



Their role is vital and they are extremely caring, but you still don't want to have to meet them while they are on the job. Life Flight pilots save lives and give patients the chance to pull through horrific tragedies. "This job is hazardous by nature, but it's safe, because we're experts at what we do," says Stephan Kardos, who has served as a Life Flight pilot for seven years. "We realize that we are responsible for the patients and medical staff on board."


A Life-Saving Program

Katy is home to Memorial Hermann Katy Hospital, which, as part of the Memorial Hermann system, operates one of the only hospital-based air ambulances in the Houston area. Founded in 1976, the hospital's Life Flight program is CAMTS accredited and has flown over 120,000 missions. The program consists of 13 pilots, 14 nurses, 15 paramedics and dispatchers, and five mechanics. Each helicopter can transport up to two patients and is staffed by a pilot, nurse, and paramedic, who are all extremely dedicated. "It's easy to stay focused knowing you are responsible for their lives," says pilot, Matt Sarahina.

I'm a LIFE FLIGHT PILOT

Saving Lives in the Sky

Written by Natalie Cook Clark
Photography by Suzi Issa

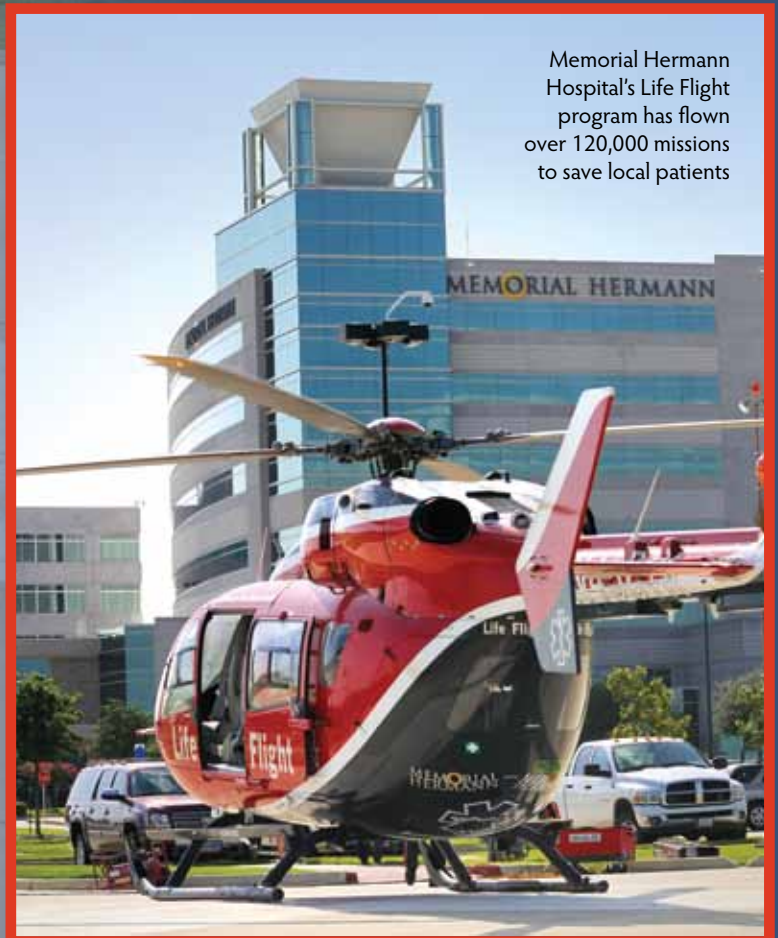


Life Flight pilot, Matt Sarahina
enjoys helping others every day

Choosing a Compassionate Career

Both Kardos and Sarahina began their career path by flying in the military. “The required flight hours for Memorial Hermann Life Flight pilots are 3,000 hours,” says Kardos. “The cheapest and quickest way to accomplish this is through the military.”

For Sarahina, finding a career that combined his skills with his desire to help others was important. “I knew from my military experience that I loved flying, so when I retired I knew that I wanted to incorporate my love of flying into a profession,” he



Memorial Hermann
Hospital's Life Flight
program has flown
over 120,000 missions
to save local patients



Veteran Life Flight pilot, Stephan Kardos began his flying career with the military

shares. While there are a host of flying jobs ideal for retired military personnel, such as with news stations and oil companies, both Kardos and Sarahina wanted the chance to make a difference in the lives of others. "I wanted to do something different and be in a position where I could render assistance to others," says Sarahina, adding, "I wanted something more rewarding, a career where I can make a difference in my community."

“ I wanted to do something different and be in a position where I could render assistance to others. ”

– Matt Sarahina

The job definitely makes a lasting mark in a pilot's life. "This job can be very rewarding," he explains. "When I was relatively new to the profession and working in California, I flew a preemie baby to the hospital. Six months later, I was awarded and recognized for playing a key part in saving the baby's life." Oftentimes, Kardos checks back in with patients and their families. "It is always hard for me to see children who are in a bad condition," he says. "I try to personally follow up on those cases."

Making a Difference Every Day

A typical day for a Life Flight pilot can be slow and they work 12-hour shifts. Each day the pilots are briefed, check the aircraft status, follow weather forecasts, maintain aircraft, and stay up on their flight ratings. On average, they make two to three flights in a shift. This may sound like a lot of waiting around, but it gives pilots time to meet new people and learn new things. It's an easy job to love. If you enjoy flying and

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helping others, being a Life Flight pilot is like getting paid to follow your passion in life. “The camaraderie is outstanding, and I enjoy the work environment,” says Kardos. “It’s great to be a part of something that can so heavily impact the Katy community.”

The Memorial Hermann Life Flight program operates as a hospital-based non-profit organization that relies on community support and fundraising efforts. The program costs \$13 million annually – none of which comes from taxes – but is well worth that because of the lives it helps save every day.

““ You never get used to the sadness of seeing someone in really bad shape, but when you know that you were a part of the team that saved a life then there is no more rewarding job. ””
 – Stephan Kardos

“You never get used to the sadness of seeing someone in really bad shape, but when you know that you were a part of the team that saved a life then there is no more rewarding job,” explains Kardos. Life Flight pilots battle weather, obscure landing locations, and heartache to save lives every day. Before the emergency room doctors and trauma specialists can begin their jobs, the Life Flight pilot steps in to save patients precious moments in their fight to survive. KM

NATALIE COOK CLARK is living the dream by working from home as a freelance writer in her hometown of Katy. She lives with her wonderful husband, Stephen, beautiful baby girl, Angelina, and dog, Oscar.



On any given day, a Life Flight pilot will make two to three rescue flights

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