

PRESS RELEASE ---- LIFE FORCE CELEBRATES 30 YEARS OF SERVICE

This week, LIFE FORCE Air Medical celebrates 30 years of service to the region. The idea of a helicopter at Erlanger Health System started in 1977 when the Board of Director's and trauma surgeons were in discussion of adding a helicopter to be able to get those critically ill or wounded patients to the trauma center in a timely manner. That idea turned into reality in 1988 when the hospital purchased a Bell 412 helicopter for 2.3 million dollars. After the staff was hired and trained, the helicopter went into service on December 17, 1988. The first patient flight came on December 20, 1988, when they were requested to respond to Sewanee, TN for a pediatric asthmatic patient. LIFE FORCE began by consistently providing the safest and highest quality service. Progressive, knowledgeable, and very talented aviation, medical, and communications teams make LIFE FORCE's commitment to excellence tangible. Such dedication and commitment have resulted in a long-term stability that is indicative of LIFE FORCE as an industry leader.

History

Erlanger Health System (EHS) is the only Level 1 adult and pediatric trauma/tertiary care center, specialty center, and Children's Hospital supporting SE Tennessee, N Georgia, NE Alabama, and SW North Carolina. Access is limited by mountainous terrain making the need for a regional critical care helicopter transport apparent. Owned, operated, and based at Erlanger Health System in Chattanooga, TN, LIFE FORCE began in December 1988 with a single SPIFR Bell 412 (LF1) staffed 24/7 by a pilot, RN, and paramedic. A 24/7 on-site communications center, hanger, fuel farm, and in-house maintenance, provided additional support. LIFE FORCE currently utilizes 6 bases/aircraft to provide critical and specialty care rotor wing transport throughout a four state area. Electing to maintain its own FAA Part 135 certificate for its first 20 years of service, Erlanger entered a strategic partnership with Med-Trans Corporation (MTC) in 2008 for responsibility of aviation operations.

Since 1988, LIFE FORCE has completed tens of thousands of patient transports with an annual flight volume exceeding 2100 missions.

Current Capabilities, Crew Qualifications, and Training

Aviation- In 1994, the world's first civilian, hospital-based, stand-alone GPS approach procedure was commissioned into Erlanger Health System, earning LIFE FORCE a place in aviation history. Currently, 23 Copter GPS approaches, and non-radar IFR routes comprise a low-level IFR network. These GPS approaches can assist LIFE FORCE in reaching patients when the weather is less than ideal.

LIFE FORCE pilots account for 180+ years of helicopter EMS (HEMS) experience. 100% are commercial instrument rated, with 50% holding an ATP rating- well exceeding industry requirements. Non-IFR pilots must demonstrate both IMC recovery procedures and an instrument approach during each quarterly training. Currently, 3 pilots have been with Life Force for over 21 years and participated in FAA testing for stand-alone GPS procedures. Seven full-time AMT's, averaging 20 years of experience, have all attended manufacturer's training.

Medical- For 28 years LIFE FORCE has been under the medical direction of trauma surgeon, Dr. Donald Barker. Through advanced procedures, state of the art on-board medical equipment, aggressive protocols, and ongoing critical care training, LIFE FORCE brings advanced critical care to the patient which has led to many state and industry firsts. LIFE FORCE has participated in numerous studies throughout its 25-year history.

Averaging 20 years of experience, and continuing a long commitment to medical education, each crew member is required to maintain advanced certifications in Adult, Pediatric and Neonatal Life Support, 96 hours of critical care education annually, advanced procedures skills lab, annual FAR 135 crew member training, and OB-Stat for high-risk obstetric (HROB) transports. The high level of education provided allows LIFE FORCE to continue to raise the bar by requiring all paramedics and nurses to obtain their Flight Paramedic Certification (FP-C) and Certified Flight Registered Nurse (CFRN) within 1 year of employment. LIFE FORCE crew has maintained 100% compliance with this advanced certification requirement.

In 2013, LIFE FORCE instituted a Critical Care Rapid Response vehicle program. Stationed at each base, 6 SUV's offer critical care assistance regardless of aircraft response capability (weather, maintenance, etc.). In July 2014, Erlanger Health System and the University of Tennessee, College of Medicine began the state's first EMS fellowship. The Fellow has been involved in all aspects of EMS to include regular rotations with LIFE FORCE, involvement in the LIFE FORCE quality assurance committee, and serves as an associate medical director.

In 2015, LIFE FORCE added (2) units of Type A Liquid Plasma on all aircraft in addition to the (2) units of O negative blood we were already carrying. We also trained all flight crew in Point of Care Ultrasound to include the e-FAST exam and line placement. With that ultrasound training, we placed a Terason 3200 Ultrasound on board each of our 6 helicopters.

Communications- The 24/7 LIFE FORCE communications center is staffed with EMT's and Paramedics that are 100% International Association of Medical Transport Communication Specialists (IAMTCS) Certified Flight Communicator (CFC) or Operations Control Specialist (OCS). The Golden Hour flight dispatch system, SkyTrac satellite tracking system, Weather Meister, and Delorme street level mapping system support daily operations. In 1998, Chattanooga MEDCOM, the state's regional medical communications center,

became part of the LIFE FORCE communications center and averages 36,500 medical control calls annually. In 2014, LIFE FORCE began construction on a 3,000ft, \$1.4 million-dollar, comprehensive regional operations center to coordinate all areas of pre-hospital medicine including a regional transfer center, and air and ground response/transport/operations. The Erlanger Regional Operations Center (EROC) went fully operational on March 21, 2015.

Safety

As a testament to its 30-year safety focus, LIFE FORCE has been incident and accident free since its first mission on December 20, 1988. LIFE FORCE considers advanced aviation and medical capabilities, equipment, and performance review a vital aspect of safety which has been the cornerstone of operation since program inception. As an indicator of our commitment to safety, the Safety Management Training Academy (SMTA) was completed by the Safety Committee chair and vice chair, and the first year has been completed by additional committee members. Safety practices are governed by a formal safety program that includes a safety officer at each base, a safety committee, and an interactive safety web that serves as the primary information distribution and safety-related communications. Annual Just Culture and Threat and Error Management training exceeds CAMTS safety training requirements.

Outreach

In conjunction with the Erlanger Health System's Southeastern Regional Stroke Center, Level 1 adult and pediatric Trauma/Tertiary Care Center, Cycle 4 Accredited Cardiac and Chest Pain Center, and the UT College of Medicine, LIFE FORCE established a monthly Advanced Clinical Education Session (ACES), a multi-specialty education program conducted throughout the region. LIFE FORCE provides a (International Board of Specialty Certifications) IBSC approved 16-hour critical care refresher to EMS and Medical Communities at no cost. Each year, LIFE FORCE provides hundreds of hours in outreach education including helicopter safety classes, airway management, etc., as well as participating in community health fairs, disaster planning, ACES programs, and 8 EHS regional education symposiums.

CAMTS Accreditation

LIFE FORCE received initial CAMTS accreditation in 2011. During the accreditation process LIFE FORCE received special acknowledgment for their Safety Program and the design and implementation of a mobile communications center used for disaster responses. LIFE FORCE has completed the re-accreditation process multiple times with several "exceeds the standards" noted by surveyors to include the safety program, communications center infrastructure, outreach education programs, staff credentialing, and aviation quarterly hands-on training. LIFE FORCE continues to be accredited by CAMTS.

Financial Commitment

Since inception, EHS has committed to the fiscal health of LIFE FORCE which has continually been a strategic priority of its board and executives. From investment in aircraft to selection of its medical equipment, LIFE FORCE has always been afforded the tools necessary to provide outstanding patient care and accomplish its mission safely. Considering changes in health care reimbursement, Erlanger Health System sought an aviation partner in 2008 to allow the hospital to focus on its health care mission. Partnering with MTC, LIFE FORCE was transitioned to a hybrid program in which LIFE FORCE continues management of all aspects of the program, medical crew hiring and training, and medical direction. MTC reimburses EHS for all expenses and is responsible for all patient billing / revenue management. Through its partnership, MTC has assisted Erlanger in many ways including Transfer Center improvements, market share analysis, etc. The MTC / LIFE FORCE partnership provides the support necessary to sustain the LIFE FORCE mission indefinitely.

Ongoing Commitment, Memberships, and Industry Involvement

LIFE FORCE involvement includes Tennessee EMS Clinical Issues Committee, Chair of Tennessee EMS Air Medical Sub-Committee, Tennessee EMS Heliport Committee, International Association of Flight and Critical Care Paramedics (IAFCCP) board, development of a Georgia Air Medical Association, and founding Association of Air Medical Services (AAMS) member SINCE 1988.

From the youngest patient- a premature baby delivered on-board, to the oldest (105 y/o), thousands have benefited from a legacy of exceptional service, superior medical care, cutting edge aviation capabilities, and an impeccable safety record. We look forward to what the next 30 years hold for the flight program. We would like to THANK all of the first responders and healthcare partners in the region for allowing us to serve you for the last 30 years. We look forward continuing to work with you in the future. There will be other events throughout 2019 to celebrate our 30-year milestone. For more information about LIFE FORCE, go to lifeforceairmed.com.