On June 25th, 2011, 16-year-old Katie Henschel left her house intending to drive to a bookstore in Portage before meeting up with family and friends at a graduation party. An unusually enlightened teenager when it comes to phones, Katie texted a friend that she was about to get behind the wheel for a while, signaling her unavailability.

Shortly afterward on a country road, authorities say a deer probably caused Katie’s white truck to ram into a tree at 52 mph. Katie has no memory of the accident. A passerby found Katie just after the accident and called for help. Volunteer firefighter Landon Hackenberg, a long-time friend of Katie’s brother, was among the first to arrive.

Additional rescue and ambulance personnel from Three Rivers Fire Department and Fabius-Park Fire Department responded to scene and removed Katie from the wreckage, observing her irregular respirations and posturing. She also had significant lower extremity trauma. Katie was given oxygen and was fully immobilized on a long backboard. Captain Bob VanZalen, EMT-P and Engineer Dave Cramton, EMT-P provided bleeding control for Katie and placed a large-bore IV before the helicopter arrived.

When West Michigan Air Care landed, medical crew Kevin Franklin, RN, EMT-P and Dawn Johnston, RN, NREMT-P off-loaded with rotors turning and moved to the ambulance that held Katie. At this point Katie was pale and unable to follow commands. Her legs had many lacerations and badly impaired circulation on the left. Katie occasionally moved her arms restlessly and was losing the ability to protect her airway. Three Rivers EMS and Fire personnel assisted with bleeding control measures while the Air Care medical crew administered medications sequentially to sedate Katie and prevent increasing pressure in her brain during endotracheal intubation.

Once her breathing tube was in place, the Air Care medical crew administered additional pain control and sedatives that would keep Katie sleeping and comfortable, administering additional medications to keep Katie sedated. Preventing episodes of low blood pressure in head injured patients is essential to optimize return of cognitive function. Likewise, any episode of hypoxia can worsen neurologic outcome, so IV fluids, sedation, and ventilator management were carefully maintained throughout Katie’s transport with Air Care.

At Bronson, Katie’s struggle for life continued. Surviving multiple surgeries, she remained unresponsive for 18 days in the Trauma Care Unit. Her family told no one that Katie might not make it. “We didn’t want everyone to give up hope,” said her mother Lisa.

The day before leaving Bronson for a rehabilitation facility, Lisa recalls stepping out of Katie’s room while therapists propped Katie up at the side of the bed with her Dad and grandmother present. Lisa heard a commotion and was called back to the room by the excited staff. Incredibly, Katie had just written her name on a clipboard. It was the start of her journey back.

Months of rehabilitation followed, along with more procedures and sometimes
Air Care Goes Live with Glidescope

As of February 1st, 2012, Air Care began using the Verathon GlideScope® Ranger as the primary method for accomplishing endotracheal intubation in adult patients. As leaders in critical care and emergency transport medicine, Air Care medical crews were the first to bring indirect laryngoscopy to the forefront in transport medicine in West Michigan by incorporating the AirTraq optical device over 2 years ago. The GlideScope® Ranger will expand on this success and promote improvements in airway management while maintaining the high level of ‘first pass’ success that Air Care medical crews exhibit. Air Care’s leadership in airway and ventilator management is just one of the assets that sets Air Care apart from other critical care transport programs regionally and throughout the country.

Katie’s Story (continued from page 1)

scary complications. Altogether, Katie underwent four brain surgeries and three orthopedic surgeries. Finally, after 99 days of hospitalization, Katie was discharged home on September 30th.

Today Katie is back in school full-time, attends appointments for outpatient rehabilitation, and plans to graduate on time. Although she can’t participate in all the sports she used to, she says it’s a small price to pay, and she is intent on thanking all who cared for her. Her mother echoes her grateful sentiments.

“I’m in the presence of a miracle every day,” said Katie’s mother Lisa. “I will never have the words to express my gratitude.”

Sixteen-year-old Katie (left center) revisits the accident site with her family, where the tree still bears the scars of her accident last June. Left to right: Bill (father), Katie, Nate (brother), and Lisa (mother).

Air Care Sponsors The Difficult Airway Course - EMS™

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– Rick Ables, EMT-P, San Diego, CA

*CE Credits
15.5 Contact Hours have been provided by the Air & Surface Transport Nurses Association (Certificate #2009-12). ASTNA is an approved provider for the California Board of Registered Nursing CEP 13575.
Approved by the Continuing Education Coordinating Board for Emergency Medical Services (CECBEMS). CECBEMS Activity #00-CECB-F2-0448. CEH Number and Type: 15.0 Advanced.
This program has been reviewed and is approved for a maximum of 16 hours of AAPA Category 1 CME credit by the Physician Assistant Review Panel.
You may notice a difference in the sound of West Michigan Air Care’s helicopters in the near future. We are in the process of switching to the latest version of tail rotor or “fenestron” as this style is referred to. Air Care has upgraded to the 10-blade “quiet” fenestron from the older 11-blade style.

While “quiet” is a relative term when there is a running helicopter involved, the new 10-blade fenestron provides a significantly reduced noise signature in comparison to the previous 11 blade version, while continuing to provide the same levels of safety and performance. The reduction in noise is due to a change in design of the system with an asymmetrical staggering and resizing of the blades. Gone is the high pitched sound of the tail, replaced with a more tolerable low growl, along with a significant reduction in decibels.

Performing this upgrade when the previous blades were due to be replaced allowed us to accomplish this in a very cost effective manner. In addition, the new version has a 5000-hour life limit for the blades, double the 2500-hour life limit of the previous blades, also contributing to the cost effectiveness. The entire process was performed in house by our maintenance staff and only required two days, start to finish. This upgrade was recently performed on N365WM with sister aircraft N365A scheduled to be upgraded in the fall of this year.

So next time you see us flying over, keep an ear open to see if you can hear the difference. Or hear it less, which is the whole idea.
Landing Zone Classes

We depend on our first responders to help us safely land at scenes, especially at night. Landing zone classes are now being scheduled on a systematic, county-by-county basis. Find out when we’ll be in your county—or, put in an early request for what works for your department. Air Care T-shirts provided to all registered participants. Contact Krystian Zygowiec at kazygowiec@aircare.org or call 1-800-922-1234.