



Tuskegee Airmen host annual holiday gathering at DSCC

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The Ohio Chapter of the Tuskegee Airmen Inc. held their annual Christmas Gathering at the DSCC Officers Club on Dec. 3.

The Tuskegee Airmen made in history during World War II. Their ranks were filled with dedicated young men who came from all over the nation, including Ohio and other parts of the Midwest, and became America's first Black military airmen.

The soldiers who became single-engine or multi-engine pilots were trained at Tuskegee Army Air Field (TAAF) in Tuskegee, Ala. From 1942 through 1946, 992 pilots graduated at TAAF, receiving commissions and pilot wings. The airmen fought two wars -- one against a military force overseas and the other against racism at home and abroad.

Several original Tuskegee Airmen were in attendance at the Dec. 3 event, including C.J. Williams, Hilton Carter, Don Cummings and Robert Peoples. Also in attendance was Alex Boudreaux, who is not only one of the original Tuskegee Airmen but was also the first African-American air traffic controller and was recently inducted into the Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame.

Keynote speaker, State Sen. Ray Miller, spoke about the legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen. "The Tuskegee Airmen broke down the discrimination that existed in America before anybody else," said Miller. "We have to continue the legacy by setting high goals and working hard and breaking down barriers."

Miller paid tribute to the Tuskegee Airmen for paving the way for other African Americans to succeed not only in the military but all sectors of society.

“We have with us this evening living history, those who set a standard of absolute excellence,” he said.

Miller called on young people to continue the standard of excellence set by the Tuskegee Airmen by educating themselves.

“It’s difficult to continue a legacy if you don’t have a sense of history,” said Miller. “You cannot advance an agenda if you don’t know what’s gone before you.”

Warren Motts, founder and director of the Motts Military Museum in Groveport, said one of the treasured exhibits at the museum is an airplane used by the original Tuskegee Airmen.

“They were groundbreakers, tireless individuals. They led the way,” said Motts. “They were heroes, and I wish young people would realize that.”

Vergel Lattimore, the first African American to achieve the rank of chaplain in the U.S. Armed Forces, told the Tuskegee Airmen in attendance about how they inspired him.

“You are warriors of the first order,” he said. “You have taught me to change those things that people say can’t be changed.”

Thomas Ratcliff, a West Point graduate, swore in the 2006 officers for the Tuskegee Airmen chapter.

“These men and their service and courage can never be feted enough,” he said. “While you blazed a trail of smoke in the sky, you blazed a trail below you for all people of color.”