WW II-era aircraft coming to Upstate

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WWII planes — the B-24 and the B-17 — are expected to fly into Greenville Downtown Airport on Friday just before noon as part of "an effort to help America learn about history."

The vintage-era war aircraft are part of the "Wings of Freedom Tour," said Hunter Chaney, marketing director for the Collings Foundation based in Stow, Mass.

He said the Upcountry History Museum and Furman University requested the tour, which was last in the Upstate about two years ago.

Tim Bishop, an Upcountry History spokesman and plane buff, said the tour also honors veterans, especially WWII vets who are dying daily across America.

"They'll fly around the city and area," Bishop said.

The public can hop a ride aboard the planes for $425, he said.

There is a $12 fee for the public to tour the planes, including sitting in the pilot's seat, Bishop said.

The weekend 35-minute tours at the Greenville Downtown Airport are scheduled from noon Friday until 4:30 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from 9 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. he said.

Chaney said a former aircraft gunner and his son will be flying with the crew when it lands just before noon.

"It's one of our last stops of the year. It's about our 105th tour. We're flying in from Asheville," he said.

Chaney said the Collings Foundation put together the "Wings of Freedom Tour" to help "Americans learn about history through direct participation" with the aircraft.

"It's our version of the Honor Flights," he said, which honor WWII veterans by escorting them to Washington, D.C., to view war memorials.

Chaney characterized WWII "as a time that is singularly one of the most horrific times in history."