

Golfers hit links to keep Honor Flights in air

By Jacob Puestow

Veterans who wish to travel to Washington, D.C., through Old Glory Honor Flight got another boost from the funds raised last week at the annual Tee It Up Fore Troops golf outing at Autumn Ridge Golf Course in rural Valders.

American Legion Post 477 of St. Nazianz helped host the outing on May 13 and 14 to benefit the Honor Flight organization.

In all, 248 golfers attended and donated to the fundraiser. Veterans who served before May 7, 1975, are flown to the nation's capital to see the monuments and sites and be recognized for their service.

In the last four years, the event has raised more than \$117,000 for Old Glory Honor

Flight.

Dan Reinke, co-project manager with Nancy Schnell-Rivera, described taking an honor flight as a momentous, life-changing experience.

"I went as a guardian on April 7," he said. "My veteran was Randy Trutschel. Randy was a Marine helicopter driver.

"(It) changed his life (and it) changed my life. Coolest thing I've ever done."

Guardians are people who go along on the flights to assist and accompany the veterans.

Jamie Lodes has been a volunteer for Old Glory Honor Flight for about 10 years, and this was her first year helping at the local golf outing.

"I've never volunteered for it," she said.

"I've heard a lot about it. I know Nancy well. She's one of our great volunteers.

"My husband has a golf team he's put together, and I'm excited to volunteer for it."

Reinke explained a little of what an honor flight is and how the day proceeds, mainly sharing his experience as a guardian.

"The day starts at 3:30 in the morning," he said. "Randy met me at my house, and we got home at 1:30 the next morning.

"We flew out of Appleton National Airport (to) Washington, D.C. The people actually came out of the restaurants in Washington, D.C., and applauded and cheered our veterans.

"We had 95 veterans on this flight, 47. See Golfers p. 9

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For the Troops

American Legion flag bearers (above) open the Tee It Up Fore Troops golf outing at Autumn Ridge Golf Course. Below, Dan Holzer takes a shot during the outing. —Journal Photos by Jacob Puestow



Golfers

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wheelchairs to break a record.... We had four buses—red, white, blue and gold, and different veterans on different buses for different reasons.”

Typical spots to see include memorials, national monuments, or government buildings.

Reinke said his favorite spot was the Pentagon.

“Randy Truttschel was an actual pilot at the Pentagon, and the helicopter that he flew out of flew over our head at the Pentagon,” he said.

Flights also aren’t reserved for just the U.S., as Lodes shared her experience with an international flight.

“We (once) took 68 World War II veterans back to Normandy, France, for nine days,”

she said.

She, too, shared the sentiment that Old Glory changes lives, both hers and those of the veterans.

“I’ve seen it again and again,” she said. “It changes lives. It changes veterans’ lives. It changed my life as a volunteer...”

“I’ve seen a lot of veterans here that have been on flights and you can tell it’s made a difference.”

Truttschel was also present for both days at Autumn Ridge, and on the first day could be heard telling teenagers some stories about his time serving in Vietnam.

During the opening ceremony, a letter written by Truttschel was read aloud re-

garding his feelings on about the honor flight organization.

“To the staff of Old Glory Honor Flight, I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for being able to go on Mission 79,” read the letter. “I’m proud to take part in such an event.

“It definitely made a difference in the way I feel. I have a feeling of (being positive now). I feel like my service in Vietnam was not a disgrace. You helped this veteran come home again.

“Thank you so much, and I give all of you a Marine Corps salute with a job well done.”

Reinke said American Legion Post 477 had a fundraising goal but did not wish to share that figure yet.

He said the organization will be expecting the check to be handed over to it in mid-June.

“Thank you to the volunteers,” he said. “Thank you to the sponsors. Thank you to the media. Thank you to the veterans.”