

Space Camp trip dream come true

Illness can't slow Florida 9-year-old who arrives for week of excitement

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Marlin Hossler flew into Huntsville on Sunday with a flight suit tucked in her bag, a NASA-logo denim jacket on her back and her eyes set on the stars.

The 9-year-old from Port St. Lucie, Fla., will spend the week here at Space Camp, courtesy of the Florida-based Children's Dream Fund which helps realize the dreams of seriously ill chil-



dren.

Her flight to Huntsville was provided by Angel Flight Southeast Inc., which uses donated aircraft and volunteer pilots to provide travel for those in need



Photos by Eric Schultz/Huntsville Times

Nine-year-old Marlin Hossler of Port St. Lucie, Fla., left, looks back at the Piper Bonanza and volunteer pilot Tom Powers walking from the plane with her escort, Sharon Keipert of Stuart, Fla., after the group landed in Huntsville.

of medical care and missions of compassion.

The chairman of Angel Flight America, Thomas Powers, a friend of Marlin's from previous medical trips, flew her to Huntsville.

Marlin has a rare blood disorder, currently in remission, and has battled her illness for some five years.

It doesn't slow her down and her

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Dream

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smile was as bright as a liftoff as she described making her dream trip to Space Camp.

"I wanted to become an astronaut," she said after arriving at Signature Aviation. "I got the space suit and wore it for Halloween. I just think it's really cool."

Hossler is going into the fifth grade and she's busy with tae kwon do, dancing and cheerleading.

Two years ago, she realized a lot of children she knew from a chil-

dren's hospital in Tampa would have to stay there over Christmas. Not only that, many of them didn't have toys.

So, Marlin organized a toy drive with the American Cancer Society and gathered "3,406 toys," she said Sunday. "She has a great family who supports her," Powers said. "She has a great personality and wants to do everything in life. She doesn't slow down."



Space Camp's Blake Mathis is an Angel Flight pilot.

Powers said Angel Flight is always open to new pilots who want to assist their efforts. The group's Southeast region pilots flew more than 750 missions from five southeastern states to assist Hurricane Katrina victims.

Marlin will spend the week at Space Camp. Blake Mathis, an account executive at Space Camp and an Angel Flight pilot, escorted Marlin to the center for her astronaut training.

"I'm really, really happy," Marlin said. "When I found out I was going to go to Space Camp I got out my wipe board and marked it every day. I counted down until it was time to go."