

Tails get wings

Volunteer pilots fly animals around the country

BY CHRISTINA MORGAN

Germantown resident Jim Carney retired as a Northwest Airlines pilot in November 2004. But his flying days are far from over.

Serving as a volunteer pilot for the nonprofit organization Pilots N Paws, Carney still flies as often as his schedule allows in his personal plane delivering mostly canines to rescue shelters and families around the country.

"We are made up of a group of pilots nationwide," Carney explained. "There are 2,500 of us who volunteer our time, airplane, fuel and other expenses to help fly dogs, cats, various birds, snakes and even endangered species."

Carney noted that he and the volunteers are not the rescuers of the animals themselves.

"We just provide the transportation," he added.

Working closely with the staff at Collierville Animal Services, Carney has flown several dogs from here to other locations.

"Collierville is a great shelter," he said. "I went out and started walking dogs (at CAS) before getting involved with Pilots N Paws."

Carney receives his flight orders from bulletins that individuals post on the Pilots N Paws website requesting transportation. Carney and other volunteer pilots access the forum whenever they have availability in their schedule to fly.

"Being a dog lover, I just want to help," Carney acknowledged. "I love flying and had a great airline career, and just want to give back."

Jim Carney, retired pilot, volunteers for Pilots N Paws, a nonprofit organization that aids in the transporting of animals to rescue shelters and families. Joplyn, pictured below with Carney, was named after his hometown of Joplin, Mo., which was struck by a devastating tornado in 2011. Carney flew the golden retriever from Missouri to Tennessee, where Joplyn was just a car ride from meeting his new family, Mike Bettes of The Weather Channel, who found the canine during the Joplin tornado coverage.

Courtesy photos



CYRUS YNG

Carney, who frequently flies out of Olive Branch, Miss., to various southern states, garnered a special nickname after navigating a trip to Lancaster, Ohio, for a Doberman named Phoenix.

"She was found tied to a tree. Rescuers found her nearly dying," Carney explained. "I flew her to Lancaster where she had nine puppies. The rescuer, Tekla Clark, gave me the nickname Uncle Jim."

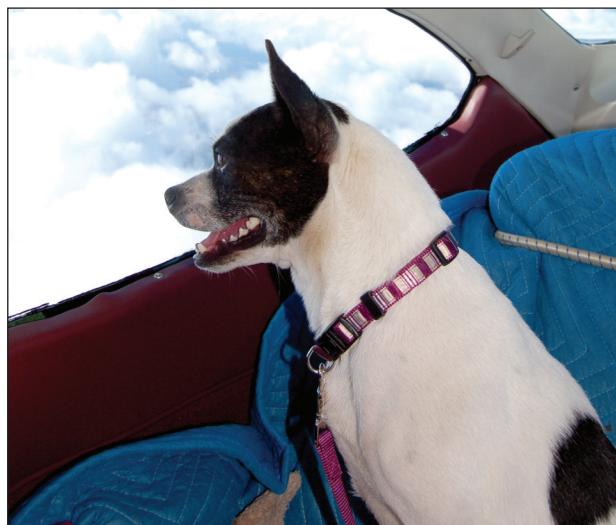
Other dogs Carney has flown to new homes and shelters include Gunner, Samantha, Angel, Cimba, Raven, Lady Heather, Joplyn and Nikki. Each time he transports, Carney attempts to get a picture of the canine and upload it to the Pilots N Paws website, along with the dog's tale.

"It's a win-win," Carney explained. "When I see the families waiting to get their dog, that puts it all in proper perspective."

Carney stressed that he is not interested in glorifying his personal donation of time and expenses to Pilots N Paws. He said he is simply hoping to spread the word about the organization.

"Pilots N Paws would love to have more volunteers in West Tennessee," he concluded. "I'm just trying to get the word out, because we do need help."

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