

HONOR FLIGHT SOUTH FLORIDA

Highlights of the General Meeting - November 1st, 2017

Only a little over a week to our biggest Virtual Honor Flight ever.... but there's plenty of other news also:

BOARD OF DIRECTORS UPDATE: Chairman Rick Asper announced that Jay Wein has been elected to the Board. Jay has been active as a committee chairman, conducting Guardian Training and presentations and assisting in planning flight details. Jim Naskrent has resigned as vice chairman to concentrate on his duties as hub creative/marketing director.

SEPTEMBER 23 FLIGHT IN REVIEW: Rick called the flight "one of our best events ever." With the flight rescheduled from September 9 because of Hurricane Irma, Rick thanked everyone who helped pull off an "incredibly smooth" flight from early morning check-in to a few audibles during the day and an amazing homecoming. He said Allegiant Air and Fort Lauderdale Airport adapted to all the challenges of the quickly rescheduled flight date. ... Because of the extra work to reschedule the September flight, the board decided there wasn't sufficient time and decided to cancel the October 28 flight.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION: Annette Claudio and Marcus Calzada received certificates of recognition for their social media work during flight day and in the weeks since then. They posted photos and interviews with veterans on Facebook during the long flight day. Annette said the posts reached more than 48,000 people and more than 32,000 viewed the interviews. For her contributions, Annette also received volunteer recognition from her employer, Ameriprise Financial, which donated \$250 to Honor Flight. Chairman Asper also noted that there is "a raft of people in this room doing extraordinary things for our veterans."

2018 FLIGHTS: The spring flights are planned for April 14 and June 2. The flights have not yet been contracted, but Rick said Spirit again offers a charter rate much lower than other airlines. This poses a conundrum -- an excellent rate that fits our budget better, but Spirit will only fly to Baltimore-Washington International and we lose about an hour and quarter with more time on the buses. Stay tuned for flight updates.

VIRTUAL HONOR FLIGHT: How big is this day going to be? Just check out the attached photo showing the greeting veterans and guests will see on the Florida Panthers' Jumbotron when they arrive at the BB&T Center on Sunday afternoon, November 12. This is an event that you won't want to miss. Many of us became hooked on Honor Flight when we attended our first homecoming. This will be even bigger -- a special day with the honored guests being World War II, Korean War and Vietnam War veterans who will never be able to go on an Honor Flight because of health or other concerns. We will simulate the Honor Flight experience with a movie showing the day in Washington, a concert by the 13th Army Band and some surprises.

But the day is more than just that. Co-sponsored by the Florida Panthers Foundation, the Virtual Honor Flight will be a salute to all veterans from all eras. Invite your friends. This will be a great afternoon for families, Scout troops and other organizations; also an excellent opportunity for guardians to re-connect with their veterans. The Virtual Flight is open to the public -- admission is free, parking is free and there will be discounted prices at concession stands. Doors open at 1:30 p.m., with the program expected to begin at 2:30. If you know of a veteran who will never be able to attend an actual Honor Flight because of significant health problems and/or physical limitations, please register them at www.virtualhonor-flight.org, as soon as possible. See attached flyer for more information.

.... We need generic mail for "mail call." You will be making a big contribution if you can write some mail. Letters can be typed or hand-written. They don't need to be long, just thankful and respectful. Make extra copies if possible. Deadline for mail is the November 8 meeting.

VOLUNTEERS IN ACTION: We have a good roster of volunteers for the Virtual Honor Flight, but November is always a busy month with a number of Veterans Day-related events. We have volunteers for most events, but need a few for these:

-- Drivers are needed to pick up veterans in Aventura and South Miami for the "Cocktails for Heroes" luncheon on Saturday, November 11 at Papa's Raw Bar in Lighthouse Point. Drivers will receive lunch. See attached flyer. If you can help, contact Ryan Paton -- ryan@capitollg.com.

-- Two volunteers needed to promote Honor Flight and register veterans on November 11 at Sunrise Veterans Day Celebration.

-- Jed Wolcott is requesting donations of auction items -- wine baskets, gift certificates, theater or sports tickets, etc. -- for the fundraiser to benefit Honor Flight at 6 p.m., Thursday, November 16 at North Beach Art Gallery, 3334 NE 34th St., Fort Lauderdale. See attached flyer for more information. If you have items to donate, email jedw@aviation-cpa.com.

PROMOTING HONOR FLIGHT: Jim Naskrent encouraged everyone to keep promoting Honor Flight through Facebook and social media. "We sell emotion," he said. The more we can get people interested in Honor Flight the more veterans we can recruit and the more money we can raise. He said approximately 5,500 unique visitors go to the website each month. While Jim keeps the website updated, he encouraged others to contribute photos and short news stories about any Honor Flight events in which they participate. The more items, the more hits, the more likelihood of attracting more supporters and veterans.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Jed Wolcott said the hub started the year with \$180,000. After three flights, the treasury is down nearly \$50,000 and 2017 likely will be the first year we finish with less money than we started. Jed said the three charter fares averaged \$62,000, a significant jump from previous years. He urged everyone to get creative in seeking new fundraising ideas. "The onus is on all of us to find ways to raise money," he said. Fundraising chairman Stan Bostic said November is "Nonprofit Month," the time when companies start budgeting for donations for 2018. He encouraged everyone to check with benefits managers and promote Honor Flight for donations.

WORTH NOTING: Stan Bostic said he soon expects to announce a new date for the military gala, probably in May. He did not have any updates on the Invicta cruise. Elaine Martin said the "Painting with a Twist" event has been rescheduled for February 7. "Operation Veteran Home Ownership" has special incentives for a new development in Deerfield Beach. Interested veterans can contact Elaine Stevens -- 1-800-229-9792. Veterans eat free on December 7, Pearl Harbor Day, at all Mission BBQ restaurants.

NEXT MEETING: 6:30 p.m., Wednesday, November 8 at Broward College, Davie -- final "mail call" sorting for the Virtual Flight.

-- Tom Christensen, Volunteer coordinator