

HONOR FLIGHT SOUTH FLORIDA

Highlights of the General Meeting - December 6, 2017

HONORING ONE OF OUR FIRST VETERANS: Buddy Galvin, who was one of 16 veterans on our first Honor Flight in October, 2013, died on November 21 at 96. Buddy was so excited about that first flight that he wanted to be a paying guardian, said Rich Georgi, who was Buddy's guardian. Rich described the "impactful relationship" that they developed in the following four years. Buddy became a terrific ambassador for our hub, speaking at many events and schools. Jim Naskrent remembered Buddy as having "the magic of communicating with teenagers."

SPRING FLIGHTS: The dates are set -- April 14 out of Fort Lauderdale and June 2 out of Miami. Chairman Rick Asper is finalizing plans with both flights expected to arrive at Reagan National, just a short drive to the monuments on the National Mall and Arlington National Cemetery.

NEW DATE, NEW PLACE FOR MILITARY GALA: Fundraising chairman Stan Bostic had a major announcement with new plans for the gala that was postponed in October because of Hurricane Irma. Stan said the City of Pembroke Pines is donating its new Charles F. Dodge City Center, which he called an "awesome facility"; photo attached. The gala is now scheduled for Saturday, June 23.

The City Center can seat 1,300 for dinner, as compared with 375 that would have been available in the previously scheduled gala at Nova Southeastern. With the larger capacity, Stan said that tickets are likely to be cheaper than the \$150 that was previously charged. Even with cheaper tickets, Stan said there was the potential that the gala could raise enough money to sponsor four flights, if all tickets are sold, plus revenue from sponsorships and the silent auction. There will be additional seating for the entertainment with Stan saying there will be a major headliner.

"This will require some severe volunteerism," Stan said. "We need full engagement of all volunteers."

The gala is being planned as the big finale to highlight a full day of appreciation for veterans, according to Stan and Pembroke Pines Commissioner Iris Siple.

MORE FUNDRAISING: Elaine Martin and Kim Coulter are leading a team of volunteers at Sunday's Toys in the Sun Run at Markham Park. Thousands of motorcycles will be pouring into the park at this traditional event. Many veterans are expected to participate. Honor Flight will have a tent and be selling military, patriotic and Honor Flight T-shirts and caps. Elaine said registrations are being accepted for the Painting with a Twist night on February 7. You can register with Passcode "1941" at www.paintingwithatwist.com/studio/davie/event/1181950.

The cost is \$35. The studio is located at 5810 S. University Drive, #106, Davie.

VIRTUAL HONOR FLIGHTS: Our hub added to its reputation for its Virtual Flights with some big help from the Florida Panthers on November 12. Fifty veterans, who would never have been able to go on an actual flight, received the full Honor Flight experience without ever having to go on a plane. "The Panthers embraced Honor Flight in a big way," Chairman Rick said. "These veterans felt the same love and appreciation as those who go on a regular flight." The Panthers also are hosting a night to honor World War II women veterans at Saturday's game. A committee is working with Broward Schools on confirming another Virtual Flight, probably on February 8. Final details will be coming soon.

TOYS FOR TOTS: Elite Guardian and Vietnam Marine veteran Gunny Lou Slagle thanked volunteers for their donations to Toys for Tots. Gunny, who coordinates toy distribution in the Keys, says he usually arranges delivery to 7,000 children but has 20,000 on his list after the destruction of Hurricane Irma. Gunny said the Marines have distributed approximately 500 million toys during the 70 years of Toys for Tots. Also thanks to all who provided cookies and treats for the year-end meeting.

FIRST MEETINGS OF 2018: 6:30 p.m., Wednesdays, January 3 and 17 at Broward College, Davie. You can register for meeting announcements at www.honorflightsouthflorida.org/calendar/. Watch for possible updates.

FINAL THOUGHT ON 2017: Thank you to everyone who has helped make 2017 such a great year for Honor Flight South Florida. We have flown 300 veterans, including our Elite Guardians, and honored more at our Virtual Flights. The amount of details in putting together a flight day, a Virtual Flight, a fundraiser or many other events can sometimes seem overwhelming. We are all volunteers. There will be no raises or bonuses again this year. Our reward is seeing all those happy faces at the airport -- the veterans coming off the plane and all our loyal supporters, especially the children receiving a valuable history lesson. You are all part of a great team and your efforts are much appreciated.

Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Happy Holidays, Happy New Year.... And then let's all try to recruit some veterans and make 2018 even a greater year.

Thank you,
Tom Christensen, volunteer coordinator