



*Flight Manual*

As a longtime pilot, I know first-hand the pleasure and sense of freedom that come from flying. The joy of flight is a wonderful gift; for many people, it embodies a spirit of adventure and elicits powerful experiences of excitement and awe.

White Feather Flights provides the opportunity to share this gift with families grieving the loss of someone they love.

This unique initiative helps families through their grief process by celebrating the lives of their loved ones through the use of private aircraft, under the guidance of a grief support group, with help from community members, and through a memorable, personal act—in this case, the release of a white feather into the sky.

During my involvement with White Feather Flights, I've witnessed how comfort and healing have been encouraged in dynamic ways by volunteer pilots, community partners, and grief support organizations. One participant, who was grieving the loss of his mother, commented: "The trip was better than I could have imagined. I felt my mother's presence in the clouds." Hundreds of testimonies just like this one are exactly why White Feather Flights has become such an important part of my life.

For a number of years, the process outlined in this document has been used with great success in two Michigan cities. With just a little planning and determination, this simple event can be replicated in any community with an airfield and willing support. The pages that follow will provide you with steps, resources, and advice that can help this unique experience take flight in your community.

My vision is to see the healing benefits of White Feather Flights expand to communities throughout the United States and wherever grief exists. Please join me.

**SINCERELY,**



*Jim Hesseman*  
Jim Hesseman

For additional information and resources to help you host a White Feather Flights event, visit [whitefeatherflights.org](http://whitefeatherflights.org), find us on Facebook at [facebook.com/WhiteFeatherFlights](https://facebook.com/WhiteFeatherFlights), or contact me at (443) 863-9092 or [jim@whitefeatherflights.org](mailto:jim@whitefeatherflights.org).





“

*The trip was better than I could have imagined. I felt my mother’s presence in the clouds.”*

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## A Brief History

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*White Feather Flights is a program that coordinates annual events to connect families grieving a loss with volunteer pilots who facilitate a commemorative flight as a celebration of life.*

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Influence and inspiration for White Feather Flights were drawn from the Dreams and Wings organization. Established in the late 1990s by Jack Lewis, a pilot in Lapeer, Michigan, Dreams and Wings is dedicated to providing a positive aviation experience to children with physical challenges. Each year, the organization coordinates a network of volunteer pilots in Michigan, connecting them with children and family members identified by local medical facilities. Events are generally held five to seven times a year, with each one hosting 40-70 children and their family members.

In 2007, an annual Dreams and Wings event was held in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in collaboration with the University of Michigan Comprehensive Cancer Center. At this event, a couple approached one of the volunteer pilots, Ron Shamblin, with a request. Ron had provided an airplane ride the previous year for them and their young daughter, who had been diagnosed with cancer. Their daughter was thrilled with the flight but had recently passed away, and the couple wondered if they could remember the joy of her last flight with another one. Ron said yes, and they departed for a short flight around Ann Arbor in his Cessna Skylane.

During that flight, the couple shared memories of their daughter. They then presented a large white feather decorated with her name and asked if they might be able to release it out of the plane in celebration of their daughter's life. Ron agreed and, after a few more prayers and tears, the couple released the feather over Michigan.

The following year, others who had heard about this white feather experience showed up at the Dreams and Wings event in Ann Arbor. They asked if they, too, could have similar flights to celebrate their loved ones who had passed away during the previous year. Jack Lewis agreed, and realized there may be a growing and passionate interest in providing similar grief support to other families.

In 2009, Dreams and Wings and the Comprehensive Cancer Center held a separate event in Ann Arbor to provide support to families who had lost someone to cancer during the previous year. Over 30 families participated in that first White Feather celebration. As a volunteer pilot from Grand Rapids, Jim Hesseman flew to Ann Arbor to observe that first event and felt that a similar celebration could be held in West Michigan. Jim arranged a meeting at Gilda's Club Grand Rapids, a free cancer and grief support community, to discuss with Jack Lewis and representatives from the University of Michigan the possibility of conducting a White Feather celebration in the Grand Rapids area. They moved forward with an event for 12-16 families in August 2010. Steelcase Inc. agreed to host the event at their corporate hangar at the Gerald R. Ford International Airport.

These White Feather Flights of celebration have since been successfully and safely conducted every year in Ann Arbor and Grand Rapids. The response from participating families has been very positive and the support—from the University of Michigan, Gilda's Club, Steelcase, and the network of volunteers and volunteer pilots who donate their time and the cost of each flight—has been incredible.



## Mission, Purpose, and Vision



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### MISSION

Celebrate a life with flight.

### PURPOSE

White Feather Flights exists to honor the journey of grieving children, families, and individuals and to help them remember their loved one who passed. This event provides the opportunity for family members to decorate a white feather in memory of their loved one, fly in a private airplane, and release the feather from the window. This symbolizes the unique relationship of connection and release with their loved one and is a unique way to celebrate their life.

### VISION

To provide a medium in which grief support organizations and private aviation groups can collaborate and provide support for individuals and families anywhere in the world who are grieving the loss of a loved one.



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## Partners and Their Roles

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*The effort of each partner is essential to the success of annual White Feather Flights events. Families, pilots, volunteers, and staff alike experience a profound connection, and the feedback has been astounding.*

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### **MEMBERS OF A SUPPORT GROUP OR OTHER FAMILIES WHO HAVE LOST A LOVED ONE**

- Receive grief support
- Experience community connections
- Celebrate the life of a loved one in a special way

No two people react the same way after the death of someone in their life. There is not a right way to feel during this time. Grieving is not about forgetting, but about remembering and living a life that honors our loved ones by taking them with us in our hearts. Our lives continue to be influenced and shaped by those who have died.

Families are impacted by White Feather Flights events in a profound way. For many, it is an opportunity to celebrate or commemorate the life of their loved one. For some, they may sense an emotional release, a letting go, of their loved one as they release their white feather. It may serve as a catalyst to people who are stuck in their grief in some way. For some, the courage they call forward from within themselves to fly in a small, private plane mimics the courage needed on a grief journey. For families with children and teens, it can draw the family together in this common theme of grief, even if just for a few moments while flying.

“Grief and pain are the price we humans have to pay for the love and total commitment we have for another person. The more we love, the more we are hurt when we lose the object of our love. But if we are honest with ourselves, would we have it any other way?”

| **C.S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed***

## COMMUNITY GRIEF SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS

- Trained grief support staff
- Volunteers

White Feather Flights is one of many events that can be offered by grief support organizations, providing an opportunity for people to deal with grief in their own way and to celebrate their story. The event is offered to individuals with a family member or friend who has died, and often who was being treated at a particular hospital or hospice group, or whose families are part of a grief support organization.

Staff members from these organizations invite families to take a White Feather flight, during which they release a feather in memory of a person who has died. These feathers are decorated with special messages and often hold clues to the person being remembered; each has different colors, words, and decorations to symbolize the family member whose life is being celebrated.

The primary role of these organizations is to offer expert grief and loss support to the families in attendance, as well as to the staff and volunteers planning the logistics of the day. Attendees have the chance to obtain grief and loss resources, and are given the opportunity to speak with others who have experienced the loss of a loved one.

By offering a variety of activities, these partners are essential to aiding in the celebration of life and the experience of grief. For previous events, organizations have provided art and music therapy activities, tours of on-site planes, helicopters and fire trucks, and interactions with volunteer firemen.

This level of partnership is not without cost: Events in Ann Arbor typically involve seven or eight airplanes and pilots, plus additional support for activities and resources. Total cost, depending on the amount of participants, is approximately \$1,000. This includes food, office supplies, feathers, signage, and other materials. It does not include volunteer time, pilot time, and flight expenses. When possible, it is advantageous to partner with individual and corporate sponsors interested in donating funds or resources for the event.



*When someone tells us how special they feel taking a flight just for them, and we see the connections that are made to further support resources, we know why this event is so important. This day is like no other—a special day just for them, where one can honor and remember. We are honored to provide special support to this event and the families who benefit from the celebration of their loved one’s life.”*

**University of Michigan Comprehensive  
Cancer Center, Ann Arbor, Michigan**



## **VOLUNTEER PILOTS AND PILOT COORDINATOR**

White Feather Flights events rely on the support and generosity of local and regional pilots who donate their time, the use of their planes, and the cost of fuel.\* Pilots who have participated in White Feather Flights report that being part of the healing process for grieving individuals has become a moving and important part of their lives—one that is well worth the cost in time and money.

Typically, each event requires 5 to 12 volunteer pilots, with each pilot taking about four or five short (30 minutes or less) flights throughout the day, depending on the number of participants or various other factors. Pilots will have the opportunity to interact with families and individuals at a level of engagement most comfortable to them. All volunteer pilots must have a private pilot certificate, fly in an FAA-certified aircraft, and be current on all applicable certificates, inspections, and qualifications.

Also needed is a volunteer pilot coordinator, who coordinates with Air Traffic Control (where applicable) in establishing any special procedures that may be required for the event, assesses safety issues, reviews pilot qualifications, briefs participating pilots on all procedures and necessary information for the event, and serves as a liaison connecting the pilots with corporate aviation and grief support organizations.

**\*NOTE:** According to Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations, pilots cannot be compensated for these charitable flights.

“*The flights have all been celebration events in honor of loved ones. It has become a very rewarding experience for me, the pilot. And that’s what keeps me coming back every year.*”

| **Dick Moy, Volunteer Pilot**

## CORPORATE AVIATION DEPARTMENTS

Support from corporate aviation departments has been critical to the success of White Feather Flights events. Three or four staff members typically volunteer for each event to ensure corporate space and aircrafts are clean and accessible. Staff members help by setting up tables and banners, assisting volunteers, and providing technical support and guidance when requested.

Aviation department staff also takes care of communication with airport operations and security, and work with the pilot coordinator to notify them of the flight details. They also contact the local Fixed Base Operator to ask for support for the volunteer pilots and the event.

Tours of corporate aircrafts are a popular activity during the event, and organizations may be willing to offer them when possible.

*Steelcase Aviation is pleased to be a resource to anyone considering being a host facility for a White Feather Flights event and can be contacted directly at (616) 956-1700 or [hhilgend@steelcase.com](mailto:hhilgend@steelcase.com).*


“  
At Steelcase Aviation, we take great pride in participating in the White Feather Event. There is an enormous sense of satisfaction in bringing joy to those who have been through such difficult times. We could not be more proud to be a part of this event and are honored to host it at our facility.”

**Steelcase Aviation,  
Grand Rapids, MI**

## Testimonials

Those who take part in White Feather Flights—pilots, grief support staff, and volunteers, and especially grieving individuals and families—agree that the experience is a unique and powerful one. The following quotes are just a small selection of the feedback we've received over the years.

### PILOTS AND PILOT COORDINATOR




*"I have been involved with White Feather Flights for at least three years and have found it to be extremely rewarding. The participants have been most appreciative, and the organizers do a wonderful job. I would recommend this program to any pilot who is interested in participating in a community service project."*

*Patrick Keenan*  
Volunteer Pilot



*"I am proud and honored to be a pilot for White Feather Flights. To be able to bring some closure to the grief being suffered by those who have lost a loved one is humbling. I thank God that I've had this experience."*

*Dick Boland*  
Volunteer Pilot



*"Most of the families, in one way or another, express how they feel closer to their loved one as we float and dance through the sky together. Usually they are eager to show me what they have written on the feather and the significance of the drawings or words. The in-flight feather release seems to be a releasing of some of the grief, and the forever joining of spirits. All of the pilots express how honored they are that the families wish to share a part of their grief/growth journey with them. I am equally honored and grateful to be a part of this extraordinary experience."*

*Jack Lewis*

Founder of Dreams and Wings,  
co-founder of White Feather Flights, Volunteer Pilot

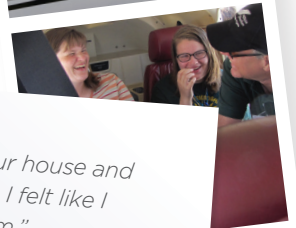


# Testimonials

## PARTICIPANTS/FAMILIES

"Thank you so much to you, your staff, and all the wonderful volunteers who helped out with White Feather Flights. My mother passed away over a year ago, so I wasn't looking so much for comfort as an exciting ride in a plane. But everyone who helped was so friendly and wonderful, and the trip was better than I could have imagined. I felt my mother's presence in the clouds, but also from all the attention. I know my mother was with me the whole time."

*Participant*



"This is the best thing I have done since my mom and sister passed. I will never forget this."

*Participant*

"I got to fly over our house and let the feather go. I felt like I was giving it to him."

*Participant*

"This is exactly what I needed; an adventure!"

*Participant*

## Testimonials

### GRIEF SUPPORT STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

"White Feather serves as a memorable healing ritual for participating members to honor their loved ones. Through both the purposeful programming and the gift of flight, each family and friend is provided a personal period of intimacy and space to reflect and remember. Our staff and organization value the gift of time, talent, and resources donated to us through a program that touches so uniquely and deeply the lives of all that participate."

*Wendy J. Wigger*  
President, Gilda's Club Grand Rapids

"White Feather Flights is one of the most moving and unique ways to memorialize someone who has died. There is an ethereal quality that people describe feeling as they release a feather with carefully chosen words and messages up in the clouds. There are usually many tears to go around, yet it is so uplifting."

*Donna Murphy*  
University of Michigan  
Comprehensive Cancer Center

"Flying with a child as they release their feather into the heavens offers me the ability to connect with that youth in a way that would not have been possible before. It is both humbling and a great honor to be present during such a significant moment on the grief journey."

*Jacqueline Scherer*  
LCSW, Gilda's Club Grand Rapids



"The ceremony of decorating and releasing a white feather from the airplane window is transformative. This is the most meaningful event that I organize and participate in at Gilda's Club."

*Dorace Van Meurs*  
LMSW, White Feather Event Coordinator,  
Gilda's Club Grand Rapids



# Timeline

## PREPARING FOR THE EVENT

*The following are suggested action steps to assist in planning a White Feather Flights event. Opportunity exists to tailor the event to interests and availability of the community involved.*

### ONE YEAR PRIOR

- Establish the date and time of the event with pilot coordinator and location host

### FOUR MONTHS PRIOR

- Communicate with pilot coordinator to confirm volunteer pilots and number of planes
- Based on this number, determine the number of families/flights  
*Plan on two to three people per plane, depending on the weight of each participant and input from pilot coordinator*
- Evaluate number of staff and volunteers needed:
  - Volunteers for the activities areas
  - Two lunch servers and lunch clean up
  - Two photographers
  - One volunteer to print family photos on-site
  - One volunteer per pilot to serve as liaison between families and each pilot (call up each family when it is their time to fly, introduce them to their pilot, organize a family photo with pilot in front of the plane, get the pilot signature on each child's certificate)
- Send a "save the date" to staff

### THREE MONTHS PRIOR

- Work with grief support partner to identify families and children for the event  
*Recommend that participating children be age 6 and older for the flight*
- Recruit staff and volunteers
- Organize activities for families as they wait to fly  
*See Appendix 1 for aviation-themed games*
- Determine person responsible for collecting white feathers, taking and printing photos, and assembling materials for decorating



## Timeline

### TWO MONTHS PRIOR

- Initiate contact with suggested families to determine interest, specific event information, and record necessary details:
  - Names of flight participants
  - Ages
  - Weight of each person flying (for reasons of aviation safety)
  - Name, date, and cause of death of the person who passed away
  - Preference for attending morning or afternoon event
  - Up to three photos of their loved one
- Order supplies for the activities, including:
  - Copy of the book *The Next Place* by Warren Hanson for each family
  - Craft supplies for decorating white feathers
  - Necessary items for activities
  - Any donations of small gifts for the families
- Confirm volunteers and continue recruiting

### ONE MONTH PRIOR

- Continue communicating with families
  - Answer any questions
  - Confirm receipt of three hard copy or electronic photos of their loved one
- Design and order appropriate signage for the event
- Finalize flights with pilot coordinator
  - Confirm initial assignments based on family weight/balance and available flights

### TWO WEEKS PRIOR

- Create photo/music slideshow with the name of the loved one on the first slide for each family
- Visit host location (corporate aviation hangar, local Fixed Based Operator) to insure laptop slideshow presentation works with their audio visual and projection screen system
- Staff and volunteers confirmed and tasks outlined

## ONE WEEK PRIOR

# Timeline

- Pilot coordinator contacts local Air Traffic Control (if applicable) to advise of upcoming event:
  - Timing of event – day and hours
  - Location of host facility at the airport
  - Number of planes involved, potential number of flights, and pace of flights
  - Request their support and designation as public benefit flights to ease communication
  - Invite them to participate (optional) in morning pilot briefing at host facility
- Finalize day-of materials, including:
  - Nametags for each participant  
*Consider a “boarding pass” look to emphasize the aviation theme*
  - A certificate for each child with their name, a line for their pilot to sign, White Feather Flights and partner logos (see Appendix 4)
  - Prepare one goody bag per family
  - Pack supplies for activity stations and coordinate transportation and set-up
- Order and prepare food for the event, including:
  - Lunch for all families, pilots, and volunteers
  - Snacks and refreshments for participants throughout the day

# Sample Itinerary

## DAY OF EVENT

**8:30 A.M.**

Staff and volunteers arrive to set up stations, signage, and registration table

**9 A.M.**

Pilots and planes arrive; pilots meet to discuss flight details

**9:15-9:30 A.M.**

Morning families arrive and register

**9:30 - 11:30 A.M.**

Morning flights; families participate in activities before and after their flight (photographer takes and prints photos to provide to each family)

**11:15-11:30 P.M.**

Afternoon families arrive and register

**11:30 A.M.-12:10 P.M.**

Lunch (all families)

**12:10-12:30 P.M.**

Everyone (families, pilots, volunteers, and staff) gathers for program:

- Explain the White Feather Flights history and program
- Pilot coordinator introduces and thanks the pilots
- Have a book reading, with PowerPoint visual on TV screen, of *The Next Place* by Warren Hanson
- Watch the photo slideshow of the family members who have passed

**12:30 P.M.**

Morning families depart

**12:30-2:30 P.M.**

Afternoon flights begin; families participate in activities before and after their flight (photographer takes and prints photos to provide to each family)

**2:30-3 P.M.**

Last flights complete; finish clean up

# Flight Operations Guidelines

The following shall define and establish the qualifications, responsibilities, and operational rules under which all White Feather Flights events shall be conducted. SAFETY is the number one priority and concern in every White Feather Flights operation. In the interest of safety, it is expected that all personnel associated with a White Feather Flights event will know, understand, and abide by these rules. Any person found acting in an irresponsible/unsafe manner will be grounded from participating in a White Feather Flights operation.

## OPERATIONS

All White Feather Flights events shall be conducted under Visual Flight Rules (VFR) at all times. Weather conditions shall be not less than FAA VFR. The pilot coordinator shall be responsible for determining if the weather conditions meet operational requirements or if conditions have deteriorated below established minimums, in which case operations will cease.

All flight operations will begin with a preflight briefing given by the pilot coordinator. All pilots must receive their briefing prior to beginning flight operations. The briefing shall include but may not be limited to:

### Weather review

- Ceiling and visibility
- Forecast
- Any special weather considerations
- Temporary Flight Restriction

### Flight Procedures

- All planes should fly at the same altitude (**NOTE:** aircraft deviating from established pattern/altitudes can pose a hazard to other aircraft)
- Pilot coordinator is responsible for establishing a flight pattern, when necessary, based on routes requested by participant, number of flights, weather, and the participation of a control tower
- Total time for each flight should be approximately 20-30 minutes
- Any special procedures/requests established by ATC for the event
- Report turning inbound to airport

### Pilot in Command (PIC) must ensure safety of flight

- PIC is responsible for refusing any and all passengers if uncomfortable for any reason
- Pilot should act in a professional manner with all family members yet focus primarily on safety
- Pilot should familiarize themselves with index card describing reasons for passing of loved one and respect the families and their emotions as they both grieve and celebrate
- Must adhere to all applicable FARs
- No overflying hangars/people at low altitudes
- Aircraft engines must be off while passengers enter and exit aircrafts
- No aerobatics
- Monitor fuel status
- Take breaks as needed
- Keep hydrated - have water on board

## **PILOT COORDINATOR**

The White Feather Flights organizers shall appoint a pilot coordinator for each event.

### **Pilot Coordinator Responsibilities:**

- Coordinate with Air Traffic Control (where applicable) in establishing any special procedures that may be required for the event
- Making the Go/No Go decision for the event
  - Safety issues
  - Weather
  - If No Go decision, make arrangements to disperse all white feathers at a later date
- Pilot briefing for all participating pilots on procedures, safety issues, weather, etc. for the event
- Reviewing pilot qualifications
  - Pilots not meeting qualifications/safety responsibilities will not be allowed to participate
  - Pilots flying/acting in an unsafe manner will not be allowed to participate

## **PILOT QUALIFICATIONS**

Pilots wishing to participate in a White Feather Flights event must meet all applicable FAA qualifications for the type of charitable flying event being held, which shall, at a minimum, include but not be limited to:

- Private pilot certificate (greater than 500 total hours PIC and current in type of aircraft flown for this event)
- Current medical (if applicable; see sport pilot certification)
- Current flight review
- Current to carry passengers

## **AIRCRAFT QUALIFICATIONS**

All aircraft being flown in a White Feather Flights event shall meet the minimum FAA qualifications for the type of charitable flying event being held, which shall, at a minimum, include but not be limited to:

- Valid airworthy certificate
- Valid annual inspection within the last 12 months (if applicable)
- Adequate liability insurance not less than \$100,000 per seat and \$1,000,000 total
- At least one working communication radio
- Working transponder (when event is held in controlled airspace with radar)

### **PILOT RESPONSIBILITIES**

Above ALL, the PIC is the final authority as to whether the flight can be conducted safely. Should he or she determine the aircraft is over weight limits or the passenger or passengers are unsafe to fly, the PIC has the responsibility to refuse any and all passengers. All pilots will adhere to all FARs during the course of the flight. The PIC is further responsible for the following:

- Safe conduct of the flight including ground operations
- Maintaining positive control of the aircraft at all times
- Ensuring that prior to each flight all passengers, cargo, fuel, and crew are within the weight and balance limitations of the aircraft being used for the event
- Ensuring that prior to each flight the aircraft has sufficient fuel for the flight including a 30-minute VFR reserve per FAR 91.151
- Ensuring that prior to each flight the runway length is adequate based on the aircraft gross weight for that flight and prevailing density altitude conditions
- Perform appropriate pre-flights prior to each flight





# **APPENDICES**

## Appendix 1: Suggested Activities

- Decorate large (approximately 12-inch) white turkey feathers with markers – feathers will be released from airplane
- Memorial craft: A necklace or bracelet made of small white feathers and beads which names their loved one or holds their favorite color bead
- Airplane checkers game: A floor game where the squares are created with duct tape on the floor and the markers are balsa airplanes
- Slingshot gliders or balsa airplanes that the children can create and fly in an open space
- Folding airplanes station
- Airplane books for children with coloring pages

### White Feathers

Donations may be available in your area to supply white turkey feathers for the event. Put the feathers in a large pillowcase to wash and dry with a tennis ball in a normal washer and dryer (this cleans and fluffs them). Then, select a sufficient number of the cleanest and fluffiest feathers for the event; there should be enough that each family member can decorate his or her own.

## Appendix 2: Considerations

- Post signage with White Feather Flights and grief organization logos at the entrance and at the registration table. A White Feather Flights logo is available for signage. (See Resources on page 24.)
- The White Feather Flights logo can also be used for personalized items (hats, t-shirts, golf shirts, etc.) for pilots and other volunteers. (See Resources on page 24.)
- Provide appropriate background music over a sound system or with a live performer. This should be soft and soothing (e.g., acoustic guitar, piano), not a concert.
- If the weather is inclement or a family or individual chooses not to fly, they can still decorate a white feather and give it to a pilot to release at a later time. Offer support and encouragement, but never force a family or individual to fly. The focus should be on celebrating life rather than on the flight itself. The celebration is the primary focus. The flight is a bonus.
- Have staff or volunteers available to watch children 5 or younger while their parent or guardian is flying.
- Flights can be from 15 to 25 minutes, depending on the number of families and flights that need to take place that day.
- The pilot can ask the family if they have a particular place they'd like to fly over (e.g., the cemetery, their home, a favorite park, a favorite place of their loved one, the location of the accident that took their life). They may choose to release their white feather at this location.
- Create index cards to hand to the pilot (one card for each family) just prior to the flight. This card provides basic information such as names of family members, ages of children, name and relationship of the person who died, and how and when they died. This confidential information is solely for the pilot to know the family situation, and the information is to be shredded after the event.
- Family photos with pilot in front of the plane are a great touch. Each person can show his or her decorated white feather for the photo. Print these photos on-site with a portable printer while the family is flying, and mount them on card stock with a decorative White Feather Flights image or logo on the cover. Present the family with the photo, along with each child's certificate, at the completion of the flight.
- The volunteer photographers will take a number of candid shots of families and individuals throughout the day, with the exception of during the program time. The grief organization may wish to print the best of these photos and provide them to the families as keepsakes.
- Be considerate with photography, as this is a sensitive event for families. Keep this very low-key in terms of media coverage. Photos released to media are typically general photos of planes and signage, not of the families.
- At the registration table, each adult should sign an "Agreement to Waive Liability, Assume Risk, and Indemnify" form for themselves and each of the minor children. (See Flight Disclaimers on page 25.) The risks of flying should be explained, as well as acknowledgment that the pilots will fly only if weather conditions allow for safe operations.
- Handwritten thank-you notes from event organizers to all pilots, donors, and volunteers should be completed within a week after the event.
- Budget expenses are approximately \$1,000 for each event depending on number of participants and amount of food and activities planned. Seek an individual, group, or company to subsidize this cost, if possible.

## Appendix 3: Gerrit's Story

When he was only 10 years old, Gerrit Baas was diagnosed with glioblastoma multiforme, a type of brain cancer. Eighteen months later, at age 11, Gerrit lost his battle to cancer.

During his treatment, Gerrit became involved with a cancer support group for children at Gilda's Club, a free cancer support community for all ages. The group provided him with a space to be himself—a space where he wasn't treated differently because of his diagnosis.

After Gerrit's death, the Baas family, (parents Jeremy and Kathy, and siblings Clay, Emme, and Abbe), took part in a White Feather flight as a way to honor the life of their son and brother. Gerrit's family was able to receive consolation as they remembered his life while dropping white feathers from the sky.

"I had an awesome time in the airplane. It was a cool way to remember my brother," said Gerrit's brother, Clay.

Jeremy, Gerrit's father, remembers receiving a sense of peace as he released his white feather from the plane. "There is a feeling of peace that flying gives while reflecting on the loss of our son Gerrit," he said.

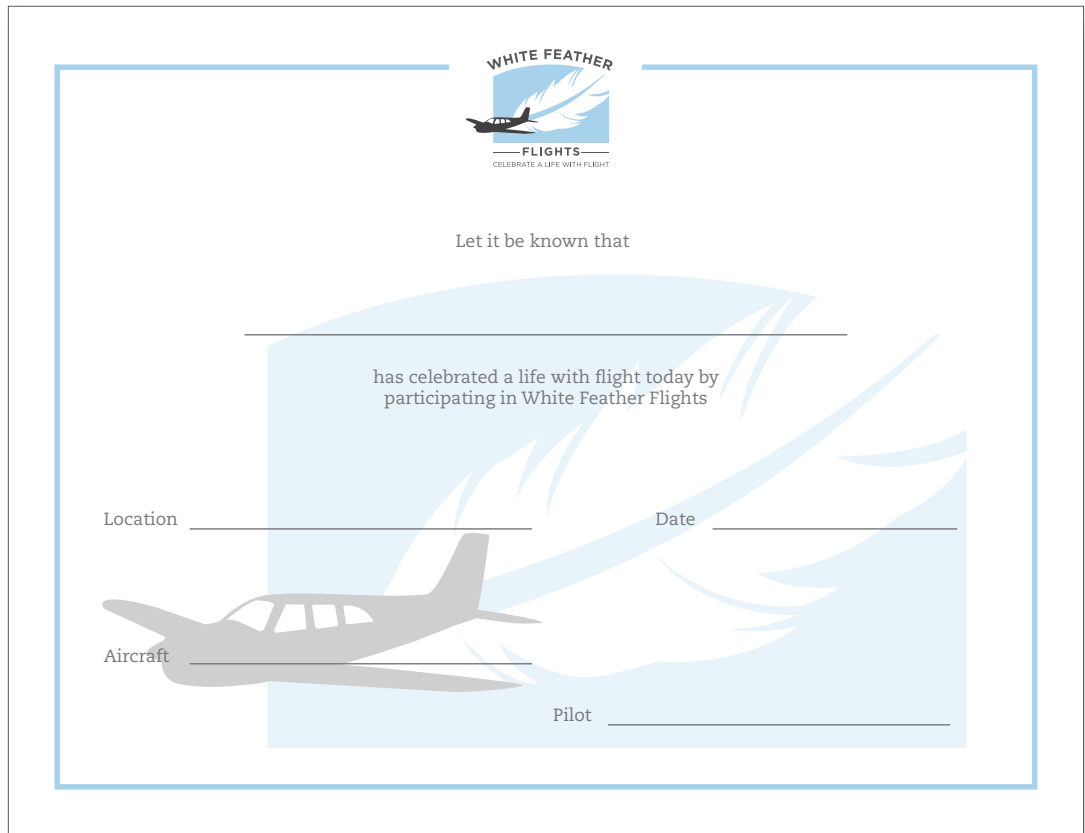
White Feather Flights gave the Baas family an experience they can forever treasure as a celebration of Gerrit's life.

“  
I had an awesome time in the airplane.  
I got to sit next to the pilot and even got  
to fly the plane! It was a cool way to  
remember my brother.”

| Clay, 12 years old



## Appendix 4: Resources



Sample Children's Flight Certificate

You may download, use, and distribute this certificate for families participating as a way of helping them commemorate their celebration of a life through flight. The certificate can be downloaded at [whitefeatherflights.org/resources](http://whitefeatherflights.org/resources).

For signage and embroidered logo items, consult a local vendor or order online from FASTSIGNS ([www.fastsigns.com/467](http://www.fastsigns.com/467)) or EmbroidMe ([www.embroidme-grandrapidsse.com](http://www.embroidme-grandrapidsse.com)). Logo source files are available for free use at [whitefeatherflights.org/resources](http://whitefeatherflights.org/resources).

The liability waiver and pilot due diligence declaration forms (see following pages) are available for download at [whitefeatherflights.org/resources](http://whitefeatherflights.org/resources).

### CONTACT US

[whitefeatherflights.org](http://whitefeatherflights.org)  
[facebook.com/WhiteFeatherFlights](https://facebook.com/WhiteFeatherFlights)  
(443) 863-9092  
[jim@whitefeatherflights.org](mailto:jim@whitefeatherflights.org)

# White Feather Flights

## AGREEMENT TO WAIVE LIABILITY, ASSUME RISK, AND INDEMNIFY

The person(s) and/or young person(s) listed below wants to take part in the White Feather Flights program, including, but not limited to, riding in an airplane. The White Feather Flights program is conducted by volunteer ground crews and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) licensed pilots. These volunteer pilots fly a wide variety of aircraft that are also licensed by the FAA. I am the young person's parent or guardian and I represent and warrant that I have the authority to enter into this agreement. In exchange for being allowed to take part in the White Feather Flights program, the young person and I agree as follows:

### AGREEMENT TO WAIVE LIABILITY AND NOT TO SUE

The person(s) and/or young person(s) and I (for ourselves, our heirs, family members, personal representatives, and assigns) release and discharge White Feather Flights and the officers, directors, employees, agents, affiliates, and volunteers (including pilots and owners and operators of airplanes used in the White Feather Flights program) of the corporation from, and agree not to sue White Feather Flights for any and all claims against White Feather Flights for any injury or death arising from any person's participation in the White Feather Flights program. This release, discharge, and agreement not to sue applies to all legal rights, including those resulting from any negligence of White Feather Flights, other than those resulting from the gross negligence or willful misconduct of White Feather Flights.

### ASSUMPTION OF RISK

We understand that flying in airplanes and being around airplanes involves risks. Serious injury or death can result from many causes, including airplane crashes, falls, pilot error, ground crew error, engine or mechanical failure, negligent maintenance, defects in runway, interference by birds and other objects, weather conditions, contaminated fuel, or hard or forced landings. Injuries could be minor such as bruises, scratches and sprains, major such as eye injuries, broken bones and concussions, or catastrophic such as paralysis, severe burns, or death. If the young person or person(s) taking part in the White Feather Flights program is old enough, or otherwise able, to understand these risks, I have explained them to him or her. **The person(s) and/or young person(s) and I (for ourselves, our heirs, family members, personal representatives, and assigns) assume all risks and full responsibility for any injury or death arising from taking part in the White Feather Flights program.**

### INDEMNIFICATION

The person(s) and/or young person(s) and I agree to indemnify and hold White Feather Flights harmless from any claims, costs, damages, and liabilities, including, but not limited to, attorney's fees, arising from taking part in the White Feather Flights program. **This duty to indemnify and hold White Feather Flights harmless applies even if White Feather Flights is negligent, however, indemnification is not required if White Feather Flights is grossly negligent or has engaged in willful misconduct.**

### LEGAL ADVICE

I know that I can talk to my legal advisor about this Agreement and I have either done so or chosen not to. I understand that I have the right and have been given the opportunity to object to and bargain about the provisions of this Agreement. I am voluntarily signing this Agreement and intend it to be the unconditional release of all liability to the greatest extent allowed by law.

### BEFORE SIGNING, CAREFULLY READ THIS ENTIRE AGREEMENT

**Note from White Feather Flights: If an accident were to occur, you and/or the person(s) and/or young person(s) (by signing this Agreement) would be giving up legal rights and incurring legal liabilities. If any part of this Agreement is held invalid, the rest of the provisions shall be held in effect. If you do not understand anything in this Agreement, you should not sign it and you should talk to your legal advisor.**

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Permission and Parent/Guardian Signature Required for **EACH** Minor Child Flying

*Please print*

Minor child name: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent/Guardian signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Print: \_\_\_\_\_

Minor child name: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent/Guardian signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Print: \_\_\_\_\_

Adult name: \_\_\_\_\_ Adult signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Adult name: \_\_\_\_\_ Adult signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



# White Feather Flights

## PILOT DUE DILIGENCE DECLARATION

All White Feather Flights events are committed to safety, first and foremost. It is essential that every possible step be taken to prevent the unlikely occurrence of an accident and/or injury on the airport grounds or in the air.

Each pilot must have a valid pilot's certificate, current medical, and meet all currency requirements in the Federal Aviation Regulations (FAR). All aircraft must be airworthy with all proper maintenance and inspections completed as set forth in the applicable regulations.

The pilot(s)-in-command are responsible for the safe and legal operation of their aircraft. It is required that adequate (not less than \$100,000 per seat and \$1,000,000 total) liability insurance is current for each pilot and aircraft. Each pilot shall have logged not less than 500 total hours as pilot in command and shall be current in the type of aircraft being flown the day of the event.

It is the responsibility of each pilot to exercise extreme care in every aspect of every flight and all on-ramp activities, especially considering that passengers and spectators are involved. Each flight must be conducted under FAR Part 91 rules and under basic Day-VFR conditions, with minimum ceilings not less than 3000 feet agl and 5 miles visibility or greater.

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**Please provide the information requested below and sign, confirming that all information is correct and that the pilot and aircraft meet insurance and all applicable FAA regulation requirements for the flights being undertaken.**

*Please print*

Pilot's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

FAA Airman's Certificate #: \_\_\_\_\_

Current Total Hours As Pilot In Command: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Current Medical: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Current BFR: \_\_\_\_\_

Aircraft Type Being Flown Today: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Hours in Type Being Flown Today: \_\_\_\_\_

Pilot's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_