



A story of compassion, purpose and pride.

In the aftermath of the horrifying events of September 11, President George W. Bush told a shell-shocked nation, "Freedom now depends on us."

New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani issued a plea for people to come to his wounded city and show their support, to boost the morale of its grief-stricken citizens and bolster an economy left dazed by the devastating blow it had been struck.



Nearly one thousand impassioned Oregonians and Southwest Washingtonians responded—men, women and children of all ages and from all walks of life. With courage in the face of fear and hearts filled with compassion, they boarded planes for New York City and delivered a mighty "transcontinental hug" that became known round the world as "Flight For Freedom."

It started out as a simple idea. Loen Dozono, wife of Azumano president and CEO Sho Dozono, wondered what would happen if they could get a group of Oregonians to show their "pioneer spirit" by flying back to New York to lend economic and emotional support in the aftermath of September 11. Well the rest, as they say, is history. With the help of community leaders, corporate sponsors and the staff of Azumano Travel, the "group" Sho and Loen had envisioned turned into a contingent of almost 1,000 strong.



For their efforts in bringing comfort to those who suffered great losses and in supporting New York and the nation's economy, the Freedom Fliers were officially recognized by President Bush, Transportation Secretary Mineta, Governors Pataki and Kitzhaber, Mayors Katz and Giuliani, and many others. Their mission garnered worldwide publicity and earned Azumano Travel the prestigious American Express "Great Performers" award.



More importantly, however, it gave us all a sense of pride and reminded us of the spirit of strength and unity that has come to define us as a nation full of compassionate and caring citizens with grit enough to meet any challenge.



No one can take away our freedom to travel.