward to meeting you in the social media universe!

Stay connected.
It takes a town.  
Or, in LifeFlight’s case, it takes many towns.

In November we took a call at the Foundation from Walter Reed, Deer Isle’s Ambulance Director. It seems Walter had recently learned that the town of Deer Isle was not yet funding LifeFlight and he knew the value of LifeFlight’s service to that community. “We absolutely depend on you,” was how he put it. Well, a lot of Maine’s towns do support us and every year several more join that support with a first-time annual appropriation. But, with more than 450 towns in Maine the process of applying to each one, gathering signatures and presenting to town committees – it’s a gradual process and success can feel incremental.

Back to the phone call. This is one of those calls you feel lucky to have received, and Walter one of those people you feel grateful to have met, if only by phone. “I think you need something like 100 or so signatures to move it forward. That’s nothing. I can do that in a day. I’ll take care of the signatures and I can go to the town meeting later this winter and represent you guys. I know as well as anyone about all that you do for us. We depend on you guys. We’ll get you some funding, I feel sure of it.”

So, in early March, after the Deer Isle budget committee meeting, I emailed Walter to ask how it had turned out. His reply:

Hi Melissa,

The Deer Isle meeting went very well with regard to LifeFlight. The warrant passed unanimously. I also gave the info package that you provided to me to Wilda Eaton, a colleague who lives in Stonington. It passed there as well. So, you should be receiving 2 checks, one from each town. If you don’t, let me know and I will pursue it. You should now be on the list for both towns automatically for future years. People were about to have you folks nominated for sainthood!

-- Walt

At LifeFlight we will take all the Walter Reeds we can get and we’ve already got a few. People like former patient Nancy Hanna, who enthusiastically (and under a tight, early December deadline!) gathered more than 170 signatures in Bristol. And LifeFlight Medic Mike Choate, finding time to petition for signatures in Albion so we could submit a similar first-time funding request there.

We depend on you just as you depend on us. It truly does take a town and these past few months, more and more Maine towns are stepping forward and pledging funds for LifeFlight. Thank you!

Melissa Marchetti works at the LifeFlight Foundation and coordinates the organization’s town fundraising campaign.

Echo Mike, the Bangor-based helicopter, is shown here after landing on Deer Isle to care for a critically ill patient last summer.

Who’s your crew in Sanford

Led by Base Manager and Flight Nurse Heather Cady (also a 20-year LifeFlight veteran), the Sanford-based flight crew is made up of 10 nurses and paramedics, 4 pilots and 2 mechanics. The flight team for each mission consists of one pilot, one nurse and one medic. That leaves one extra seat on the helicopter, which is often occupied by a recently hired nurse or medic going through an extensive orientation process. The crew is on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, ready to answer a call for help at a moment’s notice. More than just a fast ambulance ride, LifeFlight is an important piece of the emergency healthcare network in Maine. Each clinical crew member has attended (or is currently attending) additional licensing and certification programs that allow them to treat patients under advanced critical care protocols. In addition, the crew carries $500,000 worth of specialized medical equipment on every transport. It’s this combination of speed, expertise and technology that is essential for critically ill and injured patients to get the care they need, when they need it.
Helicopter Association International (HAI) recently recognized LifeFlight of Maine and Jonathan “JR” Roebuck, remote access project manager for LifeFlight and MedComm, with the 2018 Salute to Excellence Airbus Helicopters Golden Hour Award. Roebuck was honored for his work in the creation of the Remote Access Project.

Quickly locating and evacuating critically ill and injured patients in the remote areas of Maine is essential to survival. With an extensive Atlantic shoreline, hundreds of coastal islands, dense forests, mountains, and extreme temperature, LifeFlight operates in one of the most complex aviation environments in the country. In some cases, it previously took up to eight hours for a patient to reach a hospital. Roebuck oversaw the creation of more than 120 remote access landing zones (LZs), all on private land, that provide sites where helicopters can land to assist in rescue operations. In dire situations, minutes literally make a difference between life and death, and the Remote Access Project LZs provide helicopters with the opportunity to land closer to an accident scene.

The importance of the LZs was demonstrated during the rescue of an injured snowmobiler. Following the 911 call, responders dispatched a helicopter to the nearest Remote Access Project LZ, changing the destination during flight as more information became available. The aircraft landed just 50 yards from the patient, carrying vital emergency supplies. Thanks to the strategically placed LZ, the patient survived the life-threatening ordeal and has returned to work and snowmobiling.

April is National Donate Life Month

Celebrated every April since 2003, National Donate Life Month is a time to recognize the generosity of those who have saved and enhanced lives by becoming organ and tissue donors, and to honor the recipients of their selfless donations. In 2017, more than 34,700 transplants brought renewed life to patients and their families through donation.

Register to be an organ and tissue donor at www.registerme.org
LIFEFLIGHT FOUNDATION

DISPATCHES is a publication of The LifeFlight Foundation, which provides fundraising and public relations support to LifeFlight of Maine, the state’s only medical helicopter service.

The LifeFlight Foundation is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization under Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Tax Code. It is governed by an elected board of trustees who represent medical, business, legal and educational fields throughout the state.

The Foundation also supports the development and funding of Maine’s major air medical needs, such as trauma training statewide; construction of hospital helipads; and installation of weather reporting, navigational and communications systems.

The Foundation’s office is located in the town of Camden at 13 Main Street, 2nd floor. You can reach us at 207-230-7092 or by email at info@lifeflightmaine.org.

Donations are tax-deductible.

LIFEFLIGHT OF MAINE

LifeFlight of Maine is a nonprofit statewide critical care medical helicopter service jointly owned by Eastern Maine Healthcare Systems and Central Maine Healthcare Corporation. LifeFlight’s airplane, three helicopters and dedicated ground ambulances, based in Bangor, Lewiston and Sanford and operated by SevenBar Aviation, cover the entire state and offshore islands. LifeFlight complements and supports the work of local EMS and hospital personnel in caring for the critically ill or injured. Each base is staffed by a highly qualified team of pilots, mechanics, flight nurses and paramedics. More than 23,000 patients have been safely transported since LifeFlight’s founding in 1998.

LifeFlight was fully re-accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Medical Transport Systems in 2017.

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