HONORING SERVICE ONE SWING AT A TIME

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By Heather Rule

What began as one man's wish to give back has grown into a community-driven effort to honor those who served. In Battle Lake, a father-and-daughter duo is once again bringing golfers together to support Veterans Honor Flight which helps ensure local veterans can experience a once-in-a-lifetime trip to Washington, D.C.

Kim Peterson and her father, Dean Nordstrom, launched the golf tournament last year as a way to raise funds for Honor Flight, combining Nordstrom's lifelong appreciation for veterans with a simple idea: use golf to make a meaningful difference.

"He always said he wanted to give back," Peterson said. "So he decided to put together this golf tournament at Balmoral Golf Course."

The second annual tournament is on August 10 at Balmoral Golf Course in Battle Lake. The four-person scramble tournament is $400 per team and includes golf with a cart and lunch. The event raised more than $20,000 last year and hopes to raise more than $25,000 this year. All proceeds go toward the Honor Flight. Last year's tournament provided flights for about a dozen veterans.

Peterson and Nordstrom are also hoping to hold more golf-tournament fundraisers for Honor Flight in the future.

"My dad's dream is: 'Won't it be cool if we had 10 golf tournaments for Honor Flight every summer'? That could be well over $100,000, maybe over $200,000,'" Peterson said.

The tournament supports Veterans Honor Flight of North Dakota and Minnesota, a non-profit, volunteer organization that takes veterans to Washington, D.C., free of charge to visit memorials built in their military branch's honor. Veterans in the Otter Tail County area take a flight out of Fargo.

The Honor Flight takes off in May and again in September, with two flights out of Fargo each time. It's a three-day trip, with a charter flight for about 200 people, usually about half veterans and the other half being family, friends, or volunteers supporting the veterans.

Veterans Honor Flight of ND/MN hopes to raise $1,080,000 overall this year to help cover the expenses of the trips, ensuring veterans can participate at no personal cost. Last year, the cost per veteran to participate in a flight was about $1,600.

Peterson is the operations and marketing leader for the golf tournament, but also helps veterans apply for the Honor Flight. Top priority is given to WWII and terminally ill veterans. Korean and Vietnam War veterans are also included.

Nordstrom, 91, who served stateside around the Korean War, was a support person for a World War II veteran on an Honor Flight, helping him and pushing his wheelchair. Nordstrom took the Honor Flight as a veteran two years ago.

For more information: https://www.facebook.com/share/1C8DSTtwCc/ and https://veteranshonorflightofndmn.org/.

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