

PRESS RELEASE



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CareFlight Celebrates First All Female Flight Crew

MONTROSE, CO: Thirty-eight years after CareFlight put its first helicopter into service, it has another first: the first all-female flight crew.

“It’s super exciting – for girls to actually think they can do this,” says Elisabeth Abel, Flight Nurse on the first all-female flight crew in the region’s history. The crew includes a pilot, flight nurse and flight medic.

“Women make up about 5% of the aviation industry, and only 2% of helicopter pilots,” says Esther Babcock, pilot and newest member of the CareFlight crew. Having grown up in Pagosa Springs, Esther is a Colorado native and says being in Montrose is a dream come true for her. Previously, she was one of two helicopter pilots on the entire big island of Hawaii.

All three women are highly trained in their field. “We’re held to a really high standard,” says Becky Sproul, Flight Paramedic. “That’s what makes this an awesome place to work. It’s not a job for anyone to take lightly.” Becky’s background before coming to CareFlight was working for a different air transport service that was city-oriented and had high patient volumes. For the pre-hospital setting she operates in, being in a rural area like Western Colorado means her patients generally are higher acuity, making it incredibly challenging – in a good way. “It’s a very competitive field.”

The crew – who have named themselves *The Broad Squad* – say there are advantages to an all-female flight crew. “When you’re flying three girls, that means your flight load is lighter!” jokes Elisabeth. According to Esther, there’s something special about “that female vibe” - especially being with other women used to working in a male dominated industry. With different backgrounds and a mutual respect for one another, they describe each other with respect and as trail blazers in their industry. One thing is for certain: Montrose and the Western Slope has an inspirational group of role models for women everywhere.

About Montrose Memorial Hospital (www.MontroseHospital.com)

Montrose Memorial Hospital is a 501(c)3 nonprofit healthcare system serving Montrose, San Miguel, Ouray, Gunnison, Delta, Hinsdale and San Juan counties. The health system offers a 75-bed hospital and an extensive

range of inpatient & outpatient health care services, including cardiology, oncology, minimally invasive surgery, laboratory, medical imaging/radiology, Mountain View Therapy, Level III Trauma Center, Acute Rehabilitation Unit and the family birthing center. The health system partners with regional providers on joint ventures to meet local healthcare needs, including CareFlight air ambulance service, San Juan Cancer Center and Black Canyon Surgical Center. Montrose Memorial is the second-largest employer in Montrose County, with more than 700 employees and 100 physicians who represent 23 medical specialties.

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Photo caption: From left to right: Elisabeth Abel, Becky Sproul, Esther Babcock. The first all-female flight crew for CareFlight began in Montrose on December 7, 2018.