

# *Turtle Wing Foundation continues to Take to the Sky*

“To the Sky” was not only the theme of the day but is also the unofficial theme song for Turtle Wing Foundation. On Saturday, April 25 it could not have been more appropriate as all eyes were turned to the sky waiting for the weather to pass. As the final clouds parted and the sun came out, the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual GRAND SLAM Homerun Derby and Jack Hooper Day at the Ballpark began with the 5K starting just an hour late. Opening ceremonies featured a ceremonial balloon release honoring the 150 children Turtle Wing Foundation has helped so far this year. Balloons took to the sky representing the wings given to those children through scholarships, early intervention programs, mobile learning labs and social skills outings. Two families were also honored during this time. The Hamilton family of Magnolia (represented by Brian Hamilton, his mother Diann, and his three children Caitlyn, Brady and Dustin), have supported the foundation from its very beginning. With their presence, support and financial contributions they have furthered the mission of the foundation. This year Mrs. Michelle Hamilton lost her courageous battle with cancer. Forty-two of the balloons released were purple in honor of her memory and legacy, which lives on in the hearts of her family and all those children she has helped. The second family honored was the Joe & Tina Morrow family of Columbus who were there with their daughter Taylor. Six year old Paige Morrow, who was a Turtle Wing scholarship recipient, was called home to heaven April 2, 2015. She had a joyful spirit, a bright smile and loving heart. A large, pink balloon was released in her memory.

Despite the late start, the event generated a \$28,000 profit through the 5K fun run, silent auction, derby registration, turtle races, kid zone, souvenirs and concessions. Runners braved the rainy weather to participate in the annual 5k fun run. Following opening ceremonies supporters gathered for a silent auction, great music and food. Once the fields dried out it was time for the baseballs to take to the sky. Hitters sent balls sailing in an effort to become homerun champions. The souvenir booth highlighted new 2015 GRAND SLAM derby shirts along with t-shirts, wrist bands, notepads and a variety of Turtle Wing gear. Beyond Therapy set up an obstacle course for kids of all ages to compete in a timed challenge. The kid zone had non-stop action throughout the day with a clown on hand for face painting. Dr. Zatopek and his staff created balloon animals, a train ride and the Schulenburg cheerleaders had a nail polish station. Children in attendance enjoyed bubbles, hula hoops and numerous bounce houses. The Turtle races were a huge hit, with the crowd cheering on their favorite racer. Prize packages were awarded that included some of Jack’s favorite things.

The Jack Hooper Day at the Ballpark & Home Run Derby will help provide support for families with children who struggle with learning challenges and to help all children grow wings and fly. The event is held annually, promoting Autism awareness and to remember Jack Hooper who would have celebrated his 14<sup>th</sup> birthday this year on May 15. Funds from the annual event will be combined with money from private and corporate donors, memorials, and grants to continue the mission of the foundation in the rural communities it serves.

The commitment and support of volunteers who gave of their time and talents along with community support, Schulenburg Little League and the City of Schulenburg helped to make this event a success. Now that success can be directly translated into the lives of families in need. The foundation's mission is to help children with learning challenges in rural areas achieve their full potential. Turtle Wing has been founded to help not only families affected by Autism, but all children who need extra support academically, social and spiritually. Turtle Wing families have all been from Colorado, Fayette, Lavaca, Victoria and Lee Counties with academic, social-emotional, behavioral and/or developmental needs. Any individual, school, business or organization can contact the foundation to request more information. To learn more visit the website [www.turtlewingfoundation.org](http://www.turtlewingfoundation.org) or contact Turtle Wing Managing Director, Susie Shank, at 979-820-8964.