



Kent Furlow stands next to the Cessna 185 (right) that was recently christened the Furlow-Laughlin Memorial Aircraft. A local "co-pilot" (above) conducts a preflight check on the aircraft.

Furlow-Laughlin's Contribution to . . .

Wings Of Hope

Roy Johnsen (inside the aircraft) assists a local team in a medical evacuation on a highway outside the village of Donli in Honduras.



Kent Furlow's recent trip to Honduras left him convinced the charity more than worthwhile

More often than not, individuals and companies who participate in charitable organizations say little or nothing about their philanthropic efforts.

In the case of Furlow-Laughlin Equipment Inc., the company's participation in Wings of Hope is taken rather matter-of-factly. It's not a subject for self-congratulation.

In fact, had it not been for an article in last December's issue of Construction Equipment Digest, it's doubtful that anyone outside of Wings of Hope and Furlow-Laughlin would have known of the company's efforts in behalf of the 17-year-old charity.

"It's not that we're not proud of our participation in the Wings of Hope program—we are: But it isn't a subject for back-patting," explains Kent Furlow, executive vice president of the Baton Rouge-based firm.

The son of Alvin I. Furlow, co-founder of the company, the 34-year-old Furlow recently gained some first-hand experience as to how the money donated to Wings of Hope is being used. Last September, he spent two weeks in Honduras, observing and photographing the efforts of Wings of Hope staffer and pilot Roy Johnson as he flew to the remote sections of that country on charity missions in the Cessna 185 dedicated to Furlow-Laughlin as a result of the company's donations to the St. Louis-based charity organization.

It was, according to Furlow, "an unforgettable experience," one that reinforced his belief that Wings of Hope is more than merely a worthwhile charity. "You could call many charities worthwhile. But in the case of Wings of Hope . . . you could almost classify it as a necessity.

"When you consider that the pilots are volunteers and that more than 90 percent of the funds donated to the organization are spent for those items and services which are needed immediately by those who

directly benefit from its efforts, that classifies it as more than worthwhile," Furlow states.

Terming Wings of Hope's work "a lot more constructive than many other charities," Furlow notes that the organization's non-political, non-denominational, strictly humanitarian policy was among the things that first attracted Furlow-Laughlin to the charity. "That, and the fact that it was started by an equipment distributor and seems to have become over the years the equipment distribution industry's pet charity."

It wasn't until a conversation with Bill Edwards, executive director for Wings of Hope, that the depth of Furlow-Laughlin's participation in the program was revealed. In the four years that the Louisiana firm has participated in the charity, Edwards says, the company has donated nine pieces of used equipment worth slightly more than \$135,000.

"If memory serves me," Edwards comments, "Furlow-Laughlin has donated three hydraulic backhoes, two crawler front-end loaders, three crawler tractors and truck-mounted Gradall." The contributions have come in two increments, he continues, adding that all but one machine has been sold.

"The first increment netted some \$65,000," Edwards states. It was from this money that the Cessna 185 currently operating in Honduras was purchased, he says.

Founded in late 1962 by Edwards, Joe Fabick, president of Fabick Tractor in Fenton, Missouri, a suburb of St. Louis, and George Haddaway, publisher of Flight magazine of Dallas, Texas, Wings of Hope has indeed become the distributors' pet project, Edwards relates. "More than 50 percent of our funding comes from a nation-wide network of equipment distributors and a few contractors," he states.

Distributor and contractor equipment donations have totaled more than \$1 million, Edwards comments, adding that an estimated

\$100,000 a year has come from the construction industry in recent years.

Basically, the organization works with world aid organizations like CARE; the U.S. Peace Corps; local government aid organizations, and some non-denominational religious groups, Edwards explains. "We don't proselyte. We deal in what we call humanitarian free enterprise," Edwards points out.

The services provided by Wings of Hope revolve primarily around medical rescue, medical support, rural development and other needs where air transportation and radio support are required, Edwards explains. In addition, he says, "we are a clearing house for technical information and the purchase of aircraft, parts, radio equipment, etc., at a wholesale price."

Most aircraft purchased and supported by Wings of Hope are single-engine Cessnas. "With the kind of puddle-jumping flights required in remote areas, a twin-engine aircraft isn't as economical," he comments. Wings of Hope often donates the aircraft to the affected region once the pilot's tenure is over.

Operating on five continents, Wings of Hope can best be described as a group "of joint-venture specialists who look on charity with old fashioned American moxie. It isn't a matter of a big organization and small results. It's a matter of a small organization with big results.

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(Editor's Note—While Furlow-Laughlin may not go in for self-congratulation and shun back-patting, Construction News believes that this organization and the others like it across the nation who support such activities as Wings of Hope should in fact be congratulated and patted on the back. Not everyone gets involved. It's nice to see that some do . . . and do it well.)