

February 7, 2011

Super Bowl party raises money for Honor Flights

By Liz Welter

Marshfield News-Herald

Twin passions brought a crowd Sunday night to the Marshfield Knights of Columbus Hall, 400 W. Upham St. Fans were there to share in the thrill of watching their beloved Green Bay Packers battle for the Super Bowl title and to raise funds for the Never Forgotten Honor Flights.

"We love football. But this is even better than watching the Packers because we're also supporting the Honor Flights," said Sonia Cook, of Stratford, about the tailgate party sponsored by the Marshfield Knights of Columbus.

The Never Forgotten Honor Flights set for April 1 and May 2 will carry about 200 World War II veterans to Washington, D.C., to visit the memorial that honors their military service. The flights are all-expense-paid trips organized by Mike Thompson of Junction City and Jim Campbell Jr. of Rib Mountain.

"Someday, I really hope my dad gets to go on one of the flights. They're making sure all of the World War II vets go first, and then it'll be the Korean War veterans, which is my dad," Cook said.

Jordy Nelson made a leaping catch for a 29-yard touchdown, and the Cook family screamed. And they leapt from their seats and high-fived each other as Nick Collins intercepted a pass and returned it 37 yards for a touchdown.

"It's great to see all these people here. It's things like this that are raising the funds so that we can keep these flights going," Thompson said. There's an urgency to organizing the flights because most of the area's 14,000 World War II veterans are in their late 80s and early 90s.

Besides giving all veterans an opportunity to see the Washington, D.C., memorial, the flights also serve to recognize the tremendous sacrifices of the men and women who served the country.

"It was a wonderful day," Lawrence Pankratz of Marshfield said about participating in the Oct. 4 Honor Flight. A Knights of Columbus member, Pankratz served in the South Pacific throughout World War II.

Besides seeing the World War II Memorial, the group traveled by bus to see many of the city's war memorials and Arlington National Cemetery, Pankratz said.

"They're doing a very noble thing," Jacob Grzywacz said about the Honor Flights. As a military veteran and Mosinee Knights of Columbus member, Grzywacz said he's proud to support Honor Flight fundraisers.

"It's fine time that we started thanking the veterans for the job they've done and thanking the ones for the work they are doing and that they will do in the future," Grzywacz said. "It's because of (veterans) that we can enjoy days like today -- that we have the freedoms we have."

Watching the crowd whoop and holler with the Packers brought a large grin to event organizer Jack

Schmidkamp's face.

"Oh, this is really nice. Everyone is having a good time, and we're raising some money for the Honor Flights," he said.

To learn more about the Never Forgotten Honor Flights, go to www.neverforgottenhonorflight.com.
