

News from the Front Lines

VETERANS HONOR FLIGHT OF ND/MN

August 2024

Spring 2024 Honor Flight by the Numbers



USAF Veteran Stephen Bulat and USN Veteran Kenneth Brogren, Jr. pictured at the USMC Veterans War Memorial

The 2024 travel season kicked off with a triumphant BANG in May! 104 of our community's heroes and 42 of their dedicated escorts were treated to the trip of a lifetime by our team of 44 volunteers/medical staff/media members, touring our nation's capital for 2.5 days.

While in Washington, DC,

Veterans visited the National Museum of the US Army, World War II Memorial, US Marine Corps War Memorial, the National Archives, US Navy Memorial and Museum, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, Military Women's Memorial, the Changing of the Guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier within Arlington National Cemetery, US Air Force Memorial, Lincoln Memorial, Korean War Veterans Memorial, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and finally, Fort McHenry ... whew! We're still catching our breath after that wonderful whirlwind!

Along the way, 60 wheelchairs were loaded onto and then off of and then back onto the buses 28 times. 1,720 meals were served over the course of the three days and countless bottles of water were passed out.

Extra gear in the way of

blankets, rain ponchos, changes of clothes, candy, snacks, chocolate chip cookies, paperwork, medical supplies, and recording equipment was handled several times per day.

Schoolchildren and caring adults would stop our Veterans while touring to express their thoughtful gratitude and show their support. Active duty military we encountered along the way paid their respects in the most reverent and stoic ways they allowed. Everywhere we traveled we met ardent supporters.

Hearts and old wounds were healed and new bonds were formed ... and that's something none of us will ever forget!

The Spring 2024 trip for Veterans Honor Flight of ND/MN will again go down as an incredible opportunity shared by the most worthy folks our area is lucky to call their own.

Special points of interest:

- VETERANS HONOR FLIGHT OF ND/MN WAS FOUNDED IN 2015
- SINCE ITS CREATION, APPROXIMATELY 2,087 VETERANS OF THE RED RIVER VALLEY AREA HAVE BEEN FLOWN TO WASHINGTON, DC
- HONOR FLIGHTS ARE ALWAYS EXPENSE-FREE FOR OUR VETERANS

Get to Know One of Our Flight Veterans

In the early weeks of 1967, Colin "Coby" Barstad knew Uncle Sam would be calling him soon. He had an early draft number and was certain that if he waited for his call-up he'd likely find himself in harm's way regularly.

Rather than being drafted into the Army, he decided to

take control of his fate. He had decided to drive to Minot, North Dakota to speak with the US Air Force recruiter to enlist. However, when he got there, he found a note on their door letting him know that no one was in the office at that time. Without missing a beat, (cont'd on next page)



US Navy Radioman, Colin "Coby" Barstad of Sheyenne, ND served in both the Navy and the North Dakota National Guard

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(cont'd from page 1) he went across the hall and enlisted in the US Navy instead!

Shortly thereafter he was on his way to training for the next chapter in his life's story.

After meeting and making many lifelong friends in the early days of his time in the Navy (one of which would later stand up at his wedding as his Best Man), Coby was headed across the Pacific en route to Vietnam.

A Radioman aboard an LST (tank landing ship), Coby was responsible for sending and receiving communications to and from their watercraft. Regularly, they'd haul supplies to and from Da Nang to

either Chu Lai or Cua Viet. Periodically, a supply run to Okinawa would also take place.

While overseas, Coby says they were within close range of mortar fire while the battleship USS New Jersey provided cover assistance, all of which was rather unsettling. Another time, their LST rescued a downed Marine fighter jet pilot and pulled him out of the water. That experience was both rattling and thrilling at the same time.

On his final trans-Pacific sailing, Coby's time in the Navy was up. He caught a flight from Guam back to California to begin his discharge.

Throughout the reintegration process, Coby and his comrades were instructed on what had been transpiring stateside since the last time they were home. For their own safety, all military members were told to

wear civilian clothes and not display anything identifying them as members of the armed forces, should they choose to fly home out of the San Francisco Airport. Doing so was for their own safety as there were many protestors posted up there, and their messaging was in no way supportive of the work they'd done.



Coby thoroughly enjoyed his Honor Flight experience

Coby was confused ... he hadn't done anything wrong or committed any crimes. Why were his fellow countrymen turning their backs on him and his comrades? That confusion led to anger and hurt. This wasn't how it was supposed to be. Nonetheless, he followed their orders and went home in plain clothes.

For the next 50+ years, Coby would wrestle with the anger he felt over his return. When Veterans Honor Flight of ND/MN opened applications to Vietnam Veterans, he applied, thinking the trip sounded like fun. What he couldn't have expected was the healing that would come with his experience.

Upon landing at the airport in Baltimore, MD, a crowd of travelers had stopped to cheer and welcome our heroes to town. All those years later, Coby and his comrades were finally being welcomed home.

After a whirlwind tour of our nation's capital, the welcome home reception at the airport in Fargo was even more incredible!

The therapeutic side effects of our Honor Flight trips are unmatched, especially for our Vietnam Veterans. We are so very grateful people like Coby have placed their trust in us and that their expectations have been wildly exceeded.



Coby's family celebrate him at the Fargo airport homecoming

"THE ANGER I HARBORED FOR OVER 50 YEARS MELTED AWAY THE MINUTE WE LANDED IN BALTIMORE."

-COLIN "COBY" BARSTAD

Spring Flower Fundraiser Sends Six Veterans to Washington, DC



Judy and Kevin Mahoney, Community Ambassadors, show off some of their gorgeous flowers for sale

The Alexandria community really showed up for our heroes this spring!

Over Mother's Day weekend, hanging baskets and potted geraniums lined the parking lot at Lake Country Meats, waiting to beautify new homes.

Before we could even unload the racks, shoppers were chomping at the bit to find the prettiest petunias and the best

begonias ... the daintiest of daisies and the most impressive impatiens. By the time the sale concluded 347 splashes of color were en route to their new homes and Veterans Honor Flight of ND/MN would be the recipient of approximately \$10,000 in proceeds ... more than enough to put six Veterans on the next plane.

Our Alexandria Community

Ambassadors are looking forward to doing it all over again in the fall when the mums and autumnal arrangements roll out. Kevin Mahoney, Alexandria Community Ambassador, said "Each year our flower fundraisers get bigger and bigger. Alexandrians love their Veterans and really love to support this fundraising event!"

Meet a Veterans Honor Flight of ND/MN Volunteer

David Brunsvold, Treasurer, bleeds red, white, and blue. A Vietnam Veteran and member of many Veterans' groups (American Legion Post 21 and VFW Post 1223 in Moorhead, as well as VVA Chapter 941 and AMVETS Post 7 in Fargo), if he's not doing something that benefits the greater military family, it's rare.

While in the Army, David was a Personnel Specialist with HHC, 2nd Armored Div. at Fort Hood, Texas in the G3 Operations. When it was time for him to head overseas to Vietnam, he was the Company Clerk with HHC, 101st. Airborne Div., Camp Eagle. By late 1970, his service was ending and he was headed back to the Red River

Valley — the place he's called home his entire civilian life.

For many years after the military he worked for the Hornbacher's company as a Produce Specialist and now spends some time with Corwin Toyota.

In 2015, David began volunteering for Veterans Honor Flight of ND/MN and soon thereafter moved onto the Board of Directors. Numbers have always been his thing and minding the bank accounts has been a perfect fit for his strengths.

He says, "As a Vietnam Veteran, I consider all of our Veterans my family. It is an honor to take them to Washington, DC to and

tour the Memorials dedicated to their service, plus the many other sights we visit."

David is a father of two beautiful daughters, Sarah and Sandy, as well as an incredible son, David. He is also a very proud grandfather to six, including one of the Minnesota Army National Guard's newest soldiers. Spending time with his large

family has always meant the world to him. He also enjoys golfing and playing pinocle.



*David Brunsvold
Treasurer*

**"SEEING OUR VETERANS' FACES
WHEN WE RETURN HOME
FROM A TRIP WILL LIVE WITH
ME FOREVER."**

-DAVID BRUNSVOLD, TREASURER

Request: Wheelchair Sponsors Needed

The flights happening this fall and next spring will be packed full of Veterans — two plane-loads of them each time! As such, we need to increase our wheelchair fleet to make sure everyone is safe while touring.

Sponsors of wheelchairs are currently in demand. For \$150, individuals or businesses can

fund one of the 40 regular-sized chairs we need to obtain, or for \$350, one of the ten larger-sized chairs.

Checks should be made out to "Veterans Honor Flight of ND/MN" with "wheelchair" in the memo line and mailed to our PO Box (on page 6). Similarly, online submissions via

our website can be made with "wheelchair" added in the Special Instructions field.

If you would like more information about wheelchair sponsorship, please contact Bob Gregor, Director, at 218.979.1035.



Make Plans to Join Us at the Fargo-Moorhead RedHawks Game!



Board Members LuAnn McDonald, David Brunsvold, and Tod Ganje enjoy a night out with the RedHawks

We're not ready to let go of summer just yet! Later this month, we'll be cheering on the local American Association of Professional Baseball minor league team, the Fargo-Moorhead RedHawks, while raising much needed funds for our fall series of Veterans Honor Flight of ND/MN trips.

Join us on Saturday, August 25 at Newman Outdoor Field for

the game and enjoy a jersey auction sponsored by Van Dam Financial, fun giveaways, extra contests and prizes, and more! Watch as someone close to our organization will toss out the first pitch, cheer for the hometown team, and rally your friends and family so we can show those Sioux Falls Canaries who's in charge!

FMREDHAWKS.COM

A portion of all tickets sold for the August 25 game will also benefit Veterans Honor Flight of ND/MN. We hope to see you out at the ballfield and celebrate a wonderful summer together!

Special consideration by American Crystal Sugar has helped make this event possible.

Know Before You Go — Luggage Requirements



*Duffle bags gifted to each Veteran.
Medical devices need not fit inside.*

Each of our flying Veterans is gifted a beautiful, spacious duffle bag (courtesy of American Legion Post 21 in Moorhead) to pack their personal effects in for their trip. The bags are color coded by bus assignments and have luggage tags meant to be personalized. It's critical that each of our Veterans uses these specific bags for our flight.

Because of the extensive amount of gear we shuttle to Washington, DC, we are very limited on space for luggage and can not accommodate checked or roller-style bags.

Additionally, there are times when our Veterans' luggage will be in the capable hands of our trained volunteers and need to be moved swiftly.

Knowing which bus a particular piece of baggage belongs on at a glance is crucial.

As you're gearing up for your trip, please remember that packing your things in your Veterans Honor Flight of ND/MN duffle bag is required.

Add a bright ribbon, handle cover, or tag to your bag for easy identifying.

All Flight Applications Have Moved Online

IF THIS SOUNDS LIKE YOU:

You served anywhere, in any branch, and in any component (Active, Reserve, or National Guard) before May 7, 1975 or are a terminally ill Veteran of the above.

AND YOU LIVE IN THIS AREA:



THEN APPLY HERE!



Veterans Honor Flight of ND/MN has taken a leap into the technological future! In May, we shifted the pool of paper applications to an online format and away from handwritten copies. Doing so will not only save physical space (there are almost 900 applications

already in the stack, just waiting for their call-up!), it will also streamline our processes, eliminate potential challenges, and keep data secure.

Along with this shift, some of the information we've previously needed (advanced

health care directive, Living Will) are no longer required.

All applicants will be able to edit their information online with ease in the case of a move, new medical diagnosis, or otherwise.

We understand

change can be hard ... this is one that's very exciting, however! And best yet, all previous paper applications have already been captured.

For more information about eligibility, please visit:

VETERANSHONORFLIGHTOFNDMN.ORG/ELIGIBILITY

Flight Medics Provide Unparalleled Experience

Our hub is unique in regard to the attention to medical care and safety we provide our Veterans while touring.

Awhile back we decided to utilize providers from the Fargo VA Health Care System. The relationship between VA providers and our most precious cargo (our Veterans) is a key advantage to ensuring the safest experience possible.

Each flight is staffed with doctors, mental health providers, and respiratory therapists. In the case of a special diagnosis, we implement appropriate personnel assignments. Our team analyzes each Veteran's health conditions and is prepared to care for each.

Just like in your military days, our medics can be recognized by their special uniforms —

red shirts and first aid backpacks.

From headaches to knee scrapes, from glucose checks to dehydration, and from falls to oxygen tanks, our staff is ready if medical attention is needed. For any questions about your health while on our flight, please contact Jane Matejcek, President, at 701.238.7749.



Dr. Kevin Mork, provides a wheelchair ride for Army Veteran James Mork of Grand Forks while touring

How You Can Help — Become Community Ambassadors



Kevin and Judy Mahoney

While her husband was stationed at the Fargo US Army Recruiting Station in March 2017, Macaille Mahoney Hafner began volunteering for Veterans Honor Flight of ND/MN. She instantly fell in love with the work we do and encouraged her Alexandria resi-

dent parents to join her for the homecoming celebration of the next returning flight.

They too quickly became hooked ... though living 100 miles away, realized they wouldn't be able to attend and work many events in the Fargo-Moorhead area on a regular basis.

That inspired the Mahoneys to bring our mission a little closer to home. While arranging Honor Flight trips out



Tim Urness, Macaille Mahoney Hafner, and Kevin Mahoney

of Alexandria was not feasible, certainly they thought they could pull together some fundraising events and start raising awareness in their own community. After recruiting their friend, Tim Urness, and encouraging their daughter (who had since been rotated out of the Red River Valley when Uncle

Sam called her husband to his next post) to come back to help as often as possible, the Alexandria Community Ambassadors were born.

With the periodic help of other townsfolk, Kevin, Judy, Tim, and Macaille have been responsible for several fundraisers over the years, bringing in over \$75,000 and speaking to a myriad of folks and Veterans about the work we do.

If you live within our hub's boundaries (see page 4) and are ready to make your area the next Community Ambassadorship, we'd love to speak with you. Contact Lori Ishaug, Vice President, at 701.361.6972 to learn more about the rewarding opportunity to bring Veterans Honor Flight of ND/MN a little closer to home.

Request: Silent Auction Items for Future Events



Attendees got into a bidding war over this cute coffee bar

Many of our fundraiser events feature silent auctions alongside the main event(s).

Our raving fans have been so supportive of our missions over the years and have really come to enjoy the bouquets of adult beverages, tickets to sporting events or concerts, autographed memorabilia, handcrafted items, and more!

At times, smaller items are grouped together to make themed baskets like the coffee bar pictured left ... other times, items stand on their own. Our silent auctions run the gamut!

If you have items you'd like to donate to future silent auctions, please reach out to Aubrey Ketterling, Volunteer, at aubreyketterling@gmail.com.



This adult beverage tackle box was a hit!

Insider Trip Secrets — Mythbusting Stories about the Tomb Guards

At some point in your life you were likely the recipient of an email or have seen a story posted on social media that tells the tale of how strict the soldiers who are assigned to guard the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier are expected to live. We hate to burst any bubbles ... but that email/social media post was mostly false.

On two previous trips, our Veterans were fortunate to be treated to a keynote speech from Staff Sergeant John Massey, a Tomb Guard with the 3rd Inf. Reg. A proud father of two, he shared with us that despite a very precise job and pristine appearance, soldiers in "The Old Guard" are not bound to a lifetime of harsh restrictions from things like alcohol and

adult language nor must they remain celibate.

That's not to say that they don't lead a professional life ... they are the face of the US Army's state funerals, Honor Guard, and other federal ceremonies of the highest regard, after all. He reminded our group that not everything we read on the Internet is true and helped to

set the record straight for our esteemed crowd.



SSG Massey on duty at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier



VETERANS HONOR FLIGHT OF ND/MN

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Veterans Honor Flight of ND/MN is a non-profit organization created solely to honor America's Red River Valley Veterans for their sacrifice to our grateful nation. We are accepting applications from WWII, Korean War, and Vietnam War Veterans. Applications can be found on our website. Flights occur in the spring and fall of each year, pending adequate fundraising.

We are a 100% volunteer, 501(c)(3) charity.

Join Us at Future Events!



*Give one of our Meat Raffles a try
— winners go home with dinner!*

Every Monday (no holidays) in
2024 — 5:30pm Meat Raffle at
Speck's Bar in Fargo, ND

August 10 — 3:00pm Liberty &
BBQ for All at the American Le-
gion Post 15 in Detroit Lakes, MN



*Gorgeous fall mums will be avail-
able in Alexandria and Moorhead*

August 11 — 8:00am Fly-In
Breakfast Event at Mahnomen
County Airport in Mahnomen, MN

August 25 — 4:00pm Jersey Day
at the Fargo-Moorhead
RedHawks game at Newman
Outdoor Field in Fargo, ND



*Custom jerseys, prizes and fun at
the RedHawks Jersey Day game*

Every-other Wednesday begin-
ning in September — 5:30pm
Meat Raffle at Wild Rice Bar &
Grill in Wild Rice, ND

September 6 & 7 — All day Fall
Flower Fundraiser at Lake Coun-
try Meats in Alexandria, MN

September 6 & 7 — All day Fall
Flower Fundraiser at Midtown
Tavern in Moorhead, MN



*Bowling for Veterans is a crazy
good time filled with prizes*

September 24 — 6:30pm
(Alpha) and 7:00pm (Bravo) Hon-
or Flight Homecoming at Hector
International Airport in Fargo, ND

September 29 — 10:00am Hon-
or Flight Golf Tourney at Leonard
Country Club in Leonard, ND

October 26 — All day Bowling
for Veterans at Sunset Lanes in
Moorhead, MN

November 9 — 1:00pm Oh Deer!
Purse Bingo at TAK Music Venue
in Dilworth, MN



*Purse Bingo is such a fun time
and a fabulous way to up your
handbag game!*