

CHICAGO CHAPTER OF TUSKEGEE AIRMEN, INC.

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CDCTAI MEDIA & PRESS KIT



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Introduction

March 22, 2016 marked the 75th Anniversary of the Tuskegee Airmen Experience. Seventy-five years since their legend began. And in June 2016, we also celebrated the 40th Anniversary of the founding of the Chicago Chapter of Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. Forty years of preserving and promoting the Tuskegee Airmen legacy through programs for youth designed to share with them the Tuskegee Airmen model of personal and group excellence.

The mission of the Chicago “DODO” Chapter of Tuskegee Airmen (CDCTAI) is to preserve the legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen and to promote post-secondary education to youth and careers in the aerospace industry. The CDCTAI programs designed to accomplish these objectives are built upon three pillars: “Legacy Preservation”; “Academic Preparation”; and, “Aviation Education”.



These pillars symbolize the timeless significance of the accomplishments of the Tuskegee Airmen when embraced by successive generations. The contributions of the Tuskegee Airmen to the war effort abroad, and the struggle for civil and human rights at home, firmly established their legend and their place in American and World history. CDCTAI is an organization recognized as a leader in the field of creating aviation education opportunities for youth. Having evolved from a social club in the late 40s & 50s organized by WWII & Korean War veterans returning home with tales of achievement and a well-established record of overcoming adversity, these men and women then turned their attention to what they could do to help future generations of pilots, mechanics, engineers and scientists.



Roy Chappell, one of CDCTAI’s past presidents, popularized the phrase “From These Roots, We Will Build Tomorrow” which was inscribed on our chapter’s logo. This reflects the organization’s mission and purpose. The phrase was also selected as the theme of 1994 national convention held in Chicago (see photo below). Chappell’s predecessors: Clarence Finley, Hank Hervey, A.A. (Sammy) Rayner, Felix Kirkpatrick, Harold Hurd, Ted Moran, Earl Strayhorn, John Rogers, Sr. and others passed the baton to him, and now the responsibility belongs to the current generation to use their common denominator of a shared love for aviation and the

legacy left by these pioneers, to continue their efforts of encouraging youth to pursue advanced education opportunities and careers in the aerospace industry.

CDCTAI believes that it is up to organizations like theirs to keep the ideals of these American heroes out of the realm of yesterday's rhetoric by using innovative practices to keep the Tuskegee Airmen brand relevant, while successfully bridging generational communication gaps. Using their unique business model of long-term mentoring and messaging methods with youth, they build relationships of trust, inspire self-confidence and develop with these youth, a shared vision of the possible.

Black History is usually celebrated in our communities though annual recognitions of the rich contributions made by trail-blazing African Americans to our country and our way of life. CDCTAI believes that the spotlight on Black role models as an inseparable part of American history will someday become more seamlessly integrated into what is taught as history belonging to all Americans. The role of Blacks in America as leaders, educators, innovators, entrepreneurs, entertainers, elected officials, and game-changers has left its stamp- and continues to leave - an indelible imprint on our national culture and our national story. They are asking everyone who hears or reads this message, to help them ensure that this important piece of who we all are is never lost. Help them to encourage and inspire the next generation. Help them to keep the legend, and the legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen, alive & relevant.



Chicago Area History

The 99th Pursuit Squadron -- the first unit of the Tuskegee Airmen -- was activated on March 22, 1941 not in Tuskegee, Ala., but at an Army Air Corps training facility in Illinois known as Chanute Field. When the 99th personnel arrived at Chanute, the base was undergoing a transformation as U.S. involvement in World War II loomed. During that time, Chanute was undergoing a lot of rebuilding, new barracks were being built. Hangars were being completed. The 99th was assigned to an old World War I barracks in the area that would later become its segregated officers club.

Pilot training began in July in Tuskegee and after completion of their training in November 1941, mechanics and other support personnel also headed to Alabama from Illinois. The first pilot class completed training in March 1942 and included Capt. Benjamin O. Davis Jr., 2nd Lt. George S. Roberts, 2nd Lt. Mac Ross, 2nd Lt. Lemuel R. Custis, and 2nd Lt. Charles H. DeBow Jr. Lt. Roberts remained in the Air Corps and after the war he returned to Chanute and became one of the first black commanders of a United States Air Force Training Wing.



The 332nd Fighter Group, composed of three all-black fighter squadrons, was deployed to Italy early in 1944. The 99th was eventually assigned to the 332nd. After initially flying P-40 Warhawk fighters, the 99th was eventually provided with P-51 Mustangs along with the rest of the 332nd, as the fighter group's primary role became heavy bomber escort.



Chanute, which later became an Air Force base was selected to train the 99th personnel, because it was considered one of the best technical training facilities available or perhaps for other reasons. Whatever the objective, the 99th's initial training is part of the rich history of Chanute Air Force Base, the State of Illinois, the Tuskegee Airmen Memorial Trail and the legacy we preserve.



Programs

Since 1976, the Chicago Chapter of Tuskegee Airmen has provided Educational Assistance and Aviation Education programs for youth. Since 1994, CDCTAI programs have reached over 14,000 youth through its Young Eagles, Gary Flight Academy and other aviation programs. Also over the last 12 years, CDCTAI has awarded over \$100,000 in scholarships to Chicago area High School seniors. And another group of young people, exponentially larger than the first two have been positively impacted through our mentoring and outreach programs. The Chicago Chapter of Tuskegee Airmen believes that too few youth, especially those in so-called “at risk communities” never dare to “dream the impossible dream” of pursuing careers in aviation, engineering, technology and the sciences. CDCTAI’s goal is to help change that paradigm.

Post-secondary education is the preparation pathway and successful aerospace careers are the desired end result of CDCTAI’s outreach, support and mentoring programs. The pathway activities are all enabling devices designed to encourage and assist young men and women to take the next step in their educational or career journeys. CDCTAI’s goal is to help as many students as possible achieve their dreams by encouraging them to visualize their potential at an early age and take the steps necessary to realize those possibilities and turn their dreams into reality.



Through a holistic strategy of connecting the 3 dots of our core functions (Legacy Preservation; Academic Preparation; and Aviation Education) and by leveraging the types of partnerships discussed, that CDCTAI will ensure that the legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen Continues to Fly into and beyond the 21st Century.

However, the important contributions of time, talent, and resources from donors cannot be overstated. It is only through the gifts received from patrons, parents, partners, and everyday people that CDCTAI is provided with the sustaining support it needs to carry out its unique mission.