

WLAD medics share Honor Flight memories

Several years ago, Western Lane Ambulance District (WLAD) senior paramedic Darrek Mullins was talking to his neighbor's daughter, who happened to work for Senator Ron Wyden. Due to the combination of Mullins' fascination with World War II and being able to take care for so many WWII veterans in his ambulance district, Mullins was invited to participate in an Honor Flight as a team leader for six WWII veterans and their guardians.

He's been doing it ever since.

"My first flight was May 2013. Each trip is three days long," Mullins explained. "We meet Thursday night for dinner, fly out Friday, in D.C. Saturday, fly home Sunday."

Each trip has the same schedule: WWII memorial first thing in the morning; then Korean, Lincoln, Vietnam, then the Naval memorial; a sack lunch at the FDR memorial; then Air Force the memorial; a special viewing of the changing of the guard; and then finish at the Marine Memorial.

After dinner there are letters from home, family, friends, school children and strangers, all thanking them for their service.

"The veterans are also presented with a flag with a letter of authenticity that has flown over our State Capitol," said Mullins. "They also get a letter from our Governor. My favorites are each of the war



COURTESY PHOTO

WLAD senior paramedics and Honor Flight team leaders Darrek Mullins and Charlie York.

memorials and Arlington."

Each Honor Flight involves memorable moments and people. On his last flight, Mullins recalled a very poignant occurrence regarding a gentleman who signed up to be a guardian, and he was a Vietnam veteran.

"I asked him if he had been to D.C. and he said he hadn't," recalled Mullins. "I replied with excitement, 'You get to see your wall.'"

Mullins shared with him that he was excited and honored that he got to be there with him in his special moment.

"I was with him at the wall when he was overcome with emotion," said Mullins. "For a period of time I stood next to him with my hand on his shoulder

as he wept. Another leader stood on his other side with his hand on his other shoulder."

Mullins told him how honored they were to be standing with him, while the other leader pointed to the wall and said "And your brothers are honored to be there with you also."

Mullins described it as one of about 200 special moments over three days. "Honor Flight as a worthy organization. Honoring veterans with our time and financial support is the least we can do for the sacrifice they have made so we can enjoy our freedom," said Mullins, who also credits his union, the International Association of Firefighters

Local 851, in helping out financially in support of his Honor Flight expenses.

Also accompanying Mullins on his last Honor flight was WLAD senior paramedic Charlie York.

"The one thing that every veteran gets out of this trip is the love from the average citizen and most of all, the children," said Mullins. "They are taken aback by the outpouring of love and gratitude the public gives them as our group moves throughout the weekend."

Mullins describes children wanting to take pictures with their heroes and thanking them for their freedom — something lacking when they returned home from their tours of duty decades past.

"A discussion I remember on my second trip in October 2013 was when a child about 12 years old was amongst a small group all the same age," said Mullins. "This child said 'Thank you, sir, for your service. And thank you for our freedom.'"

"A veteran responded to the child," Mullins added. "Well, you're very welcome." the veteran said. "We saved it for you. It's up to you guys. You guys promise me you'll protect and cherish it. We are depending on you now."

Mullins said the child thought a moment, then responded, "Ok, we will, sir."

—Submitted by Albert Kreitz, WLAD

Belly Dancing troupe to perform at City Lights

City Lights Cinemas and It's About Time Productions will present an evening of world music and belly dancing on the Chaplin Stage at City Lights Cinemas on Thursday, June 25, from 7 to 9 p.m. with a 20-minute intermission.

Local belly dancer Angela Palmer, Troupe Damali and belly dancers from MEDGE (Middle Eastern Dance Guild of Eugene) will perform to the live music of Americanistan, as well as to selections from their new CD, "Beautiful Nights."

Americanistan is not a place or political statement. It's an

eclectic band of musicians based in Eugene. The band covers a wide range of styles, reflecting the variety of dancers that they accompany.

The band's eclecticism is also reflected in their vast array of unusual instruments.

Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Tickets are \$10 for members, \$12 for non-members.

A portion of the proceeds will be donated to the Siuslaw School District music programs.

For more information, visit www.citylightscinemas.com or call the City Lights at 541-305-0014.

LCC Florence announces summer class offerings

The Lane Community College Florence Center Summer schedule is out.

Registration has begun for both credit and non-credit community education classes. The term runs from June 23 through Aug. 13.

For more information, call Lane Community College at 541-997-8444, stop by the college at 3149 Oak St. and pick up a schedule, or visit www.lanecollege.edu/florence.

The summer term office

hours are Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Take advantage of onsite classes, online classes and cooperative education.

Fitness, dance, art, photography, opera, Outward Ventures, and pet workshops are also being offered.

LCC Florence's director, Russ Pierson, is also teaching a seven-week sustainability course, "Reconnecting with Earth."

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| Saturday 6/6 | Shannon Warren Becky Lowe | Florence Florence | Grocery Outlet Three Rivers Casino Resort |
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