



FIRST ANGEL JET NETWORK FLIGHT CARRIES CHINESE ORPHANS

News / Airlines



Angel Jet Network (AJN), a Hong Kong-based charity providing medical transportation for underprivileged patients across the Asia-Pacific region, made its first flights last week. The organization, which is inspired by the U.S.-based Corporate Angel Network (CAN), uses flights in aircraft donated by private individuals and companies.

The first three flights carried three orphans from the Chunhui Children's Foundation to Chinese hospitals where they were due to have major surgery. One flew from Haikou in Hainan province, and the other two from Zhanjiang in Guangdong province.

AJN works with other charities providing free medical care to poor patients, but which are generally not able to provide free transportation. In some cases, the flights will carry medical personnel to remote locations.

Companies and individuals worldwide are invited to contribute empty seats, empty legs and flight hours. The organization also accepts airline frequent flier miles and tickets, fundraising support, ground transportation, hotel accommodation and financial contributions.

"Usually, free medical care is available only in first- or second-tier cities and some of the patients are located far away from these cities, and ground transportation may take days," explained AJN co-founder and executive director Lydia Sheng. "For now, the majority of our patients are children, and some of them are little babies. Their fragile little bodies just cannot take too much traveling. There are many cases we know of that patients passed away before they had necessary procedures, either because they could not afford to travel at all, or the travel via ground transportation is too much to take."

Sheng, who is also marketing director with the Shanghai-based Avicus charter brokering group, pointed out that while it is still difficult for foreign operators to fly within China, AJN also wants to be able to help patients from across the Asia-Pacific region. The organization is also looking for owners and operators willing to provide flights between the U.S. and Asia as part of its plan to organize medical missions involving American doctors who would provide medical procedures and training.

The AJN board includes Avicus's global operations director Abby McBride; Textron Aviation senior vice president of business development William Schultz; Richard Ding, chief editor of China Air Medical and Rescue online magazine; and Katie Littlefield, marketing director with Heart-to-Heart Shanghai. The group was formed in April and its advisory board includes CAN co-founder Pat Blum and former executive director Dick Koenig, as well as AIN group publisher David Leach.

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