

EDITORIAL: Central Valley Honor Flight deserves your support

Testimony of the joy that Central Valley Honor Flight brings to our veterans can be found all over the nonprofit's Facebook page.

In the pictures there, you see nothing but smiles — and men and women sharing stories, handshakes and embraces before they toured Arlington National Cemetery, the National World War II Memorial, the Women in Military Service For America Memorial and other sites in Washington, D.C.

Just as important as the camaraderie is the respect shown to those who served in our military. At every stop after flying out Fresno on Monday, the 68 veterans on the sixth Central Valley Honor Flight were greeted by salutes and thanks.

Here's a Facebook post by Central Valley Honor Flight from Tuesday morning: "Words cannot describe the incredible emotions experienced as our Veterans visited the WWII Memorial ... They were saluted, cheered for and greeted as they entered."

And there was this touching scene reported by Michael Doyle of the McClatchy Washington Bureau:

Two veterans, 89-year-old Visalia resident Douglas Justus and 87-year-old Fresno resident Richard Samuelian, presented a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns.

As they and the other Central Valley veterans arrived, two active-duty Army officers worked their way among them, shaking hands.

"Because of you," a lieutenant told one veteran, "I am here."

The veterans on this latest flight came from 27 cities and communities in 12 different counties, ranging from Sacramento in the north to Los Angeles in the south.

They were 63 men and five women representing the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and Army Air Corps/Air Force.

This week's trip was the first of four planned this year. The organization hopes to begin adding Korean War veterans on its next trip in June.

As the flights are free for veterans and chaperones are charged just \$1,000, we encourage you to support Central Valley Honor Flight as a volunteer or with a financial contribution. To learn more, visit www.cvhonorflight.org.

Central Valley Honor Flight's motto is, "Let's come together to give our veterans one more tour with honor."

As 68 veterans and their friends and families witnessed this week, Central Valley Honor Flight leaders Al Perry and Paul Loeffler and the rest of their team are making good on that pledge.

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