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For more information, visit KidsFlySafe.com. Louise Stoll founded Kids Fly Safe to distribute CARES. Price: **\$74.95**
To learn more about flying with young children, visit faa.gov/passengers



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Taking Flight with CARES: A Grand-Momprenneur's Invention

By Rebecca Klein

Not even Louise Stoll, a grandmother times nine, expected a series of drawings she did on the fly would years later result in the first and only FAA certified alternative to using a car seat on airplanes.

In 1999, the sight of her pregnant daughter struggling down the stairs from an airplane juggling her toddler, a 20-pound car seat and the diaper bag fueled an idea for a lightweight harness-style restraint system that could attach to the existing airplane lap belt.



That night, she started making some sketches. "Everyone laughed over them," Stoll describes of her adult children's initial response to the idea of mom inventing something. She admits even she laughed when her husband suggested meeting with a patent attorney, but within a week had an appointment with an attorney.

As the more than two-year patent process for Stoll's Child Aviation Restraint System (CARES) neared the finish line, she left her position as executive vice president of United Jewish Communities and focused on finding a manufacturer.

The search ended with AmSafe Aviation, a leading airplane seatbelt manufacturer. She credits prior experience as Assistant Secretary in the U.S. Department of Transportation during the Clinton administration for giving her a sense of how much patience she would need to move an idea through the system, but says she didn't receive any short cuts.

After four years of post-patent hurdles, including dummy crash testing, the FAA gave the product approval for take-off in 2006 for children between 22 and 44 pounds.

My 4-year-old son, Seth, put CARES to the test on a cross-country flight. From the moment we checked his car seat, I felt the difference from lugging it on board. CARES, which weighs just a pound and fits into a small sack, sat in my purse as I

carried my 2-year-old's seat on my back. The system comes with an instructional DVD, making installation simple and fast. Luckily, my younger one didn't mind when Seth insisted on a second turn with CARES on our way home.

The FAA recommends that until kids weigh more than 40 pounds that they use an approved child restraint system. When it comes to holding a child on your lap, spokesperson Alison Duquette says, "During severe turbulence or an unlikely accident, given the forces, there is no way for you to be able to hold onto your child."

The American Academy of Pediatrics, which doesn't endorse specific products, advises using a restraint system that says it is approved for aircraft; not all car seats apply.

Stoll has seen adoption organizations and preschools buy a couple CARES to share. She was also pleased to discover an additional use for CARES. She learned that special needs children, who may otherwise need to travel in bulkier braces, use CARES as an alternative.

In addition to U.S. travel, CARES has been certified in the U.K., Australia, New Zealand and Canada and is permitted on most major airlines in Europe and Asia.

"It's been like having a 10th grandchild," describes Stoll of chaperoning her product from conception to completion and beyond. ♦

