



TUSKEGEE AIRMEN MEMORIAL OF GREATER PITTSBURGH, INC.

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GROUNDBREAKING

Groundbreaking ceremonies for the proposed Tuskegee Airmen Memorial in the Sewickley Cemetery in Sewickley, Pennsylvania, will be held at 10:30 a.m. on Thursday November 10, 2011. A host of supporters, volunteers and trustee designates will make up a VIP Shovel Line and symbolically "break ground" signaling the official start of construction on March 7, 2012, the 73rd anniversary of the graduation of the first five pilots in the U. S. Army Air Force's World War II black pilot training program in Tuskegee, Alabama.

"The dry summer has made the ground unsuitable to start work immediately," said Ms. Terry Bradford, the project spokesperson. "However, the economic downturn notwithstanding, it was the instant and enthusiastic response from all of our extended family members that enabled us to revisit our campaign goals and realize significant cost savings," she said. "We only need to raise \$178,000 between now and the March 2012 construction date and our memorial will be paid for in full," Ms. Bradford explained.

She described the proposed monument as "breathtaking", saying the Memorial will sit on a serene parcel of acreage donated by the Board of Managers of the historic Sewickley Cemetery.

Rome Monument of Rochester, Pennsylvania, designed the memorial. It will be the largest and only outdoor colorized monument created anywhere to honor the Airmen of the Tuskegee legend. The Beaver County firm will use granite components quarried in Reading, Pennsylvania, and in Vermont. "It will consist of two beautiful 7-ft x 3-ft ebony granite towers onto which all the names of the Tuskegee Airmen from the Western Pennsylvania Region - past, present and future - will be inscribed," she said.

Mrs. Bradford explained that the towers will flank the memorial's centerpiece - a stunning 10-ft x 8½-ft white monument - in the center of which will be a 7-ft x 5-ft porcelain reproduction of an original color painting by Ray Simon of Columbiana, Ohio, the gifted and award-winning illustrator of signature historic events. "Mr. Simon's brilliant illustration will enable visitors to comprehend this dramatic chapter in the historic American Black experience almost at a glance," Ms. Bradford said.

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The transition from the campaign's volunteer founder to a permanent Board of Trustees has begun. Fourteen Founding Trustees have been appointed to oversee the ongoing affairs of the memorial. They include a surviving Tuskegee pilot, descendants of deceased Tuskegee Airmen from the Greater Pittsburgh Region, Sewickley Community influentials, and major donors.

They are:

Paul Abernathy, FOCUS North America, Inc.

Herbert Bazron, MD

Janice Brooks, PhD

John Dioguardi, CEO of Rome Monument

Elaine Effort, Vice President, Greater Pittsburgh Chapter of Tuskegee Airmen, daughter of a Tuskegee Airman

Frank Hailstock, Jr., Tuskegee Airman

Angie Hicks, daughter of a Tuskegee Airman

Ronald Hunt, Sr., Vice President of Fifth Third Bank of Pennsylvania, son of a Tuskegee Airman

L. John Kroeck, President of Sewickley Valley Historical Society

Timothy McCray, Senior Sergeant, U.S. Air Force (Retired)

Carmella Mullen

Stephen Price, President of Pittsburgh Black Viet Nam Era Veterans

Kevin Trower, Esq., Partner Hollis, Trower & Clay, nephew of a Tuskegee Airman

Scott Wendt, Sewickley Cemetery Board of Managers

During the construction time line, these volunteers will be formally installed and will manage the business of the memorial once it is formally dedicated.

To date 84 names have been approved for inscription on the Memorial towers. Sewickley, Pennsylvania, was chosen to be the site of the memorial more as a matter of geography than the fact that a record seven of the area Tuskegee Airmen came from Sewickley - five became pilots and four saw combat in North Africa and Italy.

The Borough's history in many ways is a microcosm of the Black American experience throughout Western Pennsylvania. Sewickley was founded 1853 by an eclectic mix of frontier settlers and/or their descendants along with a sprinkling of wealthy families from the City of Allegheny who had their summer homes in the village. Many were Quakers and Abolitionists and were conductors on the Underground Railroad.

Four years later The Reverend Daniel B. Matthews founded St. Matthews African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church with a congregation of Freedmen, runaway slaves and indentured servants attracted to the Sewickley Valley and to Sewickley because domestic service jobs and apprenticeships were plentiful.

Geographically Sewickley is the midpoint in the memorial project's definition of the Western Pennsylvania Region. The Northern boundary is Erie, Pennsylvania, and the Southern is London, West Virginia. When the late Abraham Jackson was a waiter at an Erie Airport Country Club, he became a licensed pilot and an FAA Certified Instructor and went on to teach the Tuskegee Cadets how to fly.

London, West Virginia, was the birthplace of Colonel George (Spanky) Roberts, one of the marquee Tuskegee combat pilots. He graduated from high school at the age of 15 with an IQ of genius. Roberts was one of the first five pilots to graduate in the Tuskegee program in 1942. He was named the first Commanding Officer of its signature combat unit - the 99th Pursuit Squadron. In the skies over Europe, Roberts became a skilled aerial combat pilot winning the Distinguished Flying Cross and Air Medals for the multiple combat and bomber escort missions he flew.