

DISPATCHES

A PUBLICATION FROM LIFEFLIGHT OF MAINE

VOL. 4 NO. 1 • NOVEMBER 2002

“... the car was totally demolished. The skid marks were 100 feet long. A phone pole was broken. Trees were broken.”

Flight nurse Heather Cady

AUGUSTA FAMILY LEARNS VALUE OF TRAUMA SYSTEM THROUGH FRIGHTENING EXPERIENCE

By Randall Dustin, communications director, Central Maine Medical Center

When the LifeFlight-Lewiston crew descended to the scene of an auto accident one beautiful day last summer, what they saw made their hearts race.

“We flew over and I peered out the window and saw that the car was totally demolished. The skid marks were 100 feet long. A phone pole was broken. Trees were broken. The scene suggested that the patients had received very high energy trauma,” recalls flight nurse Heather Cady.

Expecting the worst

Pilot John Scanlon set the airship down but left the rotors spinning so the crew could perform a “hot load” – evacuate the patient from the scene as quickly as possible. Heather and paramedic John Roy jumped to the ground and ran to site. The Augusta Fire Department had strapped a young woman on a spine board, the rigid stretcher used to transport potentially spine-injured patients.

Also on the scene were emergency medical service providers from Chelsea, and an off-duty Kennebec County deputy sheriff.

“Augusta Fire did a good job assessing and preparing the patient for transport. She was immobilized and IV lines had been established,” John says. “She had belly pain, but her lung sounds were good and she was breathing okay. The belly pains were a concern to us, but her injuries didn’t seem life threatening. She was very scared.”



AMAZING ESCAPE – Three Augusta area young people miraculously escaped serious injury last summer when the car in which they were riding crashed in Chelsea. It’s hard to tell that this battered hulk is a late model Saab.

Continued on page 3 ...

DOWN EAST COMMUNITY HOSPITAL RECEIVES GRANT TO BUILD HELIPAD

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.

Norm Dinerman, M.D.,
Medical Director
973-7250
mdinerman@emh.org

Thomas Judge,
Executive Director
973-6706
tjudge@ahs.emh.org

CONTRIBUTORS

Randall Dustin
Communications Director,
Central Maine Medical Center

Susan Y. Smith
Layout
Communications Specialist,
Central Maine Medical Center

Suzanne Spruce
Eastern Maine Medical Center
Community Relations Associate

Stephen Weymouth
Media Specialist,
Central Maine Medical Center



LIFEFLIGHT OF MAINE

Down East Community Hospital in Machias has received a \$55,750 Maine Health Access Foundation grant to build a helipad on the hospital campus.

The Helipad Project will entail the construction of a dedicated emergency medical helipad that will enable LifeFlight of Maine to provide faster, safer emergency transport of critically ill patients or patients needing highly specialized care to tertiary and specialty care centers throughout New England.

LifeFlight of Maine presently lands at the Machias Valley Airport or at a makeshift landing site at the former fairgrounds. The services of the Machias Ambulance Service are needed to transport the LifeFlight crew to the hospital and the patient and crew back to the helicopter, adding up to 15 minutes to the transfer time and causing the ambulance to be unavailable for other emergencies.

Representatives of LifeFlight of Maine, Down East Community Hospital Emergency Room Director Iyad Sabbagh, M.D., Support Services Directory Chris Loughlin, and Emergency Room Nurse Manager Janet Martin have identified an area on the hospital grounds where the helipad facility will be constructed.

Construction will involve moving oxygen and propane tanks, site work, paving, installation of landing lights, and redesign of service entrance doors. The hospital's central service corridor will provide direct access to the helipad site.

As is typical with most Maine Health Access Foundation (MeHAF) proposals, the project was funded because it met very specific community and hospital needs.

The MeHAF is the state's largest private non-profit healthcare foundation. The Foundation was created as the result of the sale of the non-profit Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Maine to Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield (a for-profit health care insurer). Proceeds of the acquisition provided the endowment that supports the Foundation's annual grant and program activities.

The Helipad Project will . . .

provide faster, safer

emergency transport of

critically ill patients or

patients needing highly

specialized care to tertiary and

specialty care centers . . .

MeHAF's mission is to promote affordable and timely access to comprehensive, quality healthcare for every Maine resident. To advance this mission, MeHAF supports strategic solutions to Maine's healthcare needs through grants and other programs, particularly targeting those who are uninsured and medically underserved. The Foundation currently has assets of \$88,000,000.

"We are very appreciative of the financial support of the Maine Health Access Foundation," says Philo Hall, Down East Community Hospital's chief executive officer.

A fast cruise turns ugly

The patient was 17-year-old Jennifer Perry. She and two friends were cruising in her mom's car when she lost control while speeding along the Townhouse Road in Chelsea, outside her hometown of Augusta. Remarkably, the passengers had incurred only minor injuries. One of them had even crawled through the smashed vehicle's sunroof and called for help on a cell phone.

Assisted by the local responders, John and Heather loaded Jennifer for transport to CMMC.

Just minutes after the accident, Jennifer's parents were informed that their daughter had been in a car wreck. Her mother, Kelly, a registered nurse, was in Rockland at the time. Her dad, Andy, a Maine Turnpike Authority highway foreman, was less than an hour away.

One of the reasons everyone was notified so quickly of the accident was the vehicle's OnStar safety-security system. When the 2001 Saab's airbags inflated, the OnStar system first asked the driver if assistance was needed. When Jennifer didn't respond, the system called for help.

Immediate confidence

Kelly says her confidence in the care her daughter was receiving was bolstered the minute she walked into the CMMC Emergency Department. "She was already in the ICU when I arrived. When my husband got there earlier, she had already been processed in the ER. They were just waiting for a couple of test results. I was just amazed at the way the Golden Hour, as they say, had really worked. They had the whole team right there – they don't wait to call in specialists, so there's no



THANKFUL FAMILY – Andy, Jennifer and Kelly Perry stood for this photo recently at their Augusta home. The family credits a well-designed automobile and luck as contributing to Jennifer's emergence from a spectacular July automobile crash. They also got an up-close view of the workings of LifeFlight of Maine and the state's trauma system that left them mightily impressed.

waiting time," she says. "It was comprehensive patient care right from the beginning."

As it turned out, Jennifer's injuries were few considering the utter devastation of the crash. She broke nine toes, suffered a lacerated spleen and concussion, and incurred cuts and bruises. She was treated by orthopedic surgeon Wayne Moody, M.D., and was discharged after just five days. General-trauma surgeon Karen Crowell, M.D., would later perform surgery to remove glass and debris.

Informed opinion

Kelly says the care delivered to her daughter from the first moments following the accident through her hospital discharge and extending to follow-

up care was uniformly excellent.

She also says that local responders made a good decision in calling for LifeFlight. The severity of the crash and some of her daughter's symptoms indicated that there could be serious but unseen injuries.

"I have experience as a critical care nurse. I've also had to travel all over the country seeking the best care for some of my family members who have been very ill. I have never experienced such well-coordinated care. I'm used to having to contend with errors. I'm a real watchdog. This is the first time I've seen people do everything they're supposed to do, and it was great," she says.

"My personal experiences over the past 10 years with my family have been terrible. The real difference in this case was the flow of care and the services that were provided . . . the comprehensive care. With this system, you're not waiting for hours while the patient deteriorates and that makes a huge difference in the outcome for the patient," she adds.

Kelly says the quality of care implicit in the team approach was illustrated one day when general-trauma surgeon Carlo Gammaitoni, M.D., who was covering rounds, decided to check Jennifer's lower extremities, which is outside his specialty area. "He took the trouble to take off the orthopedic cuffs to examine Jennifer's feet and legs. In all my years as a nurse, I'd never seen a doctor show such concern. When I told him that . . . I don't know whether he believed me or not. The other doctors were excellent too. Wayne Moody – I think he was wonderful. Karen Crowell – she was great."

"The hospital staff made every effort to care for me as well as my daughter while I stayed with her for five days, from providing me with a bed in her room to providing me with

OLD TOWN FAMILY RECALLS LIFEFLIGHT JOURNEY THAT MOST LIKELY SAVED THE LIVES OF THEIR TWIN BOYS

By Suzanne Spruce, community relations associate, Eastern Maine Healthcare

Life is hectic at the Old Town home of Marcy and Jeff Allen –the parents of handsome twin boys – and they are grateful for every second.

Marcy was eight weeks along when the couple learned that she was carrying twins. At 18 weeks they discovered that the babies had Twin to Twin Transfusion Syndrome, a disease of the placenta that affects identical twins during pregnancy. One baby gets too much blood, overloading his or her cardiovascular system, and could die from heart failure. The other baby doesn't get enough blood and could die from anemia. The babies are normal; the abnormalities are in the placenta they share.

During a routine prenatal visit, Marcy's obstetrician, Joseph Benoit, M.D., discovered the babies were identical twins. Dr. Benoit was concerned that there might be a problem so he referred Marcy to Eastern Maine Medical Center (EMMC) perinatologist Timothy Boley, M.D.

Chances “next to nil”

"I remember Dr. Boley told me that Evan's chances for survival were next to nil and that Trevor's weren't much better but that he would do all he could to help," remembers Marcy. One of the babies (Evan) had multiple heart defects and the other (Trevor) had very little amniotic fluid. "It was a scary thing. You just can't imagine what goes through your mind when you hear something like that. But I never gave up . . . hope, faith, and family were what got me through," she says.

On Thursday, October 5, 2000, Marcy went to Maternal and Fetal Medicine at EMMC for her regular prenatal check up with Dr. Boley. Her thoughts were of the birth of her twins just two months away. That routine check up turned into an emergency trip to Portland via LifeFlight.

"I was in labor and didn't even know it. I kept asking 'How can I be in labor?' I felt fine, just a little tired," Marcy recalls. It was obvious that Marcy needed to get to Maine Medical Center (MMC) sooner than later, says Dr. Boley. "But putting a pregnant woman, especially one who is in labor, on a helicopter is not an easy decision to make. There's no pulling over to the side of the road if things start to happen," he says.

Unexpected flight

The first choice would have been to deliver the babies at EMMC, but since at least one of the twins would likely need immediate heart surgery and there was worry about the babies surviving a transport to MMC in Portland, the safest course was to transport Marcy. "We were fortunate that good luck was on our side, and that we had LifeFlight right here at EMMC and ready to go. Within minutes of making the decision Marcy was aboard LifeFlight and headed for Portland," says Dr. Boley.



TWO-YEAR MILESTONE — Marcy Allen with her twin sons, Evan, right, and Trevor. The boys recently marked their second birthdays. It was two years ago in October that Marcy, while in labor, was flown from Eastern Maine Medical Center in Bangor to Maine Medical Center in Portland. The speedy transport most likely saved the boys' lives.

While Marcy and Jeff had already decided their twins would be born at MMC, where the services of an invasive pediatric cardiologist are available, they hadn't planned on Marcy flying there. "I remember feeling silly for being on the helicopter; I mean LifeFlight is for people who are in a bad way and that wasn't me, or so I thought," says Marcy.

Flight nurse Linda McDougal, R.N., B.S.N., C.C.R.N., accompanied Marcy in the helicopter. "I remember how concerned her family was — especially her daughter (eight-

Continued on page 5 ...

... Augusta family continued

all of my meals and even toiletries. The staff always asked if there was anything they could do for me before they left Jen's room. I felt the staff really cared about our family and went a step beyond what was expected," Kelly recalls.

Another impressive aspect of the care Jennifer received, she says, is that none of the care providers judged her daughter for making an error in judgment that might have had much more serious consequences.

A mature response

Kelly says her daughter, an honors student at Cony High School, has shown great maturity in accepting responsibility for the behavior that contributed to the accident. "She's admitted from day one that she was driving unsafely and she made poor decisions. Her injuries were significant enough to teach her a real lesson. She feels she's been given a unique opportunity to inform and educate others about the danger of speeding and the importance of driving safely," she says.

Although she knows Jennifer has been blessed with some exceptionally

good luck, Kelly also believes her daughter escaped with relatively few injuries because the car was well designed for safety and equipped with both front and side air bags. "I was determined to have her in a Saab because of the car's safety record," Kelly says. Her determination is proven by the fact that Jennifer's car, which was in the repair shop when the accident occurred, is also a Saab. "Four kids that I know of . . . their parents went out and bought them Saabs after they saw photos of the accident," she adds.

The emotional impact

Jennifer's memory of the accident and its aftermath is vivid. She recalls the intense fear she first felt, but also the sense of comfort that her care providers gave her throughout the entire ordeal. "I felt that I was very safe and every one was very helpful and personable. The LifeFlight people were very attentive to me. I wasn't afraid to be (in the helicopter) at all. I knew I'd be getting to the hospital as soon as possible. I needed someone to hold my hand and they did. The people at the

hospital were so nice to me. It was just incredible how nice they were," she says.

She says the accident impacted her in several ways. Physically, it slowed her down for a few weeks and put a temporary curb on her dance studies. But even in this regard she was lucky. "Dancing is a big part of my life. I got back to dancing as soon as I could. I've had no pain and I'm getting back into the swing of things."

But all things considered, the emotional effect may have been greater than the physical impact. "It totally changed my outlook on life itself . . . how so quickly you can just be in a different position than you ever thought that you could. I wish that what happened to me could influence other people . . . I know how lucky I am," she says.

"The first time that I drove after the accident I was really paranoid, I was afraid and so cautious. I was afraid of all the things that could happen to me. I now know that driving is not supposed to be fun. It's supposed to get you where you want to go. It's supposed to be safe," she says.

... Twins continued

year-old Ayala). As they watched us getting Marcy ready for transport the little girl started to cry and it was a very touching moment," says Linda. Once LifeFlight was in the air Linda tried to take Marcy's mind off what was happening to her. "Anytime we have a patient that is able to sit up and look around we help them do that and keep them engaged. It is very important that we make them as comfortable as possible so they can look out the window or talk with the crew; it helps take their mind of what is happening," says Linda.

Just in time arrival

When Marcy arrived in Portland it quickly became apparent that not only was her LifeFlight trip very much needed, it saved the lives of both Evan and Trevor.

Michael Pinette, M.D., who had examined Marcy several times during her pregnancy, met her upon arrival at MMC. He says he was very worried about both babies. "An ultrasound showed one of their heart rates to be extremely slow and the decision was made to deliver them right away." According to Dr. Pinette it was a "very intense situation . . . a close call. And it's likely that just one hour longer and these babies probably wouldn't have lived."

Marcy received general anesthesia and went for an immediate emergency cesarean section. "Evan was as far gone as a premature baby can be and still be revived," remembers Marcy. "He had so much blood in his body that it all had to be drained and replaced with transfused blood. Trevor had to be given extra blood because he didn't have enough." Both boys were suffering from respiratory distress

Continued on back page ...



LIFEFLIGHT OF MAINE

300 Main Street
Lewiston, ME 04240

Address Service Requested

PRST STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Lewiston, ME
Permit No. 267

Dispatches is published by LifeFlight of Maine for members of the state's Emergency Medical Services community. Comments and suggestions may be directed to the Central Maine Medical Center Communications Department. Telephone: 795-2475. E-mail: cmmc@cmmc.org
For more information about LifeFlight, call toll-free 877-262-2525.

www.lifeflightmaine.org

... *Twins continued*

and heart defects. Dr. Pinette says the spirit of cooperation pulled everything together. "There is a nice working arrangement between the specialists at Maine Medical Center and Eastern Maine Medical Center. But in this case we were especially lucky. Without LifeFlight the outcome for Marcy and her twins could have been much different," he says.

Back home

After a few days at MMC, Evan and Trevor returned to Bangor and spent several weeks in EMMC's Rosen Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. Luckily neither boy required surgery, but both still have some minor health problems that may have to be dealt with in the future.

Marcy Allen takes nothing for granted. "I am eternally grateful for LifeFlight. I know that Evan and Trevor would not have survived the trip to Portland by car. I thank God that helicopter was at EMMC and ready to go. What those people do is nothing short of heroic. I can't say enough about their kindness, concern, and professionalism. We are fortunate to have LifeFlight here in Maine and I hope people know that."

Afterward

Evan and Trevor are now two years old and still have medical issues to overcome. Both are developmentally delayed, and both are in speech therapy.

As Marcy reflects on what she and Jeff went through to have the twins she smiles and says, "it just makes us appreciate life, each other, and our family. When I think about what could have been it makes me thankful for what we have. We have them and they are so much fun. That is what is important."

Marcy is also involved with various organizations that are dedicated to the study of Twin to Twin Transfusion Syndrome. "I want others to know that there is hope, and I want there to be a better understanding of why this happens and what we can do about it." She encourages parents of children with special needs to meet others who have similar circumstances. "It is helpful to talk to people who understand what we are going through," she says.