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Wednesday, March 12, 2008

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Chopper Challenge

ON SATURDAY morning seven helicopters took off from Lyndoch for a lap of the Barossa, in a dress rehearsal for the Chopper Challenge.

The Chopper Challenge, the brainchild of Gary Williams, promises to be a huge adventure in the Northern Territory - while giving sick children a lifeline.

Saturday's flight was a logistic test for April's Uluru gathering that will see helicopters converge on the red centre from all across the country.

And there was plenty of attention for three-year-old Riley Cook, five-year-old Ryan Jackway and their families who are currently staying at Ronald

McDonald House in North Adelaide.

Gary, who you might know Gary from the Assured Home Loans ads (he's the company's chief executive officer) says the challenge will be a charity bash, in the air, for the Assured Foundation.

"We will be making plans for each pilot to stop along the way to Uluru to take a sick child for a flight," Gary said.

The Assured Foundation reaches out to the families who are affected by childhood cancer.

"I can't do much about cancer, but I can help to take the whole family out for a special event."

"We film the whole time and

create a professionally-edited 30 minute movie to capture all the giggles and fun the family has.

"That's our gift of love."

The seven helicopters that took off from the Kies family Barossa Helicopters base included three of the Kies' own.

Sandra Kies said the idea of the challenge has pilots excited.

"Everybody likes to play together and show off," Sandra said. "And it will be a huge buzz to get so many together."

The challenge test helicopter pilots skills in the 'dressage' competition and will include what is known as an apocalypse, or mass take off - flight - and landing, minutes after sunrise.



MAIN PHOTO: Riley Cook gives the all clear sign as he sits in the pilot's seat of one of the helicopters. LEFT: Gary Williams guides his chopper in over vineyards. CENTRE: (From left) Tristenne Isaacson, Rayna Denton, Ryan Jackway, Bradley Jackway, Molly, Bruce, Riley and Kylie Cook with Gary. RIGHT: The helicopter line up.

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