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## Celebrating 75 years of transformative healthcare with Mercy Flights

Adapting to growth and changing demands with innovative community partnerships

August 20, 2024 12:33 AM



By Ashley Blakely

Over the past 75 years, Mercy Flights has been a partner in the growth, health and safety of our neighbors in Southern Oregon and Northern California. Our healthcare professionals have aligned their focus as the needs of our neighbors have evolved, our partnerships have expanded as the demand for our services have risen, and our innovation and education have grown exponentially as we implement new programs that capture the attention of healthcare organizations across the nation.

Mercy Flights' humble, community centric beginning makes celebrating 75 years of service uniquely special.

In 1949, our founder, George Milligan, recognized a gap in our healthcare system during the polio epidemic. He did the unthinkable and started the nation's first not-for-profit air ambulance service in Medford, Oregon. A service that George thought would only generate 7-10 flights a year, turned into a legacy of saving lives in remote areas of Oregon and the four bordering states.

From operating a single plane in the late 1940s to today, Mercy Flights hosts three planes, two helicopters, a 28-ambulance fleet (serving 2,000 square miles of the Jackson County Ambulance Service Area #2), an industry leading mobile integrated healthcare (MIH) program, and a robust membership program. George's dream of providing exceptional healthcare services to his neighbors has grown beyond what he could have imagined, and Mercy Flights has no plans of slowing down.

Mercy Flights takes immense pride in serving our community and is paving the way in creating a healthier future for our neighbors. New healthcare platforms have been designed to heighten the patient's level of care. Our MIH program is one of those services that is actively identifying gaps in the healthcare system, working to create specialized programs to fill the void, and revolutionizing the way healthcare is delivered by bringing healthcare and social services to the patient wherever they reside.

Our MIH team provides a variety of services that are tailored to the patient's needs, including:

An alternate response to those experiencing behavioral health crises and non-emergency treatment reduces the need for a full multi-emergency service

Care coordination in a fragmented healthcare system by liaising with the patient, family and care team.



Photo/Mercy Flights

## Addressing healthcare shortages

Mercy Flights understands that our home is a desirable place to raise a family, start a career and retire. As we continue to grow in population, forecasting healthcare needs is critical to the health of our region. To address the healthcare shortages witnessed over the past 4 years, along with anticipating future needs, Mercy Flights established the Southern Oregon EMS Apprenticeship program in 2023. This program is designed to expand and diversify the pool of local EMS professionals and combat the forecasted healthcare workforce crisis.

The program will provide hands-on education, mentorship and streamlined access to local EMS resources. Students will also earn a livable wage through job placement in local EMS organizations, gaining critical on-the-job skills, relationship building and a better understanding of the industry.

In the fall of 2024 Mercy Flights will also be partnering with Phoenix High School and Rogue Community College on an EMS pilot project, tailored to provide college credit in a high school setting for students interested in a career in EMS. Upon successful completion of the course, students will receive their Basic Life Support (BLS) certificate, while also earning four college credits through Rogue Community College's Introduction to Emergency Services course. These hours spent in the classroom will provide a greater insight into a career in EMS, while also moving students closer to their educational goal once they graduate high school.

We recognize that providing healthcare is a joint effort, and we are grateful for our strong community partnerships, including Ashland Community

who provide partnership through ground transportation and referrals, and our hospital systems who lean on us when patients need an elevated level of care outside of a healthcare setting.

Mercy Flights is honored to continue serving our neighbors and look forward to what the next 75 years will bring as we continue innovating healthcare services to best serve those in need.

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ashley Blakely is the public relations manager at Mercy Flights. She has 15 years in the EMS industry and currently oversees the organizations communications, marketing and social media content for southern Oregon and northern California.

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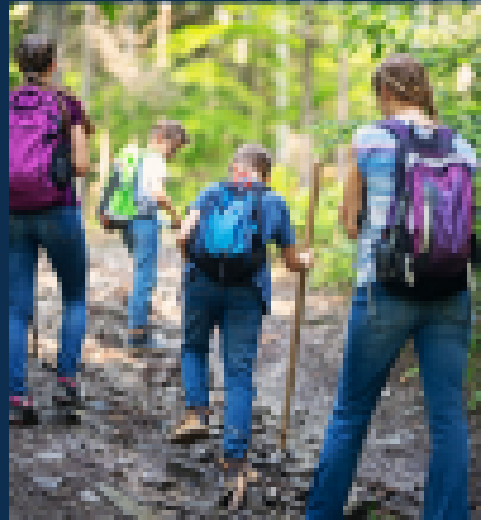
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