



For Immediate Release

May 5, 2011

FINAL HONOR FLIGHT DEPARTS ON FRIDAY

BISMARCK, ND – Roughrider Honor Flight (RRHF) will lead its fifth and final group of World War II (WWII) veterans to Washington, D.C., on Friday, May 6, to visit the National WWII Memorial. The return flight will touchdown at the Bismarck Airport at 8:40 p.m. on Saturday, May 7. The public is encouraged to come to the airport that evening to thank the veterans for their service.

“When I agreed to chair this effort, I knew there would be a first flight and I was pretty sure there would be a second. I was amazed when we began organizing the fifth flight,” said Kevin Cramer, RRHF committee chair. “We made the commitment to do this as long as there was a local WWII veteran able and ready to go.”

Upon their return, the Bismarck Hub will have exhausted its waiting list, having escorted more than 500 veterans. An additional 800 veterans traveled on flights originating in Fargo and Grand Forks.

One of the most interesting things RRHF committee members hear from veterans’ family members after an honor flight is how their loved ones open up about their service experiences. “All of a sudden, they come to life and are sharing their stories,” Cramer said. “That has been rich, because with that sharing comes a first-hand experience with history.”

In addition to visiting the WWII memorial, the RRHF veterans see the Lincoln, Vietnam, Korean and Iwo Jima memorials. They also tour the Arlington National Cemetery where they observe the changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknowns.

The WWII memorial pays homage to the 16 million Americans who served during the campaign. The monument was not completed until 2004, and most of the war’s veterans never had the opportunity to visit the site. Of the 69,000 men and women from North Dakota who served during the campaign, it is estimated that only a couple thousand are still alive.

“It has been a privilege to honor the courageous actions of these humble servicemen and women,” said Cramer. “And, our committee members are grateful for the support we have received.”

The cost of each previous RRHF trip was approximately \$165,000, all funded by corporate and private sector donations. Because of rising fuel prices and the size of the final flight - more than 125 veterans will participate - the cost is approaching \$200,000.

RRHF is part of the Honor Flight Network, a program conceived in 2004 by Earl Morse, a physician assistant and retired Air Force captain. Currently, more than 100 Honor Flight Hubs across the country are actively working to provide their local veterans with a similar opportunity.

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Media Notes:

- RRHF Chair Kevin Cramer can be contacted for media comments at (701) 220-6368.
- Veteran interviews can be arranged by contacting Sarah Mudder at (701) 391-7630 or sarahmudder@yahoo.com.
- High-resolution JPEG images taken by a professional photographer during the RRHF trips are available. There is no charge for use of the images. Contact Sarah Mudder for details.