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FIGHTER PILOT REWARDED FOR A NEW SPECIAL MISSION

Rob Newman grew up on a farm in St. Johns Michigan and inherited some early flying skills from his father, a B-26 Pilot on D-Day. Years later, Rob piloted a F-4 for the United States Airforce and now he finds himself in the driver seat of a Cirrus flying some of the most important missions of his life. Rob will be recognized for providing 46 (and counting) free flights and logging more than 250 hours for people in need of medical treatment at the On Angels' Wings Gala, Saturday, April 27, 2024.

Upon graduation from the US Air Force Academy in Colorado, Rob's rugged good looks and keen eyesight made him a natural for flight training in Del Rio Texas. Not always feeling the need for speed, when Rob wasn't flying close air support missions in the tree tops, he relaxed and honed his slow-flight skills as a certified instructor at a local flying club.

After serving in the Air Force, Rob pursued an engineering degree from Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and an MBA from the University of Baltimore. He dedicated his career to developing medical devices, working on innovative products ranging from MRI machines to wearable insulin pumps. Although he occasionally traveled with friends, flying was not a priority for him until about a decade ago.

It was during a visit to Wings Field in Blue Bell that Rob's passion for flying reignited. He was captivated by a fully loaded Cirrus, and the experience of transitioning from a 1960's era mechanical/analog airplane with handheld maps to a glass cockpit with two GPS systems and an autopilot was transformative. Flying quickly became a habit for him, and the leadership and service skills he acquired during his Air Force training led him to join Angel Flight East (AFE) as a member pilot in 2018.

AFE is a non-profit organization that was founded in Pennsylvania by Harry Morales, a general aviation pilot, who wanted to help with relief efforts after Hurricane Andrew in 1992. The organization is run by volunteer pilots who use their own aircraft to fly medical patients to their destinations. The pilots pay for all expenses for each mission. Most patients require air transportation numerous times over several years for treatment and follow-up for their conditions. In 1993, the first year of operations, AFE's small band of new volunteer pilots flew 17 flights. Today, 950 flights are scheduled each year in the Northeastern United States. Along with planning the flight for each journey, Rob enjoys meeting patients and their families. He is also an active member of The International Fellowship of Flying Rotarians.

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According to Rob, there is no greater reward than being able to help a stranger during a time of need.

Rob, who now lives in Chadds Ford his wife Robin, and a very old Maine Coon cat, Mr. Buckley will be recognized as Pilot of the Year at AFE's signature annual fundraiser held in Hangar 4 at Wings Field. All funds raised go directly to supporting AFE's mission of providing free flights for patients in need of medical treatment. Tickets are available at www.angelflighteast.org. If you can't attend, you can still support the mission by bidding on silent auction items starting today! Visit <https://one.bidpal.net/oaw2024/browse/all>.

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