



2010 Children's Escort Program in Review

We started off very slowly, primarily due to the earthquake in Haiti. As soon as this terrible tragedy occurred, all the agencies with whom we work began getting commitments from their hospitals and doctors to treat as many earthquake victims as possible and seemed to put everything else on hold. It took weeks for us to escort even the first victim out. Even though everyone had worked tirelessly to get these children here, there was tremendous difficulty in getting any of them out of Haiti. Finally a few were able to leave. Then our agencies began to re-group and began bringing kids in again from other countries. All told we escorted 153 children in 2010. Our two leading destinations were BZE and CDG. The kids escorted through CDG came from either Burkina Faso or Cote d'Ivoire. On these trips we cooperate with Aviation sans Frontieres escorts who bring them on AF up to CDG where they meet our escort. This agreement works very, very well and we even have to enlist the help of the CDG police because the kids do not have French visas and, therefore cannot leave the transit area. The BZE kids are almost all orthopedic patients who are treated at STL Shriners.



We had two trips to Douala, Cameroon to escort the children of immigrants who had won the "visa lottery" and found it necessary to come to the U.S. without their children. The first trip was made by LAXAA flight attendant Rashida Kapasi who brought 2 toddlers. This was one trip none of us will ever forget. Everything was working very well and Rashida was planning to do a turn in Douala after spending the night in BRU. Then, on landing in Douala, the airplane hit a goose and sustained enough damage to cancel the trip. In the middle of the night, I got a phone call from Rashida who was in a non-airconditioned hotel in sweltering Douala with the 2 little ones. Finally a day later, they left for BRU and met up with ORDA flight attendant Suzy Lusardo who we had sent to BRU to help with the kids on the flight to ORD. Because of the goose incident Suzy had to spend an extra night in BRU but all hotels there were full that second night and she ended up finding one that was a \$100. cab ride away in another town. The second Cameroon trip was done by JFKAA flight attendant Masako Doi and was relatively uneventful even though she escorted 3 kids without help. Masako also made 3 escort trips to China and one to DEL where she brought a little boy from Afghanistan to EWR for several surgeries. e we have a very long trip coming up.

What a valuable asset she is to the Children's Escort Program!



In December we were asked by two agencies to provide escorts for some Russian orphans coming to the U.S. for the holidays. These agencies locate families throughout the U.S. who volunteer to host these children. One agency had problems getting their children out of the Ukraine but the other agency brought 250 kids for a months stay. Merrily Dickinson did a tremendous job in working with this agency, where things seemed to change by the hour. Without her help this agency would have had some real problems. Thank you, Merrily!

Connie Lowry, our other escort coordinator, and her husband moved to Panama in September. Thanks to the internet and Skype she is still working with us. We want to thank all our 2010 escorts who volunteered on their days off to help a child in need. Without you, there would be no Children's Escort Program.



Margaret Whitehead
Director
Children's Escort Program