

# Lakeview Area News

Northern Montcalm and Southern Mecosta Counties' News Source

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The Lakeview Area News office will be closed this Friday, October 11.

Frost is coming. Cover your plants.

We remind you again that early voting starts October 26. In Montcalm County early voting will be held directly behind the Montcalm County Sheriff's Office and Jail.

### Fall Forecast

**Thu** Widespread frost, mainly between 7am and 9am. Otherwise, sunny, high 64. Light and variable wind.

**Thu Night** Mostly clear, low 42.

**Fri** Mostly sunny, with a high near 75.

**Fri Night** Partly cloudy, with a low around 44.

**Sat** Mostly sunny, with a high near 65.

**Sat Night** A chance of showers. Partly cloudy, with a low around 40.

**Sun** A chance of showers. Partly sunny, with a high near 59.

**Sun Night** A chance of showers. Partly cloudy, with a low around 35.

**Columbus Day** A chance of showers. Mostly sunny, with a high near 55.



## Paris Area Guardsman to Participate in Honor Flight



National Guard Staff Sergeant E-6 Jim Johnson, ret., will travel to Washington, D. C. on an Honor Flight October 15-17. Pictured on Jim's left is his neighbor and Honor Flight Guardian, Chuck Hall. Jim is wearing the hat and Chuck is in the light blue shirt.

### By Bethel Larsen

Retired National Guardsman James ("Jim") Johnson is described as "always there to be the first one to help, always there for neighbors." At age 69, he has returned to work for the Mecosta County Road Commission, having previously supervised its Morley Garage for 39 1/2 years. Neighbor Brenda Hall comments that he has often pulled people out of the ditch when his gravel road has been buried in snow. Though fit and active, he will soon have a wheelchair waiting for him when he travels to Washington, D.C. on his upcoming Honor Flight. ("Are you kidding me?" he protested when informed that the wheelchair is a required part of Honor Flight protocol.)

After all, Honor Flights were first instituted to honor WWII veterans, some of whom have now lived beyond the century mark. As more and more of those veterans pass from the scene, the program has been expanded to include veterans who served in Korea and Vietnam. Also

included are National Guardsmen like Jim, who served 26 1/2 years, earning the rank of Staff Sergeant E-6 while on duty in Panama during Operation Just Cause, the 1989 initiative to unseat Manuel Noriega and extradite him to be tried on drug charges in the U.S.

Several years ago, Jim was scheduled for an Honor Flight, but his appointed Guardian (another program requirement intended to accommodate veterans' age or physical challenges) backed out after plans were made. Then came the COVID-19 pandemic. For a time, it looked as if Jim's opportunity to receive the reward of his honorable service had passed him by. Then Jim's neighbors Charles ("Chuck") and Brenda Hall stepped in to inquire whether their neighbor and friend could still be included in an Honor Flight if Chuck volunteered to go as his Guardian. (Though the Honor Flight program covers all expenses for the honored veteran, his Guardian pays his own expenses.) At first, Brenda

was told that, although the Honor Flight program was "looking for heroes" and would reinstate Jim on the waiting list, his name would be at the end. Later, however, he was moved up to the flight scheduled to travel from Michigan this October 15-17.

Jim and Chuck will travel together to Cherry Capital Airport in Traverse City early on that Tuesday morning to arrive by 9:00 a.m. Each veteran will be presented with a special Honor Flight shirt and jacket. A charter flight will take the group to Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport. From there, the group will embark on a packed schedule of activities in and around the nation's capital, building lifetime memories. They will be taken on a tour of all the major monuments and military memorials in Washington, D.C. and will visit Arlington National Cemetery for the Changing of the Guard. The full day will end with a special dinner and time to share memories with those who understand their experi-

ences as non-military friends and family cannot.

One of the most meaningful and moving portions of the program will be Roll Call during the flight home. Patterned after Mail Call for on-duty service personnel, it will include distribution of "mail from home"—letters of tribute from family and friends.

After arrival back in

Traverse City and a closing ceremony on October 16, Jim and Chuck plan to spend one night in a hotel before driving back home. Before the first snow falls on his gravel road, Jim will return to doing what he always does—coming to the aid of family, neighbors, and anyone who needs the helping hand of a faithful Guardsman.



James (Jim) Johnson



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**October 24th**

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