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## **9 Year-Old Heart Patient's Wish Granted – Boy Gets Helicopter Ride Over Valley**

PHOENIX, Ariz. (April 11, 2007) – Three, two, one ... lift off! It's a saying familiar to nine year-old Alex Lopez, of South Phoenix. Helicopter toys and games have always been at the top of his wish list. On Thursday - two months before his 10<sup>th</sup> birthday - Alex will be surprised with a ride in the real thing ... a helicopter flight lifting off from Phoenix Children's Hospital at 9:30 a.m.

Alex was born with his heart on the right side of his chest, flipped backwards, with only one ventricle doing the work of two for his lungs and heart. His pulmonary arteries were not connected together, and his organs developed in opposite locations inside his body.

"Most of these children do not survive even to five years of age," said Michael Teodori, MD, Section Chief of Cardiothoracic Surgery at Phoenix Children's.

The Children's Heart Center at Phoenix Children's has battled to help Alex's heart work better and to help him grow. Alex has undergone more than 50 complex procedures in his short life. Most recently, on March 29, Alex had a pediatric catheterization, a cardiac procedure less invasive than open heart surgery. It was during this visit when Alex expressed to Hospital staff his one wish – to ride in a helicopter.

Phoenix Children's and local helicopter pilot Mitch Kelldorf will make Alex's wish come true.

On April 12, at 9:30 a.m., the helicopter is scheduled to land on Phoenix Children's helipad. The pilot will take Alex on a 30 to 45 minute aerial tour of the Valley.

"He is truly a miracle child and beats the odds everyday. There's no stopping him," said his mom Emelia.

Alex is a third grader at V H Lassen Elementary School. He is the youngest of five children in the Lopez family, and continues to take his fight for a strong heart day-by-day.

Phoenix Children's Hospital is Arizona's leader in pediatric care and is one of the 10 largest free-standing children's hospitals in the nation. The most comprehensive array of pediatric specialists in the State practice at this one organization. The outstanding clinical expertise, as well as high patient volume, and an unwavering commitment to caring only for children, all contribute to Phoenix Children's leadership position. For information about Phoenix Children's, visit the Hospital's website at [www.phoenixchildrens.com](http://www.phoenixchildrens.com).