Air Ambulance announces Student of the Year

Thursday 20 December, 2018

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Essex & Herts Air Ambulance (EHAAT) has announced this year's winner of The Michael Heaster Award, given by the Charity to its Student of the Year.

The Michael Heaster Award recognises a medical, paramedic or nursing student who has shown outstanding performance during a placement with EHAAT. The award was established by David and Patricia Heaster, whose son Michael died following a road traffic collision in 2014. EHAAT attended the incident and gave him a chance of survival by re-establishing a heartbeat before airlifting him to Addenbrooke's Major Trauma Centre

Patricia Heaster, from **Hertford,** presented the award to Ashleigh Pittams, a medical student at **Birmingham University** in a brief ceremony at Anglia Ruskin University in **Chelmsford**.

Ashleigh, who said she was delighted to have been selected for the award, spent five weeks with EHAAT in May and June as part of its student elective programme. This allows student doctors, paramedics and nurses to shadow the Charity's Critical Care Team.

She said: I was really shocked to be presented with the Michael Heaster Award. A massive thank you to the amazing team at EHAAT for such a unique experience.

"I was interested in completing my elective in a pre-hospital setting, so I was very excited to be offered a placement at EHAAT.

"It was the best experience I've had as a medical student. I was lucky to work alongside such an inspiring team, and the clinical exposure that I received was second to none. It has definitely made me more determined to pursue a career in Pre-Hospital Medicine."

Patricia Heaster explained why she and her husband established The Michael Heaster Award: "The award was set up because a lot of people wanted to give money to the Air Ambulance in memory of Michael. We were very happy to give students some recognition.

"It's an honour to give something back. Even though it is sad that Michael is not around, we've never had any doubt that the care he was given was outstanding. It allowed us to spend a last night with him to say our goodbyes."

Stuart Elms, Clinical Director at EHAAT said: "We are delighted that The Michael Heaster Award has been presented to such an outstanding student. From her first day with us, it was clear that Ashleigh was making a real contribution to the team. We are always keen to offer the clinicians of the future an opportunity to see and learn more about the Air Ambulance service and it was great to give Ashleigh this opportunity. We look forward to seeing how her career develops.

"It was also a privilege to meet up with Patricia and David Heaster once again and to hear them share their story."

The presentation was made during EHAAT's Christmas Clinical Governance Day (CGD) at Anglia Ruskin University. In addition to this event a monthly CGD is held at one of EHAAT's airbases to provide an opportunity for the Clinical Teams and other NHS and Emergency Service personnel to discuss interesting and challenging cases from the previous month. The focus is on ensuring the clinical care given is of the very highest quality. Cases are discussed in some detail and learning points are highlighted.

-ENDS-

Photograph: Ashleigh Pittams with Patricia and David Heaster and EHAAT Clinical Manager Laurie Phillipson.

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For more information please contact Gavin Sherriff, PR Officer, on 0345 2417 690.

Notes to Editor:

Essex & Herts Air Ambulance (EHAAT) is a Charity that provides a Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS) for the critically ill and injured of Essex, Hertfordshire and surrounding areas.

The service is provided free of charge but, unlike NHS emergency services, the Charity receives no direct funding from the Government or National Lottery. It costs in excess of £500,000 every month to keep the service operational and saving lives, and this would not be possible without the generosity and goodwill of people and businesses of Essex, Hertfordshire and beyond.

Each of the Charity's HEMS teams consist of a Pilot, a Co-pilot, a Pre-hospital Care Doctor and a Critical Care Paramedic.

These teams, made up of highly-skilled individuals, tended to 1505 patients in 2017/18 and are the backbone of your local life-saving Charity.

The fleet, consisting of two Air Ambulances, and four Rapid Response Vehicles (RRVs - cars) operates seven days a week from 7am to 9pm. After sunset, the Critical Care Team continues to provide the service using Rapid Response Vehicles.

In addition, a Rapid Response Vehicle is operational on a Friday and Saturday evening from 6pm until 2am with a Pre-hospital Care Doctor and Critical Care Paramedic.

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