Pilot's Dream Comes True Thanks to New Robotic Surgery

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CHICAGO, June 20, 2011 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Andrew Baniecki dreamed of becoming a pilot for as long as he can remember. His passion for airplanes began when he was a small child opting to play with toy planes instead of cars, and grew when he took his first ride on an airplane during a family trip to Disney World. At 8-years old Baniecki scribbled down on a piece of paper his dream of becoming an airline pilot and placed it into a time capsule. Ten years later, Baniecki pulled the weathered piece of paper out of the capsule reaffirming his desire to pursue flying professionally. By then however, his dream seemed out of reach due to health issues he had faced since birth which caused his bladder to deteriorate over time.

Baniecki suffers from myelomeningocele, otherwise known as spina bifida, a neurological disease that often leads to incomplete growth of the spine. It can also cause the spine to stretch, putting tension on the nerves which ultimately impacts bladder and bowel function. Growing up, Baniecki battled a hyperactive bladder and frequent urinary tract infections, endured two surgeries, and required regular use of a catheter to release his bladder. He was also on daily medication to help control his disease, all of which potentially affected his eligibility for a pilot's license and significantly impaired his quality of life.

Despite his challenges, Baniecki was determined to make his dream of flying a reality and searched for answers. That's when his doctors at Children's Memorial Hospital referred him to Northwestern Memorial Hospital [1]'s John Hairston, M.D [2]., one of only a handful of physicians in the country performing robotic bladder augmentation, a procedure that could allow Baniecki to stop daily use of medication, and gain better bladder control.

"When Andrew and
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