

An airlift takes to the skies to help a sick girl

By **CAROL DeMARE**
Staff writer

The call came in the middle of the night for **John Smith**. Boston Children's Hospital had a kidney match for a very sick Castleton child, **Charlene Clements**.

LAW BEAT

Correction Officer **Smith**, retired firefighter **Phil "Blackie" Sayers** and lawyer-pilot **Terry Kindlon** sprang into action.



CLEMENTS

Smith is president of the Albany County Correctional Facility for Children's Benefit, a nonprofit organization of jail employees and community people formed in 2001 to help seriously ill children. Eight kids, whose families are in financial need, have benefited from the group so far. Charlene, 14, suffers from Russell-Silver syndrome, a heart and kidney disease.

Fran Radley, Charlene's mom, called Smith at 2:55 a.m. on March 23. Five minutes later, Smith was on the phone with Kindlon.

Smith, who also lives in Castleton, picked up the mother and child and met Kindlon at the South Albany Airport in Bethlehem. The

mother had tears of joy, Smith said. Charlene, one of seven children, weighs 50 pounds, can't talk and "shows her love with her touch," he said.

Kindlon had his Twin Cessna ready. They took off at 4:20 a.m., and Smith watched from the ground with a lump in his throat. The Angel Flight, as such missions are called, was designated "Lifeguard 340 Alpha Papa." It was cleared to Norwood Airport on the Boston outskirts.



KINDLON

"Direct clearance, especially in the airspace around Boston, is a privilege accorded only to Air Force One and emergency medical flights," Kindlon said.

The flight at 9,000 feet was flawless, he said. After 35 minutes, they landed and were met by an ambulance arranged by Sayers with the help of the Massachusetts State Police and the Norwood Police Department. Sayers, a member of the Troy Chapter of the Renegade Pigs Motorcycle Club, an organization of law enforcement, corrections and firefighting personnel, used the connection to help Charlene.

The transplant surgery was a success, and Charlene may be home this weekend, Smith

said.

In February 2003, Smith's organization helped 15-month-old **Cameron Stackman**, who received liver and intestine transplants at Mount Sinai Hospital in Manhattan. Cameron, now 4, lives with his family in Colonie and is doing fine.