

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FREEDOM CENTER TO OPEN AT DETROIT METROPOLITAN AIRPORT ON VETERANS DAY

Traveling Armed Forces members to benefit from permanent lounge at McNamara Terminal

DETROIT, October 13, 2011 – Freedom Center, a permanent lounge dedicated to traveling members of our Armed Forces, will open inside the McNamara Terminal at Detroit Metropolitan Airport on Veterans Day, November 11. A grand opening celebration is slated for 1100 hours on 11/11/11.

"For more than a generation there has not been a full-time military hospitality lounge in the State of Michigan," said Ken Pratt, president of Michigan Armed Forces Hospitality Center, Inc., a new non-profit organization spearheading the effort. "Starting this November that will change with the opening of Freedom Center. Located adjacent to Gate A43 in the McNamara Terminal, the 1,100 sq. ft. Freedom Center will serve members of the Armed Forces and their dependents. Hosted by a dedicated staff of trained volunteers, the special needs of the thousands of military travelers who travel through Detroit Metro monthly will be now be met seven days a week, 365 days a year."

For the past two holiday seasons, temporary military lounges were set up by a group of volunteers, spearheaded by Delta Air Lines and TSA employees and assisted by military veterans. Over 2,400 members of our military and their families utilized the lounge during the 21 days it operated last December and January. That experience clearly established the need for a permanent facility.

"The Airport Authority is pleased and proud to work with the Freedom Center on plans to provide a warm welcome at Detroit Metropolitan Airport for members of the Armed Forces," said WCAA CEO Turkia Awada Mullin. "As a veteran, I understand how meaningful any expression of gratitude and appreciation can be for active duty military personnel. It is with great enthusiasm that we support this cause."

Detroit Metropolitan Airport (DTW) is a major hub for domestic and international travel. Hundreds of flights and thousands of passengers pass through this gateway daily. Many are members of our Armed Forces who deserve a comfortable place to rest and recharge during their stay.

"The facilities at DTW are world-class," Pratt said. "Shouldn't our treatment of members of our Armed Forces be as well?"

Freedom Center operating funds are dependent on individual and corporate donations. Pratt noted that fund raising efforts are progressing and individuals can make a contribution via PayPal. Freedom Center will be staffed by volunteers from six in the morning until nine in the evening, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Additional information on how to contribute or become a volunteer is available on the organization's website: MIFreedomCenter.org.

"Freedom Center is dependent on the support of our whole community, whether it's a financial or in-kind donation or the dedicated efforts of our many volunteers," Pratt said. "It's one way we can all say 'Thank you for your service' to every soldier, sailor, airman and Marine who travels through DTW."

"We wish to express our gratitude to all our supporters and a special thank you to the great support of the Wayne County Airport Authority for helping making last winter's dream of a permanent lounge a reality in a very short period of time," Pratt added. "Their support has been nothing short of outstanding."

Michigan Armed Forces Hospitality Center, Inc., is a Michigan non-profit corporation. Its board of directors include Ken Pratt, a Delta Air Lines captain, retired US Air Force Colonel and St. Louis, MO resident; State Senator Patrick Colbeck of Canton; John McCandless, retired US Navy Captain, retired Toyota executive and Grosse Pointe Woods resident; Gary Hermsen, General Dynamics Land Systems project manager, retired US Army Lieutenant Colonel and Shelby Township resident; Howard F. Rundell, Jr., retired US Navy Captain, retired General Motors executive pilot and Northville resident and Stephen D. Ihrig, a Kalamazoo attorney and retired US Navy Captain.

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Contact: John McCandless, Michigan Armed Forces Hospitality Center, Inc., 313-610-5600
Michael Conway, Wayne County Airport Authority, 734-942-3558