

We would like to nominate Eduardo Prato for Pilot of the Year, senior Pilot, and training captain with the East Anglian Air Ambulance (EAAA).

Employed by Babcock, Eduardo has been an exemplary member of the EAAA team throughout the 4 years he has flown with us as a Captain.

### **1. Living the values of EAAA – raising awareness and engaging with supporters**

All pilots have a list of essential kit they need to bring to work – flight suit, safety boots, helmet, log book. For Eduardo you can also add “comedy glasses” to that list. Eduardo takes these to work so if the team land in an area where there are children around, and it is appropriate, he can deliver them an educational but comedic talk all about the helicopter, whilst wearing his funny glasses. It is almost routine now for the clinical team to return to the aircraft after finishing with their patient to find Eduardo surrounded by groups of awestruck children learning all about aviation and HEMS.

Above teaching children about the helicopter, Eduardo also uses this opportunity to provide educational snippets in an entertaining and engaging way. A keen cyclist, he is often discussing the importance of cycle helmets with children, encouraging them to not only wear their own but be leaders of this among their friends and classmates. These subjects can often be shrugged aside by young people but Eduardo delivers his messages in such a way that you can really see the connection and respect the children have for him. Although a few conversations like this may not make the biggest difference on a wide scale, if they can be the difference between us attending a life-threatening incident involving a child, or not, we see this as a hugely impactful.

A co-pilot shared with us:

*“One of the things that stands out most to me when we’re on scene is Eduardo’s tireless efforts to engage with bystanders, some of whom are often witnesses or the friends and families of the patients we’re attending.*

*His reassuring and calming nature has often helped to diffuse a scene and ensure those around know their loved one is receiving the best care from our teams. Although this might sound like a small part of the role, it is so valuable for those people.”*

Eduardo attended an incident which involved a young child have a seizure, understandably the patient and his older sibling, who witnessed the incident, were extremely upset. Eduardo made it his responsibility to help calm them and when a base a visit was organised for the family, Eduardo made sure to carry on that support. As to be expected both children, the patient and their older sibling, were extremely anxious after the incident and their parents felt it was important to show the air ambulance in a non-threatening, calm and fun environment.

One of our Aftercare team noted:

*“Having been briefed for the visit, the team prepared trauma teddies, activity packs and a toy medical kit for them to play with. Heading out to the helicopter Eduardo made the experience really fun and engaging, of course he wore his ‘special glasses’ to make them laugh, let them sit inside and sat and explained in a really clear way about the equipment. Despite being super nervous to start with both children were so relaxed and that’s all down to the extra effort Eduardo gave to try and take away any trauma.”*

His colleagues find Eduardo a joy to be around with his charismatic and cheerful personality. Often, even in the hardest of situations, Eduardo can help to lift the morale of the team and be an encouraging and supportive peer which is something he is valued for by every Pilot, Doctor, CCP and ground staff member who works alongside him.

Off shift Eduardo is also known to take on epic and gruelling challenges to raise awareness and fundraise for various charities.

His most recent fundraising event is an 87-mile ultra-marathon, aiming to raise £14,000 for EAAA. Running the distance of four marathons to fund four missions over the space of two days. Starting from the EAAA Cambridge base, Eduardo will be visiting major hospital helipads in the region and several other key landmarks, ending day two at Helimed House, our Norwich base. Eduardo does this all in his free time and events on this scale also include months of surveying routes, engaging with interested partners, gaining coverage and of course training so it is a true testament to his commitment and support of EAAA.

## **2. Inspiring and supporting the next generation of Pilots**

It is clear that Eduardo's attitude is driven by his passion and dedication for the aviation industry and the joy he has found in flying. Alongside being a Pilot, Eduardo also holds the post of Line Training Captain and is constantly looking for ways to support Co-pilots.

Having identified the lack of a structured career progression plan and a higher rate of staff rotation than in other operations Eduardo has been lobbying to implement a clear and dedicated structure for Co-pilots.

Over the last year Eduardo has been the driving force in this project, not only identifying the need for such a programme but also being heavily involved in its development.

## **3. Going above and beyond for his colleagues**

As already mentioned, it is admirable the support Eduardo shows for his colleagues both on greater scales and day to day on shift.

One particular day stands out to one of the team:

*"I can think of dozens of specific jobs that I have worked on with Eduardo where his cool head and quick thinking have helped the team enormously but the day that will always stick in my mind is 10th March 2022. This was the now legendary day where we had 10 activations and attended 7 of them. We flew for over 5 hours and covered most of East Anglia.*

*We had been so busy that none of us had eaten since 9:00 that morning. When we landed at Stapleford Aerodrome Eduardo went off in search of food for the team whilst I sorted out refuelling the helicopter. In testament to his amazing charm and charisma, Eduardo persuaded the staff in the Aerodrome cafe to re-open the now closed kitchen and make us all tuna salad sandwiches. I can say categorically that this was the best tuna salad sandwich that I have ever eaten!"*