



# CAF RISE ABOVE®

Inspiring young people to RISE ABOVE adversity using the lessons and stories of the Tuskegee Airmen and the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP).

April 2025



You have heard reference to the Squadron's Volunteer Ambassadors before...but perhaps have wondered what the process for doing that entails.

There are numerous behind-the-scenes tasks a Squadron Volunteer can apply their specialized expertise to - from administrative work to technical jobs through becoming a full-fledged CAF member - and Volunteer Coordinator (and Ambassador extraordinaire before assuming that role) Milt McGee can offer anyone interested guidance there; but the RISE ABOVE Squadron is somewhat unusual among the CAF's many units in that its assets - the P-51C Mustang *Tuskegee Airmen* 'Red Tail' and the Traveling Exhibit - are on the road plus-ten months a year, all across the country, presenting interested Ambassadors opportunities to be involved when

either travels near them (or near somewhere they want to be).

Ambassadors who come out to work with us can count on being afforded chances to do the things with the Exhibit they want to do, and within reasonable limits not being asked to do things they've no interest in. Want to learn how to operate the unique widescreen theater and show our exclusive documentaries? You can do that. Want to introduce the movies to audiences and field questions about the Airmen and WASP? You can do that. Want a post with the Mustang when it is static to answer the many questions visitors have? You can do that, too. Going to the effort of becoming an Ambassador means you care about the stories we preserve. We are not going to waste that commitment having you sweep the entry and exit stairs all day (though that is a job that requires doing, so if you've some nascent swabbing skills and so desire, you absolutely can do that, too).

The best way to find out whether [Volunteering with RISE ABOVE](#) is rewarding for you is simply to apply, complete the very minimal but absolutely necessary backgrounding and training, and join us at a venue to experience it for yourself. Your Exhibit Crew - Don Larson and I - value the addition of an Ambassador or two at every show, especially the large ones. And the fact that many return to help at event after event suggests the experience can be very positive for the Ambassador. [Consider becoming a Volunteer Ambassador](#) for even one stop...and if you want to do more than the one?

You can do that, too.

Respectfully,

Chris Allen

Rise Above Road Exhibit Director

## 2025 RISE ABOVE TOUR SCHEDULE

[Check online for updates and more information!](#)

Apr 5-6	NV- Aviation Nation
Apr 11-13	OK - Altus Air Power Stampede
Apr 19-20	TX- Wings Over Texas
Apr 25-27	VA- Air Power Over Hampton Roads
May 19-26	AL - Rise Above/Air Power History Tour, Birmingham
Jun 10-11	VA - Aim High for Excellence
Jun 13-14	VA - TAKE IT TO THE STREETS
Jun 21-22	OH - Dayton Air Show
Jun 27-28	OK - Tinker Air Show
Jul 3-6	OH - Liberty Aviation Museum
Jul 11-13	OH - Lorain County Discover Aviation Airplane & Car Show
Jul 21-27	WI - EAA AirVenture, Oshkosh, WI
Aug 15-17	NH - Aviation Museum of New Hampshire
Aug 22-24	OH - Columbus Air Show
Aug 30-31	MO - Wings of Pride Air Show
Sep 13-14	TN - Smyrna Rotary Intl Wings of Freedom
Sep 18-21	CO - Great Colorado Air Show
Sep 27-28	CO - Wings of Pride Air Show
Oct 16-19	TX - Amigo AirSho
Oct 30 - Nov 2	MS - Thunder Over The Sound
Nov 11 - 16	MO - Negro Leagues Museum



# SOME FAVORITE PICS!





Lin D. Roosevelt ordered pilot training program of expected black soldiers

Most of the Tuskegee trainees had already attended college, but it still wasn't easy to get through the program. There were 13 cadets in the first pilot training class at Tuskegee and only five earned their wings. Just 996 pilots made it through the Tuskegee program.

to focus on the mission. They never quit trying to be the best soldiers in the military. The pilots were supported by more than 10,000 black ground personnel. They were trained to be mechanics, armament and communication specialists, and administrators. They were also known as "Tuskegee Altnen" because of the important role they played.









"I used the materials to guide my lessons and present to students. Our school hosts a Black History Month assembly every year. This year, we decided to have 7th school complete a poster project on the Tuskegee Airmen. My students benefited from the visual posters, and the information they learned helped them to complete their assignment. It was an excellent resource. I wouldn't change anything."

Adrienne, Detroit, Michigan

"It was a good foundation for teaching the students about setting and achieving goals. It gave them background knowledge a lot of them didn't have about the Tuskegee Airmen."

Roda, Dallas, Texas

"I now have great materials at my fingertips! Thank you so much! I teach at an alternative high school, and I am considering purchasing dog tags as a graduation present for my students. I plan to include a lesson on the Tuskegee Airmen when I teach my World War II unit."

Betty, Catawba, North Carolina

"I'm a teacher in a school in London, England, and I just wanted to share the piece of work that my children did on our research on the Tuskegee Airmen. In our year 6 classes we are currently studying World War II and when it was our Black History week we researched into the Airmen. The children were fascinated by this amazing and inspirational group of men, and many carried out their own independent research. Anyway, we were so proud of the final piece of work we created and just wanted to say thanks for the inspiration of your great website, resources, and all the work that you have put into it."

Andrea, London, England

AIM HIGH  
BELIEVE IN YOURSELF  
USE YOUR BRAIN  
NEVER QUIT ✈️  
BE READY TO GO  
EXPECT TO WIN

### RESOURCES AVAILABLE

**RISE ABOVE Resource Kits** Our free, downloadable RISE ABOVE Resource Kits provides users access to posters featuring the Six Guiding Principles, PowerPoint's, classroom activities and a wealth of material about the Tuskegee Airmen and the WASP.

**Aim High: "The Aircraft of the Tuskegee Airmen"** This free online tool contains sound effects, slide shows and interactive questions designed to inform and entertain. Learn about the inspiration is history of the Tuskegee Airmen, their aircraft and their legacy to triumph over adversity!

**Inspiration Packs** Perfect for the parent, teacher, youth leader or community group looking for a tangible reminder of the lessons of the Tuskegee Airmen and the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP)! Each kit includes 50 dog tags featuring the Six Guiding Principles and the "Triumph Over Adversity – RISE ABOVE: The Story of the Tuskegee Airmen" or the "Triumph Over Adversity – RISE ABOVE: The Story of the WASP" booklets.

### Other Educational Resources

Purchase dog tags featuring the Six Guiding Principles, DVDs, and other materials to enhance your classroom activities in the online store.

Please consider [making a donation](#) to help us to continue offering these resources and to keep the legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen and the WASP alive.



## FEATURED TUSKEGEE AIRMEN PROFILE

*America's Tribute to the Tuskegee Airmen*



**Flt Officer John Wilburn Squires**  
**February 26, 1925 - June 28, 1945**  
**Class: 44-H-SE**  
**Graduation Date: September 8, 1944**  
**Unit: 332nd Fighter Group, 100th Fighter Squadron**  
**Service # 66145**

John Wilburn Squires was born on February 26, 1925. His home or enlistment state and St Louis County, Missouri.

He had enlisted in the United States Army Air Forces. Entered the service via Regular Military. Served during World War II. Squires had the rank of Flight Officer. His military occupation or specialty was Pilot. Service number assignment was 66145. Attached to 332nd Fighter Group, 100th Fighter Squadron.

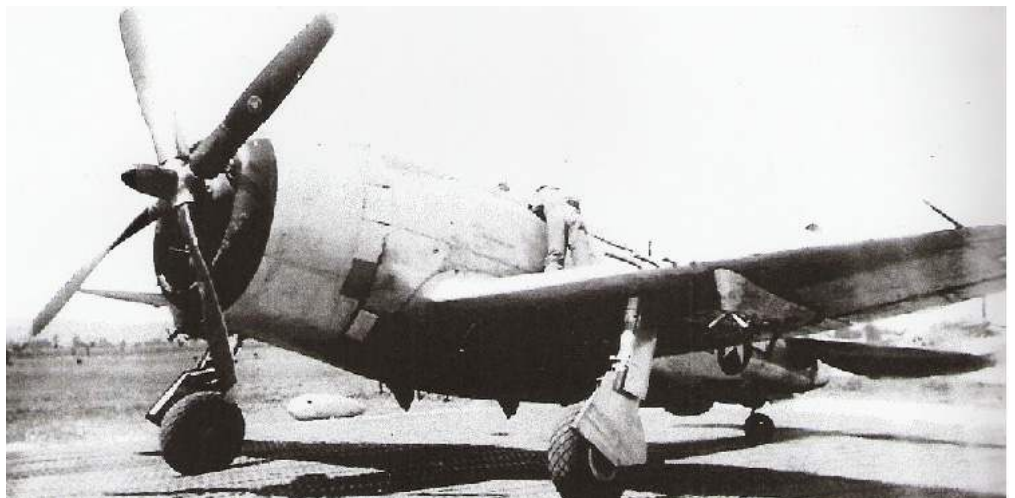
During his service in World War II, Army Air Forces Flight Officer Squires experienced a traumatic event which ultimately resulted in loss of life on June 28, 1945. Recorded circumstances attributed to: Non hostile death, Air crash. Incident location: Italy.

John Wilburn Squires is buried or memorialized at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery. This is a National American Cemetery administered through the Department of Veteran's Affairs.

According to a government database, Squires was awarded a Purple Heart for his military service.

[Read his profile online!](#)

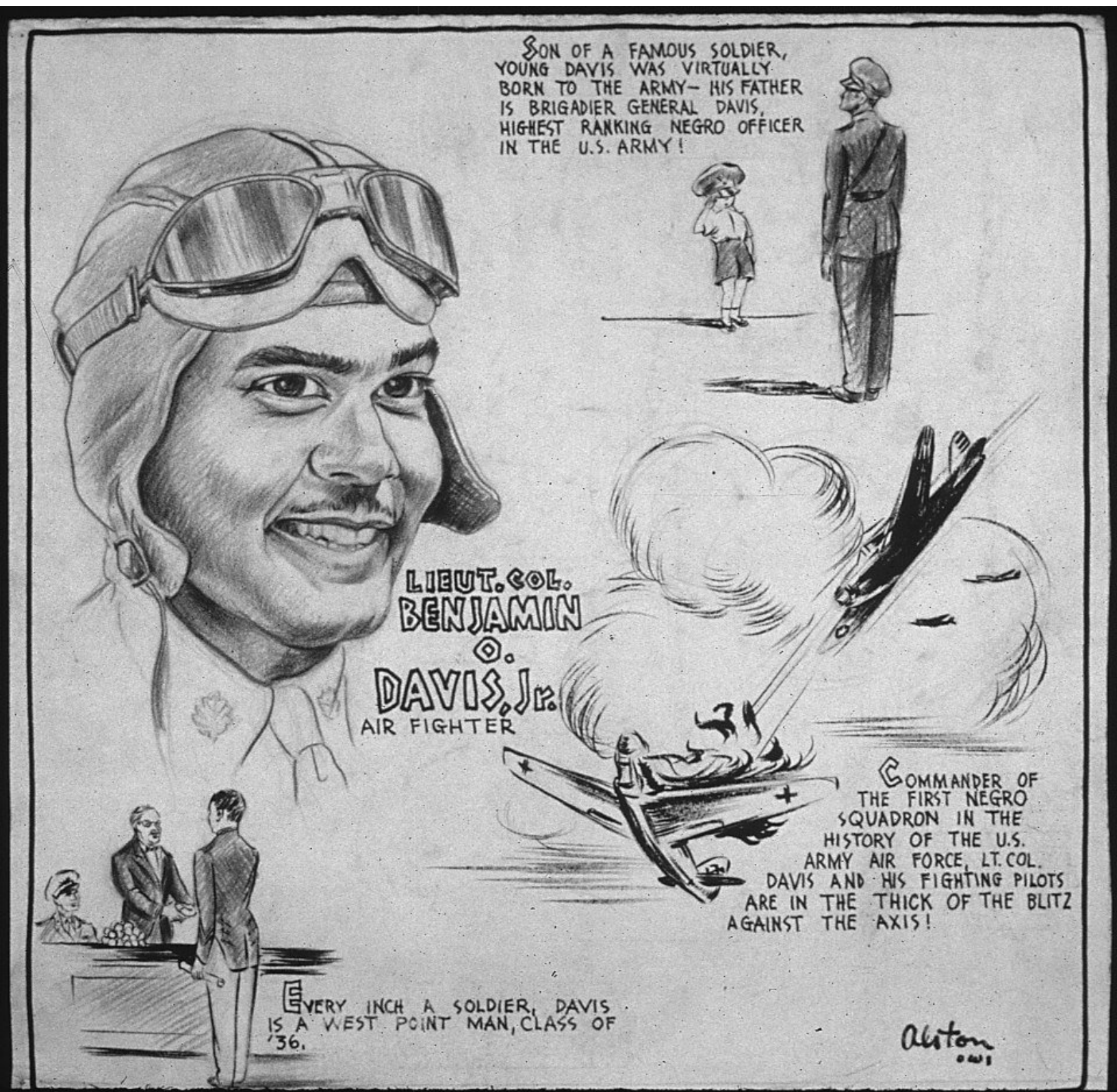
Republic P-47D, 301st Fighter Squadron, Ramitelli Aerodrome, Italy - 1943



Learn more about the [CAF Red Tail Squadron](#), whose mission is sharing the inspiring legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen, America's first black military pilots and their support personnel. Their strength, courage, and ability to triumph over adversity during WWII can serve to inspire others about how to succeed today.



“The changes have been great. That’s what we fight and die for is to have justice and equality both here and abroad.”  
~Tuskegee Airman Asa Herring



Wartime cartoon featuring Lt. Col. Benjamin O. Davis Jr.





## FEATURED WASP PROFILE

*Honoring the Women Airforce Service Pilots*



**Mary Harriet Nesbit Hearn**

**February 19, 1921 - February 7, 2015**

**Class: 44-W-5**

**Training Location: Avenger Field (Sweetwater, Tex.)**

**Planes flown: PT-17, BT-13, AT-6**

**Assigned bases: Marana Army Air Field (Ariz.)**

Mary saw an article in the Sunday Washington Post about the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) and was immediately inspired. After her father reviewed the article, noting that 500 flight hours were required, and knowing her salary of \$90 per month would buy little flight time, he gave his blessing. Regardless of how long it would take, she was elated to think she was on the road to helping her country win that terrible war. She started her lessons at a small airport outside of DC. She could take a bus and get to within a mile of the field and walk the rest of the way.

Her father's plan to keep her occupied, but close to home, was sabotaged without warning . . . the Army Air Corp decided that women with 500 hours of flying time had developed habits that just didn't comply with the "Army Way"; the flight time requirements were dropped from 500 hours to 35 hours! Mary was ecstatic! Only about five hours to go before she could submit her application! Just one final trip to Manassas!

With her log book and application in hand, she made her way to the WASP headquarters, Jacqueline Cochran's office, in the Pentagon and begged them to send her to Sweetwater immediately. She didn't realize that the WASP were swamped with over 25,000 applicants. Fortunately, Mary had her degree from University of North Carolina, and met all the age, height and weight requirements. Each weekend she would show up at the WASP office, let them know she was packed and ready to go until they finally accepted her into the class of 44-5.

The long-awaited departure day finally arrived and, her father took her to the train station for her trip to Sweetwater. Mary had orders to report to Avenger Field on his birthday, Dec 7. While saying their goodbyes, her Father pulled out a wristwatch with a sweep second hand. It was one of the requirements for entering school, but she hadn't put aside the money for it. It was his way of giving her his blessing.

Mary was 23; it was June 27, 1944 when 72 of the original 132 class of 44-5 graduated. Mary walked across the stage and was presented with her silver WASP wings.

[Read her profile online!](#)

Learn more about the [CAF RISE ABOVE: WASP](#), whose mission is sharing the story of the Women Airforce Service Pilots in order to inspire others, especially girls and young women, to RISE ABOVE expectations and find a greater appreciation of their potential.



**“I was absolutely convinced that they couldn’t win the war without me. After all, it was a big effort and everybody had to pitch in and I wanted to do my share! I was going to be a WASP!”**

**WASP Mary Nesbit Hearn, Class W-44-6**



*Photo courtesy of The WASP Archive, The TWU Libraries' Woman's Collection, Texas Woman's University, Denton, TX*



### Minorities in the WASP program

With a majority of the program and its graduates being White Americans, few minority women are allowed to participate in training. Only five women of color had been selected and graduated in the WASP program. Two women of Chinese descent, [Maggie Gee](#) and [Hazel Ying Lee](#), one woman of Indigenous American descent, [Ola Mildred Rexroat](#), and two women of hispanic descent, [Frances Dias Gustavson](#), and [Verneda Rodriguez Mclean](#).



African American women were not permitted to complete training and participate in the WASP program. [Mildred L. Hemmons-Carter](#) applied and was keenly aware of the preparations for war during this period and was intrigued by the Army Air Corps recruitment of women aviators in the Women's Air Service Program (WASP). Arguably, it was run by the most renowned and influential female aviator of the day, Jackie Cochran.

With pilot's license in hand, a hopeful Mildred applied for the program. Later, she received an official letter signed by Jackie Cochran, WASP Commander, stating that: "The US Government does not have plans at this time to include Negro female pilots in the WASP." She was very disappointed that she was not able to fly in the program.

It wasn't until she was 70 years old that she finally received a letter inducting her into the program.

### On this date, the following Tuskegee Airmen events occurred:

1 April 1945: Seven members of the 332d Fighter Group's 301st Fighter Squadron shot down a total of 12 enemy airplanes during a mission to escort B-24s of the 47th Bombardment Wing to raid the St. Polten marshalling yard and conduct a fighter sweep of Linz, Austria. The victors included 1st Lt Harry T. Stewart, who shot down 3 FW-190s, 1st Lt. Charles L. White, who shot down 2 Me-109s, 2d Lt Carl E. Carey, who shot down 2 FW-190s, 2d Lt John E. Edwards, who shot down 2 Me-109s, 2d Lts Walter P. Manning and Harold M. Morris, who each shot down one FW-190, and Flight Officer James H. Fisher, who shot down another FW-190. Two of the 332d Fighter Group P-51 pilots were reported missing: 2d Lt. Walter P. Manning and Flight Officer William P. Armstrong, both of the 301st Fighter Squadron, at 1400 over Wels, Austria, after encountering enemy aircraft. (332d Fighter Group mission report number 253 and Fifteenth Air Force General Order 2294 of 1945; Missing Air Crew Report numbers 13376 and 13377). Flight Officer James H. Fisher shot down the German pilot who had shot down his wingman, Flight Officer William Armstrong. (Tuskegee Airman Leo Gray supplied this information). For their heroic actions on this date, 1st Lt. Charles L. White, 1st Lt. John E. Edwards, 1st Lt. Harry T. Stewart Jr., and 2nd Lt. Carl E. Carey, all of the 301st Fighter Squadron, each earned a Distinguished Flying Cross. On the same day, the 332d Fighter Group sent a set of P-51s on a second mission, to escort a single P-38 on a photographic reconnaissance mission over Prague, Czechoslovakia. (332d Fighter Group mission report number 254). (Fifteenth Air Force General Order 2834 dated 28 Apr 1945 and Fifteenth Air Force General Order 3484 dated 29 May 1945). Tuskegee Airman Leo Gray reported that on the mission to escort the P-38, the P-51s encountered German Me-262 jet fighters, but the jets departed when the Mustangs dropped their auxiliary fuel tanks.



*The Me109 or Bf109 Messerschmitt was one of the most advanced fighters of the era.*



# SHOP WITH WITH A PURPOSE!

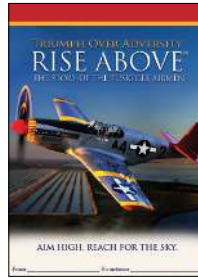
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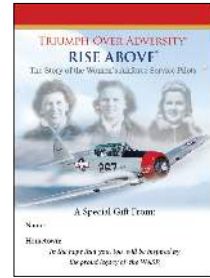
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**For \$99 you can join the exclusive ranks of the Top Flight Club!**

There's no better way to support our mission to educate, inspire, and honor through flight and living history experiences than by joining a Top Flight Club!

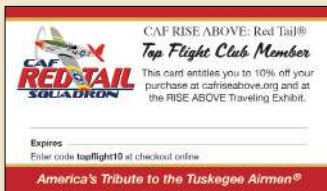
**Why 99?** *(for each annual membership)*

### [Join RISE ABOVE: RED TAIL](#)

The 99th was originally formed as the U.S. Army Air Forces' first African American fighter squadron, then known as the 99th Pursuit Squadron. The personnel received their initial flight training at Tuskegee, Alabama earning them the nickname Tuskegee Airmen.

### [Join RISE ABOVE: WASP](#)

The Ninety-Nines was founded November 2, 1929, at Curtiss Field, Valley Stream, Long Island, New York. All 117 women pilots at the time were invited to assemble in mutual support of the advancement of women in aviation. In 1942 members of the Ninety-Nines were asked to join the Women Air Force Service Pilots (WASP) class of 43-W-1 in Houston, Texas.





# Be A Hometown Hero

## Bring The RISE ABOVE Traveling Exhibit To Your Community!

The CAF RISE ABOVE Traveling Exhibit could be available to make a stop in your hometown. Imagine the draw an exhibit like this would be at your airshow, community event or festival!

Contact the CAF Rise Above Squadron at (802) 371-8838 or email [logistics@cafriseabove.org](mailto:logistics@cafriseabove.org) for more information.

## We Need Your Support!



The CAF RISE ABOVE is a part of the Commemorative Air Force (CAF), a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization.

The mission of CAF RISE ABOVE is to educate audiences across the country about the history and legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen and the WASP - so their strength of character, courage, and ability to triumph over adversity may serve to inspire others to RISE ABOVE obstacles in their own lives and achieve their goals.

The operation of the P-51 C Mustang Tuskegee Airmen and the RISE ABOVE Traveling Exhibit are dependent on the generous support from people like you!

Here's how you can help:

[Make a one-time or recurring donation online.](#) Dedicate your gift in the following ways:

- Make a memorial gift to the Squadron to honor someone's memory. For donations of \$50 or greater the names will be listed on the online [Honorary Flight Log](#).
- [Join the Top Flight Club: Red Tail!](#)
- [Join the Top Flight Club: WASP!](#)

Purchase memorabilia, books and gifts from our [online store](#)

Join [The Heritage Club](#): The Heritage Club is made up of CAF supporters who have included CAF in their estate planning. Email [development@cafhq.org](mailto:development@cafhq.org) for more information.

Check out [FreeWill](#), a **free** estate planning tool which is provided as a benefit for our CAF members and supporters. Gifts from your estate may be designated as unrestricted or restricted to a specific aircraft, unit, or the CAF's endowment.

***Do you need to make a charitable gift from your IRA before the end of the tax year?***

Check out [Smart Giving from Your IRA](#) on the CAF website or contact your IRA administrator **TODAY** to arrange a QCD before the end of the year.



Please mail correspondence or donations to our home office at:

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**Follow us on Instagram**

Check out archived photos and highlights as we tour the country!

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