

By ROBERT PIERCE

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A flight which would take veterans from all of western Kansas, including Liberal, to the nation's capital was originally scheduled to take place this week, but officials with the area Honor Flight group have now pushed the date back.

Trip manager Brenda Kuhlman said while an exact date has not been set, she said the flight should take place in October in order to use the Honor Flight jet, which allows for a lower cost for seating than the charter jet, which had originally been scheduled for the flight.

"Charter was \$700 per seat, whereas the Honor Flight was down to \$500 per seat," Kuhlman said. "We would also have to drive to Salina or Wichita or Kansas City. The National Honor Flight says they'll come right to us here in Garden City or Liberal."

Kuhlman said the Honor Flight group had been informed that jets were on their way about a month or two ago, but they hadn't arrived from overseas yet.

"We had to have them quarantined," she said. "They had to be examined and pass inspection."

Many also had speculated that the jets used for the Honor Flight were too big for airports such as Liberal's and Garden City's. Kuhlman said that information is false.

“That’s what the charter planes told us,” she said. “The National Honor Flight says there’s no problem coming in to either one. We knew that wasn’t true because on 9/11, we remember that there were big jets setting there at Garden City. They got them out of the air, and they set them there. They grounded them there at Garden City, and I’m sure the same happened at Liberal.”

Kuhlman added the primary reason for the postponement of the flight is due to the heat of the upcoming summer season. The committee had also set another date for June, but it was not going to be on the Honor Flight jet.

“It was still on charter planes, which means the seat cost is higher,” she said. “We still needed to raise some funds in order to meet our goal to begin with. The first dates were June 3, 4 and 5, and the second dates were the 22nd through the 24th, but we still wouldn’t have enough money to take everybody.”

Kuhlman said another problem is that separate flights would need to be used.

“We were going to have to splice 56 guys from the get go, and then the rest of us would have to wait on a second flight,” she said. “We didn’t want to do that. We want to take everybody all together.”

Kuhlman said the committee is working on an exact date for the October flight.

“We have another board meeting in the first part of June,” she said.

“We’re going to start working forward for our flight in October.”

Kuhlman said the group is primarily in need of guardians for the veterans on the flight.

“We’ve pretty well filled our plane in October with veterans, but we need guardians,” she said.

Kuhlman said if a person wants to be a guardian, they can call her at

(620) 855-2564.