



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Aviation Volunteers Honored for Public Benefit Flying

**Washington, DC, October 19, 2017** – The National Aeronautic Association (NAA), in partnership with the Air Care Alliance (ACA), a nationwide league of humanitarian flying organizations, is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2017 Public Benefit Flying Awards. These awards were created to honor volunteer pilots, other volunteers, and their organizations engaged in flying to help others, as well as those supporting such work.

This year's recipients are:

#### **Distinguished Volunteer Pilot:**

Over the past 12 years, **John Billings** has completed 380 patient flights as a volunteer pilot for Angel Flight Mid-Atlantic (AFMA). At 94 years of age, Billings continues to average one patient transport per week and has been awarded AFMA's pilot of the year award five times since 2009.

#### **Distinguished Volunteer:**

The Legacy Flight Academy (LFA) is a non-profit organization that conducts character-based youth aviation programs that draw upon the legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen. In 2017, **Maj. Aaron Jones, Capt. Eric Johnson, and SSgt. Johnnie Blount** were part of the core planning team for the LFA's quarterly event, "Eyes Above the Horizon" in Valdosta, Georgia. Their dedication and commitment to the event resulted in the largest and most successful "Eyes Above the Horizon" event to date.

#### **Outstanding Achievement in Advancement of Public Benefit Flying:**

**Civil Air Patrol** has distinguished itself as an exemplary organization in support of public benefit flying through its "shadow escort" flights for the Air National Guard's 174<sup>th</sup> Attack Wing. As part of the U.S. Air Force Reaper Training Program for pilots and sensor operators, Civil Air Patrol aircrews accompany the MQ-9 Reapers to and from Military

Restricted Airspace for training exercises. This support has helped save taxpayers over \$1 million and has increased MQ-9 training by 25%.

**Public Benefit Flying Teamwork Award:**

In the Fall of 2017, several national disasters, including hurricanes and wildfires, devastated enormous areas of South Texas, Florida and other states in the Gulf region, the islands of the Caribbean, and Northern California. Within days and over the succeeding weeks, hundreds of volunteers from public benefit flying and other groups created a large relief effort providing rescue and critical aid to communities large and small throughout the affected regions.

Members of the 2017 Public Benefit Flying Selection Committee were Jeff Bennett, 2016 Distinguished Volunteer Pilot; Linda Daschle, President of LHD & Associates, Inc; Dan Meyer, Former President, Air Care Alliance; and Jane Nicolai, 2015 Distinguished Volunteer Pilot.

The Public Benefit Flying Awards will be presented at NAA's Fall Awards Dinner on November 29, 2017 at the Crystal Gateway Marriott in Arlington, Virginia. For more information, please visit [www.naa.aero](http://www.naa.aero).

*The National Aeronautic Association is a non-profit membership organization devoted to fostering opportunities to participate fully in aviation activities and to promoting public understanding of the importance of aviation and space flight to the United States. NAA is the caretaker of some of the most important aviation awards in the world, and certifies all national aviation records set in the United States. For information, visit [www.naa.aero](http://www.naa.aero).*

*The Air Care Alliance is a nonprofit public service organization supporting the work of dozens of volunteer-based charitable organizations whose members fly to help others. ACA is devoted to fostering, enhancing, and promoting public benefit flying in the United States and other countries. For information, visit [www.aircarealliance.org](http://www.aircarealliance.org).*

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