

# AirWaves

A Publication of West Michigan Air Care



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[www.AirCare.org](http://www.AirCare.org)

## New Look, Same Excellence in Critical Care

West Michigan Air Care has a new, temporary aircraft as a result of our partnership with Metro Aviation, but our critical care capability hasn't changed. When you call Air Care to request patient transport, our flight nurse team works to stabilize the patient as soon as possible as we transfer them quickly to definitive care. We appreciate your patience as our flight crews learn to work in a slightly different "office." The Airbus

EC-145 helicopter gives our crews a bit more room for patient care and we'll continue to perform lifesaving missions within a 75-mile primary and 200-mile secondary radius of Kalamazoo.

Rest assured, the rules of heliports and landing zones (LZ) haven't changed. Please refer to your training materials from West Michigan Air Care or visit us online to schedule an LZ class at [AirCare.org/contact/event-request](http://AirCare.org/contact/event-request).

Air Care's current aircraft is temporary, but similar to our expected final aircraft, which will be painted differently. We'd like to say a special "thank-you" to our many photographer friends for sharing these awesome photos taken in recent months. Do you have a good photo or video of our aircraft? Send them to us to share with the world at [photo@aircare.org](mailto:photo@aircare.org).



Courtesy of Mark Paren



Courtesy of Justin Walker



Courtesy of Eric Klien

# Air Care Patient Follow-Up

West Michigan Air Care is committed to excellence in patient care and these stories are why! It is wonderful to see these Air Care patients doing so well.

## John Benson

John Benson sustained serious injuries in a motorcycle crash on August 14, 2016. Although he normally wears a helmet, he says this was the one rare time he did not. In the crash, John laid down his bike going 40-60 mph and slid 30 feet from his bike before coming to a stop. John was unconscious for well over 10 minutes, according to first responders, then awoke confused and combative when the ambulance arrived. He also had a 3-inch laceration to his forehead



John Benson in a recent photo with his pal, Lucy.

and scattered abrasions and road rash. As the Air Care helicopter arrived, John began regaining consciousness and complained of a bad headache. The Air Care medical crew, Dawn Johnston and Nick Wright, gave John medication for pain and nausea and rushed him to Bronson Methodist Hospital where Trauma Surgeon Scott Davidson assumed care.

John had sustained a subdural hematoma, a C-1 cervical fracture, a complex scalp laceration, a traumatic pneumothorax and multiple rib fractures in addition to a deep shoulder wound. He went to the operating room to have his complex scalp wound cleaned and carefully stitched. Several hours later

he was moved to the Trauma Care Unit, where he recovered over the next several days. John continues to heal and Air Care was delighted to receive a note from him recently!

Hi,

*This message is long overdue, but on Aug. 14th I was in a motorcycle mishap and had to be flown to Bronson Methodist Hospital. I had broken ribs, fractured vertebra, a skull injury and all kinds of road rash. The care I received from the EMT and flight crew was absolutely incredible. They called my son in Kentucky, my neighbor to get my dog, and were very professional with my care to say the least. Flight Nurse Dawn Johnston even came to the ICU room to see how I was coming along after ER. Thank you all so very much!*

John Benson

*P.S. I'm pretty much fully recovered now.*

## John Benson's Flight Crew:

- » Dawn Johnston, Flight Nurse
- » Nick Wright, Flight Nurse
- » Brian Vanderberg, Pilot
- » Steve Riet Kerk, Communications Specialist

## Lucas Doyle

News of the accident involving five-year-old Lucas Doyle and a lawn mower on October 8, 2016 reverberated throughout southwest Michigan, shocking and unsettling the region. In one devastating moment, Lucas was backed over by a riding lawn mower, sustaining serious injuries to his abdomen, right leg and foot. Mendon Fire Department arrived first to manage the scene, which was the most difficult many of them

had ever encountered. Firefighter Mike Franks called West Michigan Air Care and as the helicopter landed, Lifecare EMS was busy caring for Lucas and obtaining the first intravenous (IV) access. Lucas was in Class IV shock from blood loss. The Air Care medical crew, Dawn Johnston and Jan Eichel, immediately

started a second line via intraosseous (IO) access, and started blood products as they departed for Bronson Methodist Hospital. Lucas received uncrossmatched packed red blood cells (PRBC) and fresh frozen plasma (FFP), along with pain medicine and oxygen. These measures kept Lucas's vital signs stable and prepared him to do well in surgery. His color began improving and he became more interactive. The Air Care team was met by Trauma Surgeon Oreste Romeo in the Trauma & Emergency Center where stabilization measures continued and Lucas was prepped for the operating room.

Lucas's foot, knee, and abdomen were his primary injury sites. In the operating room, his knee and foot were cleaned and treated. Some toes on his right foot had to be amputated. Lucas's abdomen was also badly injured and required multiple surgeries. The mower had removed most of his intestines, so he began receiving intravenous nutrition which he continues to receive today. Skin grafts were used to close his abdominal wound. Eventually the breathing tube was removed for good and over the course of weeks, Lucas healed and started acting like his old self. He began enjoying

Popsicles, which exited his body through tubes placed in surgery. Next came physical therapy and recreation time to gradually improve Lucas's activity tolerance. Soon Lucas was transferred to Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital in Grand Rapids with a plan to go home by Christmas and continue outpatient physical therapy.



Lucas, just three days after his accident with his flight nurses on October 11, 2016.

December 8: Enjoying a Christmas party at Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital in Grand Rapids

Lucas has a firm grip on our hearts at West Michigan Air Care. We

will follow his progress as he and his family begin the process of exploring options for intestinal transplant surgery this spring.

### Lucas Doyle's Flight Crew:

- » Dawn Johnston, Flight Nurse
- » Jan Eichel, Flight Nurse
- » Rick Miller, Pilot
- » Steve Riet Kerk, Communications Specialist

## Lexi Jacobs

On the afternoon of Wednesday, September 14th, 2016, 17-year-old Lexi Jacobs was driving her younger sister, Ella, to their grandmother's house in the Three Rivers area. While crossing U.S. 131, their 4-door sedan was stuck by another vehicle at highway speed. Three Rivers Fire Department responded and closed the northbound lane to care for the girls. The crash had rendered Lexi unconscious. Ella had also sustained serious injuries, but was talking and seemed to be doing fairly well. She was taken to the Emergency Department at Three Rivers Health and was eventually airlifted to Bronson Methodist Hospital. Lexi needed immediate help. She had suffered a brain injury in addition to several other internal injuries, and her arm was bleeding significantly.

Three Rivers Fire Department called West Michigan Air Care to stabilize Lexi before transferring her directly to a trauma center with pediatric services. When Air Care's helicopter landed at the scene, the bleeding from Lexi's arm had been controlled, but her Glasgow Coma Score was 8 and she was restless and incoherent. The Air Care team, Dawn Johnston and Nick Wright, sedated Lexi and placed a breathing tube to protect her airway. Medications were administered to keep her comfortable and still, which would help prevent pressure on the brain. Lexi was moved into the aircraft, placed on a ventilator, and flown to Bronson where her parents awaited her arrival and Trauma Surgeon Scott Davidson assumed initial care. Amazingly, Lexi's blood pressure and other vital signs remained stable after the accident, despite her brain injury, two skull fractures, collapsed lungs, and a broken pelvis.

An intracranial pressure (ICP) monitor was placed soon after Lexi arrived at Bronson to observe the pressure in her head and keep it as normal as possible to protect her brain. Her parents, Katie and Luke, watched Lexi's ICP numbers with great anxiety, but thankfully, they stayed within a safe range. By Sunday, four days after the accident, the ICP monitor was removed and Lexi's sedation was lightened. Once the breathing tube was removed, Lexi's words came in little whispers, says Katie, and she had a lot of pain because of her pelvic injury.

After the surgery on her pelvis the next day, Lexi felt better and had less pain. To everyone's surprise, she got out of bed with a walker just six days after the accident! She was transferred to Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital on Wednesday, September 21st where she stayed for a week and was then discharged home with outpatient therapies. Because of a serious injury to her neck, Lexi had to wear a cervical collar around the clock, even while showering, for 3 months. That was no fun, but it didn't keep her away from the Sadie Hawkins dance at her high school in October! For this event Lexi even ditched her wheelchair and went on crutches.

Lexi's voice was quiet for a while and there was concern that her lovely singing voice might not return. Within a few months, however, Lexi's voice did recover and with her doctor's approval, she was able to take off the cervical collar two weeks early for her high school musical tryouts. Lexi sang her heart out and got the lead role as Cinderella!

Lexi has amazed her care providers with her rapid recovery, and has only lost some hearing from her right ear in addition to a "little bit of brain tissue" according to her mother. She's had minimal cognitive changes as a result of the accident, but the family is wisely helping her minimize activities to allow her brain a full and safe recovery. As with any brain injury, optimal healing takes time, a great deal of rest, and a gradual return to prior levels of activity and concentration tolerance.

Shortly after the accident, close friends of the Jacobs family started a Facebook page called "Jacobs Strong" for both girls and Katie began sharing updates on their progress. The page generated an outpouring of support that was greatly appreciated by the family. "There are no words for our support system," Katie says. "We have been extra blessed." Katie has a message for Lexi's care providers, too: "My baby wouldn't be here without you all and I can't say thank you and have it mean what my heart is feeling. But THANK YOU ALL!!"

On November 27, Lexi posted a photo of herself on Instagram that was taken shortly after the accident. She wrote the following inspirational message:

*"This Thanksgiving is an extra special one for me. About three months ago no one knew if I was even going to live. And now I'm walking, back to school, and get my neck brace off in four days! I have so much to be thankful for. The biggest being that I'm even here to express my love for those who've helped me. I owe so much to my family, friends and Zach. I wouldn't be healing so well without you. The biggest lesson I've learned from this is that life really can be taken away so quickly. So cherish every day and don't ever think bad things can't happen to you because they can, I'm proof of that. Be careful and love with every ounce of your being. Happy Thanksgiving."*



Lexi in her Cinderella costume in December, about three months after the accident.

### Lexi Jacobs' Flight Crew:

- » Dawn Johnston, Flight Nurse
- » Nick Wright, Flight Nurse
- » Allan Berry, Pilot
- » Terry Tratt, Communications Specialist

## Landing Zone Training Available Online or at Your Department!

Need an LZ refresher? You'll find our 20-minute LZ video and quiz online at [Aircare.org/resources/lz-training](http://Aircare.org/resources/lz-training). Complete the quiz while watching the video for a quick review of all aspects of LZ safety for West Michigan Air Care. This is a highly efficient training tool for first responders and helistop managers. To schedule a free on-site LZ class at your facility worth one (1.0) operations credit, please go to [Aircare.org/contact/event-request](http://Aircare.org/contact/event-request).



Courtesy of Jen Squires

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- » Review how to set up a landing zone.
- » Use the Fly Guides to see if a patient requires air transport.
- » Call to request the helicopter.

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