

HONOR FLIGHT SOUTH FLORIDA

Highlights of the General Meeting - August 30, 2017

Only a little over a week until our next Honor Flight -- Saturday, September 9 out of Fort Lauderdale -- with 27 World War II veterans and 45 Korean War veterans, each accompanied by a Vietnam veteran as an Elite Guardian.

PLATOON 9917: That's the official name for our 72 Elite Guardians flying on 9-9-17. This is a very unique flight with the bonding of three military generations. We are the only hub to have Vietnam veterans serving as the full corps of guardians on a flight. Several guardians, including one who enlisted in the Marines at 15, were in attendance at perhaps our best-attended meeting ever. Tommy Matteo, who received six Purple Hearts, will again serve as ambassador for the Vietnam veterans. Allegiant Flight 1941 will depart Fort Lauderdale at 6:30 a.m. for Baltimore-Washington International. The four buses will head directly to Arlington National Cemetery for the Changing of the Guard, and then on to the World War II and Korean War memorials and the Vietnam Wall before returning to FLL for the big homecoming celebration. Thirty-five soldiers from Fort Meade will be assisting again. This has become such a popular day for the active-duty troops that many have participated several times and there is a competition to see who will get to join us this time.

HOMEcomings: This is a night you won't want to miss. With so many veterans, this homecoming is likely to be the most exciting, emotional ever. Start inviting your friends. It's a great night for families and the veterans always enjoy seeing all the children. There will be entertainment while waiting for Flight 1945, which is scheduled to arrive at Terminal 2 at 8:30. Ryan Paton said he expects at least 25 ranking officers to attend. Several flyers to post on social media are attached. For more information, go to www.honorflightsouthflorida.org/homecoming.

GROUND CREWS: "Yellow shirt" volunteers will be scheduled to arrive at 4 a.m. at FLL Terminal 2. As always, the goal is to make the veterans as comfortable as possible while keeping the boarding process moving. At night, volunteers should arrive at 6:30 to hang posters, set up the parade route and greet all our supporters. And remember after the parade, there is still plenty of work -- cleaning up the terminal and assisting at the curb until the last veteran is picked up. Volunteer assignments will be sent out next week. ... Parking will be provided for volunteers scheduled to work. Take a ticket as you enter the Palm Garage. DO NOT drive through the SunPass lane. You will not be reimbursed for a SunPass charge.

MAIL CALL: Thanks to Carol and Bob Filoramo for again hosting the early mail call sorting. Final sorting will be at next Wednesday's meeting. Mike Miskew said there is a decent amount of mail arriving. With school just resuming, there is little generic mail from students. If you would like to write letters to veterans, please bring them next Wednesday. The more letters the better.

HONOR FLIGHT GALA: The formal military gala -- October 14 at Rick Case Arena at Nova Southeastern University, Davie -- will be the biggest event ever for Honor Flight South Florida. Fundraising chairman Stan Bostic said all the entertainment has been confirmed.

Travel expenses are the only fees for the speakers and entertainers and there is no charge for use of the arena. Still, Stan pleaded for more help, saying "the gala has to be a huge fundraiser" to keep our flight plans ambitious again in 2018. If all sponsorships and tables are sold, there is a potential of making \$200,000, Stan said. There will be radio and TV coverage promoting the gala.

HOW YOU CAN HELP: Chairman Rick Asper challenged everyone to get involved and do what ever they can to make the gala a big success. So what can you do? Start by telling your friends. Invite them to join you -- tickets are \$150 for the full gala, \$1,500 for a table of 10; \$35 for tickets for entertainment only. The big key is selling sponsorships, starting at \$5,000. If you know a possible sponsor but are hesitant to ask yourself, contact Stan Bostic -- stanbostic@rickcase.com. Try to come up with some auction items. Think creative. Special experiences -- restaurants, hotels, tickets -- are always popular. If you have season tickets, consider donating a game or a show for the auction. If you have a time-share you are not able to use, consider making it available for the auction. If you have 80,000 or more sky miles or significant hotel points, consider donating them to help pay travel expenses for the entertainers. Contact Elaine Martin -- fl54@hotmail.com -- if you have miles/points to contribute. (In some cases, you may be eligible for an "in kind" donation.) ... To buy sponsorships, tickets or program ads, go to the website -- www.honorflightsouthflorida.org. On the home page, click on the gala item on the rotating banner of photos. You will find buttons to click for all the information and to make reservations.

WORTH NOTING: Rick Asper and Ryan Paton presented plaques to veterans coordinator Bev Engler and Steve Shapiro, keeper of the Honor Chairs, for their continued dedication to the Honor Flight mission. ... Stan Bostic said he has not yet received information about the Invicta Cruise. ... Joel Bofshever said the Anthony's Pizza event raised approximately \$650. ... Ryan Paton said the Quarterdeck Beer Bash raised nearly \$2,000. ... Robert Mulvaney presented a donation of \$500 from the Brothers of Doric Lodge. ... The Marlins recently hosted 20 Honor Flight veterans, plus volunteers, for a luncheon and Sunday afternoon game.

NEXT MEETING: 6:30 p.m., Wednesday, September 6 at Broward College in Davie -- final flight details for September 9 and final mail call sorting.

-- Tom Christensen, Volunteer coordinator