

Courage to Succeed: Jackie Pflug's Story

Ten minutes into EgyptAir's Flight 648 bound for Cairo from Athens, Greece, on November 23, 1985, three terrorists pulled out guns and grenades and announced they were taking over the plane. In the gun battle that followed, the aircraft's fuselage was punctured, causing a rapid depressurization. The plane went into a rapid descent in order to allow the crew and passengers to breathe.

The plane was forced to land in Malta where the hijackers began following through on their threat to execute one passenger every fifteen minutes.

Like four victims before her, Jackie Pflug was shot in the head and thrown out the door of the plane. For five hours, she laid still on the tarmac, pretending to be dead, until a team of airport grounds workers retrieved what they thought was another body. But, on the way to the morgue, Jackie involuntarily gasped for breath, and the shocked and horrified crew learned that one person was still alive.

Jackie survived with some sight and short term memory loss and an incredible message of hope and encouragement to anyone anywhere who faces obstacles, setbacks and challenges.

"I made a commitment to succeed," Jackie told NHCC students during her talk at this year's Mental Health and Wellness week. "Life is a journey and all of us are hijacked at some point, by getting cancer, going through a divorce or experiencing a death in the family. It's how you rise above these things to become the most capable person you can be."

Mental Health and Wellness Week (MHW) is an annual event at North Hennepin Community College. It features a resource fair, presentations on stress management, and many other educational activities to promote the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health of the NHCC community.

"College can be one of the most exciting yet most difficult times of our lives," says Sue Smith, a NHCC counselor and one of the MHW organizers. "The stress and pressures of time-managing and dealing with new situations can be overwhelming. Mental Health and Wellness week was developed to help students understand there are many resources to help."



The College's next Mental Health and Wellness Week is the week of November 2nd. To participate, please contact Sue Smith at 763-424-0703 or ssmith@nhcc.edu.



Fifty-nine of the 98 passengers on Flight 648 lost their lives that day. The hijacking ended when Egyptian commandos suddenly stormed the plane in a spectacular display of force.