FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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The National Aeronautic Association Recognizes the Best in Humanitarian Flying
The 2023 Public Benefit Award recipients share their time and talent for humankind

Washington, DC, December 21, 2023 – The National Aeronautic Association (NAA) is honored to announce the 2023 Public Benefit Flying Awards recipients.

Created in partnership with the Air Care Alliance (ACA), a nationwide league of humanitarian flying organizations, the Public Benefit Flying Awards recognize volunteer pilots, other volunteers, and organizations engaged in flying to help others and those supporting such work.

Uniting their love of flying and selfless devotion to humankind, pilots and other volunteers engaged in Public Benefit Flying combine their talent and time with the desire to help others. Types of Public Benefit Flying include medical transport, environmental and conservation support, search and rescue, emergency response, and pet transport. The people chosen to receive Public Benefit Flying Awards this year combine their love of flying with the capabilities of general aviation to create a rewarding and valuable part of the aviation story.

The 2023 Public Benefit Flying Awards recipients are:

**Distinguished Volunteer Pilot**
Dennis Phelan, for altruistically giving his time, talent, and resources to transport hundreds of passengers to their life-saving medical care as an Angel Flight West volunteer pilot and Earth Angel. Phelan has flown over 880 missions to help passengers reach life-saving medical care.

**Distinguished Volunteer**
David Brubaker, for his dedication to youth aviation education. Brubaker is helping to build the next generation of Public Benefit Flying pilots through STEM Flights, an organization mentoring youth and encouraging them to pursue STEM careers.

**Teamwork Award**
All General Aviation Pilots Involved in the Maui Relief, represented by Rainbow Helicopters, in recognition of their outstanding efforts to transport essential supplies to displaced families on the island of Maui after the deadly wildfires of 2023.

**Outstanding Achievement in Advancement of Public Benefit Flying**
Jim Hesseman, for outstanding service to public benefit flying and as a volunteer pilot with generosity and compassion that exceeds all expectations. Hesseman works tirelessly to build awareness of volunteer flights.

**Champion of Public Benefit Flying**
Lightspeed Aviation, for their outstanding and inspiring support for volunteer pilots and charitable aviation. Lightspeed spreads the word about Public Benefit Flying through media and published materials, such as their book, Flying for Compassion.
“The selfless dedication of these people is remarkable, and their impact is staggering,” said Amy Spowart, NAA President and CEO. “From a child with a terminal illness to an organ that needs to get across the country for transplant to the movement of people escaping natural disasters, these pilots represent the best in aviation. It’s our honor to recognize them and share their impact for the recognition and inspiration of others.”

Members of the 2023 Public Benefit Flying Selection Committee:

- Ed Bolen, National Business Aviation Association
- Linda Daschle, LHD & Associates, Inc
- Jenna Gerdes, Angel Flight Central
- John Lunseth, 2022 Public Benefit Flying Award recipient
- Rol Morrow, Air Care Alliance
- Greg Pecoraro, National Association of State Aviation Officials
- Patty Wagstaff, Patty Wagstaff Aviation Safety, LLC

The presentation of the Public Benefit Flying Awards will occur in Washington, D.C., on a date to be determined.

The Air Care Alliance is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit public service organization representing a nationwide network of volunteer pilot groups that deliver impactful and inspiring service through aviation. ACA encourages volunteerism among pilots, helps patients access the free air transportation they need, and ensures that charitable aviation remains a viable resource to those who need it most. For information, visit https://www.aircarealliance.org.

The National Aeronautic Association is a non-profit membership organization devoted to fostering opportunities to participate fully in aviation activities and promoting public understanding of the importance of aviation and space flight in the United States. NAA is the caretaker of some of the most important aviation awards in the world and certifies all national aviation records set in the United States. For information, visit www.naa.aero.

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