



High School Guardian Program

This update to the program will be instituted beginning with applications in the summer-fall of 2024 for the Spring 2025 flight season.

What is the HFC High School Guardian Program?

This program is designed for upper-level high school students to serve as Guardians on an Honor Flight with Honor Flight Columbus. HFC is a nonprofit organization that flies our nation's Senior Veterans to Washington DC to see their memorials paid for by grateful Americans. Guardians spend the day with Veterans connecting with them, listening to stories, and caring for basic needs. It is an incredible opportunity to show Veterans how grateful this country is for their service and give them the Welcome Home that so many of them never received. High School Students accepted into this program will complete 5 mandatory training sessions, serve as Guardians on a Flight Day, and their school must host an introductory event for students (e.g. a presentation by HFC staff and/or Veterans to explain HFC and its mission.) They will be paired with an adult from Washington DC who will assist them. There is no financial cost for students accepted into this program. Flight costs are covered by HFC for all program participants.

Why should I participate in this program?

This program provides an opportunity for the next generation to honor, share, and celebrate our nation's Veterans. Additionally, students gain experience in application and interview processes, marketable skills associated with people, logistics, and service, as well as networking opportunities. Students will learn that the stories of these Veterans become our stories, once they share them with us. Their participation in this unique and relational opportunity will offer a once and a lifetime perspective of our nation's Veterans.

What is the application process?

Once HFC has received all application materials, applicants will receive an email with directions for next steps in the process. Applicants selected for the next round will be interviewed virtually by the High School Guardian Program Coordinator and/or the Director of Outreach. Finally, students will receive notice if they have been selected to take part in the program and receive a program contract to be filled out and returned. This contract is similar to an internship contract which outlines all expectations of program participants and includes all training session dates. All applications will be considered after the deadline.

Applications must include:

- A completed High School Guardian Program application
- Essay 200 word max. (outlined in the application)

- One recommendation from a teacher, school administrator, or other school associated personnel (coach, choir director, etc.)

Who is eligible for the HFC High School Guardian Program?

- Upper Level High School Students with an interest in serving our nation's Senior Veterans and attend school or are homeschooled in one of HFC's counties. Priority is given to Seniors.
- Students with the desire to connect with Veterans on a deeper level and able to care for basic needs.
- Reliable students who can attend 5 trainings over the span of 4 months (dates given in program contract)
 - Session 1: Spring Season in Jan./ Fall Season in June
 - Session 2: Spring Season in Feb./ Fall Season in July
 - Session 3: Spring Season in March/ Fall Season in Aug
 - Session 4: Mission Specific Training (date assigned once Flight Day has been assigned)
 - Session 5: One week after Flight Day
- Students should be kind, considerate, and excited to learn from Veterans.
- Able to walk long distances and push a wheelchair with a Veteran, in hot, cold, or inclement weather.

What does a Guardian do?

Guardians spend the day with two Senior Veterans (65 years and over) and their responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Keep a consistent positive and friendly attitude towards HFC staff, volunteers, and Veterans at all HFC events including Flight Day.
- Limit phone usage to Flight Day requirements (this includes **NO** headphones).
- Attend Mission specific training session two weeks prior to Flight Day.
- Contact Veterans within 3 days of Mission specific training day.
 - Deliver Veterans' shirts, take meal orders, ask Veterans for favorite snacks, and remind Veterans of Flight Day information received in advance of Mission specific training.
- Arrive and check in at CMH by 5:45am (baggage claim) and wait for Veterans to arrive.
- Spend the day with assigned Veterans, never leaving them.
 - Listen to stories, ask questions, and get to know each Veteran.
- Take pictures of the Veterans throughout the day at all of the stops and of anything that may interest them.
- Pay attention to needs, medical and logistical, throughout flight day.
 - This may include wheelchair, oxygen, restroom breaks, snack breaks, medication reminders etc.
 - HFC has 3 EMTs and 1 medical doctor on every flight available for any questions and concerns.

- Deliver Veterans to their families or directly to their vehicles after the Welcome Home Celebration.
- After flight day, call Veterans and check in with them.
- Upload all photographs to the HFC link **and** deliver them to Veterans.
 - We recommend creating a photobook, scrapbook, or labeling photographs and delivering them.
- We encourage Guardians to keep up with their Veterans even after the trip.
- Commitment to the Honor, Share, Celebrate vision of this organization.

What are the required training sessions?

High School Guardians are responsible for all of the above duties but must also complete 4 additional training sessions. These sessions will be once a month for three months leading up to their flight season, two weeks before Flight Day and the final session will be one week after Flight Day. Each session will last approximately 30 minutes and will be virtual. **These are mandatory and cannot be missed. Students who need accommodation for training dates must request prior to the first training session.** The purpose of these sessions is to equip every program participant to feel comfortable and prepared for their Flight Day. Sessions are as follows:

1. Session 1: A Conversation of the History of the Vietnam War
2. Session 2: How Do I Relate to My Veterans
3. Session 3: What Does HFC Expect of Me and What Can I Expect of HFC
4. Guardian Training: Mission Specific Training for Everyone Flying on the Mission
5. Session 4: Flight Day Debrief