

NO PLANE NO GAIN

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In Business Aviation, A Dream Takes Flight and Creates Economic Opportunities



A few years ago, Denise Wilson had a day job; to relieve stress, she took flying lessons.

“Flying was a hobby then,” she says. “But before I knew it I had my private pilot certificate, instrument rating and commercial pilot certificate.” A multiengine rating and an instructor certificate followed, but the practical Denise still clung to her day job.

Then she had a revelation. “This is silly,” she thought, sitting at her desk. “All day, I daydream about being a pilot.” So she shed her office job and became a professional pilot. Not long after, she launched what became Desert Jet, a successful charter operation serving Palm Springs and the Coachella Valley of California.

In just the last year, Desert Jet has hired seven new employees and recorded nearly a million dollars in revenue, much of which goes to support other jobs in the community. Her aircraft include two Cessna Citation jets and a large

Beech King Air.

“Our clients appreciate us,” says Denise. She cited a recent flight for a woman whose sister had fallen ill in Chicago, half the country away. “She wanted to be there. Within two hours we were on our way, and she made it to the hospital in time. That’s not something you can do on an airline’s schedule.”

Most of her clients are small Coachella Valley businesses. They appreciate not only the flexibility of Desert Jet’s anywhere/anytime schedule, but also that most of the money Desert Jet earns stays within the community.

Small puppies also appreciate Desert Jet’s charter service. On non-revenue flight legs, puppies rescued from “puppy mills” may be given rides to Palm Springs on Desert Jet flights. Desert Jet also provides medical compassion flights for seriously ill human patients, in cooperation with nonprofit organizations such as Angel Flight and Corporate Angel Network.