



Lions urge people to support air ambulance

LIONS Club members in Surrey are calling for support to help raise vital funds for the lifesaving 24-hour helicopter service provided by Kent, Surrey & Sussex Air Ambulance Trust (KSSAA).

Following a Night Flying Appeal launch by Lions across the South East in 2012, Surrey's Lions have raised £67,938 towards a £250,000 target.

Members of the public have shown great support for the South East Appeal but more help is required so that Lions in Surrey can continue to generate funds.

The £250,000 will go towards saving up to 700 more lives each year, thanks to the night flying air ambulance service that is now running.

Surrey Lions Clubs, along with fellow Lions in Kent and Sussex, have formed a strong partnership with the Air Ambulance Trust and the funds raised by the charity are providing the equipment necessary to allow the latest helicopter to fly at night.

In September 2013 Kent, Surrey & Sussex Air Ambulance became the first air ambulance in the country to launch a 24-hour Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS).

The move followed nearly three years of research and planning after a change in CAA flying regulations allowed air ambulances in the UK to fly at night.

Since the night service began, the specialist doctor and paramedic crew are attending an average of one to two missions a night, in addition to the four to six missions they respond to during the day.

Howard Lee, chairman of the Lions Air Ambulance Night Flying Appeal Steering Committee, said: "When we entered discussions with KSSAA, night flying was only a dream, and we are more than proud to have been the catalyst in making that dream a reality.

"Our initial fundraising helped launch the service, after the trust identified a real patient need by night and we are dedicated to raising further funds to enhance its current capability.

"We hope that people across Surrey will donate so we can reach our £250,000 target and more lives can be saved at night. People can help us save lives by giving online at www.lionsgiving.org."

Kent, Surrey & Sussex Air Ambulance chief executive Adrian Bell

added: "We are the only air ambulance in the country which delivers a Helicopter Emergency Medical Service 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

"Our focus remains our patients and the results thus far entirely support our decision to deliver a night service. Of course, this all costs a lot of money and we could not achieve this without the wonderful support we get from the public and, in particular, the generous support of the regional Lions Clubs in providing much of our night equipment."

The launch of the 24-hour HEMS increased the charity's costs from £5 million a year to more than £6 million. Each flying mission costs about £2,500 so the support of Lions and the general public will go a long way towards helping the night service run smoothly.

The aircraft delivering the night service is flown by two pilots 24 hours a day and the second aircraft (the 'day service') will also have two pilots in due course to ensure all patients have the safest and most reliable service possible.

To make a donation to the Lions Night Flying Appeal visit the website www.lionsgiving.org