

Dear friend of the Never Forgotten Honor Flight,

The Never Forgotten Honor Flight has been flying veterans to Washington DC to see the memorials built in their honor since April 27, 2010. Not many people know that that first flight almost didn't happen.

Mike Thompson and Jim Campbell had met at the Relocation Bar on Veteran's Day, November 11, 2009 for a fish fry, a beer, and discussion about the possibility of starting an Honor Flight for the Wausau area. They put together a budget of \$80,000 and set about to put together a 12-person Board of Directors, and to recruit 100 WWII veterans, 50 guardians to care for the veterans, and about 60 volunteers to help with a pre-flight dinner and help the vets get on and off the airplane.

All of this in 5 months, to a community that mostly had never even heard of an Honor Flight. They had a big vision, but not much else.

Shortly after making a Public Service Announcement at the VFW that was aired on local TV stations, they were contacted by a WWII veteran, offering to sponsor the first flight. The co-founders were ecstatic, and the fledgling board began to work on the logistics. Then the donor met with his financial advisor, who determined that we were not yet a 501c3, so he could not use the donation as a tax write-off. He needed to withdraw his generous offer.

That left the Board in a real pickle.

On the night that the Board found out that the offer was rescinded, our Board Secretary couldn't sleep because of our cash dilemma, so he sent an email to the Board members at 3:00am suggesting that we postpone our April 27<sup>th</sup> flight date until the funds could be raised. Mike Thompson couldn't sleep that night either, and he replied to the Board that we are losing 1,000 WWII veterans per day nationwide and we can't wait a day longer. April 27, 2010 stands! Many of the other Board members replied early that morning as well and concurred that we move ahead for an April flight.

Mike knew that guardian fees would raise \$25,000, and that we were anticipating a major fundraiser from Kwik Trip and a sizable donation from the Alexander Foundation. If those things didn't cover the costs of that first flight, Jim and Mike were willing to mortgage their houses in order to make up the difference.

Trying to squeeze every nickel, we even thought of charging our TV newscaster \$500 for flying with us to report on our first mission. Our Board member in charge of advertising convinced us to let media fly for free, as we would receive press that would put us on the map for recruiting vets, guardians, volunteers, and for raising money. And boy was he right. A snowflake turned into an avalanche of support from all corners of our area with support from businesses, individuals, schools, civic organizations, foundations, guardians, veterans and their families.

We created a PowerPoint presentation, and Mike and Jim have presented it 276 times to date. Other Board members have given many presentations as well. So far we have flown 46 missions to Washington DC, giving 4,399 WWII, Korea, and Vietnam Veterans the "Trip of a Lifetime" to see the memorials built in their honor.

Thank you for your generous support of our veterans. Here's a look at our scoreboard as it stands before the spring flights:

Veterans flown				Waiting list			
WWII	Korea	Vietnam	Total	WWII	Korea	Vietnam	Total
1,045	1,247	2,107	4,399	1	15	762	778

For the heroes,



Ken Moberg  
 President  
 Never Forgotten Honor Flight

