

HONOR FLIGHT SOUTH FLORIDA

Highlights of the General Meeting - March 29th, 2017

COUNTDOWN TO APRIL 8: Our first flight of 2017 is almost here. There are 77 veterans -- 51 World War II and 26 Korean War vets -- registered for the flight to Washington D.C.

Because of security concerns, there were three terminal changes in the past two weeks. After a series of meetings, Chairman Rick Asper said everything is all set and back to the original plan with Spirit charter flight 1941 departing from Terminal 4 and the return flight and homecoming at Terminal 2.

There is always a strong force of police for our homecomings, but security has been raised significantly since the airport shootings in January. Rick said that Fort Lauderdale airport and Spirit Airlines have again showed their dedication to Honor Flight. He also said he again expects for veterans and guardians to move easily through TSA.

The morning flight is scheduled to depart by 6:30 a.m. and arrive at Baltimore-Washington International at 9 a.m. Veterans are then scheduled to head to the World War II and Korean War memorials, Changing of the Guard at Arlington Cemetery and the group photo at Iwo Jima. Rick has said he is striving for a 5:15 departure from Baltimore with an intended, earlier arrival of 7:45 in Fort Lauderdale.

“GROUND CREW” VOLUNTEERS: We have had an overwhelming number of volunteers sign up for both the early morning check-in shift and evening homecoming celebration. Frankly, there are more volunteers than we can use, so not everyone is going to be called on this time. Assignments will be emailed in the next few days. This is an important part of the entire Honor Flight experience, making sure the day gets off to a smooth start and finishes with a grand celebration. “Yellow shirt” volunteers arrive at 4 a.m. and register and care for veterans. And then the night shift arrives at 5:30 to prepare the terminal, welcome the big homecoming crowd, assist veterans and clean up at the end of the evening. ... Parking vouchers will be available for those volunteers who are working. Go through the hourly lane of the Palm Garage. Take a parking ticket. **DO NOT USE THE SUNPASS LANE.** As you depart, go through a lane with an attendant available.

HOMECOMING: Even if you're not scheduled as part of the “ground crew,” still plan on coming out for homecoming. Ryan Paton has another big celebration planned. For those who have never been to homecoming, this is the emotional highlight of the day -- for the veterans, guardians, volunteers and the thousands who come out to celebrate this moment in living history. Everyone can help -- invite your friends and school groups, Scouts and other organizations. To assist in recruiting people to homecoming, Jim Naskrent has prepared flyers and maps -- www.honorflightsouthflorida.org/homecoming/.

CALLING WORLD WAR II AND KOREAN WAR VETERANS: After the April 8 flight, there are only six World War II veterans and 119 Korean War veterans on our list, so we need to do a lot of recruiting for our other three scheduled flights:

May 20 -- Miami to Reagan National.

Sept. 9 -- Fort Lauderdale to Reagan National with Vietnam veterans serving as Elite Guardians.

Oct. 28 -- Miami to Washington Dulles.

“We're chasing veterans to fill our flights,” Rick said. He said that volunteers should keep track of any veterans they recruit and whoever recruits the most would receive special recognition, possibly a staff seat on a fall flight.

Mike Miskew said presentations are planned at King's Point, Sunrise Lakes and Century Village-Pembroke Pines, all large retirement communities. If you know of a retirement home or association that might be interested in a presentation, email mikemiskew@gmail.com. ... Carol and Bob Filoramo recently gave us a major breakthrough with a presentation in the Keys, which is part of our territory.

Jim Naskrent said that estimates are that the nation is losing 800-1,000 World War II veterans every day and added that “we need everyone's efforts.” ... Mercy Iglesias also said we need more guardians for the May 20 flight. ... “People attending homecoming are at a euphoric high and that's the perfect time to network and recruit,” Jim said.

GET WELL, JED: Rick Asper said that treasurer Jed Wolcott is recovering after being hospitalized. Rick credited Jed with suggesting Honor Flight's association with Eastern Airlines that has resulted in four extremely reasonable charter flights.

FUNDRAISING: Stan Bostic was encouraged by a good turnout of volunteers for a pre-meeting gathering for two major fundraisers. First up, the golf tournament scheduled for August 12. The gala is being rescheduled for October. These are big projects requiring plenty of advance work, promoting the events, registering golfers, recruiting sponsors and finding donations for gift bags and auctions. Check Stan's attached sheet of the many golf duties and email with how you can help -- stanbostic@rickcase.com. Stan is optimistic of recruiting a big-name speaker and entertainer for the gala.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS: Mercy and Emilio Iglesias have planned a fundraiser for Sunday, May 7, noon-9 p.m. at Lincoln's Beard Brewing Co., 7360 SW 41st Street, Miami. Lincoln's Beard is brewing a special beer for the day with proceeds being donated to Honor Flight.

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, April 5, 6:30 p.m., mail call sorting.

-- Tom Christensen, Volunteer coordinator