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**Rainbow Helicopters Receives HAI's Salute to Excellence
Humanitarian Service Award**

Alexandria, Virginia (Jan. 10, 2024) – Helicopter Association International (HAI) is pleased to announce Rainbow Helicopters is the recipient of the 2024 Salute to Excellence Humanitarian Service Award. The award, sponsored by Sikorsky, a Lockheed Martin company, honors the person or persons who best demonstrate the value of rotorcraft to the communities in which they operate by providing aid to those in need. It will be presented on Feb. 26, 2024 at HAI HELI-EXPO 2024 in Anaheim, California.

On Aug. 9, 2023, employees of Oahu, Hawaii–based Rainbow Helicopters woke to the devastating news that a fire had destroyed the town of Lahaina, Maui. They had an immediate and overwhelming desire to do something, anything, to help their greater Maui *ohana*—their Hawaiian family. Throughout the day, the Rainbow Helicopters team reached out through its wide-ranging network to learn what was needed. They soon received a clear message: people had left their homes with nothing, and mothers and babies in particular needed immediate assistance.

Having herself just given birth six weeks earlier, Rainbow Helicopters owner and director of operations Nicole Battjes dove into action. She sent her father-in-law and a Rainbow team member on a Costco run to buy as much formula, diapers, baby wipes, and other supplies that could fit in an Airbus AS350 helicopter. As the two purchased over \$4,000 worth of supplies, news spread among the rest of the Rainbow team. People stayed on past their shifts, and others returned to volunteer their time to aid in the humanitarian effort. Mechanics ensured the helicopter was ready to fly, ground crew weighed loads, operations managers planned and oversaw loading, and pilots created the flight plan. On the morning of Aug. 11, the helicopter flew its first relief flight to Maui, landing at Kapalua Airport (PHJH), as close to Lahaina as it could safely land.

Ground-tour company volunteers met the helicopter with vans to unload and transport the supplies to families in need. The helicopter then flew to Maui's international airport in Kahului, where the team loaded more supplies that couldn't get to Lahaina by ground and brought them to Kapalua. During the flights, the team saw firsthand Lahaina's complete destruction and the desperate need of its residents. They shared what they witnessed when they returned to Oahu, inspiring further action.

The Rainbow team established a GoFundMe account in hopes of raising \$1,000 to purchase supplies for the Lahaina-area residents. All told, the account raised over \$76,000, 100% of which was used to purchase items for families affected by the fire. Rainbow also established a base of operations for physical donations from around Oahu, and over the next several weeks the entire team donated hundreds of hours of off time to purchase, receive, and catalog supplies; package and weigh loads; load helicopters; and fly relief missions.

HUMANITARIAN SERVICES AWARD

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“It took on a life of its own, and I was overwhelmed with pride in our team, our community, and those making donations,” Battjes says of the response. “At one point, through our partnerships, we were receiving photographs of specific supplies individual families needed, and our team members were volunteering their time to run to stores to get them and put them on the next flight. It took extra effort to drive around Oahu to find everything. It was really incredible to see people making this effort, and it was a feeling of hope during such a tragic time.”

In those first several weeks, Rainbow flew 13 missions to Maui carrying more than 5,500 lb. of supplies, including 275 containers of formula, 175 cartons of diapers, 175 boxes of baby wipes, and more than 19 gallons of breast milk. Castle & Cooke Aviation donated all the jet fuel and Rainbow covered the avgas and aircraft for all the flights, which were flown in both R44 and AS350 helicopters.

To help with distribution, Rainbow partnered with several organizations, including Northwest Mothers Milk Bank in Tigard, Oregon, and local nonprofits Keiki O Ka ‘Aina and Na ‘Aikane o Maui, which helped distribute the supplies and provided Rainbow with specific requests from families.

Rainbow continued its efforts into the 2023 holiday season. Working with Keiki O Ka ‘Aina, the company provided food, gifts, and necessities to families in need. The operator also provided an aircraft to fly Santa Claus to Maui to deliver food, gifts, and necessities to children and spread holiday cheer.

The Humanitarian Service Award will be presented during HAI HELI-EXPO 2024. HAI HELI-EXPO[®], the world’s largest helicopter trade show and exhibition, will be held at the Anaheim Convention Center in Anaheim, California, Feb. 26–29, with the exhibit hall open Feb. 27–29. For more information on HAI HELI-EXPO 2024, visit heliexpo.com.

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HAI is the professional trade association for the global helicopter industry and represents more than 1,100 companies and over 16,000 industry professionals in more than 65 countries. Each year, HAI members safely operate more than 3,700 helicopters and remotely piloted aircraft approximately 2.9 million hours. HAI is dedicated to the promotion of the helicopter as a safe, effective business tool that provides unique advantages to society and to the advancement of the international vertical aviation community.