Athlete spotlight
Kvon Albert, Louisiana

Kvon is a shining example of a Special Olympics competitor. Everywhere he goes, he wins the hearts of many volunteers and coaches with his enthusiasm and contagious energy. He is an excellent role model for other athletes and a great competitor. Kvon also will be one of the youngest athletes at the National Games in Lincoln, where he will compete in track and field. "It gives me a chance to play sports with others who are in wheelchairs and not be judged by what I can’t do but what I can do," Kvon said.

A special thank you to our Airlift partners

The Citation Special Olympics Airlift would not be possible without help from these companies that provide us with resources that allow for a safe and successfully executed Airlift. From Cessna and the entire Special Olympics organization: thank you for partnering with us to help transport these very special athletes.

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An Update from the CSOA Director

What to expect once you register for the Airlift

The Airlift is less than three months away and the Ground Logistics Team is now in high gear as we finalize the last few planning details. There’s not a day that goes by that I am not asked “How is planning for the Airlift going?” and “What do you have left to do?”. My answer is always the same. I need to find more aircraft to provide transportation because I have 2,000 athletes counting on Cessna and me to fulfill the promise we made in October 2008. These athletes understand that the economy has been devastating to many of our companies because they have seen the effects on their own families. Still, these athletes haven’t given up on their goal of achieving gold at the Special Olympics USA National Games in Lincoln, Neb., and I can’t give up on mine of making sure I have a seat on a Citation for each of them.

I know some of you are new to the Citation family or the Airlift and might not know what to expect if you register your Citation. Here’s an overview:

Within a week of registering your Citation, you will receive a letter with a Citation Special Olympics Airlift decal and a medallion for your aircraft representing each year you have participated in the Airlift. In late June, you will receive a package that will include all the information you need for your Airlift participation:

• A “Dove” call sign that will help ATC expedite you through the system and give your aircraft priority over all other air traffic on both Saturdays.
• A special Jeppesen Briefing Bulletin on filing your flight plans, instructions on arriving and departing LNK and a LNK airport layout map.
• A complete passenger manifest, schedule of departure on July 24 from LNK back to the FBO and contact information for your FBO.
• A special Jeppesen Briefing Bulletin on filing your flight plans, instructions on arriving and departing LNK and a LNK airport layout map.
• We know many of you may need to drop passengers and have a quick turn in Lincoln, which is how we have designed the process. But if your schedule allows we hope you might stay for awhile in Lincoln. The Pilot Hospitality Tent will have food, drinks, comprehensive weather briefing provided by Baseops, and Lincoln Tower personnel will be on site to provide the necessary flight clearance and a payment kiosk for handling all fueling operations.

The Ground Logistics Team has designed the Airlift to be safe, efficient and provide a great environment for both the athletes and our customers. To register, please go to www.airlift.cessna.com and sign up today to join us in Lincoln on July 17 and July 24.

Rhonda Fullerton is Cessna Community Relations manager and director of the Citation Special Olympics Airlift

Kemmons Wilson Companies:

Giving Special Olympics athletes a lift

Kemmons Wilson’s pioneering vision in the hospitality industry changed the way Americans travel and the way we do business.

The idea of a chain of hotels that allowed kids to stay free and featured standard amenities like air conditioning, television and a swimming pool was revolutionary when Kemmons opened his first Holiday Inn in 1952. He continued to break new ground by developing franchising in the 1950s well before it was a widespread business concept, and in the 1960s, he was the first to offer computerized hotel reservations.

Having flown in the U.S. Air Force’s Air Transport Command during World War II, Kemmons naturally found aviation to be valuable as a business tool. According to his son Bob, one day Kemmons missed a commercial flight out of Memphis and chartered an airplane. “He thought to himself, ‘This is ridiculous. I could fly myself,’ and we’ve been using business aircraft ever since,” said Bob, who along with his brothers continue to run Kemmons Wilson Companies (KWC) from Memphis, Tenn.

Since 1948, KWC has owned, operated or partnered in 400 companies. Today, KWC represents a diverse collection of businesses mostly in the areas of resort timesharing, hospitality, real estate, financial services, aviation and insurance.

KWC purchased its first business jet in 1994 – the 50th CitationJet to roll off the production line – and has participated in each Citation Special Olympics Airlift since.

“My wife is a pediatric physical therapist and I grew up with a cousin who had polio, so I’ve been around kids with special needs all my life,” Bob said. “The Airlift gives our company a wonderful opportunity to make a difference in a way that really touches my heart.”

KWC’s CitationJet took athletes to Hartford, Conn., and Raleigh-Durham, N.C., respectively. The company donated its Citation Excel for the 2006 Airlift to Des Moines, Iowa.

KWC currently has three business jets in its fleet: a Citation CJ2, a Citation Excel and a Citation Mustang. They have agreed to donate two of their Citations to transport athletes from Memphis to Lincoln, Neb. During the past two Airlifts and again this year, KWC has also hosted a departure point at one of its Wilson Air Services, which has fixed-base operations in Memphis, Charlotte and Houston.

Bob and his brother Spence fly the company’s aircraft, and KWC also employs a full-time pilot, Charlie Huggins. All three are Air Force trained.

“Since three of us have flown in big airlifts in our military careers,” Bob said, “and from a pilot standpoint, Cessna makes it so doggone easy. They are ready if something comes up, but we’ve never had a problem.”

“It’s a great atmosphere when you land at the Special Olympics. You open the door and the volunteers from Cessna take care of everything. We enjoyed it so much that we wanted to stay another couple of hours to just watch the other Citations come in, meet the different crews and be a part of the athletes’ experience.”

Everybody needs a lift now and then...