

HONOR FLIGHT SOUTH FLORIDA

Highlights of the General Meeting - November 8th, 2017

AN EXCITING WEEK: It's been a very busy, but productive and rewarding stretch since last week's meeting. Honor Flight was at 11 events, filling 110 volunteer shifts, including more than 50 at Sunday's Virtual Honor Flight. Thank you to all who participated especially those who were at three, four, five or more events. Each one of these events -- even on the slow days -- builds awareness about Honor Flight and helps us find and serve more veterans.

The Virtual Honor Flight was a very special day. Fifty older veterans who never would have had a chance to go on our flights to Washington received the full Honor Flight experience. They were treated to refreshments in a luxury suite and saw our own Honor Flight movie. They heard the 13th Army Band play each of their military branch's anthem and heard veterans from World War II, Korea and Vietnam describe their Honor Flight experiences. The veterans then were surprised when they heard their names in mail call for the first time in 70 years. The rain stopped just in time so our traditional airport-style homecoming parade could go outside.

There were also a number of our past Honor Flight veterans and some younger veterans for an afternoon that was also in their honor, plus a good crowd who came to show their appreciation.

On Saturday, there were two big events. A standing room only crowd came to "Cocktails With Heroes" at Papa's Raw Bar in Lighthouse Point to greet and hear seven World War II veterans tell their stories. And the Lauderdale Small Boat Club continued its fundraising campaign on behalf of HFSF with a Veterans Day party, featuring a crepe dinner, silent auction and 50/50 raffle.

Many thanks to the Florida Panthers, BB&T Center, Papa's Raw Bar and the Lauderdale Small Boat Club for your support for Honor Flight and our veterans.

A LETTER OF THANKS: Just how much did the Virtual Flight mean? Check out this letter from Abby Uhl:

"This event was fantastic and I know that facilitating all of the details for the veterans was no easy feat. My dad was so enthused and moved by the program. He was particularly emotional when he received the letters and pictures from the school children in his "mail call" package. He is 91 years old and is visually impaired so I read him the letters and he was able to make out the drawings from the kids.

"Please extend our thanks to the folks that put the video together. It was so very realistic that I learned some things about the experience of coming home after the war. My father further explained

that when he was let off the boat when he was discharged there was no one to provide guidance. You were simply on your own. There was no recognition of the servicemen's efforts at that time, so now that you are doing this hero's welcome so many years later, it really is fantastic."

ANOTHER BIG EVENT TONIGHT (THURSDAY, NOV. 16): Don't forget tonight's fundraiser to benefit Honor Flight from 6-9 p.m., at the North Beach Art Gallery, 3334 NE 34th St., in the Galt Ocean Plaza, Fort Lauderdale. We need a few more volunteers to assist with the silent auction, 50/50 raffle and T-shirt sales. The \$20 donation includes two complimentary beverages, appetizers and live music. There also will be a hula dancer and classic car display. See the attached flyer for more information.

2018 FLIGHTS: As previously announced, the two spring flights are planned for April 14 and June 2. Chairman Rick Asper said that he now thinks Spirit Airlines is closer to agreeing to fly the Honor Flight charters to Reagan National Airport, rather than its usual route to Baltimore-Washington International. A flight to Washington would significantly reduce the bus travel and allow more time at the monuments. Spirit offers a very reasonable charter rate and Rick said it was possible that both spring flights would be with Spirit.

SOLICITING FUNDS: Fundraising is a necessity and challenge for most charities and it certainly is for Honor Flight. While we appreciate everyone's fundraising efforts, Rick reminded that we do not solicit from our Honor Flight veterans and their families. He did say that many of our veterans, on their own, have made generous contributions so that more of their comrades will get to go on flights.

HAPPY THANKSGIVING: It's that special time of year when we realize how much we have to be thankful for. We all do our parts to thank as many veterans as possible who have given us a sense of security that few nations enjoy. The Honor Flight Board is also thankful for all of you who have been so generous with your time and spirit in helping us continue our mission. We have flown approximately 300 veterans again this year and have passed 1,000 on our dozen flights since the first one with 18 in October, 2013. THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

NEXT MEETING: 6:30 p.m., Wednesday, December 6 at Broward College, Davie. Watch www.honorflightsouthflorida.org/calendar/ for possible updates.

-- Tom Christensen, Volunteer coordinator