

Tragedy strikes the Transplant Program and Survival Flight teams as six members are lost while working to save the life of a patient.

EACH ONE A HERO

In University Hospital in Ann Arbor, the patient lay prepped and awaiting the gift of donated organs for a double-lung transplant that could save his life. In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the Cessna jet lifted off with six members of the U-M transplant team and Survival Flight crew transporting the donor lungs packed in ice for the 45-minute flight to Willow Run Airport outside Ypsilanti. Moments later, the plane had crashed into the waters of Lake Michigan, killing all aboard, and the patient once again was in peril of losing his life.

Throughout the Health System, shock and disbelief gradually gave way to great communal grief even as other members of the transplant team resumed the urgent search for a new pair of donor lungs. Six of our own were suddenly gone. In a field of endeavor where life and death are confronted every day, the Michigan medical community — indeed, the entire University — tried desperately to accept the unfathomable, awful truth. And almost immediately, amidst tremendous emotion, memorials to the fallen began.

June 4, 2007, will forever be a dark day in Michigan's history, and in the personal histories of the six stunned families left behind. But underlying the loss remains the nobility of the cause and the individuals themselves: Putting patients first, we do all we can to save lives. In this extreme case, six were lost in service to others, the ultimate sacrifice we more typically associate with those at war, or those who protect our communities from fire, disaster or crime. Even as we grieve their loss, we celebrate and honor the extraordinary dedication, humanism and high ideals embodied by these six who inspire us to try even harder, to do even more, to save all the lives we humanly can.

Within days, another set of donor lungs was located, safely transported to University Hospital and transplanted into the patient who continues to recover. His progress, and the many physicians, nurses, surgeons and staff who made it possible, stand as our beacon during a long time of deep healing.

Ashburn. Chenault. LaPensee. Spoor. Hoyes. Serra. These names represent the very best about us, and are forever forged in our hearts and in our history, icons of Michigan, exemplars of public service, each one a hero to every one of us.

—Rick Krupinski

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LaPensee



Ashburn



Chenault



Serra



Spoor



Hoyes



DAVID ASHBURN, M.D., 35, of Dexter, joined the U-M in 2005 as a resident in pediatric cardiothoracic surgery and planned to begin a fellowship in pediatric cardiovascular surgery in July. Ashburn graduated from Quillen College of Medicine at East Tennessee State University in 1998 and went on to complete an internship and residency in general surgery at Wake Forest University. In 2003, he finished a two-year congenital heart surgery fellowship at the University of Toronto. He served as chief resident at Wake Forest's Bowman Gray campus from 2004-05. Ashburn is survived by his wife, Candice, and three children.



RICHARD CHENUALT II, 44, of Ann Arbor, joined the U-M in 1985 and served as a transplant donation specialist with the Transplant Program for 10 years. In 2006, he received the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services distinguished Medal of Honor for his efforts to increase organ donation at Michigan. He was part of a team that helped achieve an organ donation rate of more than 75 percent, establishing the University as one of the leading transplant centers in the nation. Chenualt attended Eastern Michigan University and Spring Arbor College. He is survived by his wife, Janet, daughter and stepson.



RICK LAPENSEE, 48, of Van Buren Township, joined the U-M Transplant Program as a part-time transplant donation specialist in 2005. He had served as an EMT and firefighter for the Ypsilanti Fire Department for 14 years. The U-M job combined LaPensee's passions: aviation and helping people. After obtaining an associate's degree in fire science from Washtenaw Community College, LaPensee graduated from Eastern Michigan University with a bachelor's in public safety. He was pursuing a master's degree in emergency management at EMU. LaPensee is survived by his wife of 23 years, Claudia, and two sons.



MARTINUS SPOOR, M.D., 37 and an Ann Arbor resident, was known by his colleagues as Mart or Martin. He was a clinical instructor at the U-M Medical School in the Section of Cardiac Surgery. A native of Canada, Spoor received his medical degree from the University of Calgary in 1995, completed his cardiac surgery residency and research fellowship at the University of Alberta, and his strategic training fellowship at the Canadian Institutes for Health Research at the University of Alberta. He came to the University of Michigan in 2003 for a heart failure fellowship, which he completed in 2005, followed by a critical care fellowship completed in 2006. Spoor served many clinical roles at the U-M but was also known for his personality, compassion and humor. He is survived by his wife, Susan, who is also a physician, and three children.



DENNIS HOYES, 65, was a pilot with Marlin Air Inc. He worked in the insurance industry and as an aviation instructor and professional pilot who flew executive flights on Beach Jets and King Airs aircrafts. Hoyes flew the Survival Flight Cessna periodically during the last 10 years. "Dennis was a great individual, dedicated to flying, with more than 4,000 hours in the air and an excellent track record. He just preferred to fly, and really enjoyed flying for Survival Flight," says Stu Dingman, owner of Marlin Air Inc. Hoyes is survived by his wife of 35 years, Vanyce, four children and one stepchild.



WILLIAM SERRA, or Bill as his colleagues called him, age 59, was Marlin Air's chief pilot and check airman responsible for ensuring that Marlin Air pilots are proficient in in-house instructing, and for performing instrument flight rule checks to ensure pilots are skilled in instrument-only landings. With more than 12,000 hours of flight as a full-time pilot, including flying DC8s and 747s, Serra had a long track record of achievements including receiving the Air Medal from the President of the United States for outstanding achievements while participating in aerial flights, and the 1993 Air Force Desert Storm and Desert Shield award as a civilian pilot for supplying materials and ammunition during Desert Storm. Serra is survived by his wife, Deborah, and three children.

www.med.umich.edu/survival_flight/update/