

Tallahassee Honor Flight

Honor Flight is an organization and program that began in 2005 with the mission of getting veterans to Washington D.C. that have never had the opportunity to visit the war memorials there. Priority is given to World War II and Korean War veterans, but veterans from any war can go if they have a terminal disease. The main idea is to provide a free, escorted trip to veterans to experience the monuments that have been erected in their honor and to directly honor their service to the nation. There are currently over 100 Honor Flight Hubs in 38 states. There is no hub in Tallahassee currently.

There are many veterans from World War II and Korea in the Panhandle area that would qualify for a free flight on Honor Flight. These veterans are currently not served by a hub for them to experience this event. There were sixteen million men and women that served in WWII and less than three million of them are still alive today. They are dying at a rate of about one thousand every day nationwide. The time is now to act to provide the Honor Flight opportunity in our area for our veterans.

We are proposing that Leon County EMS (LCEMS), in conjunction with others in the community support an Tallahassee Honor Flight Hub. LCEMS could provide invaluable medical help during the flights in the form of Paramedics that would accompany each flight with equipment to provide emergency care if needed. Veterans of WWII currently run from age 84 to over 100. This segment of the population has many serious medical issues and many would need constant monitoring to make such a trip to Washington D.C. successful. We are proposing that LCEMS and Leon County would become a partner by helping to form the Board of Honor Flight here in Tallahassee, work out details of operations, provide any logistical details possible, and provide the medical personnel on each flight as we proceed. The costs to Leon County would be minimal, but the rewards to all would be tremendous.

The first step would be to form a Board of community leaders and interested parties and register with national Honor Flight. From there organizational meetings would need to take place and fund raising would be established. Many policies and procedures have already been established by the national Honor Flight and other hub directors would be available to provide expertise to us to get started. In initial meetings to look into the possibilities of starting a hub here, Royce Ard, Hub Director from Columbus, GA has volunteered to mentor us through the process and work with us through our first flight. A local citizen, Rob Doll is also working to make the Tallahassee hub a reality.

Many groups in the community would need to become involved. Veterans groups, the County Director of Veterans Affairs, associations, clubs, private businesses, government agencies, and individuals would all need to have the opportunity to participate and donate time and money to the effort. Leon County would be one of those participants and a founding member of the local hub.

We would like permission to proceed with this very worthwhile project to establish a Honor Flight hub here in Leon County and include LCEMS personnel in that effort. The first anticipated flight would be in the spring of 2011. There of course would be a lot of very positive publicity for our participation, but even more than that would be the knowledge of every County Commissioner and County employee that they are contributing to a very worthy cause that provides a once in a lifetime experience to the people that sacrificed so much to allow us to live the life we currently do.