



HONOR FLIGHT®

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It's Time to Fly!

With Spring here, the Honor Flight Rochester season is underway with the first mission of 2017. Mission 52 took place April 8-9 with 45 veterans scheduled for the flight.

Honor Flight Rochester Volunteer of the Year: Tracey Reiter

Tracey Reiter was surprised when she was named the recipient of the Col. Woody Mench Award for 2016. "It's not something I would have expected," said Tracey. That's how it should be. Volunteers do what they do for the love of it and not the recognition.

Tracey is the essence of volunteerism. She always steps up when called upon by Honor Flight Rochester. Currently, she is the roster coordinator for HFR. But she's been a solo guardian, a veteran escort, a trip safety assistant, and has worked at both departures and homecomings. All while trying to fly under the radar. But she was detected.

The award – named for HFR co-founder Col. Edwin "Woody" Mench – is given annually for exceptional volunteerism to HFR. This year's award was presented Jan. 21 at the HFR Volunteer Recognition event.

In nominating Tracey, HFR Vice President of Operations John Burns said: "Her work in 2016 coordinating the calls and scheduling of veterans went above and beyond. I can't remember a year in which we had so many challenges and I am not sure we could have pulled it off without the work that Tracey did. I think the thing that puts her over the top for me is her 'can do' attitude. Regardless of whatever Gina Ryan or I asked of her, she always responded: "I am on it" and then got it done, and she always does it with a smile."

HFR Health and Safety Coordinator Gina Ryan concurred. "Tracey managed to coordinate the roster for 300 veterans who are booked by 15 to 20 volunteer callers. She was inundated with texts messages, phone calls, and emails at all hours during 2016. Her commitment is truly humbling!"

HFR President Richard Stewart described her work as "Herculean."

Tracey and her husband, Steve, became involved in HFR after seeing a TV report on the Honor Flight Network one Memorial Day. "I was so moved, I knew that I wanted to help," said Tracey, a daughter and granddaughter of veterans. She searched the internet, found HFR, and filled out guardian applications for her and Steve.



Tracey Reiter (second from the left) after being named the recipient of the Col. Woody Mench Award for exceptional volunteerism. With her (from the left) are Marion Mench, Rich Stewart, Gina Ryan and John Burns. In the background is HFR Chairman of the Board Peter Glennon. (Photo by Jen Wylie).

(continued on page 4)

Latest News

Photos from Recent Events



Clockwise from top left:
Brasstacular, BOMA Golf Tournament,
Volunteer Recognition Party, Geneseo
Airshow, Stars & Stripes VeteRun,
Locust Hill Golf Tournament,
Skycoasters Turkey Bash, and
Lakeshore Golf Tournament.

Latest News

Mission 51 Through the Eyes of Richard Randall

Richard Randall of Geneseo, a retired eye doctor, flew on Honor Flight Rochester Mission 51 with his step-daughter, Kimberly Burgess, of Groveland, as his guardian. Here is his account of the trip, also published in the *Livingston County News*.

Upon arrival at BWI Airport, we proceeded through a line of hundreds of welcoming persons that included a band, other travelers, perhaps 50 or so uniformed Midshipmen from the U.S. Naval Academy, men and women dressed in uniforms from World Wars I and II, Korean and other wars standing at attention, U.S. flags everywhere. Each greeter, civilian or military, gently spoke the words ‘Thank you for your service’ to each of us as we proceeded down the airport corridor. Some saluted us as we passed by. I saw many Honor Flight veterans wipe tears from their eyes as a result of the tremendous support. Yes, I was one of them who tried, but was unable to hold back the tears.



After boarding one of three first-class chartered tour buses at BWI, a group of Patriot Guard Riders (PGR) escorted the buses from the airport on their motorcycles to the Washington Memorials. I used to think of PGR as a group of rather roughshod, bearded men that you wanted to steer clear of, but I quickly discovered Patriot Guard Riders actually are respected 100% Americans, men and women who would really “have your back” at all times. They are truly friends of military veterans and their families, ready to help at any time if the need arises.

We visited the World War II Memorial first. As we disembarked from our bus, our guardian and multiple Honor Flight staff and volunteers were right there offering assistance and guidance as needed by each veteran guest. After reboarding our buses we were on to the Korean, Lincoln, and Vietnam Memorials. Next was a bus trip to the Air Force Memorial and lunch.

After lunch we were off to Arlington National Cemetery and the Changing of the Guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. We were escorted to front line spaces at the Tomb where we had a fantastic view of the event. Again, it brought tears to many of us, including me, as we watched the precision and dedication of the Tomb guard soldiers.

Immediately afterwards, we were escorted to a nearby area where a member of the Tomb’s guards spoke to us and answered our questions. Did you know they are required to spend six hours polishing their shoes each day while on duty? The private meeting with the guard was a treat not shared with visitors in general. From there we were on our way to the Women in Service Memorial, which I didn’t know existed, and finally a visit to the Iwo Jima-Marines Memorial.

That evening we enjoyed a banquet and socializing at the BWI Hilton Hotel. I had an opportunity to talk with the only female veteran guest with us, 1st Lieutenant Ginny Stocks, a World War II veteran and Army nurse. I believe she said she was 94 years old, and it was my honor and pleasure to meet her. Next morning, we were served breakfast at the hotel and then on to the airport for our Southwest flight to Rochester.

When we arrived at the Rochester airport we were again overwhelmed and awed by the tremendous reception we received as Honor Flight guests. There were hundreds and hundreds of family members, fellow air travelers, children, uniformed military personnel, a band, Patriot Guard Riders, all standing in a line, greeting us with, ‘Thank you for your service’ and often a salute.

Each of us on our Mission 51, guest veterans, guardians, staff and volunteers were overwhelmed with our special Honor Flight experience. Ordinary words cannot express how we felt or shed tears, only words from the heart would suffice. All of the guest veterans’ expenses, airfare, hotel, meals, etc. were paid for by Honor Flight Rochester and their financial supporters. We were not allowed to spend any money for anything during the trip, personal souvenirs excepted. Thank you, fellow Americans, from the bottom of my heart for a once in a lifetime experience.

Latest News

Cobbles Elementary School

Korean War veteran Warren Webster joined HFR President Rich Stewart to speak at Cobbles Elementary School for their Veteran's Day assemblies. The school presented HFR with a check. Pictured from left: Superintendent Dr. Thomas Putnam, Rich Stewart, Anne Krauss of the Cobbles Reading Team, Warren Webster, and Principal Dr. Stephen Kenny.



Daughters of the American Revolution Masquerade Ball

On Oct. 21, 2016 the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) held their Black Tie Masquerade Gala Ball at the Hotel Lafayette in Buffalo, with all proceeds being donated to Honor Flight Rochester. At a HFR Leadership Team meeting, DAR President Deborah Stauring presented to HFR President Rich Stewart a very generous check that will fund seven veterans on their "trip of a lifetime."

Honor Flight Day

Monroe County Executive Cheryl Dinolfo proclaimed October 2, 2016 to be Honor Flight Day, in recognition of Honor Flight Rochester's 50th mission.



(Continued) HFR Volunteer of the Year

When they didn't hear back, she sent a follow up email. Then, HFR President Vince Hope replied, promising "We'll get you in." And he did. Tracey and Steve were guardians on Mission 15 in April 2011 and, afterward – like most HFR volunteers – were hooked.

When Tracey isn't volunteering with HFR, she works full-time from her Hilton home for her in-laws' family-owned brochure distribution company. She and Steve are parents of active 2-year-old twins Sara and Benjamin. "I hope that my children will grow up learning to value and appreciate our veterans and all of the sacrifices they have made for us," said Tracey.

And, they'll also learn the value and satisfaction of being a volunteer by watching Tracey.

By Richard Meier, VP Publicity

Latest News

Mission 49



Mission 50



Mission 51



Mailbag: Letters from Veterans

How does one say an appropriate thank you for having been given a memorable moment in one's lifetime. Being a member of Honor Flight Mission 51 was that for me.

It would not have been possible if it weren't for the many volunteers, local organizational support, and the many dedicated people who make this experience for veterans possible. It was a time filled with pride, humility and healing. We served as you do now.

The mass organizational skills that the volunteers possess should be taught at a local college level. An awesome undertaking and success was admirable.

I will always be grateful for the privilege of having been able to be part of Mission 51.

Fred

To Everyone @ Honor Flight,

This Thank You card is a difficult one to write. It's hard to express in writing how grateful we are for the experience you gave to my father and me. It is one we will never forget. Your Team is Amazing!!! It was awesome to witness how everyone worked together for the good of the Veteran.

In a World of unresolved and self entitlement it's nice to experience selflessness and passion for our fellow human being.

The Thank You card with photo on front is the note we sent to the students that wrote letters to my Dad. Thought you might like to see it. It answered all their questions and showed them a picture of the band he was in. Thanks again for all that you do and God Bless You!!!

George & Karen, Flight #50

Thank you so much for the unforgettable Honor Flight! Everyone was so warm and kind. I'll always remember and relive each moment.

I'm sending a small donation to help another veteran benefit from your thoughtfulness. Thank You! Thank You! Thank You!

PS—I was given a beautiful throw blanket by a motorcycle rider and I don't know where to thank him. Please do so for me. It's proudly on the back of my sofa.

Love to all! Ginny



What an amazing weekend on the Honor Flight. It couldn't have been better. Everything went like clockwork and everything was first class, transportation, lodging, and food. The care & caring all the volunteers gave was extra ordinary. I'll never forget it.

Sincere thanks to all! Tom

Rich Stewart and Honor Flight Members Mission 49,

This is a letter of appreciation for all the treatment you and your group gave me and my guardian, my nephew Martin. We had a wonderful time. The meals were great and the breakfast was like old times. The get together after dinner was fun. We all had some old stories to tell, and laughed at. Just like old times, and it made me feel good inside. How old memories come back and renew old comradeship. This came at a good time, for my ship's reunion just disbanded, because of dwindling membership, I jumped at a chance to go with fellow veterans, for a good time.

The Photo album, lap throw, tote bag full of goodies, the welcome crowd, was too good for words. I never expected to get a stack of letters at 'Mail Call', it was great, and I answered them. Those kids were great, too. I'm 83 and I never thought that I would ever have tears come to my eyes when I saw those young guys thanking me for my service.

Thank You Again,
Herbert

I thank you for having me as a participant on Mission 51. Your staff rating was an A plus. Memories of this trip will be with me the rest of my life.

Thank you again!

Robert

Upcoming Events

Upcoming Talks & Ground Events

- April 12 17 Highway Superintendents show
- April 29 Man's Field Days
- May 5-12 7th. Annual Victor Week
- May 22 Naples Rotary*
- June 2-3 American Warrior Concert
- June 2-4 Fairport Canal Days
- June 14 Jefferson Ave. School*

*Talks in italics



On behalf of the Attica Middle School and the Attica Middle School Compact Team, I'd ask you to please accept this check as a thank you for the presentation put on on November 10, 2016. Mr. Kanane did a great job explaining what Honor Flight is and he and the Video expressed how important it is to honor our veterans. Thank you for continuing this program. We hope our contribution allows deserving veterans to participate. Thank you.
- Krystal Dominick



A Message from Rich

This past fall was truly a championship season. Our 50th Mission milestone was reached and at that Welcome Home celebration Monroe County Executive Cheryl DiNolfo officially proclaimed October 2 as Honor Flight Day. Later that month, we flew again raising our totals to 2,434 veterans who have taken their “trip of a lifetime” since our hub’s founding nine years ago. Thank you to all volunteers who helped make this possible through your tireless dedication. And thank you to the generosity of the greater Rochester community for funding this worthy enterprise. You may be interested to know that our primary source of funding comes from Ground Events which is pure outreach. More than ever, we are looking for volunteers to step up to lead individual events. If you are interested, please contact Larry Strassner at: ljrstrassner@rochester.rr.com.



Thank you to the sponsoring organizations for events benefiting HFR and to our supporting volunteers. Our calendar since last August has been filled to include: the Deer Run Winery Benefit, Lake Shore Golf Tournament, Frances McCabe Golf Tournament at Locust Hill, Harris Beach Pizza Party & Bike Run, Old Hickory Golf Tournament, Red Rooster Golf Outing at Holley Brook Golf Club, Blossom Road Pub Fundraiser, B.O.M.A Golf Tourney, Tahou Golf Tournament, Elvis Night at Bernard Exempts, Order of the Eastern Star Banquet, REVO Masquerade Gala hosted by the DAR, Veterans Open House, Greece Performing Arts Society Veterans Day Concert, Stars & Stripes 5K VeteRun, and the Skycoaster’s Turkey Bash Decades Party. This year the month of March started off strong with the Amerks Alumni Charity Hockey Game and the Rochester Home & Garden Show.

Regarding staff leadership there are two announcements. Please join me in congratulating Frank Vavrck who was named Vice President of Treasury & Purchasing. His well-deserved designation as VP was effective with the new year. With equal excitement, last summer Jennifer Wiley became a member of the Leadership Team through the creation of the Veteran Experience Coordinator position, covering both Welcome Homes and Photography including the Mission Photo Album. While Jen joined the Leadership Team in August, it is never too late for recognition. Jen has been a volunteer since 2009.

And “thank yous” are due to Anthony DiMattia for his great job with the newsletter. He let us know early last fall that he would be relinquishing his role as editor due to work obligations. To our good fortune, we have very strong media talent on the Leadership Team and Neil Fagenbaum has agreed to spearhead the newsletter’s revitalization.

The popularity of our Facebook is soaring with more than 2,800 likes! In fact the content is absolutely engaging, so continued “thank yous” are due to Heather Henry. As a side note, I would like everyone to keep in mind that our Facebook’s purpose is for social media only. Formal business communications must be made through our website address at honorflightrochester.org. This provides the official channels for making donations, submitting applications, inquiring about volunteer opportunities, contacting the Speakers Bureau & Events Team as well as our phone number at (585) 210-2115. Also listed is our mailing address at PO Box 23581, Rochester NY 14692.

I look forward to the coming year as another “Best ever” for HFR. Thank you one and all.

Rich Stewart
President

**Have a question, comment, or something to share?
DROP US A LINE!
VolunteerHonorFlightROC@gmail.com**

**Thank a
Veteran!**

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