

ANGELS PROVIDE GREAT SERVICE TO FAMILIES

By Hanna Morris

Hospital visits are nothing new to Joseph Tebbett, but flying to Auckland to receive medical care is a rare treat.

His face lit up as he watched Angel Flight pilot and new friend Phil Pacey touch down on Dargaville's airstrip last week.

It's the second time he has caught an Angel Flight, meaning the usual 2 ½ hour drive to Auckland was chopped back to just 45 minutes.

And he got to ride in style with a helicopter trip later that day.

Angel Flight New Zealand is made up of pilots who donate their time and aircraft costs, and ground volunteers, affectionately known as "Earth Angels" who transport passengers to and from their treatment centres.

It's providing a service for those that need it. It can reduce a lot of stress and driving time", says flight co-ordinator Roger Leadbeater, who drove up from Orewa to make sure mum Erica and Joseph got away OK.

It's a novelty for 7yr old Joseph, who lives with numerous congenital issues – and a nice change for Erica – who was able to "sit back and relax", knowing there was someone at the other end waiting to take them to hospital.

They returned to Dargaville at 2:30pm and hovered over Selwyn Park School where Joseph's classmates had formed the letters J.O.S.E.P.H in rows on the field to welcome him home.

"It just makes it so easy, when you're there and back within the school day" says Erica.

The registered charity was founded in late 2011 by Tutukaka resident and recreational pilot Lance Weller.

It now has more than 120 volunteers across New Zealand, including 48 pilots and aircraft.

With almost 14,000 thousand kilometres flown, and \$16000 aircraft time donated by pilots, Mr Weller is thrilled how it has grown.

“It started with just me, so it’s great to see where it has grown. But we still need to make more people aware the service is available. Not enough people know to ask us.” He says.

Angel Flight NZ is operating one flight every six to eight weeks and Mr Weller they would probably have enough staff to operate one flight a week.

It works two ways as well, with pilots thrilled to be able to provide an invaluable service.

Copied from “Dargaville and Districts News” Page 3 Wednesday 23rd April 2014

Accompanied by two photos, one of Erica and Joseph and the other of the Selwyn Park School pupils lying on the playing field in shape of J.O.S.E.P.H.

Visit the following website to view Newspaper

<http://www.pressreader.com/new-zealand/dargaville-news-district>