



John Valentine – Our Hero

I learned an overwhelming lesson from a young child; a lesson of compassion, generosity and courage. I met seven year old John Valentine during our first annual Halos and Heroes (H&H) awareness and fundraiser for Air Compassion for Veterans (ACV).

During that H&H 07 event, the Valentine children were adorned in Army fatigues and beaming with joy as they presented us with their hard-earned contribution check of \$500. Their parents, Tom and Christina Valentine, looked on with pride. WOW! In the hustle and bustle of H&H, this was the memory that rose above the technical and logistic tasks of producing an event of this scale. These children magnified the best in the human spirit.



John Valentine and his sister present their donation check to ACV.

My phone rang on a busy day recently while I was working on our 2008 Halos and Heroes event. I expected it was one of many calls to purchase tickets for the event but the caller was Christina Valentine. Christina wanted to inform me that her son John was in the midst of raising money again for ACV. She went on to say that John had set a goal of raising more donations than he had raised last year as it was to be given in memory of his father. Christina told me that her husband Tom, had given his life last February in service to our country that he honored and loved. Tom was a highly decorated Navy Seal.

Talk about a reality check! John has turned his sorrow and tragedy into a triumph by making his contribution a tribute to the memory of his dad. John has turned this donation to ACV into a living memorial. John and his dad will be a part of continuing the healing process for those who serve our country so bravely.

This is a story of integrity and courage set by such a young man, a boy who obviously had great pride in his father, his country, the military and the Navy specifically.

John and his friends, with some help from the ACV website, raised more than \$10,000 for ACV in 2008 in honor of his dad. The story doesn't end there.



John presenting his donation 10/4/2008, to Heidi Greer, Director of H&H.



John getting into the P-51 Mustang at H&H.

At, Halos & Heroes 2008, last October, John was surprised when we had arranged for Jerry Yagen, owner of the "Warbird" Airport and Museum in Pungo, to give him a ride in a P-51 Mustang! What a thrill for John. His excitement and enthusiasm was infectious to all of us watching the event from the tarmac.

John was so thrilled that he wants to now share his experience with others through his new fundraising project for 2009. Between January 1st and April 25th, 2009, other children or individuals will have the opportunity to win a free "Warbird" plane ride by donating \$5 per ticket for the chance.

Everyone who donates and has a ticket for the chance to fly in the "Warbird" plane is invited to the Hampton Roads Executive Airport (5172 w. Military Hwy. in Chesapeake, VA) on April 25th, from 11:00 am – noon for the drawing and flight. There will be a complementary light lunch served before the drawing.

The winner of the drawing will then experience flying like the aces of World War II with Mike Spalding in his "Warbird" T-6 North American vintage airplane while everyone else is able to watch and enjoy. Mike is a licensed, insured and FAA approved pilot. His company Planeview Aviation is one of the generous businesses that help support Air Compassion for Veterans (ACV) and our wounded warriors. Mike has donated his plane, time and gas to ACV in treating the ticket winner to an exciting ride in his T6 Warbird.



Andy Gibbs, the owner of the Hampton Roads Executive Airport has not only donated his marvelous facility for us to hold our event but also has donated a free helicopter ride for a second drawing. He is making other helicopter rides available for only \$20 a person and will donate back \$5 of that to ACV. The person selling the most donation tickets will be given a free Angel Flight plane ride provided by one of our Angel Flight pilots, David Brown. David is also donating his plane, time and gas to ACV to help promote John's event. All Angel Flight pilots generously donate their planes and gas for each medical mission they fly for Mercy Medical Airlift, Angel Flight and ACV. There were over 1,800 Angel Flight missions flown in 2008.

ACV and John Valentine extend our tremendous gratitude to Andy Gibbs, Mike Spalding and David Brown for their amazing generosity and heart for our wounded warriors and veterans.

John has decided to form a precious group called TEAM VALENTINE to help him sell tickets for the Warbird ride and raise money for ACV in honor of his dad, to give us at the next Halos and Heroes on October 3rd, 2009. Joining him on Team Valentine is:

- His 6 year old sister Meghan
- 8 year old Nathan Roberts who's father was also a Navy Seal and was killed a year before John lost his father Tom. Tom became Nathan's surrogate father, so when Tom died, Nathan felt he had lost two fathers.
- Ethan and Sidney Kleinschmidt who helped raise money in 2008

April 25th is the date for the "Free Warbird Ride" event at the Hampton Roads Executive Airport. It will run from 11:00 to noon including the rides and lunch. We'll give you an update on how things went for John and his team.



Team Valentine at Halos and Heroes 2008

Air Compassion for Veterans has been blessed with so many resources including young John Valentine. We trust that God will enable us to continue providing this critically needed service. With the help of John, businesses, corporations and compassionate Americans, ACV will be serving for as long as there is a need.

We may learn more about Air Compassion for Veterans by going to our website:
www.AirCompassionforVeterans.org.

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