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**MUSICIANS AND JROTC STUDENTS FROM CHICAGO HIGH SCHOOLS  
PREPARE FOR WORLD WAR I CENTENNIAL TRIP TO FRANCE**

*Students from Chicago Military Academy and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. High School will perform and tour historic sites on a trip sponsored by the Robert R. McCormick Foundation*

**NOTE TO EDITORS:** Students depart for France on Sunday, Sept. 9. Pre- and post-trip interviews with students, school administrators and McCormick Foundation/Cantigny Park staff can be arranged via the media contacts above.

**CHICAGO, September 4, 2018** – Student musicians and JROTC members from two Chicago high schools are preparing for a once-in-a-lifetime trip to France this month for performances and visits to historic locations once the scenes of the heaviest battles of World War I.

Along with school administrators and adult chaperones, 40 students from the Chicago Military Academy JROTC High School and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. College Preparatory High School will connect for musical performances with French high school students, many of whom they met before during a French trip to the United States earlier this year. Additionally, the trip will provide opportunities for students to experience WWI battlefields, walking in the footsteps of soldiers who became part of history.

The idea for the exchange began with the Friends of the Victory Monument, a Chicago-based volunteer organization that maintains and promotes the Victory Monument, a sculpture in Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood honoring Chicago's African-American veterans of World War I. The all-African-American 8<sup>th</sup> Illinois Infantry, based in Bronzeville and later re-designated as the 370<sup>th</sup> U.S. Infantry Regiment, fought heroically in France. Today, the former armory of the "Fighting Eighth" is home to the Chicago Military Academy.

The trip, sponsored by the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, is the second half of an exchange with Gerard de Nerval High School (GNHS) in Soisson, France. In March 2018, GNHS sent their chorus to Chicago to join CPS musicians in exchange activities that included a concert Cantigny Park.

An important cultural legacy of the African-American troops is the advent of jazz in France. The students from MLKHS are the jazz band musicians. They will join their French counterparts in jazz concert tributes to the African-American soldiers.

“We hold a very close connection with the French people, ever since our benefactor, Col. Robert R. McCormick, fought in the Battle of Cantigny, France, during the war with the First Division, now the 1st Infantry Division, the famous “Big Red One,” said Paul Herbert, executive director of the First Division Museum at Cantigny Park. “While it was the only battle in which he fought, the experience affected him deeply. Upon his return to the states, he renamed his family property in Wheaton, Illinois, to Cantigny.”

“With 2018 marking the centennial of all the heavy fighting by U.S. forces in World War I, we believe it is important to honor the contributions of these often-forgotten soldiers by uniting our communities through activities like this sponsorship,” added Herbert. “It is truly an international affair.”

Vauxaillon, France, the village where the 370<sup>th</sup> fought 100 years ago, is serving as the host village for this trip. Students will have the opportunity to meet other international students also participating in events around France to honor the WWI Centennial.

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### **About the Robert R. McCormick Foundation**

The Robert R. McCormick Foundation’s mission is fostering communities of educated, informed and engaged citizens. Through philanthropic grant-making and Cantigny Park, the Foundation works to make life better in Chicagoland. Based in Chicago, the McCormick Foundation is among the nation's largest foundations with more than \$1.5 billion in assets. It was established in 1955 upon the death of Col. Robert R. McCormick, the longtime editor and publisher of the *Chicago Tribune*. Find out more at [mccormickfoundation.org](http://mccormickfoundation.org).

### **About Cantigny Park**

Cantigny Park, part of the McCormick Foundation, is the 500-acre Wheaton estate of Robert R. McCormick (1880-1955). It is home to the McCormick House, First Division Museum, formal gardens, picnic grounds, walking trails and a Visitors Center with banquet and dining facilities. More information, including hours, directions and upcoming events is online at [cantigny.org](http://cantigny.org).

### **About the First Division Museum**

The First Division Museum at Cantigny Park, fully renovated in 2017 and part of the McCormick Foundation, promotes public learning about America’s military heritage and affairs through the history of the “Big Red One”—the famed 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division of the U.S. Army. It stands in tribute to all who have served our country in the armed forces. Visit the museum online at [fdmuseum.org](http://fdmuseum.org).