



## woodlands villager - news

### Woodlands pilot takes to the air for Grace Flight

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For a while, flying an airplane was merely, well, a flight of fancy for Scott Young. He had three children to put through college and the disposable income just wasn't there. Now, with his kids all married or on their own, Young, 52, gets in his Beechcraft B55 Baron whenever he can.

Funny thing is, now that he has the chance to get up in the air, he's not doing it for himself.

Young, of The Woodlands, flies about two missions a month for Grace Flight of America, a program that provides free flights for medical and humanitarian purposes.

"As a pilot, I would find a reason to fly anyway," Young said. "It is really a great thing in life when you can find something you would like to do anyway that can make a material impact in the lives of other people."

Young, who has been flying since 2004, caught on with Grace Flight a little more than three years ago. He's up to almost 80 missions, with his latest treks coming in the two weeks prior to Thanksgiving, when Young made eight flights to and from Mobile, Ala., bringing 13-year-old Jessica Weller and her father Lynn to and from treatment at MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston.

"If you can get people to the best treatment in the world in the right time frame, they have an extraordinary chance," Young said.

Without Grace Flight, Lynn and Jessica, who was diagnosed with Ewing's sarcoma in March, would have to make the 470-mile drive from Mobile to Houston once a week until Sept. 20, 2010.

"What made it nice is I've been driving out since March," Lynn Weller said. "Overall it's been a good experience so far. I definitely appreciate what everybody's doing. For me to drive, it has cost me about \$200 to \$225."

Grace Flight consists of approximately 1,157 volunteer pilots and others whose time, efforts and aircraft usage are donated free of charge when called upon during a medical or humanitarian crisis, according to a Grace Flight press release. The pilots are not allowed to accept any kind of reimbursement due to Federal Aviation Administration regulations, Young said.

Young is just one of the many pilots in Grace Flight's Angel Flight South Central wing, and he said the typical Grace Flight journey is between 300 and 600 — but up to 1,000 — nautical miles.

"I sort of feel bad because I'd like to give them something, but you can't," Lynn Weller said. "They're there for us. It definitely helps out."



Pictured from left to right before a recent Grace Flight are co-pilot Rich Wagner, Lynn Weller, Jessica Weller and pilot Scott Young.

The Mobile to Houston and Houston to Mobile flights took about two hours in Young's Beechcraft, cutting off an hour of what would normally be a two-legged journey chartered by separate Grace Flight pilots.

"Some people don't have access to reasonably priced airfare or any airfare whatsoever," Young said, adding that a one-way ticket from Mobile to Houston costs about \$450. "We can help people get past those barriers where they can just get the right treatment. The doctors do a big chunk; we have to get them to the doctors. That's really the joy I get from it."

Things don't always go as planned, though. Weather, like icy conditions or thunderstorms without a break, can cause a cancelation.

"One of the toughest things is to have to call somebody and say we just can't make the flight," Young said.

It's not common, but Young has negated the effect of his own cancelation by picking up the tab for a commercial airline ticket, if one's available, or a bus ticket.

"Really, it's a lot better than going on a big airline," Lynn Weller said. "(Young) pretty much grabs your bags and loads them up and you basically walk to the door and get on the plane. He calls the air traffic controller and gets permission and you're gone."

After Jessica had a tumor removed in August, her pathology report came back reading 100 percent dead cells. She is now enrolled in a study of the drug ImmTher, which trains the body's T cells to attack any cancer cells that may redevelop. It lowers the chance of a relapse from 65 percent to 20 percent, Lynn Weller said.

"I've been blessed," he said.

In 2008, Angel Flight South Central coordinated 3,060 missions for patients in need of medical assistance and successfully flew 1,400 patients and companions, according to the press release.

"The Woodlands is a reasonably affluent community," Young said. "I can't imagine there aren't at least a few pilots out there that want to start something different."

"If I can recruit one pilot this whole thing is worth the trouble."

For more information, visit [graceflight.org](http://graceflight.org). If you have questions about or are interested in becoming a Grace Flight pilot, call Young at 281-356-1689.

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