



A Morning Drive Turns into an Emergency Flight

When Jacob headed out in the morning, he didn't see it coming, and his mother Christine certainly didn't expect to receive the dreadful call. Jacob had been in a devastating car wreck and needed to be transported to the hospital by helicopter. It was a mother's nightmare.

On December 2, Jacob Summerlin was involved in a head-on collision that had him fighting for his life, and limbs. Thankfully, it was the Air Evac LifeTeam crew from Decatur, TX who responded to the emergency and flew him to the hospital.

"Without the assistance of many he may not be here today or may have lived but without the use or existence of his legs," Jacob's mother Christine Summerlin said. "Air Evac #68 was part of God's team."

The Air Evac LifeTeam began nearly 35 years ago, to ensure access to emergency healthcare to their remote community. Today, they operate more than 140 helicopter air ambulance bases. As the preeminent provider of advanced emergency health care and rapid medical transport, the first responders of Air Evac LifeTeam were on the scene as quickly as possible, giving Jacob the best possible chance with the highest level of care.

"I agree that no Amount of money is too much to save your child and that one helicopter ride is expensive but think for a minute what it actually takes to provide this service," Christine said. "A helicopter, a well-trained pilot, several well-trained paramedics, fuel, maintenance, down time, risk of their own lives... that sounds really expensive!"

To the relief of Christine, Jacob's emergency flight wasn't expensive after all. The costs were covered because Christine bought a 3-year AirMedCare Network membership for her family. "Something I thought I would NEVER need," she said. "And here we are."

Jacob is currently back at home, alive and well—a blessing both Jacob and his family are very grateful for.

Jacob's mom, Christine says, "Please everyone, consider finding who covers your area and looking into the minimal investment that not only helped save my Jacob but also bore the cost."





Advocating for the Patient

Anyone who has ever been flown for a life- or limb-threatening medical emergency can testify that the medical trauma is just the beginning. Those who survive the medical emergency are often caught off guard when their insurance companies start asking for more information or deny the medical claims all together.

Brittney Spomer works for a health insurance company in Texas, and she was surprised by how much time it took to get payment for the air medical flight. Brittney and her husband spent eight years trying to conceive children. In the winter of 2018, Brittney – pregnant with twin boys – went into pre-term labor in Wichita Falls, Texas.

“I was at 24 weeks,” Brittney said. “They gave me medicine to stop the labor at the hospital, but it didn’t work.”

Brittney needed to get to a higher level of care quickly, before her twins’ lives were put in danger.

“It would have been a two-and-a-half-hour drive, but the flight was 45 minutes,” she said. “My husband is a firefighter/paramedic, and he knew the Air Evac crew in Wichita Falls.” “I’d never been in a helicopter before, and I was already extremely anxious about these babies we’d waited eight years for.”

Flight Paramedic Ross Caston came into the room and reassured Brittney and her husband that the crew would do everything to keep Brittney and the babies safe and comfortable.

“I knew who was caring for me, and that put me at ease,” she said.

She remained in the Fort Worth hospital for five days before returning home. That flight got Brittney and the babies to definitive care in time for the medical team to stop her pre-term labor. Then came the denial from her insurance company, which caused more anxiety for Brittney – something she and the twins didn’t need.

“I work for the company that was denying the claim,” Brittney said. “I got an explanation and request for records in the mail, filled everything out and sent it in.”

The insurance company replied with partial payment and required more information. Brittney called the Air Evac Lifeteam Patient Advocates and spoke with Michele Lewis.

“They (insurance) needed something to show there was a 30-minute time savings in going by air versus going by ground,” Brittney explained.

Michele worked with Brittney for the next 17 months, dotting I's and crossing T's, to ensure the insurance company had everything it needed to pay the charges.

"I think she knew it wasn't just about a claim," Brittney said. "My patient advocate knew this was causing stress for me. My insurance should be backing me up and taking care of me and I felt like they weren't. Having someone from the provider there to say, 'You're right. This isn't how it should be.' I had her helping me get it resolved. It was one thing I didn't have to stress about, because I knew she was working for me. She cared enough to listen to me."

The Spomer twins, John and Grayson are happy and healthy, something Brittney does not take for granted.

"Because of that flight, my boys held off until they could be born at 32 weeks and 5 days," Brittney said. "I was able to give birth in Wichita Falls, and the boys were able to stay there too. They may not have survived at 24 weeks. Had I not had the Air Evac flight; this situation would have been totally different. We did eight years of infertility treatments, and it could have all been gone had the Air Evac crew not taken us to Fort Worth."



An Amazing Response

Lisa and Steve lead a very adventurous lifestyle. They love going to the mountains near their home in Northern California to spend quality time there together. It's their way of life. Because they spend so much time outside and far from city life, they decided to join AirMedCare Network (AMCN), an Air Ambulance membership program. If anything ever happened while they were hiking or 4-wheeling, they would be prepared. The odd thing was, when a medical emergency did happen, they weren't isolated out in the wilderness. They had just finished breakfast in their own home.

"I never thought I would need this membership at our own house," said Lisa.

The day started out like any other normal day. Lisa was in her kitchen, preparing to leave to run some errands. She and her husband Steve were having a conversation, when suddenly Lisa stopped responding. She turned to her husband and started to cry. Lisa was not able to speak. Steve recalled, "She wouldn't respond to me, and I thought, Wow! Something's wrong." He walked up to her, gave Lisa a hug and tried to calm her down. They looked at each other and realized what was going on: Lisa was likely having a stroke.

Steve immediately thought to himself "Ok, I could possibly drive her down there [to the hospital], and then we realized no, we can't. So, we decided to call 911, which started an amazing response." They live in a less populated area and it would have taken quite some time to get from their home to the closest hospital. An ambulance responded to the call for help, but because of the nature of Lisa's symptoms and the remote location of their home, the REACH Air Medical Services flight crew in Redding was also dispatched. They arrived on the scene quickly. "We're ready for anything. We have basically a mini emergency room in these helicopters," said Reach flight paramedic John Kowalski. As quickly as possible, the highly-trained REACH flight crew assessed Lisa's symptoms and loaded her in the aircraft.

"The crew itself on the helicopter are talking to you the whole time and telling you 'We're going to be doing this and we're going to be doing this,'" said Lisa. The crew is in constant contact with the hospital, communicating details about the situation and working to stabilize the patient during transport. "The pilot turned around mid-flight and I'm staring at him, but he turned and gave me a thumbs up. I'll never forget that. Never forget when he turned around and did that because he knew that I was there, and just scared to death."

When Steve walked into the emergency room after following his wife to the hospital, he realized that it was so smart for the first responders to fly her to the hospital rather than him trying to drive her there. She was already at the facility before he arrived, already being diagnosed and treated for her stroke, when the minutes mattered most. "This helicopter was the perfect solution. It saved her life and it saved her quality of life."

Steve said after it was all over, and Lisa was back home making a full recovery, he had no idea what everything was going to cost. He suspected it would be very expensive, even with their insurance. But because of their membership with AirMedCare Network, they never received a bill for their flight. REACH is a participating provider in the network. As a member, he had no out-of-pocket expenses and he and Lisa were able to focus on her recovery.





Nancy Raper's Story

Like many newly retired people, Wetzel County, West Virginia, resident Nancy Raper had lots of plans and dreams of how her daily life might be different after retiring. Unfortunately, Nancy did not have much time to dream or plan anything. Because less than two months after her retirement, Nancy suffered a heart attack.

"On a Friday morning, July 29, I just knew there was something wrong," she said. "We went to the local hospital in New Martinsville, and Dr. McArthur there diagnosed me with a heart issue. She arranged for me to see a cardiologist, but the roads were closed."

Nancy ended up having a heart attack in New Martinsville, and luckily, the Air Evac Lifeteam crew from Wetzel County returned from another flight just in time to transport her to Wheeling, where she received stents.

The heart attack was scary enough, but Nancy wondered if insurance would cover her flight.

"We didn't realize at the time that the Wetzel County Commissioners had purchased Air Evac Lifeteam memberships for the residents," she said. "That was such a relief to me. Plus, we're in such a rural area—that's why Air Evac Lifeteam is so important."

Now Nancy can happily live out her retirement with the peace of mind that comes with AMCN membership.