

HORIZONS

FORTY YEARS. ONE MISSION.

\\ TOOLS AND TECH

TRANSFORMING CARE
FOR TRAUMA PATIENTS

\\ COMMUNITY SUPPORT

THE RUMSEY RIDE FUNDRAISER
CELEBRATES ITS 36TH YEAR

\\ LIFE AFTER

PARALYMPIAN JENNIFER OAKES
ON HER LIFE POST-RESCUE

◀ A LIFE ON THE LINE

WADE CASSIDY SHARES HIS STARS
RESCUE EXPERIENCE

PRESENTED BY

Nutrien[™]



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WELCOME

To our dedicated allies, partners, and friends:

Thank you for picking up this very special edition of *Horizons* celebrating 40 years of STARS.

Since 1985, it has been our mission to provide critical care to the patients who need it most, no matter where they live, work, or play – and it would not be possible without the immeasurable community support we have received since day one.

With support from our allies like you, STARS has grown into one of the world's leading and most respected helicopter emergency medical service (HEMS) providers. What started as one helicopter, one base, and a volunteer crew in Calgary, has since grown into a fleet of 10 helicopters across six bases in three provinces. Today, our dedicated STARS team has helped deliver more than 60,000 missions across Western Canada, helping countless families and communities.

Our survival as an organization has always relied on the support of the community. In the early days, our founder, Dr. Greg Powell, would go to the mailbox each week hoping that enough donations had come through just to pay for fuel for the helicopter. Over time, the need for an organization like STARS became abundantly clear, and the community rallied behind our mission. Your steadfast support has allowed us to expand, innovate, and stand at

the forefront of critical care in Canada.

On behalf of our employees, volunteers, and most importantly our patients, we are excited to celebrate 40 years of critical care, anywhere, alongside you.

Thank you for standing by us – here's to the next 40 years.

Dr. John Froh
President & CEO, STARS



On the cover:

Wade Cassidy at Chitek Lake, Sask.

Photo by Lyle Aspinall

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STARS Editors

Angela Anderson-Blunt, Lyle Aspinall,
Michelle Sinclair

Published by RedPoint Media Group

Managing Editor Colleen Seto

Art Director Veronica Cowan

Director, Strategy & Content Meredith Bailey

A Call from the Skies

STARS provides life-saving rescue to Wade Cassidy as well as caring support to his wife, Thea.

By Lyle Aspinall



VERY IMPORTANT PATIENT

A phone call from the skies eased Thea Cassidy's worst fears.

When she last saw her husband, Wade, he had just been shocked back to life by STARS flight nurse Crystal Lybeck before being wheeled into a helicopter bound for a city hospital. Crystal phoned Thea en route and put Wade on the line. "That was probably the best sound ever, just hearing him say hi," Thea said.

REMOTE RESCUE

It was the September long weekend of 2018, and Wade was at his cottage in Chitek Lake, Sask., pulling in his boat dock for the season, when searing chest pain knocked him down.

"The last thing you think about at age 42 is a massive heart attack," he said, "let alone the location of where

it happened." He was 232 km from the nearest major hospital in Saskatoon. "I knew the timelines. I didn't have hours, I had minutes."

His cousin called 911. Local ground crews came to his aid, and a doctor in the community urged a STARS response since a road trip would take two and a half hours.

"With Wade's condition, we did not have that time," said STARS flight paramedic Glen Pilon. "We needed faster transport to hospital." The STARS helicopter launched from Saskatoon, and a ground ambulance carrying Wade rushed toward it. They met on the roadside at an emergency services parking lot.

"I was doing everything I could to just keep breathing," said Wade. "When we got to that rendezvous site and I heard

that helicopter, a sense of relief came over me."

But the worst was yet to come.

When Glen and Crystal stepped into the ground ambulance to assess Wade, he was alert and talking. Moments later, he was not. "I noticed his eyes started to roll back in his head and he started to shake," said Glen. "We both looked at the monitor, and he was in ventricular fibrillation."

Wade's heart wasn't beating as it should, so the STARS air medical crew had to act quickly. "I didn't really understand what was happening," said Wade, "It was a very euphoric feeling. What I didn't know was that as your brain shuts down and loses blood – sight, hearing, consciousness – all those things fade away when your heart stops. All I could

see was my wife and children standing there smiling. And it was the most calming feeling I've ever had."

But in reality, he was dying.

"The type of cardiac arrest he was in required us to shock him," said Crystal, who quickly deployed a defibrillator. "After I shocked Wade, we had return of circulation waves. He started to come to, and I remember saying, 'Welcome back, Wade.'"

GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND

While Wade was moved from the ground ambulance to the STARS helicopter, Thea asked Crystal, Can you just tell him that I love him? "She was so great," Thea recalled. "She said, 'Absolutely, I will.'"

Crystal even went a step further. She had taken the phone number of the driver

who would take Thea to the hospital. While providing care in the air, she knew Wade was alert enough to talk to Thea, so she called.


"It was scary," said Thea. "I didn't know what to expect on the other end, but it was Crystal's voice saying, 'Do you want to speak to Wade?' That phone call made it possible for me to breathe again."

Wade made it to a cardiac catheterization lab at Saskatoon's Royal University Hospital and has since fully recovered. Now, when he's not at the hockey rink with his two teenage boys or growing his career as a salesperson in powersports vehicles, Wade continues to spend time at the cabin with his family whenever possible.

"We come up here as often as we can," he said, sitting on the shoreline where his heart attack occurred. "And having

a service like STARS – I will forever be indebted to them. If it wasn't for STARS, I wouldn't be back here today telling the story."

The Cassidy family has become staunch supporters of STARS, participating in numerous fundraising and awareness activities.

"Not only do I owe my life to STARS, I owe it to the people who support STARS," said Wade. "It is so precious to our province, to Western Canada." 



Scan the code for a video of Wade's heartwarming story.

Wade, fully recovered, back at Chitek Lake, Sask.

"Not only do I owe my life to STARS, I owe it to the people who support STARS."

—WADE CASSIDY



PHOTOGRAPH BY LYLE ASPINALL

From Pioneer Donor to Legacy Partner

Lions Clubs International continues to support STARS 40 years after funding the first mission.

By Olivia Piché



The original Lions Air Ambulance Service helicopter

Launching an air ambulance service isn't easy – it requires funding, trust, and an organization willing to take a leap of faith. Lions Clubs International (LCI) made it possible for STARS to take flight.

In 1985, STARS founder Dr. Greg Powell had a vision to bring critical care to patients who needed it most. To help make that vision a reality, he approached local LCI members Art Hironaka, David Dalgetty, and John Pantou for support and funding. From that point on, the Lions became a critical component to getting life-saving care airborne. During this formative time, LCI provided STARS with \$100,000 – enough to provide early stability.

LCI serves and strengthens communities across the globe and has done so for decades. "Where there's a

need, there's a Lion," said Kevin Gibbons, immediate past district governor of LCI's District C-2, Alberta, and nephew of Hironaka.

"It's a red helicopter now, not the white one that started out in the beginning, but it's still our legacy," said Gibbons. In 1985, STARS was initially known as Lions Air Ambulance Service and flew a white helicopter with the Lions logo on it.

Today, the helicopters are red, the fleet has grown, and STARS has become a lifeline for communities across Western Canada – but the Lions' unwavering support remains the same. To honour its first donor and the steadfast support that has followed for 40 years, STARS named one of its new helicopters C-FLCI after LCI. (The Canadian aircraft naming convention starts with C-G, C-F, or C-I, followed by three letters.)

"It hits you right in the heart, thinking, 'There's our helicopter,'" said Gibbons. "But the bigger picture is that we were a part of this; we helped create this."

A LEGACY THAT LIVES ON

Gibbons recalled his uncle's immense pride in seeing STARS grow into something so monumental. Gibbons carries on this pride. "We'll always continue to support STARS because we were the beginning of STARS," he affirmed.

Nearly every Lions Club in the geographic regions that STARS serves donates to the organization. Gibbons explained that individual clubs determine how much they'd like to donate, and many host additional fundraisers to help. For instance, the Beiseker Club hosts the Beiseker Lions Annual Golf Classic, where all proceeds go to STARS. That tournament has raised close to \$200,000 to date.

Similarly, the partnership continued with the Lions/STARS Stampede breakfast, where the Bowness Lions Club cooked a breakfast for the family of STARS employees.

"We serve by continuing to support STARS and seeing STARS continue helping the citizens of Western Canada," said Gibbons. "It's kind of like breathing. You don't think about breathing; you just do it. It's the same with Lions: we continue to support STARS because we want to, and we have to. It's like a natural part of what we do every day. Every time we see [the helicopters] flying around, we can all look up and say, 'That's us.'"

IMPACT

2024/25

YEAR IN REVIEW

STARS EMERGENCY LINK CENTRE

38,420

EMERGENCY REQUESTS HANDLED

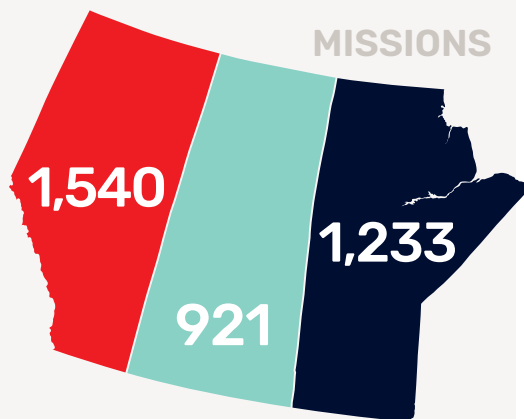
105

AVERAGE EMERGENCY REQUESTS A DAY

63K+

MISSIONS TO DATE SINCE 1985

MISSIONS



=3,694

YEARLY MISSIONS*

10

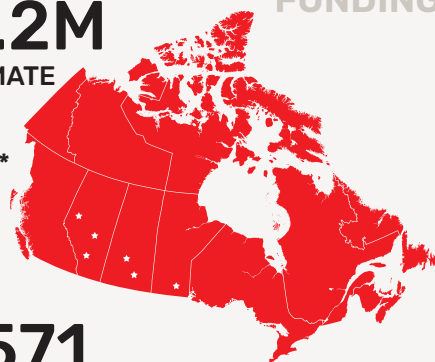
AVERAGE DAILY MISSIONS

*includes helicopter and fixed wing

\$12.2M

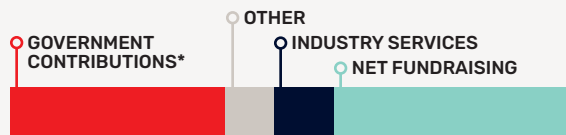
APPROXIMATE ANNUAL COST PER BASE*

FUNDING



36,571

ANNUAL DONORS

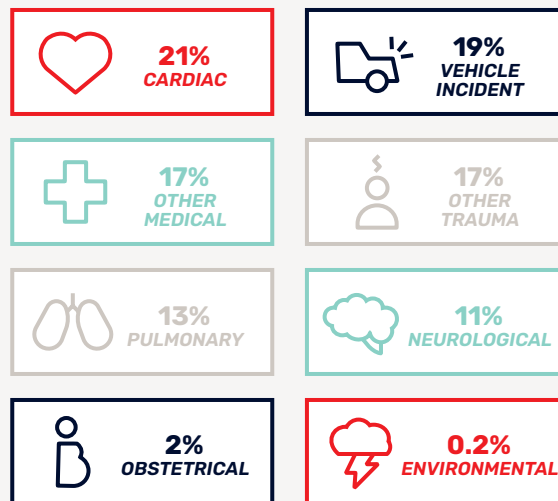


FUNDING SOURCES

*based on STARS' most recent audited financials

INCIDENT TYPES

STARS RESPONDS TO A VARIETY OF CRITICAL CARE CALLS



Since 1985, STARS has flown more than **63,000 missions** across Western Canada. Below are **3,694 missions** carried out from our six bases in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba in the past year.

ALBERTA Acme, Airdrie 2, Alberta Beach, Alcomdale, Alder Flats 2, Aldersyde, Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation 2, Alix 2, Amesbury 2, Andrew 2, Ardrossan, Athabasca 12, Atikameg 2, Balzac, Banff 15, Barrhead 13, Bashaw 2, Bassano 7, Beaver Mines 2, Beaverlodge 9, Beiseker 3, Bezanson 4, Big Valley, Blackfalds, Blairmore 7, Blueberry Mountain 2, Bon Accord 2, Bonanza, Bonnyville 15, Botha, Bow Island 2, Bowden, Boyle 4, Bragg Creek 4, Brooks 30, Bruderheim, Buck Lake 3, Burmis 2, Busby 3, Cadotte Lake 2, Calgary 8, Calmar 2, Camrose 28, Canal Flats, Canmore 13, Canyon Creek, Carbon 2, Cardiff, Cardston 5, Carmangay, Caroline 4, Carseland 5, Carstairs, Carvel, Caslan, Castor, Cayley, Cereal 2, Chauvin 2, Cheadle, Cherry Point, Chetwynd 2, Chip Lake, Chipman, Clairmont, Claresholm 15, Cleardale 2, Cline River, Clive, Clyde 4, Coalhurst 2, Cochrane 4, Cold Lake 17, Conдор 2, Consort 2, Cooking Lake, Coronation 2, Cowley 2, Cranbrook 7, Cremona 2, Crossfield 4, Dawson Creek 3, Daysland 5, De Winton 2, DeBolt 2, Delia 3, Derwent, Devon 2, Dewberry, Diamond Valley 13, Didsbury 9, Donald, Drayton Valley 12, Driftpile 5, Drumheller 23, Duchess, Duffield 4, Dunvegan 3, Eaglesham, Eden Valley First Nation 5, Edmonton 40, Edson 13, Elbow Falls PRA 4, Elk Island Park, Elk Point 6, Elkford, Elko, Enoch Cree Nation 2, Evansburg 4, Exshaw 3, Fairview 11, Fallis 2, Faust 2, Fernie 8, Field 2, Flatbush, Fort Assiniboine, Fort Macleod 3, Fort McMurray, Fort Saskatchewan, Fort St. John, Fort Steele, Fort Vermilion 3, Frog Lake 3, Ghost Lake, Gibbons 3, Gift Lake 5, Girouxville, Gleichen 9, Glendon, Glenevis, Glenwood, Golden 6, Goodfare 2, Goodfish Lake, Gordondale, Grande Cache 13, Grande Prairie 32, Granum, Grimshaw, Grouard 2, Grovedale 12, Gunn, Guy, Halkirk, Hanna 7, Hardisty, Hattonford, High Level, High Prairie 28, High River 10, Hill Spring, Hines Creek, Hinton 10, Hondo, Horse Lake First Nation 4, Hussar, Hythe 4, Innisfail 4, Innisfree, Invermere 6, Islay, Jasper 4, Jenner, Kananaskis Village 9, Kapasiwin 2, Kavanagh 2, Kikino 3, Kikino 4, La Glace, Lac Cardinal, Lac La Biche 7, Lac la Nonne, Lacombe 9, Lake Louise 9, Langdon 2, Leduc 2, Legal 2, Lethbridge 82, Little Buffalo 3, Little Smoky 2, Lloydminster 5, Lomond, Longview, Loucheud, Madden, Ma-Me-O Beach, Manning 2, Marshall 9, Maskwacis 4, Mayerthorpe 9, McBride, McLennan 4, Medicine Hat 10, Millarville, Millet 5, Minburn, Mini Thni (Morley), Mirror, Mission Beach, Morrin, Mossleigh, Mulhurst, Mundare 2, Muskeg River 3, Nanton, New Sarepta, Newbrook 3, Niton Junction, Nordegg 5, O'Chiese First Nation 3, Okotoks 3, Olds 14, Onaway 2, Oyen, Peace River 21, Pearce, Penhold, Picture Butte, Pincher Creek 16, Pink Mountain 2, Pipestone Creek 5, Plamondon, Ponoka 8, Pouce Coupe, Priddis 2, Princess, Provost 3, Radium Hot Springs 2, Raymond, Red Deer 61, Redwater 7, Redwood Meadows 2, Rimbey 7, Rivière Qui Barre, Rochester, Rocky Mountain House 32, Rogers Pass 3, Rycroft, Saddle Lake Cree Nation 5, Sandy Beach, Saskatchewan River Crossing 3, Saulteaux, Sedgewick 2, Sexsmith 6, Siksika Nation 7, Slave Lake 6, Smith, Smoky Lake 14, Sparwood 2, Speddin 2, Spillimacheen, Spirit River 10, Spring Lake, Springbank, Spruce Grove 2, St. Albert, St. Paul 37, Standard 2, Stettler 22, Stony Nakoda First Nation 5, Stony Plain 5, Strachan 2, Strathmore 16, Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation 7, Sunchild First Nation 8, Sundre 17, Sunset House, Swan Hills, Sylvan Lake, Taber 14, Teepee Creek, Thorsby 2, Three Hills 10, Tofield 6, Tomahawk, Torrington, Trochu, Tumbler Ridge, Two Hills 4, Valhalla 2, Valleyview 11, Vauxhall 2, Vegreville 10, Vermilion 8, Viking 3, Viina, Vulcan 9, Wainwright 10, Wandering River, Wanham 3, Warburg, Wasa, Water Valley 2, Waterton Park, Watino 2, Wembley 2, Westeros, Westlock 16, Wetaskiwin 58, Whitecourt 11, Wildwood, Winfield 2, Woking 2, Wonowon, Ya Ha Tinda Ranch **SASKATCHEWAN** Abbey, Aberdeen, Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation 8, Alice Beach, Allan, Arcola 16, Assiniboia 6, Avonlea 2, Baldwin, Balgonie 3, Beardsy's and Okemasis First Nation 4, Beatty, Beechy 2, Belle Plaine, Big River 3, Big River First Nation 2, Biggar 14, Birch Hills 5, Borden, Broadview 8, Bruno 2, Buena Vista, Buffalo Pound Park, Canora 4, Carievale, Caron 2, Carrot River, Carry the Kettle Nakota Nation, Central Butte, Chitek Lake, Christopher Lake, Clavet 3, Cochin 2, Colonsay 2, Conquest, Coronach, Cote First Nation, Coteau Beach, Cowessess First Nation, Craik, Craven, Cupar, Dafoe, Dalmeny, Davidson 5, Davin, Debden 3, Delisle 2, Denholm, Deschambault Lake, Disley, Dorintosh, Dundurn, Edam, Edenwold, Elbow 2, Elrose, Ernfold, Esterhazy 8, Estevan 34, Eston, Findlater 2, Fishing Lake First Nation 2, Fort Qu'Appelle 21, Frobisher, George Gordon First Nation 2, Glaslyn 2, Glen Ewen, Govan, Gravelbourg, Green Lake, Greig Lake 2, Grenfell, Hafford, Halbrite 2, Hanley 2, Happy Valley No. 10 RM, Heward 2, Humboldt 13, Indian Head 11, James Smith Cree Nation 2, Kamsack 3, Keeler, Kelvington 4, Kerrobert 2, Killaly, Kindersley 13, Kipling 4, La Ronge 2, Langham, Lanigan 2, Leader 3, Leross, Leroy 2, Lestock 3, Lily Plain, Little Bear Lake, Little Black Bear First Nation, Little Pine First Nation, Little Red River Cree Nation, Lloydminster 12, Loon Lake 6, Lumsden 2, Maccowall 2, Maidstone 2, Makwa, Makwa Sahgaiehan First Nation, Maple Creek, Markinch, Maymont, McLean, Meadow Lake 8, Melfort 13, Melville 5, Meota, Midale, Middle Lake, Milden, Mildred, Milestone 4, Mistatim, Mistawasis First Nation 2, Mistuswinne 2, Montmartre, Montreal Lake Cree Nation, Moose Jaw 35, Moosomin 16, Moosomin First Nation, Mortlach, Mosquito First Nation 3, Mount Hope No. 279 RM, Muenster, Muscowpetung First Nation 2, Naicam, Nipawin 12, Nokomis, Norquay, North Battleford 33, Ochapowace Nation, Onion Lake 2, Outlook 7, Outram, Oxbow 5, Pasqua First Nation, Peepeekegis First Nation 4, Pelican Lake First Nation, Pelican Narrows, Pense 4, Perdue 4, Peterson, Piapot First Nation, Pierceland, Pike Lake 3, Pilger 2, Pleasantdale, Plunkett 3, Porcupine Plain 4, Poundmaker Cree Nation 2, Preeceville 3, Prince Albert 62, Quill Lake, Rabbit Lake, Radville 3, Rama, Raymore 2, Red Earth Cree Nation 4, Red Pheasant Cree Nation 3, Redvers 4, Regina 55, Regina Beach 4, Riverhurst, Roblin, Rockglen, Rosetown 5, Rosthern 10, Sandy Bay 2, Saskatoon 21, Saulteaux First Nation, Scott, Sedley, Shamrock, Shaunavon 2, Shell Lake, Shellbrook 16, Shields, Sintaluta 2, South Lake, Speers, Spiritwood 4, St. Brieux, St. Denis, St. Walburg 2, Stewart Valley, Stoughton, Strasburg, Struan, Sturgeon Lake First Nation 2, Sunset Cove, Sweetgrass First Nation 2, Swift Current 23, Tessier 2, The Key First Nation, Thunderchild First Nation, Tisdale 6, Tribune, Turtleford 11, Tyvan, Unity 7, Valparaiso 2, Vibank, Viceroy, Victoire 2, Vonda, Wadena 8, Wakaw, Waseca 2, Watrous 7, Watson, Weyakwin, Weyburn 18, White City 2, Whitewood 2, Wilcox, Wilkie 2, Witchean First Nation 3, Wolseley 3, Wynyard 12, Yarbo, Yellow Creek, Yellow Quill First Nation, Yorkton 35 **MANITOBA** Altamont, Altona 11, Anola, Arborg 5, Ashern 18, Austin, Bacon Ridge 2, Beausejour 8, Bélair, Beulah, Bird Lake, Bird River, Birds Hill, Birdtail Sioux, Black River First Nation, Bloodvein First Nation, Blumenort, Boissevain 2, Brandon 88, Bunibonabee Cree Nation 7, Caddy Lake 11, Carberry 4, Carman 4, Churchill 3, Clandeboye, Crane River 2, Cross Lake First Nation 13, Crystal City 4, Dauphin 65, Deloraine 2, Dog Creek 2, Domain, Dominion City, Dunnottar 2, East Braintree, East Selkirk 2, East St. Paul 2, Easterville, Ebb and Flow First Nation 3, Elie, Elm Creek 2, Emerson 2, Erickson 2, Eriksdale 6, Fairford 6, Fisher Branch 4, Fisher River Cree Nation 4, Flin Flon 20, Fortier, Fox Lake Cree Nation, Garden Hill First Nation 15, Gillam 3, Gimli 22, Giroux, Gladstone 4, Glenboro 4, Gnadenthal, God's Lake First Nation 5, Grahamdale, Grand Beach, Grand Marais, Grand Rapids 6, Grandview, Gregg, Grosse Isle, Grunthal, Gypsumville 3, Halcyon Cove, Hamiota 2, Hazelridge, Headingley 3, Hnausa, Hodgson 21, Hollow Water First Nation 3, Ile des Chênes 4, Ilford, Inwood 2, Island Lake, Keeseekoowenin Ojibway First Nation 3, Kenora 6, Killarney 9, Kinonjeshstegon First Nation 8, Kirkness 2, Kleeefeld 2, La Broquerie, La Salle, Lac Brochet 4, Lac du Bonnet 3, Lake St. Martin, Laurier, Lester Beach, Libau, Little Black River, Little Grand Rapids 11, Little Saskatchewan 6, Long Plain First Nation 6, Lorette 2, Lunder, Lynn Lake 5, Macdonald, Mafeking, Manto Sipi Cree Nation, Mathias Colomb Cree Nation 4, Meadows, Melita, Miami, Milner Ridge, Minnedosa 6, Mitchell, Molsen, Morden 14, Morris 3, Narol, Navin, Neepawa 14, Netley 2, Ninette 2, Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, Niverville 3, Norway House Cree Nation 22, Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes 2, Nutimik Lake, Oak Bluff 2, Oakville, O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation, Pauingassi, Peguis 18, Pinawa 5, Pinaymootang First Nation, Pine Creek First Nation, Pine Dock, Pine Falls 26, Pipestone, Plum Coulee, Plumas, Poplar Point, Poplar River 4, Poplarfield, Portage la Prairie 54, Rapid City, Red Sucker Lake First Nation, Reynolds RM 3, Richer 4, Rivers 3, Riverton 2, Roland 2, Roseau River Anishnabe First Nation, Roseisle, Ross, Rossburn, Russell 12, Sandy Bay Ojibway First Nation 12, Sandy Lake, Sanford 2, Sayisi Dene First Nation, Selkirk 79, Seven Sisters Falls, Shamattawa First Nation 7, Shoal Lake, Somerset, Souris 3, South Junction, Sperling 2, St. Andrews, St. Eustache, St. François Xavier, St. Jean Baptiste, St. Laurent 5, St. Malo, St. Martin, St. Theresa Point First Nation 2, Starbuck, Ste. Agathe, Ste. Anne 12, Ste. Rose du Lac, Steep Rock 2, Steinbach 43, St-Lazare, Stonewall 16, Stony Mountain 4, St-Pierre-Jolys 8, Stuartburn, Swan Lake, Swan River 49, Teulon, The Pas 48, Thompson 64, Traverse Bay, Treherne 2, Valley River, Victoria Beach 2, Virden 15, Vita 3, Vogar, Warren 2, Wasagamack First Nation 15, Waywayseecappo First Nation, West Pine Ridge, West St. Paul 3, Westbourne 3, Whitemouth 2, Winkler 21, Winnipeg 32, Woodridge, Woodsie.

Our fiscal year runs from April 1-March 31. Missions may have been scene calls in the area closest to the listed communities. Missions flown to eastern British Columbia are included in the mission record for Alberta. Missions flown to western Ontario are included in the mission record for Manitoba. Locations with no number indicate a single mission responded to in or near that area.

Behind the Scenes

Backing every life-saving STARS mission is a team of allies and experts – emergency communication specialists, doctors, pilots, flight nurses, flight paramedics, and emergency-response partners – working seamlessly to ensure that patients receive the best and most timely care. Here’s one incredible story of how a life-saving STARS mission played out. **By Colleen Seto**



Johnson, after recovering from her accident.

THE INCIDENT

Last July, Paula Johnson was on a horseback ride with friends in the foothills of southern Alberta, near Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump. They were ascending a steep hill when her young horse, Star, spooked, and Johnson was thrown off as the horse bolted downhill.

“I’ve been riding my whole life, and I’ve never been thrown from a horse like that,” she said. “My dad was a cowboy, and I heard his voice in my head telling me to take my foot out of the stirrup. I did, then off I went. I don’t remember anything from there, but I’m pretty sure if I hadn’t, I would have been dragged.”

Johnson was knocked unconscious after hitting the ground with potential head and spinal injuries, making her situation critical. Her friends called 911; Alberta Health Services Emergency Medical Services (EMS) collected the information and triangulated the call signal to determine Johnson’s location. Then, Fort Macleod EMS and fire department were dispatched to the scene.

CALLING IN STARS

The STARS Emergency Link Centre (ELC) was connected to the call.

“The ELC is integrated with EMS, so event details are shared and updated in real-time,” explained John Griffiths, ELC director. “Both agencies began communicating, planning the most effective response, and ensuring all

parties knew what was happening.”

Because of limited access to the accident scene and concerns for Johnson’s injuries, helicopter transport was determined to be most advantageous. The STAR 1 (Calgary) crew had just returned from a call in the same area when they were dispatched to Johnson’s call.

MAKING A PLAN

A flurry of activity began: the Fort Macleod Fire Department sent its emergency responders to the scene and tended to Johnson, while EMS assembled at a staging area due to challenging access.

The ELC team of emergency communication specialists also swung into action, supported by clinical oversight by STARS transport physician Dr. Sean Fair. The ELC team pinned Johnson’s location on STARS mapping software and evaluated options for STARS’ response.

Initially, the fire department planned to move Johnson to the ambulance using a side-by-side off-road vehicle, but it was deemed too difficult and could compromise Johnson’s condition. Instead, STARS would land directly at the scene.

CRITICAL COMMUNICATION AND PRE-HOSPITAL CARE

“Our Link Centre is in constant

“One day, a helicopter went over my house, and I went out to see if it was STARS. It wasn't, but I started to cry. I thought, ‘Oh my gosh, I actually rode in a STARS helicopter, and because of that, I survived to walk out on my porch and see another helicopter.’ I'm so thankful for them.”

—PAULA JOHNSON

STAR 1 MISSION SUMMARY:

12:47 Mission accepted after pilots evaluate weather conditions

12:48 Dispatched



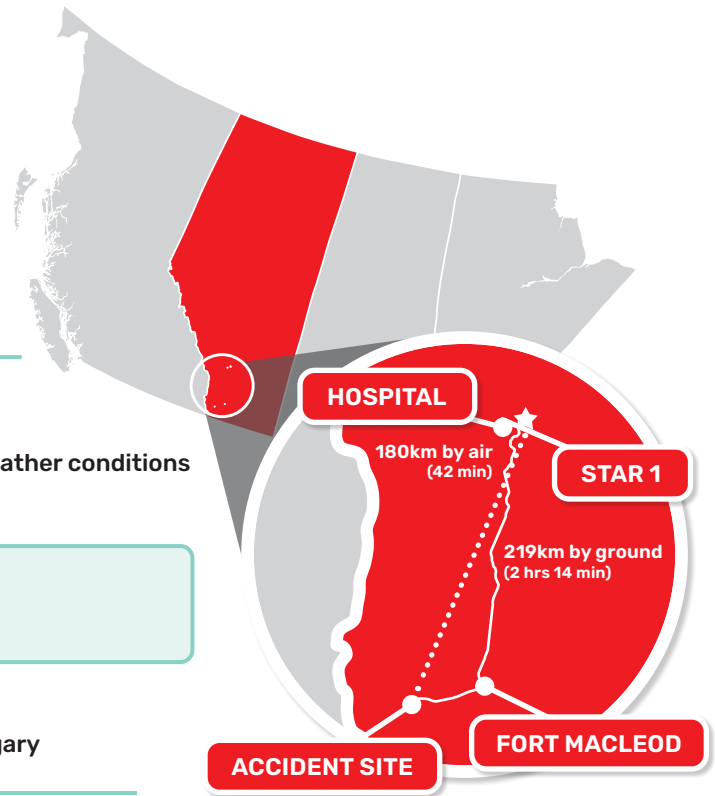
43 MINUTES

13:05 Leaves Calgary base after refuelling

13:48 Lands at scene near Fort Macleod

14:04 Leaves scene with patient safely loaded

14:44 Arrives at Foothills Medical Centre in Calgary



communication with first responders,” said Griffiths. “EMS flagged that the road gets really rough; there were real concerns with access and that Paula may have a spinal injury. All this information helps determine the best course of action, and that’s how the plan evolved.”

EMS and Fire continued relaying information about the scene and Johnson’s condition so that the ELC could coordinate a safe landing and ensure the air medical crew was fully prepared upon arrival.

Once Johnson was safely aboard STAR 1, the STARS air medical crew provided ICU-level care in transit, managing her pain and initiating advanced pre-hospital interventions to optimize her outcome. Meanwhile, the ELC kept Foothills Medical Centre informed, ensuring the trauma team was ready the moment she arrived.

The STARS crew safely delivered Johnson into hospital care, where she was treated for a broken collarbone, nine broken ribs,



Fort Macleod emergency responders attend to Johnson at the scene.

a fractured sternum, a hematoma on her hip, and a brain bleed.

During Johnson’s flight, two other requests for STAR 1 occurred, which Dr. Fair triaged and assigned to other resources. Johnson’s mission was one of 15 that STARS flew that day – July 31, 2024.

THE RECOVERY

Johnson has since been recovering at her ranch near Longview, Alta. She visited with both the STARS crew and EMS team that rescued her, and they helped her fill in the blanks of what happened.

“They’re so empathetic, caring, and professional. I was just so thankful to meet them and have them help me put the pieces of the puzzle together. Having STARS get me out probably saved my life.”

EN ROUTE

THE LIFE-SAVING MISSION THAT STARTED IT ALL

Forty years ago, Kelly Waldron became STARS' first Very Important Patient. She continues to hold immense gratitude for her second chance at life.

By Olivia Piché



On Dec. 1, 1985, Kelly Waldron (née Hulstein) and her twin brother, Travis, were born at St. Michael's Hospital in Lethbridge, Alta., at only 27 weeks gestation. Not only were they two months premature, but the twins were briefly stuck in the birth canal. Once Kelly arrived, she was black and blue, had no detectable heartbeat, and weighed only two pounds and 13 ounces. Both twins were in trouble.

At the time, Lethbridge wasn't equipped for such a situation, and the babies had to be moved to Calgary. Waldron's mom was told the babies would not likely survive. Travis was taken by a fixed-wing airplane and Kelly was flown by helicopter – STARS' first mission – to receive life-saving care at the Foothills Medical Centre. Both twins survived.

"I wouldn't be alive if it wasn't for STARS," said Waldron. "My parents wouldn't have a daughter. They wouldn't have gotten to see me grow up,



Waldron, shortly after birth, receiving life-saving care.

take my first steps, learn to talk, go to school, graduate high school, or anything like that."

Waldron's rescue marked take-off – literally – for the STARS organization. The success of that inaugural mission served as validation

of the necessity and importance of STARS' critical services.

"They did exactly what their mission was: they came to a city that couldn't help me, and they took me to Calgary, a city that could, and it was a success," she affirmed.

THE STARS FAMILY

Naturally, Waldron is a lifelong supporter of STARS, and she's close with Dr. Greg Powell, STARS founder, and his wife, Linda. Waldron visits with the couple and keeps them updated on her life.

"I'm just so grateful for Dr. Powell and that he had this idea. I consider him and Linda part of my family."

Waldron is a history-making member of the STARS family, too – she has a helicopter named after her. In 2019, STARS surprised Waldron by naming a newly acquired helicopter C-GKLY. All Canadian aircraft start with C-G, C-F, or C-I, and STARS chose the following letters KLY for Kelly.

"It was amazing to have them do that," she said. "Still, to this day, I don't feel like I deserve it, but it is an awesome feeling."

40 YEARS: FULL OF LIFE AND LIFE-SAVING

Waldron knows that STARS made her entire life possible. Since her

"THEY DID EXACTLY WHAT THEIR MISSION WAS: THEY CAME TO A CITY THAT COULDN'T HELP ME, AND THEY TOOK ME TO CALGARY, A CITY THAT COULD, AND IT WAS A SUCCESS."

—KELLY WALDRON




Waldron with the STARS aircraft named in her honour.

rescue 40 years ago, she's gone on to live a full life made up of meaningful moments.

Thanks to STARS and its allies, Waldron was able to experience significant milestones like going to university, starting her own accounting business, getting married, and becoming a mom to two daughters. She leads a life she loves, taking pride in her career and joy in her marriage of nearly 11 years.

Like Waldron, STARS has had a remarkable 40 years.

"They've helped so many people, and they continue to do that," said Waldron. "I hope they're around for many more years. The fact that they've made it to 40 years with the support of the community shows how much they are needed and how much support they've been given."

Waldron's gratitude for STARS continues by carrying on living her life well. "I get to plan a future with my children and my husband." 

STARS Founder Dr. Greg Powell Remembers STARS' First Mission

By Lyle Aspinall

Dr. Greg Powell wasn't on board the first STARS mission, but he remembers how it played out.

Dr. Powell was chief of emergency medicine at Foothills Medical Centre in Calgary at the time. While other helicopter emergency medical service flights had occurred earlier in southern Alberta, Kelly Waldron's mission in 1985 was the first under the Lions Air Ambulance/STARS banner.

"We went as a STARS team," said Dr. Powell, noting that Kelly's brother, Travis, was transported in care of the neonatal team on a government-run airplane ambulance. "Kelly went on the helicopter with the neonatal team orchestrating the whole event as clinical providers in the background. That was definitely a STARS flight. When she arrived at the Foothills and went through all of the early neonatal care that she required, that was a memorable event.



(Left to right) Dr. Greg Powell, Tyler Waldron holding daughter Reese, Kelly Waldron and Linda Powell at a 2018 STARS event.

"Kelly is an amazing story. But her relationship [with STARS] to this day is due to Linda," Dr. Powell said of his wife. "Linda recognized that continuing the relationship with Kelly was important to patient care and exemplifies that STARS is a family.

"When Kelly grew up, got married, and had a family, then came to STARS' 10th and 20th anniversaries and cut the cake, I was always amazingly appreciative. And I was absolutely honoured to take a helicopter model to her that had her initials on it.

"But the real credit goes to Linda for fostering that story and making sure STARS has an organizational memory framed around that. That's really important because people see the benefit of caring in the long term."

CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF CRITICAL MOMENTS

In 2025, STARS marks its 40th anniversary, a monumental achievement made possible by generous donors, government support, and the dedication of crew members. Here's a rundown of some of the major milestones over the last four decades, and here's to another 40 years and beyond of life-saving missions.

STARS Grande Prairie, the third Alberta base, opens.



The STARS Human Patient Simulator program is established with founding donors Lions Clubs International Multiple District 37 and Lockerbie & Hole.



2006

2004



STARS receives a \$2 million transformational gift from Susan and Doug Ramsay, making them the single largest non-corporate donors at the time. The resulting Susan Ramsay Advanced Skills Institute helps provide ongoing training and education to STARS crews.



The Vision Critical campaign launches for the purchase of two new helicopters and to establish a critical care education centre, raising more than \$26.5 million.

STARS announces the Keep the Fight in Flight capital campaign to replace the aging fleet of helicopters. Over the next five years, \$138 million is raised to fund 10 new H145 helicopters.



2011

2012



STARS signs a 10-year agreement with the Government of Manitoba to provide helicopter air ambulance service from a permanent base in Winnipeg.

STARS' Regina and Saskatoon bases open with help from commitments made by lead donors, including Nutrien, Veren, The Mosaic Company, and Saskatchewan Crown Corporations.



Lions Air Ambulance Service is established in Calgary through the support of Lions Clubs International (see story on page 5). The first mission that December transported a critically ill infant (Kelly Waldron, née Hulstein) to tertiary care in Calgary (see story on page 10).



STARS Edmonton base is established, and provincial air ambulance contracts are awarded to STARS for Edmonton and Calgary bases.



1985

1986

Alberta Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society (STARS) is incorporated as a not-for-profit organization.

The STARS Emergency Link Centre is established thanks to funding from the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers.

1991

STARS becomes the first Canadian program to receive full accreditation as a critical care provider from the Commission on Accreditation of Medical Transport Systems (CAMTS).



The inaugural ENSERVA STARS & Spurs Gala takes place in Calgary, gathering the energy sector to fundraise for STARS. To date, the annual gala has raised more than \$22 million.

1999

1998

1997

1996

1994



STARS launches the Seconds Count campaign, co-chaired by philanthropist Stan Grad. Raising \$8.1 million, this successful fundraising initiative helps to retire STARS' helicopter loans.



STARS celebrates its 40th anniversary, having flown more than 60,000 missions across Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. 🇨🇦

2018

2019

2024

2025



The Pegasus Project for STARS is launched by the community to support the Keep the Fight in Flight capital campaign and raises more than \$3 million. The project sees a 1968 Ford Mustang Fastback built, toured through Saskatchewan, and sold for \$1 million at the prestigious Barrett-Jackson Auction.

STARS replaces its Computer Aided Dispatch system in the STARS Emergency Link Centre with a new future-focused product to go beyond dispatching and tracking helicopters, thanks to a generous gift from TD Bank Group.

THE EVOLUTION OF STARS AIRCRAFT

STARS has always been about the patient – even as the aircraft changed over time.

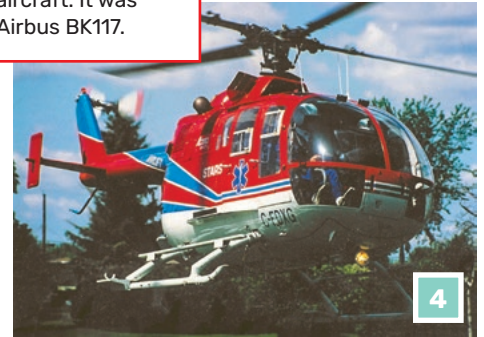
By Lyle Aspinall

Since its 1985 inception, STARS has flown six types of aircraft. Six and a half if you consider the upgrade of its current model.

Here's a rundown of how the aircraft involved in STARS' history have evolved.

MESSerschmitt-Bölkow-Blohm (MBB) B0105: 1991-1993 [4]

When STARS' Edmonton base was established in 1991, it launched with this aircraft. It was eventually replaced with the Airbus BK117.



MITSUBISHI MARQUISE MU-2: 1991-1996 [5]

STARS flew the Marquise MU-2 airplane for several years in Alberta in the 1990s, but as the mission of providing critical care anywhere was honed and refined, helicopters soon became the only type of aircraft STARS would operate. Today, when needed, STARS air medical crews fly on fixed-wing ambulances operated by other organizations.



AIRBUS BK117: 1985-2022 [1, 2, 3]

This "workhorse" was the single most-prolific and long-lived helicopter model in STARS' history. From the first STARS mission in 1985 to its official retirement in 2022, the BK117 dominated the STARS aircraft lineup for most of the organization's first 40 years. At its peak, there were eight of these helicopters in use simultaneously, anchoring fleet operations after an original three were leased in the early years.





**SIKORSKY S-76A:
1996-2001 [6]**

In 1996, STARS established Nova Scotia's first helicopter air ambulance program, operating it with this aircraft through the first five years on a temporary contract.



AGUSTAWESTLAND AW139: 2013-2020 [7]

Three of these roomy helicopters flew more than 5,000 STARS missions from three bases over a seven-year span, ending in 2020. This aircraft helped pave the way for the organization-wide unified fleet that would come next.



**AIRBUS H145:
2019-PRESENT [8]**

This model now makes up the entirety of STARS' 10-helicopter fleet, spread across all six of its bases. The original handful of four-bladed D2 models that STARS purchased were upgraded to the newer five-bladed D3 variant. All 10 aircraft are now the latest version of the Airbus H145. ▀

A Potentially Game-Changing Method of Blood Transfusion

STARS participates in a critical study that could transform care for trauma patients. **By Halluma Seklani**

STARS is always exploring ways to improve patient outcomes, and as leaders in air ambulance transport, STARS' duty is to deliver the highest standard of care.

Now, groundbreaking research has the STARS team reconsidering a 100-year-old method of blood transfusion. STARS is participating in a study led by the University of Pittsburgh. This TOWAR (Type O Whole blood and assessment of AGE during prehospital Resuscitation) study could redefine prehospital care by offering whole-blood transfusions for severely injured patients early in their treatment.

Donated blood is typically separated into red blood cells, plasma, and platelets for storage and individual use. However, when someone bleeds out, they lose all these parts.

Dr. Doug Martin, STARS medical director, explained that the implication of the TOWAR study may be "game changing."

"It's a kind of change that comes along once every couple of decades that has the potential to absolutely shift the playing field on how you care for trauma patients," he said.

During the Battle of Somme in 1916, the story of whole-blood transfusion for injured patients began. Canadian surgeon Dr. Bruce Robertson was among those who pioneered the use of whole-blood transfusions on wounded soldiers during the First World War. He authored an article about his findings and the benefits

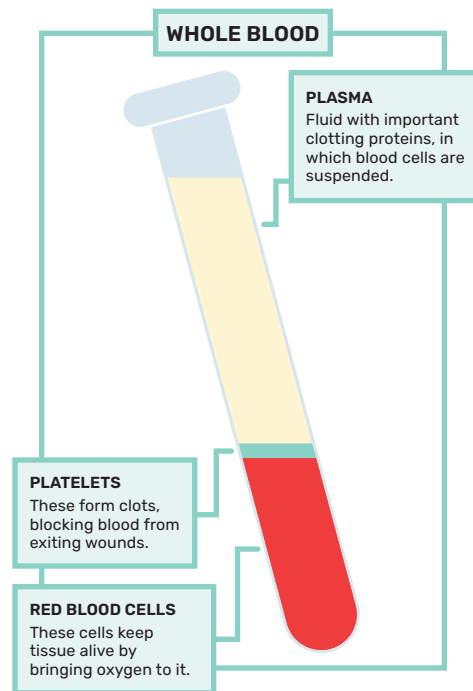
of whole-blood transfusion that was published in the British Medical Journal.

"Assigned to a British base hospital, Dr. Robertson was exposed to the practice of using saline for the resuscitation of bleeding patients, and its results were uniformly dismal," said Dr. Martin. "This article began the process of convincing British army surgeons of the value of whole blood over saline as a resuscitation fluid."

Over the years, the practice was gradually replaced by the transfusion of blood components in an effort to increase safety and give patients only the parts they absolutely needed. However, in recent years, a renewed interest in whole-blood transfusion has emerged, fueled by its effectiveness in treating trauma patients.

TOWAR study whole-blood transfusions involve the use of low-titer blood with low levels of antibodies and can be transfused to people of various blood types. This practice of giving trauma patients who are losing a lot of blood whole-blood transfusions when they reach the hospital has been associated with a greater chance of these patients surviving their injuries. The TOWAR study is designed to examine whether providing these transfusions earlier, before arrival at hospital, improves outcomes even more.

"We are all expecting that there's going to be an outcome benefit in terms of lives saved," said Dr. Martin. "And if the study turns out as expected, then I think



the practice of transfusion for trauma is going to look entirely different in two to three years."

As of February 2025, the STARS Winnipeg base began carrying two units of whole blood on board the aircraft as part of STARS' participation in the TOWAR study. This was made possible with the help of Canadian Blood Services. Through the study, STARS is one of the first civilian agencies to administer whole blood in Canada.

"It should be seen both as a great privilege and a sign of the growing maturity of our organization that we can be part of the scientific leadership of this important change," said Dr. Martin.

As STARS continues its work in critical care, the TOWAR study serves as a reminder of the impact that scientific research can have on saving lives. Together, with a commitment to innovation, STARS can continue to redefine what is possible for patients. ▀

ILLUSTRATION BY SERGEYVASUTIN, FROM ISTOCK

A Hamlet That Helps

The Rumsey Ride continues its reign as the longest-running STARS fundraiser.

By Fabian Mayer



Rumsey Ride participants hit the trail on the morning of the event.

By appearances, the Rumsey Ride may seem like an understated fundraiser. Event chairperson Rob Richmond calls it a “meat and potato” fundraiser. While he’s referring to the annual one-day event’s simple nature – it’s a trail ride on horseback followed by a tasty beef supper – the fact is, the Ride is a major STARS supporter. During the 2023 Rumsey Ride, an enormous milestone was reached: the \$1-million mark for cumulative money raised.

The event, which started in 1989, is the longest consecutively held fundraiser in support of STARS and takes over the hamlet of Rumsey, Alta., located 40 kilometres north of Drumheller, every August. Richmond said the Ride is one of the main events of the summer for the hamlet and surrounding communities.

“It has really become a community tradition for the whole area,” said Richmond. “It’s not a glitz-and-glamour kind of thing, but it’s definitely circled on everybody’s calendar.”

Participating riders collect pledges as their entry ticket. Nobody is overly fussed about the amount, though some riders manage to collect thousands of dollars in donations. Along with the dinner and trail ride, the event has grown to include a whole day of activities, including a pancake breakfast, poker rally, silent auction, raffle, and awards ceremony. It’s recently evolved to add a virtual trail ride, online auction and five-km walks to “make our fundraiser adapt, stay current, and bring in new audiences,” said Richmond.

The event is all about community effort and support. “Everybody probably knows somebody, whether it’s a neighbour, family member, or somebody in their life that’s actually been saved by STARS,” said Richmond. “It has a lot of meaning for rural areas where it’s so important.”

As a sign of appreciation for all the support over the years, two of STARS’ helicopters feature the Rumsey Ride logo on them. One of these helicopters has

also made an appearance in Rumsey, giving people the chance to see an ambulance aircraft – and the Rumsey logo – up close and personal as an additional thank you.

“I guarantee when everybody walked across that field, that was the first thing they went to look for,” said Richmond. “It’s a small thing, but it’s a patch of honour that means a lot to everybody.”

No matter what else is happening, even through a pandemic, fires, floods, economic downturns, and droughts, participants keep showing up and the Rumsey Ride continues every year.

“The success and longevity of the Rumsey Ride is the community spirit and volunteerism displayed by our committee, community groups, our faithful riders, donors, businesses, and long-time supporters,” affirmed Richmond. “We always say about our Ride – it’s more than a tradition. It’s about keeping our STARS spirit alive.”

A Decade of International Success

Since being rescued by STARS, Jennifer Oakes has represented Canada on the world stage, won a Paralympic medal, and travelled the globe.

By Olivia Piché



Ten years ago, then-17-year-old Jennifer Oakes was enjoying a hot summer day at her parents' cabin near Brooks, Alta. But on that July afternoon, Oakes came dangerously close to losing her life.

She was kneeling at the front of her family boat when it hit some rogue waves, and she fell off. As the boat went over her, its propeller sliced her leg in multiple places. The damage to her leg could have been fatal because of the significant blood loss.

Oakes survived, thanks to STARS and her family and friends, who acted quickly to rescue her. Although she lost her leg, she's gone on to experience extraordinary moments in the decade that has since passed.

AN ATHLETE BY NATURE

Sports played a big role in Oakes' recovery — she didn't let anything keep her from returning to her sporting life, namely volleyball. She was still in the hospital when she discovered the women's national sitting volleyball team. Watching them compete in a Paralympic-qualifying tournament, Oakes thought it would be a dream to play alongside them.

Before she was even fitted for a

prosthetic, Oakes started playing sitting volleyball. It's different from the game she was used to — it involves a smaller court, a lower net, and players seated on the floor — but she took to it quickly. The following February, she joined the national team. By September, Oakes was in a stadium rumbling with excitement, representing Canada at the 2016 Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro.

"To play on that world stage was something that I've always dreamed of, and that was the first time that it was a reality," she said.

And it wasn't the last time. Oakes represented Canada on the national sitting volleyball team in the 2020 Tokyo Games and again in Paris 2024 when she became a Paralympic bronze medalist.

In addition to the Paralympic destinations, sitting volleyball has sent her to China, Egypt, Peru, Bosnia, and several other European countries. "Having the opportunity to travel internationally and compete for Canada was just such a great opportunity for me, and I just kept falling in love with the sport."

When she's not serving the ball or globetrotting, Oakes works for a

"My family and I always celebrate my anniversaries at the lake: to celebrate life, be grateful that I'm alive, and that I get to have this amazing life with family and friends."

—JENNIFER OAKES

marketing agency serving agriculture clients from her home in Brooks, where she lives with her fiancé. Oakes credits her accomplishments to STARS, her family, and the support system she's had throughout the last decade. Every year, on the anniversary of her accident, she goes out to the lake with her family to toast life and the wonderful moments she's had since. 🌊



Oakes on a sit volleyball court.

Nutrien: A Proud STARS Ally



More than a decade ago, Nutrien made an incredible investment in STARS to help us grow our operations into Saskatchewan. We had a common goal: to provide more patients with access to critical care, no matter where they are. Today, after 40 years of growth, innovation, and more than 60,000 missions across Western Canada, we continue to provide hope to patients on their worst days. Nutrien is proud to be a STARS ally and to be part of this 40-year milestone of critical care, anywhere.



“With our team’s passion for supporting rural Canadian communities and dedication to safety, STARS is a partner that aligns closely with our priorities. Nutrien is proud to have supported STARS for over 10 years and we look forward to continuing to support this essential service for rural Canadian communities.”

Jesse Hamonic - Vice President & Country Head, Nutrien Ag Solutions Canada





**YOUR SUPPORT = ANOTHER PERSON’S LIFELINE.
BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR TODAY!**

Help save lives like Jennifer’s.

When Jennifer was in the fight for her life (see story on opposite page), critical support from people like you ensured STARS could provide a life-saving response. Become a STARS FOR LIFE monthly donor and stand with STARS 24/7, 365 days a year. You’ll ensure patients like Jennifer have ongoing access to the critical care they need – any time, anywhere.



-  **\$10/month** provides an airway-management tool.
-  **\$25/month** provides a Blood on Board cooler system.
-  **\$50/month** provides mission critical equipment like an electronic flight bag.



Become a monthly donor today at stars.ca/monthly or scan the QR code.

VIP Wade Cassidy and his wife, Thea.
Read the story on page 3.



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