

Care Flight offering paid flights as a way to fund new equipment

By Adam Rasmussen, KTVN-TV

Care Flight plays a vital role in Northern Nevada, able to transport patients in critical condition to health care centers in just minutes.

Saturday, it hosted its inaugural Flight For a Good Cause fundraising event, giving people a unique opportunity to fly inside one of its medical helicopters.

For \$75, each person was given a 15 minute helicopter ride from the Truckee Airport. All the proceeds go directly to Care Flight.

“The reception from the public has been absolutely amazing,” says Kurt Althof with Care Flight. “We sold out in record time.”

Dozens of people signed up, and the rides continued all afternoon. Care Flight expects to raise about \$12,000 to purchase some new medical equipment.

“We’re looking at what’s called a video laryngoscope,” says Althof. “It’s to open up and secure an airway for those patients that need assistance breathing.”

A necessity for Care Flight, which receives an average of three emergency calls per day.

“That’s up to 90 to 160 calls every month,” says Althof. “So, these are folks that really need emergency air medical transport.”

Every bit of money helps, especially considering how expensive operation costs are.

“Completely configured for medical transport, it’s between \$4 million and \$4.5 million per aircraft,” says Althof. “We have four of these.”

There wasn’t enough room on the helicopter, so our camera wouldn’t fit. But we did follow along with some folks preparing for their first ride.

That included Lester Reynolds and his 4-year-old son Kaleb.

“Oh, he was so excited,” says Reynolds. “He’s been excited for like three weeks.”

After a 10-minute orientation, everyone is buckled into place. Once in the air, they fly over Squaw Valley and North Lake Tahoe.

A great experience for a father and son, who say it was definitely money well spent.

“My first time and it was awesome,” says Reynolds. “You’re going 120 mph, and it was great.”

Care Flight will offer rides again next Saturday in Gardnerville and again in Reno the week after. It’s completely sold-out, but there is a waiting list just in case someone cancels.