

Honor Flight Northern Colorado

With Joy gleaming in his eyes Stan Cass, Director of Honor Flight Northern Colorado, began to tell the story of how this outstanding organization came to be.

The Honor Flight Network originated in Ohio where founder Earl Morse began a small effort that would soon become nearly nation-wide. Morse was a retired serviceman who worked with World War II veterans in Ohio. When the WWII Memorial was completed in Washington, D.C. in 2004, Morse began to ask other veterans if they were going to go see their memorial. When he heard them say they may never see it because it was too far away, he decided to do something about it.

Morse was a private pilot and he began flying five or six veterans at a time to see the memorial in Washington, D.C. After a few trips, he began asking other pilot friends to do the same. One thing led to another, and in 2005, the National Honor Flight network was born.

The Honor Flight network is a program that allows WWII veterans to travel to Washington, D.C. free of charge to see their monument. Cass first heard about Honor Flight from his daughter in Pensacola, Florida. She sent him an article about the Honor Flight hub there. Reading the article inspired Cass to create an Honor Flight hub in Northern Colorado.

As an active member of the Community Foundation's board, Cass was able to secure the Foundation's cooperation as a fund holder for Honor Flight Northern Colorado. Cass called Morse and other hub directors to get more information on all that Honor Flight requires. He then completed the necessary paperwork, took out insurance, and made all other necessary arrangements to begin the operations of Honor Flight Northern Colorado.

Once Cass started advertising, the response from veterans interested in making the trip was immediate and so large, he decided to charter two planes to accommodate this huge group of excited veterans. The inaugural flight of Honor Flight Northern Colorado transported 212 veterans along with 80 guardians to our nation's capitol to see the memorial built in their honor. The trip was such an outstanding event that National Honor Flight President Earl Morse flew out to go along and witness the great event.

After the first flight, Cass decided to continue the trips with just one larger plane at a time. Now, Honor Flight Northern Colorado takes two trips per year, one in April and one in September. Each flight transports 120 veterans along with plenty of guardians to the memorial. The flight takes two days. The veterans arrive at the Embassy Suites in Loveland around seven in the morning where they are greeted with a grand reception including coffee, food, and music. They pile into buses and are accompanied by police and motorcycle escorts all the way to the charter facility in Denver. They take off around ten in the morning and land in Washington, D.C. three and a half hours later. Upon arrival in Washington, D.C., they travel to their hotel and relax until evening when they head down to the banquet hall for the presentation of the colors, a performance of the National Anthem, a message from a speaker, dinner, and time to socialize.

They get an early start the next morning when they travel to the WWII Memorial to spend a couple of hours admiring the beautiful sight created in their honor. They also visit other memorials including the Air Force Memorial, Iwo Jima, the Korean War Memorial, the Vietnam War Memorial, and the Lincoln Memorial.

At the end of a long and exciting day, the Veterans are transported back to the airport to board the plane and fly back to Denver where they are received with a grand reception of flag waving, applause, and music to honor their bravery and heroism in service to our great nation. They board the buses once more and are transported safely back to the Embassy Suites in Loveland where they are greeted by friends and family. Such a wonderful trip is well deserved by these brave and courageous men and women who so selflessly served their nation in order to preserve the freedoms we all cherish today.

This wonderful operation would not be possible without the support that Honor Flight Northern Colorado receives from the Community Foundation. The Foundation receives all donations made to Honor Flight Northern Colorado. They send out all the necessary tax receipts and handle all paperwork surrounding the donations they receive. They make it very easy for Cass and the other members of Honor Flight Northern Colorado's board to have the donations sent where they need to go to make the arrangements for each flight. The President of the Community Foundation, Judy Knapp, even volunteered along with her husband to be among the guardians assisting with the inaugural flight in September of 2008.

The goal of Honor Flight Northern Colorado is to continue to make two flights per year for as long as there is money to fund the operation, and veterans who are willing and able to make the trip. This remarkable organization, along with the Community Foundation, is dedicated to taking every World War II veteran in Northern Colorado who is able to the memorial that was built in their honor, and they will continue to work hard to reach that goal.

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