



FLYING SCHOLARSHIPS
FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

Changing Lives

NEWSLETTER - DECEMBER 2017



“ THE WHOLE
EXPERIENCE
HAS TAUGHT ME THAT
DISABILITY IS JUST A NOUN
NOT A LIFE SENTENCE ”

Read Matthew's story inside

“ MY FAMILY AND
FRIENDS
ARE REALLY IMPRESSED WITH
WHAT I'VE ACHIEVED ”

Read Jamie's story inside

“ I AM NOW A FULLY QUALIFIED
PILOT
WITH A NEW CAREER AS A
MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER ”

Read Steve's story inside

“ THE CHANGE IN ME HAS BEEN
HUGE,
I FEEL SO MUCH MORE LIKE
ME AGAIN ”

Read Rebecca's story inside



WHAT AN EXPERIENCE

Matthew Monaghan

“ Being able to fly free from the shackles of my disability shows the world that no matter what problems I have, I am still capable of doing something amazing. I may not be able to run, or ride a bike like able bodied people but how many of them can say they have flown a plane! ”



“ SINCE STARTING MY
SCHOLARSHIP
I HAVE HAD THE
CONFIDENCE
TO TAKE A FULL TIME JOB ”



Born with a rare form of muscular dystrophy, Matthew has always found it difficult to lead a normal life. He has spent his 28 years trying to overcome every obstacle that his condition has thrown at him; learning to walk, driving a car and going to a mainstream school where he achieved three A-levels.



“ I was in a very low place emotionally and physically when I applied for a scholarship. To my shock I was offered the chance to attend the selection centre at Cranwell. I had never travelled alone to another country but I took the brave step of booking a flight and hire car to travel to England purely because the chance of learning to fly was one I couldn't pass on. I arrived at Cranwell very nervous, anxious and embarrassed. I was a young man walking into an RAF base with an obvious physical disability. Everyone was so welcoming; my anxiety and nerves faded - I have never in my life felt so 'normal'. ”

Matthew learned to fly back in July. “Shadow Aviation is a very special place with incredible instructors. Every single effort was made to make the experience enjoyable and nothing was ever too much trouble. I can honestly say without question it was the best time of my life. The whole experience has taught me that disability is just a noun, not a life sentence.”

“ The whole experience feels like a dream. Every time I think of flying it brings a huge smile to my face. I feel like I can do anything now and things that I never would have considered before are now all options. It is tremendous. Thank you so much from the bottom of my heart. ”

A REAL MILESTONE IN MY LIFE

Jamie Thomson

A year ago whilst skiing in Switzerland, Jamie fell and broke his back and sternum resulting in paralysis from the chest down. Having been a farmer since he left agricultural college in 1991, doing all the farm work himself, he now faces life in a wheelchair.



Whilst in Stoke Mandeville Jamie met another farmer with similar disabilities who told him that he had a pilot's licence and flew his own aircraft from his farm. He had always loved aviation, and this spurred him on to research opportunities for people in a wheelchair to learn to fly and he came across FSDP.

“ I found the experience of learning to fly positive and very enjoyable. I had a great camaraderie with my instructors at Bristol Aero Club and my fellow scholar Tom. I was delighted to achieve a solo flight, a real milestone in my life. My family and friends are all really impressed with what I have achieved in a relatively short period of time since my accident. ”

“ IT REALLY IS A HUGE
PRIVILEGE
TO HAVE BEEN AWARDED MY
SCHOLARSHIP ”

“ Initially I did not understand the FSDP 'family' tag line, but I do now and I feel part of an exclusive club! It really is a huge privilege to have been awarded my scholarship; something I am very proud of and grateful for. One day I'd like to re-reinstall an air strip on my farm. ”

THANKS FOR CHANGING MY LIFE

Steve Robinson



“ Life was hard; I'd lost a right arm at the age of 18 and had no job prospects. Disabled and discriminated against, life was a struggle to make ends meet. ”

“ I WOULD NOT BE HERE
TODAY
OR BE THE
PERSON I AM
IF IT WEREN'T FOR FSDP ”

“ I was contemplating suicide when I came across FSDP, on Facebook of all places. What happened next changed my life forever, thanks to the most generous and positive group of people I had ever met.

To my surprise I was offered a flying scholarship and my flight training started. Re-envigorated by my FSDP experience I made my own prosthetic arm and completed my flight training.

I'm now a fully qualified private pilot with a new career as a motivational speaker. All of this has been made possible thanks to my scholarship; it restored my faith in people and gave me my life back. I would not be here today or be the person I am, if it weren't for FSDP and the support of my fellow FSDP scholars. I know it sounds very thespian, but I love you all! Thanks for changing my life.”

STARTING TO BUILD A NEW LIFE

Rebecca Giddings



“I FEEL SO MUCH MORE
LIKE ME AGAIN
AND SO MUCH
HAPPIER
IN MYSELF”

“ Today I went out and got my wheelchair from the car on my own. It may seem like a very little thing but I have never used my wheelchair on my own, only ever when my husband or friend have been with me. So, for me that was a big step.

The change in me has been huge, I feel so much more like me again and so much happier in myself, I am no longer embarrassed about using my stick - it's the first time in over 3 years that it hasn't been all about my health. ”



“The more time I spend with the FSDP folks the more I realise the flying is a small part of the scholarship; it is all about confidence and making a positive difference.

Thanks to FSDP I am starting to rebuild my spirit and my life, moving forward and not focusing on the past. The rebuild is different; it is not a replication of my old life, because I know I can't go back to it. I am building a new life that accepts that I am ill but that my illness can't and won't stop me.”

A few words from our Chairman

NIGEL SAMUELS



In my first year as Chairman I am delighted to be able to report that our charity has been able to help change the lives of another twelve people by providing them with a FSDP scholarship.

Since our inception FSDP has changed the lives of over 400 disabled people with many going on to achieve great success in or out of aviation.

In the last year alone 2 scholars have competed in the Invictus Games, with one winning a Tennis Gold. 1 has participated in the Paralympic Games and won a Gold for the Paratriathlon, 3 have been awarded MBE's and 2 received awards in industry, 3 have gone on to obtain their pilot's license and 2 are now flying instructors.



To make a donation, either complete the enclosed form or go to virginmoneygiving.com/charities/reach4thesky

In this edition of our newsletter we are going to see how a scholarship has changed the lives of Rebecca, Matthew, Steve, and Jamie. What becomes very apparent in their stories is the importance of being part of the FSDP family in providing an environment of understanding, fellowship and fun.

Talking of fun, this has been an exciting year for fundraising by our scholars; for example Sean Allerton has continued his epic wheelchair challenge, Karen Cox has abseiled from the Forth Road Bridge, and Sherrill Semple has done a wing walk on a Boeing Stearman.

Once again our Annual Scholar Awards Ceremony at RIAT was a highlight of our 2017 calendar with powerful and poignant speeches from scholars Peter Lau and Claire White – another year with hardly a dry eye in the house.

With 2018 fast approaching much work is underway to be able to deliver our greatest number of scholarships, and also to host a 3-day exhibition at RIAT 2018 looking at how FSDP changes lives and the inspiration behind our charity, Sir Douglas Bader.

All of this is only possible as a result of the generous donations we receive and the continued support of our sponsors to whom we are incredibly grateful; we simply could not do it without you – THANK YOU.

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£10

Will buy a baseball cap
and hi-vis vest



£2 / MONTH

Will pay for a
scholar's flying jacket



£10 / MONTH

Will pay for one night's
hotel and food



£175

Will provide an
hour's flying lesson



£500

Will pay for a
FSDP family event



£20 / MONTH

Will put a candidate
through the
RAF Cranwell
Selection Centre



£50

Will provide
three hours of
ground school

£12,000

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ground school, safety clothing & ongoing
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