



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **THE COLLINGS FOUNDATION'S - WINGS OF FREEDOM TOUR WILL FLY THREE LOCAL WWII VETERANS FROM NAPLES AIRPORT TO PUNTA GORDA AIRPORT**

**PUNTA GORDA, FL** (January 30, 2017) – The Punta Gorda Airport welcomes the Collings Foundation's Wings of Freedom February 6<sup>th</sup> through February 9<sup>th</sup>. Three local WWII veterans will participate in the tour from the Naples Municipal Airport to the Punta Gorda Airport. Punta Gorda is one of 110 cities on a national tour that brings extremely rare bomber and fighter aircraft for a living history display.

Three WWII veterans will ride in the B-24J Liberator from the Naples Airport to the Punta Gorda Airport: Jim Ross, Jim Bowden, and Perry Seay. In 1943, Jim Ross, a US Navy flight engineer mechanic, served with VB-105 Squadron Fleet Air Wing 7. The unit's duties included patrolling in B-24 Liberators while looking for German submarines. At the age of 90, Ross received the prestigious Federal Aviation Administration's Charles Taylor Master Mechanic Award. Jim Bowden, intel officer that flew NEACAP after the war including the first time a president flew on it. During his service in the U.S. Army Airforce, pilot Perry Seay learned to fly the B-24 at Tyndall Field, Florida in 1945.

The WINGS OF FREEDOM TOUR travels the nation as a flying tribute to the flight crews who flew them, the ground crews who maintained them, the workers who built them, the soldiers, sailors and airmen they helped protect; and the citizens and families that share the freedom that they helped preserve. Participating aircraft includes: B-17, Flying Fortress "Nine O Nine", one of only 8 in flying condition in the United States. B-24J Liberator "Witchcraft," the sole remaining example of its type flying in the World. B-25 Mitchell "Tondelayo" bombers best known for being used in the daring Doolittle raid. P-51 Mustang "Toulouse Nuts" fighter that recently received the 2016 Oshkosh Grand Champion Award for restoration.

The tour offers a rare opportunity to visit, explore, and learn more about these unique and rare treasures of aviation history. Visitors are invited to explore the aircraft inside and out - \$15 for adults and \$5 for children under 12 is requested for access to up-close viewing and tours through the inside of the aircraft. Discounted rates for school groups. Visitors may also experience the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to actually take a 30-minute flight aboard these rare aircraft. Flights on either the B-17 or B-24 are \$450 per person. P-51 flight training is \$2,200 for a half hour and \$3,200 for a full hour. B-25 flights are \$400 per person. For reservations and information on flight experiences call 800-568-8924.

There are also a few seats left on the B-24J Liberator for media rides (FREE) from the Naples Airport to the Punta Gorda Airport, please contact Jennifer Smith [jdsmith@flypgd.com](mailto:jdsmith@flypgd.com) or 941.639-1101 ext 131 for details.

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About the Punta Gorda Airport

The Charlotte County Airport Authority owns and operates the Punta Gorda Airport located at 28000 Airport Road in Punta Gorda, Florida 33982. The Charlotte County Airport Authority Board: Pam Seay (District 1); Robert Hancik (District 2); Paul Andrews (District 3); Kathleen Coppola (District 4); and James Herston (District 5). The Punta Gorda Airport President is James W. Parish, PE. The Punta Gorda Airport is located 3 miles southeast of Punta Gorda, Florida at Exit 161 on I-75. The airport provides quick and easy access to Fort Myers, Cape Coral, Sarasota, Naples, Punta Gorda, Englewood and all Southwest Florida.

About Collings Foundation

The Collings Foundation is a 501c3 non-profit educational foundation devoted to organizing “living history” events that allows people to learn more about their heritage and history through direct participation. The Nationwide WINGS OF FREEDOM TOUR is celebrating its 28<sup>th</sup> year and visits an average of 110 cities in over 35 states annually. Since its start, tens of millions of people have seen the B-17, B-24, B-25 & P-51 display at locations everywhere. The WINGS OF FREEDOM tour is one of the most extraordinary and unique interactive traveling historical displays of its kind. For additional details contact Hunter Chaney 800-568-8924 or [hchaney@collingsfoundation.org](mailto:hchaney@collingsfoundation.org).

About Jim Bowden

Jim Bowden can be reached at [ginjim@embarqmail.com](mailto:ginjim@embarqmail.com) or 941-637-5917.

About Jim Ross

Jim Ross

For additional information contact:

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