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## Movie about Tuskegee Airmen draws interest in Iowa

January 18, 2012 By [Dar Danielson](#)

Several Iowans will be watching with interest as the movie "Red Tails" opens in theaters Friday. The movie is based on the experiences of the all-black fighter unit of World War Two known as the Tuskegee Airmen.

Twelve Iowa men flew with the Tuskegee Airmen, while another seven trained to join the unit. Michael Kates, the executive director of the Fort Des Moines Museum, says the museum is holding a viewing party Friday at a local theater (Southridge).

"They are showing the movie and we're going to have an information table on Friday to just show some different things and connections with the Fort Des Moines Museum," Kate says. He says they hope to provide people more information about the Tuskegee Airmen.

The Des Moines Museum created the exhibit to honor the Iowans in the group back in 2002. Kates says the exhibit sometimes leads to some confusion about the airmen.

"A lot of people think that...the grounds of Fort Des Moines is where they served, but they did not serve here...they were trained in Tuskegee, Alabama," Kates explains. The ceremony in 2002 included the presentation of a replica of a P-51 Mustang with the red tail color that became famous through the airmen.

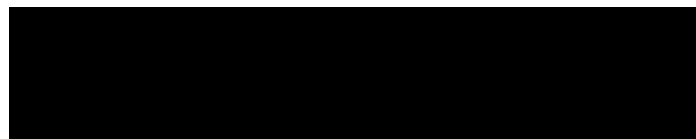
That replica plane sits at the gates of the Iowa Air National Guard base at the Des Moines airport. Kate says the story of the Tuskegee Airmen is amazing.

"Of course they were noted for never losing a bomber plane, and their mission was a very high risk mission. For example Luther Smith (an Iowa native), he flew 133 combat missions, something that is unheard of, and he shot down a number of planes," Kates says. "It's stories like that I think that get lost in history and I think it's good for us to go back and really talk about what these men did."

The Iowans and others in the group were also noted for what they did after the war. "A lot of these men what you'll find out with the Tuskegee Airmen, they went on to become community leaders, they went on to become national leaders and were really generous with their time and made sure their communities were taken care of. You had some really quality men that came out of the Tuskegee Airmen."

Other groups, such as the Des Moines V.F.W. Post 12105, also plan to hold group watch parties for the movie. Kates says the Fort Des Moines Museum has been holding e-mail trivia contests to give away some tickets to the movie on Friday. An effort is also underway to find any ground crew who may've served with the Tuskegee Airmen, as few records were kept of their work.

Find out more about the Iowans in the Tuskegee Airmen on the Fort Des Moines Museum website at: [www.fortdesmoines.org](http://www.fortdesmoines.org). See the trailer for Red Tails below.



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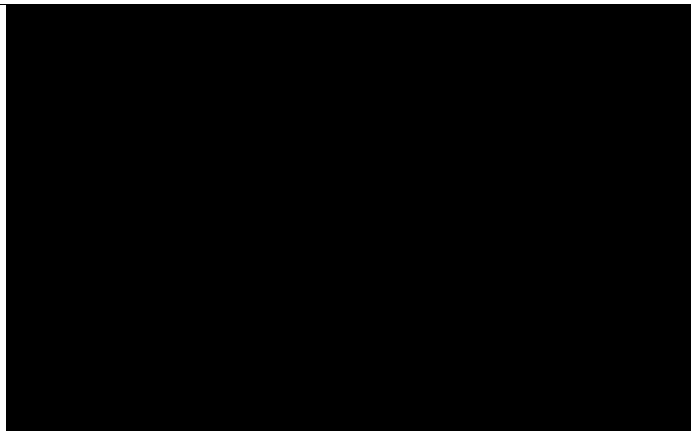
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