

DISPATCHES

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“This is like riding on TWA.

I am in good hands; I can relax,”

Mark Luce remembers thinking.

BOSTON FLIGHT SAVES MAN'S ARM

Near amputation turns into remarkable recovery

By Sue DiRosario, Director of Marketing and Development, Sebasticook Valley Hospital, and Karen Sites, LifeFlight of Maine Outreach

After 22 years on the job, Mark Luce knew his work at Maine Fence in Pittsfield inside out. So when he and two other men began maintenance on

an eight-blade gang saw on the morning of October 3, he considered the chore routine. In fact, he says he knew the saw better than his own truck.

An experienced foreman, Mr. Luce had overhauled the saw many times. He understood the dangers it posed. Following the usual procedure, he shut off the machine and waited the 90 seconds for the motion of the blades to stop. On this morning, however, the timing of the shutdown was off by a few seconds. He reached into the machine and the saw blades, now moving almost silently, ripped into his forearm. He pulled his arm from the machine and one of his coworkers passed out at the sight of the mangled limb. Nonetheless, Mr. Luce had the presence of mind to apply pressure to stanch the bleeding. Although his instinct was to run, he calmly walked to the parking lot and his boss drove a mile down the road to Sebasticook Valley Hospital.

At the hospital, emergency physician Larry DuBien, M.D., and registered nurses Rachel Haley, Stacy Norris and Jeanne Reny began treating Mr. Luce's injuries. Although his arm had sustained multiple fractures and was 90 percent amputated, the team believed there was a chance the limb could be saved. After conferring with LifeFlight Mission



These x-rays show the catastrophic injury Mark Luce suffered in an industrial saw accident. Sound judgement and fast action saved his nearly severed limb.

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MISSION STATEMENT

To provide a statewide medical helicopter service that transports critically-ill and -injured patients. LifeFlight will provide the highest quality of care and follow rigorous safety standards.

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LIFEFLIGHT OF MAINE

... *Mark Luce continued*

Approval and with surgeons at Eastern Maine Medical Center in Bangor, they decided to send him to Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston and called in LifeFlight.

Mr. Luce remembers the LifeFlight crew arriving to join the SVH team. Flight nurse Carol Jordan, R.N., C.C.R.N., and flight paramedic Laura Schimming, C.C.T.-P, introduced themselves to Mr. Luce and took report from the SVH team, which had already stabilized the patient and prepared him for transport. Lead Pilot Dennis Small came in next. "Hi Mark, my name is Dennis and I will be your pilot today," he said. Mr. Luce recalls feeling a sense of relief. "This is like riding on TWA. I am in good hands; I can relax," he remembers thinking.

Because of the decisive action taken by SVH and LifeFlight, Mr. Luce was in surgery at Mass General less than three hours after the accident. He recalls the doctors telling him "they had a maximum 12-hour window from the time of the injury to complete the operation to save function." The first surgery took over 10 hours, so the helicopter transport was crucial to its success. Over the next week he would undergo two more surgeries.

After 12 days at Mass General, Mr. Luce was discharged and sent home for follow-up care at SVH. His doctors believe that he will eventually regain 60 percent to 80 percent function in his arm. When he again met the people who saved his life, he was able to shake their hands with the hand he nearly lost.

"There is no way to express my gratitude," an emotional Mr. Luce told the SVH nurses and doctors and the LifeFlight crew that worked together to save both his life and his limb. "Thank you so much. Without the people here I wouldn't have my arm," he said.

The LifeFlight crew was equally as taken with Mr. Luce's ability to cope with the devastating injury. "Your attitude is incredible," flight nurse Carol Jordan told him.

"Patient's with these types of injuries were one of the original targets in developing the LifeFlight program," says LifeFlight Medical Director Norm

Dinerman, M.D., F.A.C.E.P. "Prior to LifeFlight, Maine patients with near and full amputations were often faced with a life-long, career-ending disability. Early recognition and assessment of salvageable injuries, followed by rapid stabilization and transport can make all the difference in these cases."



Mark Luce looks over photos of his mangled arm. Doctors expect he will regain much of the limbs function.

SVH CEO and President John C. May, notes "that SVH completed their helipad just in time for LifeFlight's first anniversary. While we recognized at the time the importance of the pad, this event is yet another reminder of how important the investment has been for our community."

Without the quick thinking of the Maine Fence work crew, a skilled SVH Emergency Department team, and access to LifeFlight, the outcome for Mr. Luce would have been much different.

Mr. Luce and his family said the generosity and support they have received from the Pittsfield community is overwhelming. Their church, neighbors and Maine Fence all took up a collection to help the family while Mr. Luce is out of work. Mark and his wife, Donna, say they have been overwhelmed by the many cards and letters sent by well-wishers. Throughout his ordeal, Mr. Luce says the care and support he has received has been extraordinary – it's "the Maine way," he adds.

The Luce family knows they have a long road ahead of them. There will be more surgeries and extensive physical therapy. But despite the challenges ahead, Mr. Luce says, "wherever my life goes from here is better."

Profiles

Laura Schimming, E.M.T., C.C.T.-P., grew up with her two older brothers in New Mexico. She spent her summers volunteering with a local ambulance service and did ski patrol in the winters.

This experience with emergency medical services inspired her to take her love of helping people to the next level.

She attended Eastern New

Mexico University, where she earned her degree and worked in her spare time as an EMT for the college ambulance service. She later decided to become a paramedic. After working as a paramedic at different locations around the country for seven years, she decided to move to Maine and join Meridian Mobile Health. She has been a welcomed member of the LifeFlight crew in Bangor since October 2003.

Carol Jordan, C.C.R.N., was born in Houlton and she grew up and raised her two children in Maine. She got her nursing degree at the Eastern Maine General Hospital (now Eastern Maine Medical Center) School of

Nursing in Bangor. After becoming an RN, she spent 25 years as an ICU nurse at EMMC. Looking for a new challenge, she began transporting patients about six years ago. When



Laura Schimming, left and Carol Jordan with Marc Luce.

LifeFlight began operations in 1998, she jumped at the chance to become a flight nurse, bringing with her a wealth of knowledge, experience and a positive attitude. At the Bangor LifeFlight base, she

is known as “Nanny J” because she can always be counted on to help out whenever and wherever she is needed – just as she does for her five grandchildren.

Terry Smith grew up in Maine and presently resides in Orland with her two children, Emily and Nicholas. She has been with LifeFlight since its first flight more than five years



Terry Smith

ago. As the communications coordinator at MedComm, she takes calls for four different ambulance services as well as for LifeFlight. There are many aspects of a LifeFlight mission that she must take care of before a mission can take place, and her meticulous attention to detail helps assure that flights go as smoothly as possible.

Dennis Small was born and raised in Milo. After high school he joined the Army where he became a helicopter pilot and served combat tours in Vietnam and Desert Storm. He was



Dennis Small

twice decorated for heroism in combat and also earned the Distinguished Flying Cross. After 22 years of service, he retired as a helicopter chief officer and became a civilian pilot. For the last four years he has been a LifeFlight pilot and serves as site manager for both the Lewiston and Bangor bases. Over the course of his flying career he has accumulated over 10,000 flying hours. His extensive experience and dedication are evident in all that he does for LifeFlight.

LIFELIGHT OF MAINE DIRECTOR WINS NATIONAL AWARD

LifeFlight of Maine Executive Director Tom Judge received national recognition last fall for his work promoting aviation safety.

Tom was awarded the Jim Charlson Award from the Association of Air Medical Services at the Air Medical Transport Conference in Reno in November. The award is presented annually to an individual for his or her “contributions to the enhancement, development or promotion of aviation or aviation safety in the national and international air medical transport community.”

He was chosen for the award for both his work in Maine and nationally as co-chair of the national Air Medical Safety Committee, his role with the Air Medical Safety Advisory Council, and his patient safety work.

The crews at LifeFlight of Maine’s bases in Lewiston and Bangor nominated Tom Judge for the award in June 2003. They referred to him as “dynamic and visionary,” and said they are proud to work with him.

“This is a prestigious award that is extra special because it came from our

staff,” said Tom. “This crew is tops. I was completely unaware they had nominated me and was totally gobs-macked when they arranged to have the national office call during one of our staff meetings. In reality, the award is much more about everyone at LifeFlight’s commitment to safety. Safety is a team effort from everyone in the program.”

LIFELIGHTERS COMPLETE HEAD INJURY COURSE

New program can reduce morbidity and mortality associated with traumatic head injuries

By *Cathy Case R.N., C.C.R.N.,
E.M.T.-P., Education Coordinator,
LifeFlight Of Maine-Lewiston Base*

Emergency medical technicians (EMTs) from across the state recently attended an instructor course that provided them with the most current information for managing head-injured patients.

The training course prepared the EMTs as instructors for Guidelines for the Prehospital Management of Traumatic Brain Injury, a protocol for improving care for the brain-injured patient throughout the acute phase, starting with prehospital management and continuing through their hospital stay. Emergency care professionals believe that by incorporating these guidelines into the management of brain-injured patients continuity of care can be improved, ultimately saving lives and sparing families from the hardships of life-long disabilities.

With the benefit of a grant from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the New York City-based Brain Trauma Foundation (BTF) established the guidelines through evidence-based research. BTF is dedicated to improving care for brain-injured patients throughout the acute phase. The guidelines are now being introduced to prehospital providers across the United States.

BTF also created a training course to teach the guidelines to prehospital care providers across the United States. A training program for guideline instructors was offered to EMTs in Maine at a session in Waterville. Those attending the instructor training session were also provided materials to assist them in presenting the course to their colleagues.

The guidelines class structure is designed to benefit everyone from first responders to emergency and critical care nurses. It challenges some long-standing treatment protocols, clarifies new ones, and strives to bring prehospital care providers together in their current practices.

Traumatic brain injury occurs in two stages. Primary brain injury occurs at the moment of impact and can only be “treated” by prevention. Secondary brain injury, however, develops after an injury has occurred and is caused by the swelling, hypoxia and hypoperfusion experienced by the brain. This type of injury, with proper care, can sometimes be prevented or minimized, leading to improved outcomes for patients and decreased costs to their families and to society.

The importance of prehospital management of head-injured patients is especially important in Maine because of its rural character. Because travel time to definitive care for some patients can be calculated in hours instead of min-

utes, prehospital caregivers have the potential to make an enormous impact on morbidity and mortality. The care provided in those first minutes is crucial, and improper care can be detrimental. Through education regarding pathophysiology and management of brain-injured patients, prehospital providers can improve the care they offer in the field and improve outcomes for head-injured patients.

Traumatic brain injury is the leading cause of death and disability in children and young adults. Its emotional and financial toll, not only to family members of someone who has suffered a brain injury, but also to society, is enormous. The long-term cost of care for a permanently disabled person can run into the millions of dollars. In addition, because the people who experience these injuries are generally young, many families lose their primary wage earner, causing further financial and emotional distress.

The following LifeFlight staff members completed the course: Kim McGraw, Cathy Case, Brian Chipman, Shelly Wilkins, Carol Jordan and Jon Wardwell.

Any EMS service interested in scheduling the four-hour provider guidelines course should email Cathy Case at casec@cmhc.org or call 207-795-2585.

LIFELIGHT EARNS ACCREDITATION

Air medical service also wins national safety award

LifeFlight of Maine has earned full accreditation from the Commission on the Accreditation of Medical Transport Systems (CAMTS).

CAMTS accreditation is a voluntary assessment process that objectively reviews the quality of all aspects of a medical transport system's operations. LifeFlight is the first ambulance service in Maine to achieve CAMTS accreditation, considered the “gold standard” in critical care medical transport.

“We are very strong believers in external assessment of

quality. Our parent organizations, Eastern Maine Healthcare and Central Maine Healthcare, set achieving national accreditation as a goal for LifeFlight from the beginning. Our performance should be measured against the best of the best. We are extremely proud of achieving this goal on behalf of all the patients we serve,” said LifeFlight of Maine Executive Director Tom Judge.

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... Accreditation continued

LifeFlight of Maine invited the quality assessment from the outside review agency to benchmark its performance against the highest standards and best programs in the world. Only one in five critical care transport services nationwide have achieved full CAMTS accreditation.

CAMTS surveyors spent the last week in September conducting an on-site review of all operations, including medical oversight, quality assurance, patient and aviation safety, clinical care, aviation management and maintenance, communications, and community service. Surveyors commended the program on medical oversight, quality management, safety, and community outreach, noting that LifeFlight's quality management program was the best they had ever seen in a survey.

In addition to the flight program and the LifeFlight section of MedComm, the CAMTS accredited LifeFlight's ground critical care transport program, which partners with United Ambulance in Lewiston and Meridian Mobile Health in Bangor.

"Accreditation is another mile marker in assuring a state of the art air medical system for Maine," said LifeFlight Medical Director Norm Dinerman, M.D., F.A.C.E.P.

Dr. Dinerman said the quality of the LifeFlight service was also recognized recently with awards from Maine's Department of Education and KIDS Consortium for their

injury prevention program and when LifeFlight Executive Director Tom Judge was awarded the Jim Charlson National Safety Award from the Association of Air Medical Services (AAMS).

The Charlson Award is presented annually to an individual who makes significant contributions to the enhancement, development or promotion of aviation or aviation safety in the national and international air medical transport community.

Tom was also elected president of AAMS during the national air medical conference last held in Reno, Nev. The AAMS is headquartered in Washington and is comprised of over 300 air medical and critical care provider services worldwide. Tom has served on the AAMS governing board for the past four years, representing member services in Region V which stretches from Michigan through Pennsylvania to Maryland and up into New England.

In other LifeFlight-related news, voters overwhelmingly approved the state transportation bond issue last November. The bond included a public-private initiative to help LifeFlight improve air medical infrastructure across the state, including new hospital helipads, more sophisticated weather prediction systems at airports in central, eastern, and northern Maine, on-site refueling at hospitals in Aroostook County, and seed money for a critical care continuing education outreach program.

LIFELIGHT FOUNDATION FOCUSES ON FUND-RAISING GOAL

Board will raise \$3 million for infrastructure improvements match

The LifeFlight Foundation, which celebrated its first anniversary on January 1, now has a fully functioning board of trustees and has conducted its first fund-raising effort.

The board is presently focused on matching the \$3 million raised through the Transportation Bond approved by Maine voters in November. The funds raised through the Transportation Bond are earmarked for air medicine related infrastructure improvements.

While the goal is to construct helipads at all of Maine's hospitals, initial projects in planning or construction include:

- Northern Maine Medical Center, Fort Kent
- Cary Medical Center, Caribou)
- The Aroostook Medical Center, Presque Isle

- Houlton Regional Hospital, Houlton
- Downeast Community Hospital, Machias
- Mayo Regional Hospital, Dover-Foxcroft
- Inland Hospital, Waterville
- Maine Medical Center, Portland
- Bridgton Hospital

The bond funding will also be used for improvements at C.A. Dean Hospital in Greenville, Rumford Hospital, Miles Memorial Hospital in Damariscotta, and St. Andrew's Hospital in Boothbay.

Other air medicine-related improvements will include navigation and weather reporting systems and refueling facilities at airports in western, northern, and Downeast Maine.

The bond will also provide initial funding to support a mobile human patient simulator for LifeFlight's expanded trauma and critical care training outreach program.

Foundations, corporations, and an increasing number of individuals, all dedicated to improving LifeFlight's effectiveness and operating efficiency, have made early contributions to the fund-raising effort.

Memorial gifts have been received in memory of Ashley C. Allen, Betsy Burr, Philip C. Hastings, Helen Hovey, and Peter Yates.

Significant grants from foundations and corporations have included: The Bingham Program, Davis Family Foundation, Dead River Company, and the Kenduskeag Foundation. A complete list of donors will be published in a future issue.

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www.lifeflightmaine.org

... Foundation continued

Drawing on the medical, educational, and business communities around the state, the Foundation's Board of Trustees is comprised of the following individuals:

- John C. May, Foundation President, President and CEO, Sebasticook Valley Hospital, Pittsfield
- Krishna Bhatta, M.D., Foundation Treasurer, Bhatta Medical Practice, Skowhegan
- Hon. Ronald Daigle, Esq., District Court Judge, Fort Kent
- David Hartley, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Health Policy and Management, Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine, Portland
- George L. Higgins III, M.D., Associate Vice President for Patient Improvement, Maine Medical Center, Portland
- Thomas P. Judge, C.C.T.-Paramedic, Port Clyde, Executive Director, LifeFlight of Maine
- Noel C. March, Director of Public Safety, University of Maine, Orono
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- Kristine D. Young, Music teacher, North Haven Community School, Vinalhaven
- William W. Young, Auburn, Retired CEO, Central Maine Healthcare

The LifeFlight Foundation is a non-profit tax-exempt organization under Section 501 (c)(3) of the U.S. Tax Code.

For further information, contact: Pen Williamson, LifeFlight Foundation Director of Development, P.O. Box 1007, Union, Maine 04862 or call 207-785-2288.

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