



# the Sentinel

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Aug. 5, the day before Sean Smith and Alex Abate became engaged, they completed their first Angel Flight in Washington. Now they are traveling to all 50 states to build awareness for the nonprofit while they plan their wedding.

AMY HAUSMAN/FS

## The Fifty Project: Angel Flight

BY AMY HAUSMAN  
amy@friendsentinel.com

Alex Abate and Sean Smith of Washington State are flying to all 50 states in a 1979 Mooney M20K to raise awareness and funds for Angel Flight. The couple has Alaska and Hawaii yet to make it to.

Angel Flight is an organization that provides flights for patients in critical care from rural communities. Pilots volunteer their time and aircrafts to coordinate missions.

The couple has volunteered for three flights in Washington State after Smith taught Abate to fly during covid.

“The day before Sean

and I got engaged, we completed our first Angel Flight Mission. We met a wonderful woman and helped her travel home from treatment in Seattle. We experienced such a sense of connection with this woman and we were reminded of the power of human connection,” Abate said. “It was a powerful experience and moved me to tears.”

Their project began shortly after becoming engaged on Aug. 6 and in addition to building awareness, they have embarked on an engagement roadshow.

“We are literally planning our wedding in the clouds,” Smith said. “This project has



AMY HAUSMAN/FS

Smith and Abate performed a test flight around the Crete community before continuing on their journey on Sept. 17. The monitor in the cabin shows the GPS information they use to navigate their course.

allowed us to plan a path that connects us to our family and friends across the country to share in our joy and our cause. Our goal is to raise \$5,000 on our Go Fund Me account.”

They are covering their own expenses, including the jet fuel. Smith budgeted \$10,000 in fuel for the trip with the prices ranging from \$6-7 a gallon. His Mooney burns 13

gallons an hour. To keep their expenses at a minimum, they check fuel prices at all of their stops.

Smith and Abate flew into Crete Sept. 15 and then spent time with Abate's relatives in Friend. Smith was able to experience agriculture and the rivalry between the Cornhuskers and Sooners.

After putting in 14-hour days flying, the couple works remotely for their full time jobs at Starbucks and Amazon. When they touch down, Smith and Abate run a mile in every state no matter the weather.

“We have gotten to enjoy so many adventures through aviation, and as we enter the next chapter of our lives, we plan to continue to use this platform as a way to give back and help others,” Abate said.

To learn more about the project, visit [www.gofundme.com/f/the-fifty-project](http://www.gofundme.com/f/the-fifty-project).



AMY HAUSMAN/FS

Sean Smith and Alex Abate from Washington state flew into the Crete airport on Sept. 15 as part of their awareness campaign for Angel Flight. They spent a few days with family in Friend celebrating their engagement before traveling to Oklahoma.

“One of the most amazing things for me is to see the different terrain across the country,” Smith said. “Coming to Crete and Friend, I have a whole new appreciation for agriculture.”

## Polls Open



AMY HAUSMAN/FS

Despite the rain and wind on Nov. 8, when the polls opened over 20 Friend registered voters were gathered at the Community Center ready to cast their vote. Election results will be available in the next week.

## Saline County schools host Veterans Day programs

Multiple schools around the Saline County area are hosting Veterans Day programs. The programs in the area are as follows:

Friend: Program on Friday, Nov. 11, at 8:30 a.m.

Dorchester: Program on Friday, Nov. 11, at 10 a.m. in the main gym.

Exeter-Milligan: Program on Friday, Nov. 11, at 10 a.m. in the gym.

Wilber-Clatonia: Program on Friday, Nov. 11, at 9:30 a.m. at the high school gym.

Tri County: Program on Friday, Nov. 11, at 9 a.m. in the school's auditorium.

Crete Public Schools: Program at the Crete Middle School auditorium on Friday, Nov. 11, at 9 a.m.

## Zito Media to replace cable with fiber internet

BY AMY HAUSMAN  
amy@friendsentinel.com

The Friend City Council has approved Zito Media to begin replacing its underground cable with fiber as early as next month.

The update to fiber will allow Zito to provide better service and give more service provider options for internet and phone to Friend residents.

Tracy Berggen, Zito Media outside plant technician for the area, addressed council members at their meeting Nov. 1, explaining the internet

provider is working on upgrades to service in the area. The existing, outdated cable will be completely replaced with fiber optics, which is part of the franchise agreement for upgrades.

Zito will bore a new duct underground near the Friend Country Club but will only plow and trench when absolutely necessary. It will also work in other areas of Friend where existing cable needs replaced.

Zito Media leaves a small on-ground footprint where the pedestal or vault is in-  
(continued on 3)

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Stop in the office at 101 N. Main in Friend or email [friendelev@diodecom.net](mailto:friendelev@diodecom.net) for an application.  
If you have any questions, please call Ed Menke at 402-947-4291.

