
Villas Man Act of Kindness

Draws Worldwide Attention

VILLAS- When Villas resident Eric Kunkel sat down on a flight from Orlando to Philadelphia he did not realize his act of kindness to a child would draw worldwide media attention.

His story appeared on ABC News with Diane Sawyer Jan. 15 and in newspapers from coast to coast and as far away as England.

Kunkel was seated on the aisle next to three-year old Kate Mouland who is autistic and her mother Shanell Mouland, who occupied the window seat. He said at the beginning of the flight, Kate touched his arm, called him “daddy” and began a conversation about her just concluded visit to Disney World.

“I like Tigger, so we talked about Tigger a little bit,” said Kunkel. “We kind of kept the conversation going from there.”

“It was just a normal flight for me,” he continued. “I was shocked when the story came out.”

He said the conversation with Kate made his flight time seem shorter. Kunkel, a former scoutmaster, said he doesn’t possess a special skill to communicate with an autistic child.

“It was more about letting her do what she wanted to do,” he said.

Kunkel is father of a 25-year old son, also a Villas resident. He said he flies four to five times per month for business as an IT executive for MMA Technologies Corp.

Throughout the two-and-a-half hour flight, Kunkel entertained Kate with drawings and games. A few days later, Mouland wrote about Kunkel’s kindness to her daughter on her blog “Go Team Kate.”

The blog received more than 70,000 reads before it leaped to the Huffington Post, USA Today, the Daily Mail in London, Essential Mums in New Zealand and other media.

Kunkel has communicated with Mouland and her husband via Facebook since the story went viral.

Future television appearances are in the offing.

Kunkel and his wife Barbara moved to Villas in 2011 from Lumberton. He said he is pleased to be a resident of Villas which allows him access to Mid-Atlantic region airports.