

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The following is a letter written to David Faulkner, Director of Development at the Shriners Hospital for Children-Boston. This was published in the May edition of the Shrine Vine, a publication for employees and staff of Shriners Hospitals for Children-Boston.

Airline Passengers and Crew Give Help and Hope

Dear Mr. Faulkner,

I'm writing to tell you about an encounter I had with a little girl, Isabell,* who was just released from your facility. I had the wonderful opportunity to meet this little girl and her grandmother on an American Airlines flight on their way home to Mexico from Boston. If you know the staff that was

involved with her care, I would appreciate you sharing this letter with them. Isabell has opened my eyes to the incredible work that you and the staff at your hospital do and I will now make Shriners one of my regular annual charitable donations. Please read the letter below that I sent to American Airlines:

Dear Shriners,

Thank you so much for recognizing the students of SOUTH RIVER SCHOOL with a special award.

The children were very proud to be recognized, and the award is hanging in the lobby for all to see when they visit South River School.

The students are enthusiastic about collecting the tabs again in the 08-09 school year.

This is definitely a win-win situation.

Thank you for all you do.

Erin O'Brien
All Star Student Club
South River School

Dear Sirs:

On April 18th, my family and I were in Boston Logan Airport waiting to board our plane for Miami when I noticed this older woman of about sixty holding this little girl in her arms. The child had kicked off one of her shoes and I bent down to pick it up. As I turned to place the shoe on the child's foot, I immediately saw that she had a Boston Shriners Hospital tag around her neck and when I looked at her face I realized she was a burn victim. She had been burned all over her face and body and I could see she was wearing a special kind of netting to protect the skin under her clothes (all the way from the palms of her hands to her ankles).

At that exact moment, an American Airline representative walked up to us, and I offered to help get the grandmother and the child onto the plane because the grandmother, who did not speak English, was looking overwhelmed. As it turned out, my seat was situated right behind them. The AA rep thanked me and proceeded to explain the situation.

The grandmother was returning to Mexico with Isabell, who I believe was about 15 months old. Isabell, her mother, and older sister had been in a house fire set by the Isabell's father. Her mother died, but both girls survived and were flown to Boston's Shriners Hospital. Unfortunately, the older sister died from complications a few months before and Isabell had only her grandmother to take care of her.

At boarding time, I took the grandmother and Isabell to the check-in counter and asked if I could pre-board with them to get them settled. As we boarded, I explained to the first flight attendant I saw that the grandmother did not speak English and asked if there was an attendant that spoke Spanish. She told me "Danny" did and that she would send him over to see us. The flight attendant also suggested that I could sit with the Isabell and her grandmother.

During the course of the flight, I played and held Isabell so that the grandmother could relax. The attendants were ALL wonderful always coming by asking if there was anything we needed. They brought the grandmother a sandwich (she had no money for food) and took the little girl's milk bottles and put them on ice so that they wouldn't spoil.

At one point during the flight I got up and took Isabell to the back of the plane so the grandmother could take a much needed nap. I stood with several of the attendants in the back gallery and they were absolutely wonderful with her. They asked me for more details about her situation and I told them what little I knew about the fire and the unfortunate financial situation.

Then the incredible happened. One of the flight attendants got on the speaker and said "Ladies and Gentlemen, today we have a special guest aboard our plane, little Isabell." The attendant went on to explain that Isabell was finally returning to Mexico with her grandmother after being treated at Boston's Shriners Hospital for several months, and that the staff had taken up a collection to help her and her grandmother. She said that in all her years of flying she had NEVER seen all the staff AND the pilots reach into their pockets to help a passenger out. She said that if any of the other passengers wished to contribute, they would be coming around to collect the money.

I was practically in tears from this completely unsolicited generous offer. One passenger, who spoke Spanish, came over to our seats and told the grandmother what was happening. The grandmother's eyes swelled up with tears. I could tell that she was overwhelmed by the generosity of the people and staff on the plane. In the end, the flight crew collected over \$1300 dollars for Isabell and her grandmother. The staff also packed up additional food and milk for them for the rest of their journey.

Perhaps it was fate that I was standing near Isabell when her shoe fell off, but I can tell you that I never would have dreamed of a flight crew being so incredibly helpful, kind, and generous. Please acknowledge these individuals for going beyond the call of their job description and making a huge difference in Isabell's young life. ~ Sincerely, Rhonda

* The child's name has been changed.



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1992, 1991 Honorable Mentions: 2006, 2002, 1993, 1990, 1989

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