

Wings of Freedom planes on tour

If you've never seen a B-17 Flying Fortress or a B-24 Liberator heavy bombers, there's still a chance to tour them and talk to the real fliers.

Wings of Freedom is bringing three World War II aircraft into Signature Flight Support, 3300 Airport Drive, at the **Boca Raton** Airport. The planes include a P-51 Mustang and will be on display from 2 to 4 p.m. Jan. 28 and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Jan. 29, 30 and 31. Admission at the gate is \$12 for adults or \$6 for children younger than 12. You can even arrange a flight on the planes.

"We're visiting 110 cities, so we'll be visiting just over a dozen in Florida and then head off," said Hunter Chaney, director of marketing for The Collings Foundation: Preserving Aviation History that sponsors the national tours and preserves the planes.

At the Boca stop, retired U.S. Air Force Lt. Irwin Stovroff, 93, will talk about flying 35 missions in the B-24. He will also speak March 6 at the Festival of the Arts BOCA.

A former event co-chairman, Stovroff will be pulling double duty in his role as founder of the nonprofit Vets Helping Heroes, which has provided more than 150 professionally trained service dogs to veterans, he said. Stovroff's dogs, Cash and Jenny, will come along when he speaks to school children.

But the reality is that two veterans who usually share their experiences won't be back. "Did we lose some? Of course," Stovroff said.

"Probably four or five veterans will be there," Chaney said.

"This is the first time I was asked to take part," said Irving Appel, a retired Navy ensign whose mission was looking for German subs. "This bring back memories."

"Why is this important? It is truly a special part of history in our country," Stovroff said. " I went [to war] because it was the most important thing I could do."

The tour stop is always a living history lesson for school children, and "they can explore inside and they have a chance to talk to a real World War II veteran who flew in these planes," Chaney said. "The tour is about honoring our World War II vets.

"I expect a lot more younger children and this is their first chance to look at the aircraft. They're multi-generations removed from World War II and we hope they'll be affected and excited."

Schools expected this year include Northern Broward Prep, St. Andrew's School, Grandview Preparatory School, Pahokee Middle Senior High School, home schooled children, Junior ROTC Air Force students from Lake Worth High School and college students from Lynn University and Florida Atlantic University, according to Audra Vaz, business and public affairs manager for the Boca Raton Airport Authority.

Thirty-minute flights are available and usually scheduled before or after the ground tour times. Flights on the B-17 or B-24 are \$450 per person. P-51 flights are \$2,200 for a half hour or \$3,200 for a full hour. Call 800-568-8924 or see the foundation's tour flight coordinator, Jamie Mitchell, at the airport.