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Grandparents of dying Aurora toddler thank Southwest Airlines for delaying plane

Email

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The grandparents of a 2-year-old Aurora boy who died Jan. 6 after allegedly being thrown across the room by his mother's boyfriend are thanking Southwest Airlines for holding a plane so the boy's grandfather could hurry home to see his grandson before the boy died.

Nancy Dickinson told travel and airline blogger Christopher Elliott that her husband, Mark Dickinson, was on a business trip in California when the couple received word that their grandson, Caden Rogers, had suffered devastating injuries. Aurora police said the boy hit his head on a bed after his mother's boyfriend, Theodore Madrid, 30, threw him across the room.

Dickinson told Elliott that her husband had to fly from Los Angeles to Tucson before heading on to Denver, and that he arrived at Los Angeles International Airport two hours early only to be caught in a long security line.

"Every step of the way, he's on the verge of tears and trying to get assistance from both TSA and Southwest employees to get to his plane on time," Nancy Dickinson said in her e-mail to Elliott. "According to him, everyone he talked to couldn't have cared less."

Dickinson called Southwest to explain the situation and said her husband ran to the gate in his stocking feet to find the plane's captain waiting for him at the jetway. She said the pilot said he was sorry about their grandson and wouldn't let the 11:50 a.m. flight depart until Mark Dickinson ultimately arrived at 12:02 p.m.

"They can't go anywhere without me, and I'm not going anywhere without you," she said the pilot told her husband.

Marilee McInnis, a spokeswoman for Southwest Airlines, said Friday the company is proud of the pilot, but has not released his name pending his approval.

"We empower our employees to make decisions on behalf of our customers," McInnis said. "While we can't wait for every late customer, we knew he had an extreme family emergency and the pilot specifically decided to wait."

Caden Rogers died the next day, Aurora police said.