

Cedar Club paddles for veterans

Cedarburg platform tennis club raises money for Honor Flight

By Jim Cryns
News Graphic Correspondent

Cedarburg — While most people use sports to escape the mundane tasks of their lives, members of the Cedar Club in Cedarburg often mix business with pleasure and act as a sporting conduit to help others. They still find time to have fun, make no mistake about it, but it's great if you can find a way to do both.

Their ongoing efforts to help their community continued on St. Patrick's Day. The club held its biannual tournament and was able to parlay that tournament into a fundraiser to send three World War II veterans on a Stars and Stripes Honor Flight.

Club President Brett "Duke" Smith said this is not an isolated effort.

"At all our tournament functions we sponsor a charity event to go along with the tournament," Smith said.

It costs about \$500 for the Stars and Stripes Honor Flight to send one World War II veteran to Washington, D.C. to see the memorial.

"We have a great bunch of guys and we look at what we can do each year," he said.

Platform tennis is a cross between tennis and racquetball. It uses a spongy rubber ball, a wooden paddle and a court about half the size of a regular tennis court. The court is fenced by taut chicken wire and the ball can be played off that wire.

The club's mission statement says they strive to make a positive impact on their community, and they have put actions behind



Photo by Jim Cryns

Cedar Club members Brett 'Duke' Smith and Chris Crosse add money to a Stars and Stripes Honor Flight envelope to send veterans to see their memorial in Washington, D.C.

those words.

The club donated \$50,000 to help fund a sheet of ice at the Ozaukee Ice Center. "Everybody in the club helped organize a food drive for Family Sharing of Ozaukee County around the holidays," Smith said.

"The veterans are the people that fought for our freedom, our liberties we have today," said club member Eric Arvold. "I'm very honored to support a great cause. Everybody here is cognizant of what the veterans have done for us."

Club member Chris Crosse said it's important to show appreciation to the veterans, and that can be done by helping them see their memorial.

Two Stars and Stripes are events are scheduled this spring. One on April 28 will take 110 veterans, and two flights on June 2, will take 220 veterans.

"We are not only trying to give back to the community, but show the veterans how much they mean to us. If a veteran requires a companion, we're going to try to raise enough money for them, too," Crosse said.

A guardian on the Honor Flight will serve as a trained companion to men and women who are now in their upper 80s and 90s.

"We've never set a goal we haven't met," Crosse said. "We enjoy what we do here so much, we want to make sure we don't forget the guys that made this possible."

Crosse said some of the veterans have been on a waiting list for quite some time. "We're very happy to play a small role."

Crosse's father, who is 89 years old, served on the U.S.S. Franklin.

"They called it the hero ship," he said.

The Franklin was also known as "the ship that wouldn't die."

John Wallus serves as marketing director for the club and had a hand in putting this together.

"It's a team effort," he said. "We have a great group of guys and I just nudge them in the right direction. It's an honor to be able to give back."