Nonprofit agency gets high-flying donation

Don Roeckstap (left) and Joe Brownlee talk about the two airplanes donated by Brownlee to Wings of Hope.

By William Tucker 

It’s a grand view to see the plane that the greatest of the feelings of the vastness of the world, something Joe Brownlee Jr. has experienced many times as a pilot. This owner of Brownlee Construction in Knoxville has never been far from being able to take flight whenever he pleases. The two planes he owns most recently, a Cessna 405 and a Piper Cherokee, have served business and recreation purposes. One trip might be necessary to check on construction projects in neighboring states; others have taken him where few have gone.

For instance, a 1,600-mile journey Brownlee took with his dad and a few others for a fishing adventure of a lifetime in a remote Alaskan village. At that time, you couldn’t get there except by plane,” Brownlee explained.

While the trip was a fun and worthwhile adventure, the woods were not always kind. “There’s still not much of a road,” Brownlee said. The men have died plenty of fish on their way to their destination, and some have even thrown them to their death.

As for seeing other people, not so much. “You can’t believe how big a place it is in nobody’s home,” Brownlee said. “We walked in an hour, 200 miles, and not see a sign that anybody was there or even been. Not a road, smoke, not anything.”

At 72, he’s got plenty of escapades he can share of his time as a pilot. His dad was also one, and one of his sons.

On Tuesday, this lover of flight handed over his two planes to a nonprofit called Wings of Hope, based in St. Louis. The humanitarian organization provides medical travel to the U.S. and also serves as missionaries in other countries. Wings of Hope pilot Don Roeckstap made the journey to AAC at Knoxville’s McGhee Tyson Airport to take possession of the Piper and Cherokee.

Inquiries and other Federal Aviation Administration regulations had to be followed at the 72 before the two long- serving airplanes made their way to St. Louis. Brownlee said he now owns no planes. At least for the moment.

Up and Away

He got his pilot’s license in 1968 and was flying at a young age, next to his father, who founded Brownlee Construction in 1947. “The year I was born,” Brownlee Jr. pointed out.

When he decided it was time to let the planes go, Brownlee said he knew he wanted Wings of Hope to have them. He has read articles over the years about the projects Wings of Hope takes on to bet- ter the lives of others. He contacted them six months ago to get the transfer up in the air.

Roeckstap has racked up plenty of miles as well. Before he became a volun-

ner pilot with Wings of Hope, Roeckstap also flew professionally, getting his license in 1966. He said he owned a Piper dealership at one time, and also was a flight instructor. He says Wings of Hope has many just like himself — former profession- al pilots who still love soaring at 8,000 feet.

He said there have been a half-dozen or so planes donated to the nonprofit this year. They come in all shapes and sizes. “We have had everything from jets to single-engine tail druggers,” Roeckstap said. “As far as the planes that go into the mission field, the most popular is the Cessna 206. It’s a single-engine plane that’s long enough to get a stretchier inside.”

In some instances, planes that weren’t operational have been donated. If it’s the Cessna 206, Wings of Hope is very much interested.

“We have sent our crew out to dis- assemble an airplane and truck it back,” Roeckstap said. “We try to stay away from doing that unless it’s a 206. You will still truck it in an airplane like that.”

The longest flight Roeckstap has done

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FORUM

For Wings of Hope was to Africa. He’s also taken planes to Ecuador for He’s with Trans- West those patients of the clinic. Minnesota. The planes that Brownlee Brownlee Wings of Hope will be to find its programming. As for how for the Wings of Wings of Hope in the US will travel, the flights will take place for 400 miles of the St. Louis headquarters. That would flights to find its programming. The would include East Timor. The international programs in nine countries, by comparison, its hoping to 1250000 people annually, the added. Those countries include Belize, Cambodia, Colombia, Ecuador, India, Nicaragua, Tanzania, and Tanzania to Paraguay. In every Wings of Hope partners with an international organization, Tanzania, they partner with Flying Medical Services (FMS) providing fly in medical services to 25 smaller nations, focused on prenatal and infant care. Enright said: “In 2018, FMS treated 30,600 patients, vaccinating 16,077 children and providing 5,772 women enworth fundraising and more.”

DOING GOOD WITH VOLUNTEERS

In 2018, Wings of Hope provided transport for 162 medical patients free of charge. The 162 medical patients included pilots, mechanics, doctors and nurses along with patient flight advocates must strict screening and training requirements. The pilots must have their commercial pilot’s license and instrument rating and have logged at least 1,000 hours in small aircraft. The organization’s 18 volunteer pilots have 220,000 hours of pilot experience. The website provides an overview of some of the patients who have been served by Wings of Hope. One of them is a girl born with one leg shorter than the other. She was flown from central Kansas to St. Louis Shriners Hospital for bone lengthening. It would have been a 16-hour car ride.

Another is a police officer with cancer. He was flown from Mississipi to the Mayo Clinic in

CLUBS, ORGANIZATIONS, GROUPS

CLUBS: Meet at 7:30 p.m. at The Coffee, 229 College St. Each club is independent and meets separately.

FLIGHT INVESTMENT CLUB: Meet from 10 a.m. to 12 noon on the first Monday of each month. The club is a member of the Flight Club Association, the National Association of Flight Clubs, and the Investment Clubs.

GOLD WING ROAD RALLY CLUB: Meet in the evening at the Shoney’s in Farmville. Meet at 7:30 p.m. at Gold Wing Road Rally Club, 229 College St. All motorcycle riders are welcome.

RIVERTOWN AIRCRAFT ENROLLMENT SERVICES: Meet at 7:30 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month at the American Baylen Club in Farmville. Meet at 7:30 p.m. at Rivertown Aircraft Enrolment Services, 229 College St.

BUNCH: Meet at 7:30 p.m. in the Bunch’s home at 4014 Highland St., at 7:30 p.m. at Bunch’s home at 4014 Highland St., Farmville, and at 7:30 p.m. at Bunch’s home at 4014 Highland St., Farmville. Meet at 7:30 p.m. at Bunch’s home at 4014 Highland St., Farmville.

SELF-HELP GROUPS

GET THE WORD OUT

FOOD EVENTS

FRIENDLY FRIDAYS AT MELANIE’S: Meet at 7:30 p.m. on the last Friday of each month. Meet at 7:30 p.m. at Melanie’s, 4014 Highland St., Farmville.

MOTHER LOVE BAPTIST CHURCH: Meet at 7:30 p.m. on the last Monday of each month. Meet at 7:30 p.m. at Mother Love Baptist Church, 229 College St.

LOVEBIRD: Meet at 7:30 p.m. on the last Tuesday of each month. Meet at 7:30 p.m. at Lovebird, 229 College St.

SHADY MOUNTAIN SUPPORT GROUP: Meet at 7:30 p.m. on the last Thursday of each month. Meet at 7:30 p.m. at Shady Mountain Support Group, 229 College St.

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