

# AirWaves



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## A Note From the Editor

Welcome back to another exciting issue of the Air Waves. In this issue you will first read a wonderful article authored by our own Jan Eichel. Next, you will get the opportunity to meet and learn about four of our medical crewmembers. These four are our most senior crewmembers. You will see as you read each of their biographies that they have quite impressive credentials and qualifications. Our next few issues of the Air Waves we will continue to give you biographies of our medical crewmembers.

As always we are looking for suggestions, comments and/or questions. We love to receive photos of the crew and of our helicopter. So keep the emails coming to Laura at [lkirley@aircare.org](mailto:lkirley@aircare.org). Until our next issue everyone take care, stay safe and have a great day.

## Watching Transport Medicine Grow – Jan Eichel, CFRN, BA, Director of Clinical /Comm Ops.

Flight nursing has matured as a profession over the years and the improvements that have taken place have been impressive to watch. It has evolved into a very different animal since the National Flight Nurses Association was formed in 1981.

Years of experienced have honed our expertise and operations in Kalamazoo. As a flight nurse of over twenty years, I'd like to share with you just how far we've come.

Starting out I wore a polo shirt, EMS pants and Reebok tennis shoes. I was pulled from the Emergency Room with little preparation. If we needed medical

direction we called a physician nearby for online orders. Gradually flight nurses became safety overseers of our patients as well as our profession. As our patient care progressed, so did our culture of safety. The Air Care uniform now includes helmets, fire-resistant flight suits and EMS boots. With education we have developed a safety-consciousness of our environment.

Our patient care no longer revolves around just speed. At Air Care we continually seek the latest research in medication therapy and management of airway and ventilation to improve the long-term outcome of our patients. Our medical protocols are

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extensive yet flexible and always evidence based. We also focus on minimizing the stresses of transport like vibration, temperature and altitude.

Today all West Michigan Air Care flights are staffed with experienced critical care registered nurses who are also licensed paramedics. This dual licensing prepares them for the occurrence of pre-hospital scene response as well as complicated inter-hospital air medical transports.

All our medical personnel obtain certification and advanced training in areas

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## Medical Crewmember of the Year

West Michigan Aircare is very proud to announce that our own Flight Nurse Kathy Nichols has been given the honor of *Medical Crewmember of the Year* by the Association of Air Medical Services. This award is given once a year to a nurse, paramedic or physician who has significantly contributed to the air medical community. Kathy will receive this national honor October 20, 2008 at the Air Medical Transport Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Kathy's contributions are extensive in the areas of education and training, publishing, public speaking, research and always with an eye on safety. She is professional, compassionate, caring and knowledgeable. She has made many contributions to transport medicine and her legacy lives on. Kathy is an inspiration for nurses in every specialty. Bravo Kathy!

### Watching Transport Medicine Grow *(continued from page 1)*

specific to air medical transport. This training sharpens their assessment skills and enhances their clinical judgment. WMAC requires extensive continuing education for all their medical crew members with case reviews, surgical labs, scenario testing and lectures by visiting physicians. Since over one third of our patients require airway management, the medical crew spends a significant amount of their training time on airway concerns. Difficult airway situations are a particular focus using evidence-based research to guide our decision-making for specialized airway equipment and medications.

Our flight nurses maintain certification in ACLS, PALS, NRP, and Transport Nurse Advanced Trauma Course. They also achieve Certified Registered Flight Nurse status within two years of employment at Air Care. Our medical personnel are

recognized as instructors in many of these programs as well.

The medical crews recognize the clinical and emotional investment that referring professionals have in their patients. Because of this investment, our medical crews remain sensitive to the need for respect and cooperation, in addition to skill during the transition of patient care. This sensitivity fosters a partnership among our referring agencies that focuses on providing optimal care and compassion to the patient.

Flight nursing is not a skill that comes naturally. Like all professional skills it takes hard work, perseverance and desire. As transport nursing continues to change, we will endeavor to not only keep up with it, but to shape these changes in order to provide safe and competent patient transport.



## New Air Care Associate

**Please join us in welcoming Paul to the Air Care Crew.**

Paul comes from The University of Michigan Survival Flight where he continues to work. He graduated from The University of Michigan nursing school in 1998. Since then, he has worked at Children's Hospital of Michigan in Detroit in the Emergency Department as well as the Pediatric Cardiothoracic ICU, Adult Surgical ICU and the in-house transport team before starting at Survival Flight in 2003. He is also a licensed paramedic instructor in the state of Michigan and has presented at the local, state and national level. Welcome to our team Paul!





**Dr. Glenn Ekblad** became Medical Director for Air Care in 1994. This is the fifth aeromedical program that he has worked for.

He has previously been Medical Director for the Detroit Medical Centers "DMC Sky Team". This program was only in operation for approximately one year and was then discontinued as a result of the financial reorganization of the new DMC.

While Dr. Ekblad was in the United States Air Force Reserve (USAFR), he was the Medical Commander for the 305 ARRS

pararescue team. Part of the mission of the 305th ARRS was to participate in rescue services for the NASA space shuttle program. This mission was suspended prior to the fateful shuttle explosion on takeoff during 1986.

Colonel Ekblad completed 26 years of military service in 2006. Col. Ekblad was commander of the 927th Aeromedical Staging Squadron for the last 4 years of his military service.

Dr. Ekblad began his medical career as an army medic with the 25th infantry in Vietnam during 1969. Following his return to the United States, he enrolled at the University of Utah and completed two undergraduate degrees. He graduated Magna Cum Laude with a B.S. in psychology in 1974 and Magna Cum Laude with a B.S.N. in 1975.

In 1977, Dr. Ekblad completed a master's degree at Yale University and finished his premedical studies in 1977. He then entered medical school at Michigan State University and graduated in 1980.

During 1984, Dr. Ekblad attended flight surgeon school at Brooks AFB, San Antonio, Texas. Following graduation, he returned to Michigan and started working as an emergency physician at

the Department of Emergency Medicine at Detroit Receiving Hospital. There, he became Medical Director for the DMC Sky Team in 1986.

Dr. Ekblad began yet another training program when he began his residency in anesthesiology at the University of Michigan. He completed that residency in 1990 and took on a residency director position in emergency medicine until he was offered the Medical Director position at West Michigan Air Care.

Dr. Ekblad is an associate professor at MSU/KCMS in Emergency Medicine. He currently works full time as a staff emergency medicine physician with Kalamazoo Emergency Associates.

Dr. Ekblad is a member of a four person research team at Air Care which includes Bob Mayberry, R.N., Kevin Franklin, R.N., and Dr. Paul Horvath. Their research project on medication assisted intubation took 2nd place in the annual scientific research program at MSU/KCMS. They have also presented their work at ACEP Scientific Conference in Seattle, Washington. Currently, they are writing two publications on their research.





**Jan, RN, BA, EMT-P**  
*Flight Nurse and Director of  
Clinical Operations*

Taking the lead as Air Care's Director of Clinical Operations is no small task, but Jan manages this considerable responsibility in addition to performing her favorite duty: working flight shifts. It's a role she continues to thrive on even after many years in the flight nursing profession.

Jan launched her nursing career after graduating from Kellogg Community

College's nursing program in Battle Creek. While working at both Bronson and Sturgis Hospitals, she joined Colon Fire and Rescue Department, entering the EMS world as an EMT-Basic. When flight nursing became a career option in the Kalamazoo area, Jan saw her chance to combine her love of emergency nursing with EMS. She joined Bronson CareFlite part-time in 1986, setting in motion an enduring career in flight nursing.

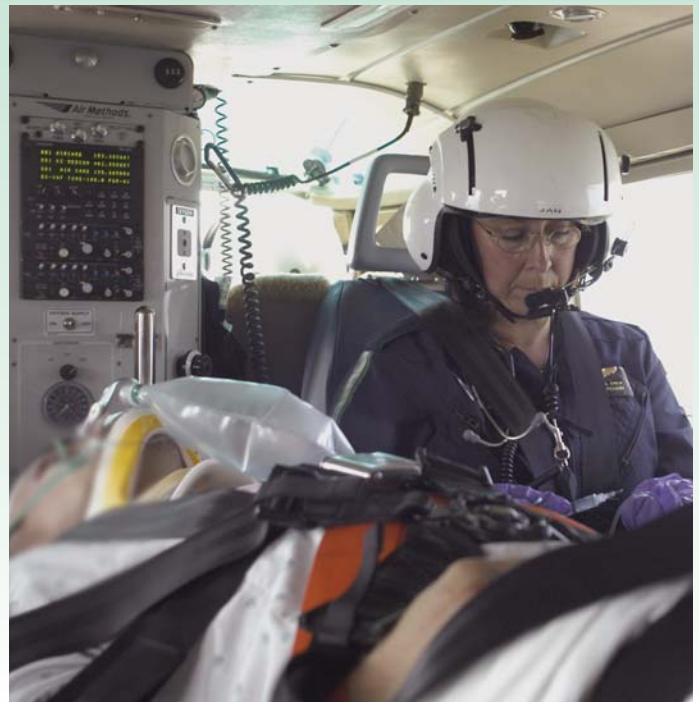
Jan completed her bachelor's degree from Spring Arbor University in 1991. She also obtained her EMT-Paramedic license at this time by successfully challenging the paramedic exam, an option that is no longer available.

In 1993, Jan was thrilled to become part of the West Michigan Air Care team when the Kalamazoo programs merged. Her career began to take off in 1995 when she became Director of Clinical Operations, overseeing the medical crew through many changes. In 2001 she increased her responsibilities by assuming the management duties of Air Care's Communication Center.

In addition to her roles at Air Care, Jan is an instructor for ACLS, PALS, PHTLS, Critical Care Emergency

Medical Transport-Paramedic, Transport Nurse Advanced Trauma Course, and EMS continuing education. She has been a contributing author and editor for the TNATC textbook and spoken at regional and national conferences. She is also a national Site Surveyor for the Commission on Accreditation of Medical Transport Services (CAMTS).

Jan's professional life is obviously divided many ways, but her most satisfying and rewarding time is still spent flying. For Jan, it's not just about saving lives or flying fast; it's about working side by side with the truly motivated, professional and exceptional colleagues at West Michigan Air Care.







**JoAnn, PA-C, BSN, CFRN, EMT-P**

JoAnn graduated from Ball State University in Muncie, IN with a BSN, and then started her career in nursing at Community Health Center of Branch County in Pediatrics. From there she moved into Intensive/Coronary Care and then later transitioned to the Operating Room at LaGrange Hospital.

JoAnn knew early on that her ultimate goal was to become a flight nurse, so she found a fixed wing program in Goshen Indiana to gain experience in air transport. After researching the credentials needed to fly in a rotor wing program, JoAnn soon became an EMT and transferred back to Coldwater to work

in the Emergency Room. Once the clinical checklist was gathering the needed momentum the list of other certifications such as ACLS, PALS and PHTLS was attacked.

In 1986 JoAnn gathered her resume and interviewed with Borgess Inflight. Joann's first position was part time and later became full time. She flew with Borgess Inflight from 1986 until 1989 during this time she also licensed as a paramedic. In 1989, JoAnn accepted a position as a flight nurse in Ft. Wayne Indiana to fly for Samaritan as they opened a new program. After one year in Ft. Wayne the program was up and running. In the mean time JoAnn became a new mommy so she decided to go back to Borgess Inflight until the program merged into West Michigan Air Care in 1993.

Since 1993 JoAnn flew full time until her career took yet another turn. In 1996 she decided to start working on another career in medicine and graduated in 1998 from the University of St. Francis as a Physician Assistant. Due to her love of flying she continued to fly full time and work part time as a PA in numerous settings from urgent care to family practice and the emergency room. JoAnn held on full time as a flight nurse for 22 years until Jan 2007, when she decided to go full time as a Physician Assistant in Emergency Medicine for Professional

Emergency Physicians based at Parkview Memorial Hospital in Ft. Wayne, IN. JoAnn continues to fly now part time at West Michigan Air Care.

In addition to her roles as a PA and flight nurse, JoAnn holds the following credentials: CFRN, PALS, PHTLS, NRP and ACLS instructor. JoAnn has been a contributing author and editor for the TNATC textbook and has published in flight journals.

JoAnn has enjoyed her life caring for thousands of patients over the years. For JoAnn, it's not all been about work over the years it's been about friendship too. "The friends I've made over the years are different (and I do mean different) we have been in situations that usually drive people away from our table as we debrief about our flights. We have pulled some patients from the grips of death and we have watch others slip away. Together we support each other to understand that we have been trained to do a lot, but sometimes, someone else is in control of the outcome and we can not change that."

Although JoAnn is now is in a new chapter of her career, she stills holds a deep passion for flying and states "Flying is the greatest job in medicine - its fast, exciting and challenging, and the best part is smiling at your partner before you step out of the helicopter knowing this is not going to be pretty!"





**Bob, RN, EMT-P**  
*Flight Nurse*

Bob launched his nursing career after graduating from Owens Technical College's nursing program in Toledo, Ohio. Bob worked first at W. A. Foote Memorial Hospital and then the University of Michigan Medical Center. He had the chance to combine his experience as a fire fighter and EMT with nursing in 1985 when he became a flight nurse for the Detroit Medical Center Sky Team. This set in motion a long-standing career in flight nursing.

In 1987 Bob accepted a position as a Flight Nurse with Borgess In Flight Medical Service, and moved to the Kalamazoo area. While continuing his flight nurse career he completed

his bachelor's degree from Western Michigan University in 1991. In 1993, Bob was pleased to become part of the West Michigan Air Care team when the Kalamazoo programs merged.

In addition to his roles at Air Care, Bob is an instructor for BLS, ACLS, PALS, and the Transport Nurse Advanced Trauma Course. He is a senior editor for the 4th edition Transport Nurse Advance Trauma Course textbook and has spoken at regional and national conferences.

Bob's professional life is busy and challenging, but his greatest recompense is still transport and patient care. For Bob, the best days are spent working alongside the professionals in Southwest Michigan.



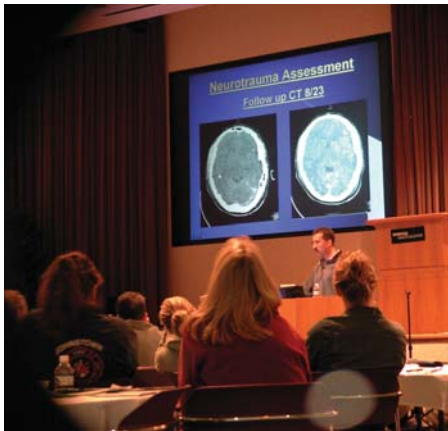


# Air Care Connections

Our safety and education goals extend well beyond the four walls of Air Care. Here are several ways we stay connected to all of Southwest Michigan and keep YOU “mission ready”!

## Check Us Out at [www.AirCare.org](http://www.AirCare.org)

Our updated website is a wealth of information and pictures. Find out more about our Observer program, order our latest Air Care wearables or check out the Careers page for open positions at Air Care. This is also a great place to learn more about our history and critical care capabilities.



## Attend Our Fall and Spring Conferences

We'd love to see you there! For continuing education with an EMS bite, come to our conferences in Kalamazoo. The Fall Conference is scheduled for Saturday, October 4, 2008 at the Lawrence Center at Borgess Medical Center. The Spring Fling will be revived February 28, 2009 at the Gilmore Center at Bronson Methodist Hospital. As usual, we'll make sure you leave the conference well fed. Look for this information soon on our website.



## Air Care Appearances

Air Care flies in to several public events (we call them “PRs”) involving EMS and fire departments every year. Firefighter Open Houses, burn camps and SADD demonstrations are a few examples.

## Landing Zone Classes are the Real Deal

Air Care's pilots can refresh you on the finer points of safe landing zones at your Fire Department and give you a live test at the end of class! Contact us for more information.

## Air Care Display Booth at Area Conferences

You can learn more about Kalamazoo's premiere flight service from the medical crew at Air Care's display booth, coming to a healthcare conference near you. Air Care's flight crew can be found at several local conferences in southwest Michigan. Bring us your questions and walk away with some choice freebies.

## Certification Classes

Air Care has made regional education a strong focus. The members of our medical crew are instructors for ACLS, PALS, CCEMT-P and several other courses. We team up with local training centers to bring education to you. Look for us the next time you renew those cards!

## Air Care Calendar

Every year, Air Care cranks out a new calendar just for you with vital information for scene and helipad operations. And good pics are sometimes hard to find. If you have a gift for taking great shots of our twin helicopters, Whiskey Mike and Alpha, contact us at [www.aircare.org](http://www.aircare.org). Your picture might come in for a landing on our calendar pages.

## Air Waves

Stay current by reading Air Waves. Our publication will inform you of new staff, patient case reviews, operational trends and more. For your convenience, each issue can be found at [www.aircare.org](http://www.aircare.org).





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**Watch for news of the  
October 6 Fall Conference!**

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