# KEEP THE UNICORN FLYING!

## Support Freedom's Wings International

December 2026

Dear Friends,

### “Freedom’s Wings International is a unicorn!”

That’s how Pete Gagliardo, Director of the Helen Hayes Hospital Outreach Program, describes our organization. “There’s nothing else like it. It’s in the air, and the fact that it even exists is a unicorn!”

Pete first experienced Freedom’s Wings International (FWI) in 2006, following a spinal cord injury that left him using a wheelchair. Since then, he has introduced many groups of individuals with disabilities to the extraordinary experience of soaring.

For 45 years, FWI has made the seemingly impossible possible—giving people with physical disabilities the opportunity to experience the freedom of flight in quiet, engine-free sailplanes and even pursue their dreams of becoming FAA-certified pilots.




Our specially adapted sailplanes, equipped with hand controls, allow individuals who cannot use their legs to take the controls and discover the exhilaration of flying. Some participants, like Kris Lapinski, have gone on to become flight instructors themselves, inspiring others to follow in their footsteps.

None of this would be possible without our dedicated volunteers and pilots, who have generously contributed their time, skills, and expertise throughout our 45-year history.

But FWI is about much more than flying. It is a community of pilots, volunteers, participants, and friends united by a passion for soaring and a belief in the possibilities within every individual.

One participant described flying as “an opportunity for persons with disabilities to feel normal.” Others have called the experience “blissful” and “a moment of clarity.” Another simply imagined, “This must be how birds feel.”








For someone who uses a wheelchair, leaving their chair behind and taking to the sky can be truly transformative. It is more than an adventure—it is an experience of freedom, independence, confidence, and possibility. Learning to pilot a glider creates a sense of independence and opens a new world of limitless possibilities. As one disabled pilot committed, “Flying an airplane speaks to possibilities. What else can I do, that I didn't think I could do, because I have a disability?"

# Help Keep This Extraordinary Opportunity Flying

**This unique program cannot continue without your support.**

FWI is a small, all-volunteer organization. From tow-plane and sailplane pilots to flight instructors, ground crews, and welcoming volunteers, every member of our team contributes to making the dream of flight a reality.




Sailplanes offer a relatively affordable and accessible way to experience aviation. Yet keeping our program safe, operational, and available to participants requires substantial financial resources. We are able to provide this unique, low cost adaptive sports and educational program because we have no paid staff.

Our annual insurance and maintenance expenses total approximately $8,000. In addition, our two aging gliders need refinishing and essential upgrades, with estimated costs of $90,000. These expenses present a significant challenge for a small nonprofit organization like ours.

Your contribution will help us maintain and improve our specially adapted sailplanes, support flight training, and introduce a new generation of individuals with disabilities to the joy of soaring—and perhaps even the dream of becoming pilots themselves.

## YOUR SUPPORT MAKES FLIGHT POSSIBLE

Please consider making a generous, tax-deductible donation to Freedom's Wings International, to the extent permitted by law. You may also wish to remember FWI in your estate plans.

Every gift, regardless of size, helps preserve an extraordinary opportunity that few other organizations can provide.

**Together, we can ensure that the freedom of flight remains within reach for generations to come.**

## Help Us Keep the Unicorn Flying!

With heartfelt gratitude,

*Gil Frost*

**President, Freedom's Wings International**



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