

Highflight



www.highflight.info

Introduction

High Flight was started in by Stratton Richey, a Captain with British Airways with the initial aim was to raise funds for one ***Flying Scholarship for the Disabled*** (in memory of Sir Douglas Bader). While still in the creation process the aim was to take disadvantaged and disabled young people flying.

Since then, we have raised over £500,000. These funds have come from regular Gift Aid donors, payroll giving from within British Airways and individual donations. Of the funds raised by donation, none are used for any administration purpose at all. Any administration funds come from the huge help offered by British Airways together with additional financial help from our friends at Flight International magazine.

High Flight has now taken over 3,000 young people gliding, of which some are terminally or permanently ill, while others come from an area from which they would not normally be able to experience a day gliding and the teamwork that this requires. High Flight has also funded the Flying Scholarships for the Disabled for over £250,000, given funding to a microlight organisation to modify a microlight to take wheelchairs and taken over 2,000 Special Needs youngsters to the Imperial War Museum at Duxford. In addition, we have facilitated several flights in light aircraft for individual cases.

We are pleased when we see positive results of our efforts and this is reflected very poignantly in a speech made by one of the scholarship recipients. The text of which is on the next page.

Moving words, I am sure you'll agree. Please contact me to offer your support for our worthy cause.

Stratton Richey
Chairman of Trustees
January 2011

Words from one of our recent scholarship recipients..

"There are times in all of our lives when the music stops, doesn't it? And there is little or nothing we can do on our own to get it going again.

For me the music stopped on Feb 18th 1991 at ten to eight. It was a Monday morning on Victoria Station, London. I was making a quick telephone call to my Mum. I was only in London for the weekend!

Suddenly, and shockingly, an anonymous face with evil in their heart ripped my life apart. With the devastating blast of an IRA bomb it meant that nothing was the same. Nothing could ever be the same. As I lay on the floor of Victoria Station and tried to get up, I could see that I had lost my right foot and had severe injuries to my left leg.... But still I couldn't understand why I couldn't get up. There was chaos everywhere.

There were many losses that day – for me and for others. Some were obvious – some I only realized and faced years later. My physical losses took priority – which, of course, they had to. But years on when my physical disability had become a daily reality, the enormity of the changes to my self-identity were truly disabling.

By this I mean the things which I felt made me, ME

I knew that I was not coping. After all the years I had worked as an Occupational Therapist and had been advising other people with disabilities on how to cope – I realized I had never had a true understanding of disability. How arrogant I had been!

How could I start to rebuild the person I had been with what was left?

My body wasn't the same any more – my relationships weren't the same any more and at that point my husband of 16 years left. If only I could have had the choice of leaving my disability behind.

Then, five years after the bombing, I wished, for the first time, that I had not survived at all. What a lonely, frightening time that was. The following year something stirred me. I saw an advertisement for a flying scholarship that interested me. Why not? Should I? Shouldn't I? ----- So I applied.

This was a step in the dark – I had no idea if I would have the aptitude or the nerve to learn how to fly, but I really felt I should give it a try. As doors closed behind me, I was trying desperately to find some new hopes and dreams – somewhere.

I can honestly and sincerely say that flying back to Big Bear from Barstow in California on September 17 1998 at 11.45, having just passed my check flight - the music did truly start for me again, seven years after the bomb. My flying instructor, the owner of Aerohaven flying school and all my recently made friends were out on the runway to applaud me as I landed -----ME A PRIVATE PILOT!!!!

My anonymous sponsor had had the generosity of spirit and the humility of not wanting gratitude to buy back for me what is totally beyond the realms of monetary worth, that which is immeasurable and invaluable.

From nothing, I was given a hope and belief in myself again. I am more than grateful to sponsors like yourselves for having the spirit and optimism to believe in others, when they don't feel that they can believe in themselves. Thank you SO much".