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ECU Health, Maynard Children’s Hospital and EastCare launch North Carolina’s first dedicated pediatric medical transport helicopter

New helicopter will provide life-saving care to thousands of children in region

Greenville, N.C. — ECU Health, the James and Connie Maynard Children’s Hospital at ECU Health Medical Center and EastCare today announced the arrival of North Carolina’s first medical transport helicopter dedicated solely to pediatric patients. This milestone investment ensures that children across eastern North Carolina—especially those in rural and underserved communities—have rapid, safe access to the highly specialized, critical care they need.

Designed as a fully equipped mobile intensive care unit (ICU), the new aircraft brings advanced subspecialty expertise directly to the region’s sickest and most vulnerable children. Its capabilities allow care to begin the moment transport starts, reducing critical time to treatment for patients who often live far from specialty services.

“One-third of the children we transport are premature or neonatal infants, many of whom need highly-specialized care,” said Dr. Matthew Ledoux, pediatrician in chief at Maynard Children’s Hospital and chair of pediatrics at the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University. “This new helicopter gives us the ability to reach these babies faster, stabilize them sooner and deliver ICU-level care from the very first moments of transport. It is truly a game-changer for pediatric and neonatal outcomes in eastern North Carolina.”

The helicopter carries specialized neonatal and pediatric equipment—including ventilators designed for the smallest patients—and features a spacious, child-friendly interior. The environment allows clinical teams to deliver both intensive medical treatment and developmentally supportive care in a space where children can feel safe and comforted. Much of the equipment in the aircraft was funded by generous donors through the ECU Health Foundation.

Used exclusively for hospital-to-hospital transfers, the helicopter expands regional capacity and strengthens resource allocation across ECU Health’s service area. The aircraft also enables providers to fly out to support deliveries and neonatal resuscitations, bringing critical expertise directly to local hospitals when seconds matter.

“This investment reflects ECU Health’s commitment to access and exceptional care for every child in our region,” said Brian Floyd, chief operating officer, ECU Health. “Families should not have to travel long distances or face barriers to receive specialized pediatric services just because they live in a rural community. By placing this resource in eastern North Carolina, we’re bringing life-saving care closer to home and advancing our mission to improve the health and well-being of those we serve.”

This new helicopter builds on a decade-long legacy of life-saving care provided by EastCare and Maynard Children’s Hospital as this year marks the 10-year anniversary of ECU Health’s children’s transport team. By significantly reducing transport times and increasing access to advanced care, the new helicopter is poised to improve outcomes for thousands of children across eastern North Carolina.

To learn more about the new helicopter and access images and video, please visit:
go.ecuhealth.org/helicopter

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About ECU Health

ECU Health is a mission-driven, 1,708-bed academic health care system serving more than 1.4 million people in 29 eastern North Carolina counties. The not-for-profit system is comprised of more than 14,000 team members, nine hospitals and a multi-specialty group practice with more than 1,100 providers in more than 180 locations. The flagship ECU Health Medical Center, a Level I Trauma Center, and ECU Health’s Maynard Children’s Hospital serve as the primary teaching hospitals for the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University. ECU Health and the Brody School of Medicine share a combined academic mission to improve the health and well-being of eastern North Carolina through patient care, education and research. For more information, visit ECUHealth.org.