

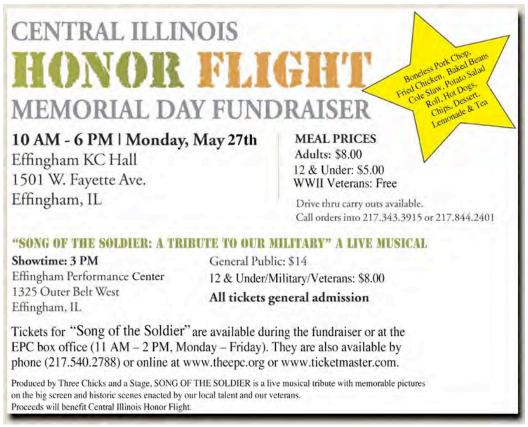
Peoria Honor Flight hub ready for takeoff About 80 veterans will participate in Greater Peoria Honor Flight trip

By ANDY KRAVETZ (akravetz@pjstar.com) of the Journal Star Posted May 31, 2013 @ 09:32 PM

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PEORIA — Almost 80 veterans will fly next week to Washington, D.C., on the first flight of a newly created local hub of the Honor Flight program.

Leslie Matuszak, one of the hub's organizers, said 35 veterans from World War II and 35 from the Korean War will ioin seven Vietnam vets and two from the Gulf War the on daylong trip to the nation's capital where they will visit several



monuments and memorials.

The total is nearly twice the number she and others with the Greater Peoria Honor Flight had hoped would be on their first flight.

"All gave some and some gave all and this fight is supported by all the good people of Peoria who understand the importance of what these people did for their country," Matuszak said. Matuszak, the head of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Peoria, said more than 50 of the veterans are older than 80. Every service branch is represented. Some were prisoners of war. Others were involved with the D-Day landings. And still others were involved with the Battle of the Bulge.

"It brings tears to my eyes," Matuszak said, speaking of learning about the veterans' stories.

The flight will leave about 7 a.m. Tuesday from Gen. Wayne A. Downing Peoria International Airport and return at about 9 p.m. Tuesday. As is common with Honor Flight programs, the public is encouraged to go to the airport to welcome the veterans home. Often the crowds are large and the old soldiers, sailors, airmen or Marines are moved to tears.

Matuszak said shuttles will run to and from the CEFCU branch just outside the airport for those who want to greet the veterans. She encouraged people to arrive by 8:30 to 9 p.m.

She also noted plans are being made for the next flight, which will occur in late September. For more information on the flight or if you want to donate to the privately funded program, go to the Web site at www.greaterpeoriahonorflight.org



Veterans return from Honor Flight to cheering crowd

Jun 05, 2013 @ 12:04 AM

About 80 Peoria-area veterans of World War II, and the Korean, Vietnam, and Gulf Wars returned Tuesday night to cheers and waving flags at Gen. Wayne A. Downing Peoria International Airport after their inaugural Honor Flight to Washington D.C. The day long event was formed initially for World War II veterans but expanded over the years. The goal is simple: Fly aging veterans out to the nation's capital for a one-day sight-seeing tour of the service memorials and monuments, free of charge, as a way to say thanks for their service and sacrifice.

