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Making a difference in the lives of Canadians in need



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Timing can make a difference between life and death when it comes to many serious illnesses. However, in communities across the country treatment is not always available or accessible. The Air Canada Foundation's Hospital Transportation Program work to fly patients closer to their treatments for life saving results.

When Bella Arcand, an eight year old girl from Saskatoon, needed brain surgery to treat a rare neurological condition that caused her to have up to 60 seizures per day, her mother, Bev, made one of the toughest decisions any mother has to make. She chose to give her daughter a fighting chance to live a normal life.

Bella was suffering from an extremely rare disease, Rasmussen's encephalitis. A Saskatoon neurologist recognized the symptoms and recommended immediate major surgery involving the removal of the diseased part of her brain, but the closest facility where the operation could be undertaken was at the Stollery Children's Hospital in Edmonton.

The Air Canada Foundation's Hospital Transportation Program stepped in, arranging to fly Bella and her mother, Bev, between Saskatoon and Edmonton, where Bella spent five months and underwent two surgeries.

In fact, nearly every day, a child needing vital medical care not available in his or her community plus an accompanying parent, fly free with Air Canada through the Hospital Transportation Program.

Last year more than 11 million Miles, benefited children like Bella, who today is a busy ten-year-old who loves games, singing and her little sister, Ava.

"The magic that an airplane brings made the return home even more special and gave me time to fully appreciate how far my little girl has come," Bev said. "It meant a reprieve from a long drive."

Bella is in recovery and has been seizure-free since June 2014, though the hemispherectomy of the right side has caused left-sided paralysis.

"She works hard daily to regain as much use as she can. Her current goal is to walk without the use of an Ankle-Foot Orthoses (AFO)," Bev continued.

"For many families, particularly those who live in smaller centres or more remote communities, The Hospital Transportation Program can also make the difference between missing three days of school and missing ten days of school," said Micheline Villeneuve, Air Canada Foundation Manager. "We are extremely grateful for all donations, which are used to help children like Bella get the medical care they need."

The Hospital Transportation Program provides Aeroplan Miles to 15 pediatric hospitals across Canada who administrate the program based on need and make associated travel arrangements. Providing hundreds of airline seats each year is just one of the ways the Air Canada Foundation helps make a real difference in the lives of families across Canada and abroad.

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