

Colorado Springs Airport programs bring holiday cheer to local children

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Published: December 12, 2015

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The Snowball Express stops over in Colorado Springs to pick up families of fallen military heroes. For the last decade, American Airlines and the Snowball Express non-profit organization have taken children and spouses from all over the world to a 5-day holiday trip to Ft. Worth, Texas. (The Gazette/Jerilee Bennett)

A flight will leave Colorado Springs on Saturday on a mission to bring holiday joy to 19 children of fallen local troops.

The Snowball Express will carry the kids to Dallas for a weekend of fun and activities, including a chance to hang out with celebrities and a private concert from Gary Sinise. The nonprofit Snowball Express group is in its 10th year of working to smiles on the faces of military children who face grief after a parent dies overseas.


Jim Palmersheim, who heads military and veterans programs for American Airlines, said his firm is providing 10 charter planes to take the kids from around the country to Texas.


"It's just the right thing to do," he said.

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Palmersheim said at American one of the hardest jobs was picking which volunteers would pilot the Snowball flights.

"We had 300 pilots who volunteered to fly the flights," he said.

The Snowball Express flight is one of two Colorado Springs Airport events Saturday to help children find Christmas cheer.

SkyWest Airlines in partnership with the Community Partnership for Child Development and the Junior League of Colorado Springs will take local kids airborne with the "Fantasy Flight." Those children will take off for a brief hop from the airport and return to a terminal redecorated to look like the North Pole. Santa Claus will greet the passengers with gifts.

"This event is cherished by everyone involved, and every year SkyWest employees help provide treasured holiday memories for children whose families struggle to meet their basic needs," Lori Hunt, a SkyWest vice president, said in a statement.

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