

AMERICAN VETERANS HERITAGE CENTER, INC.

2008 ANNUAL REPORT

The 2008 year for **American Veterans Heritage Center, Inc. (AVHC)** began with a great deal of enthusiasm following a very successful planning session in November, 2007. In response to a suggestion from **Dayton VA Medical Center Director Guy Richardson** and building upon discussions at the planning session, the Board developed a priority list of buildings within the historic district that were worthy of maintenance and other improvement funds if they become available. The priority buildings included the Grotto area, the Protestant Chapel, the Headquarters Building, the Putnam Library, the Earnshaw (Chaplain's) house, the Clubhouse, the Freedom and Liberty houses and the five "Doctors' Row" staff houses. Another outgrowth of the 2007 tactical planning session was the appointment of a special committee, consisting of **Judge Walter Rice, General Dennis Samic and Harry Seifert** to consider enhancements to AVHC's governance structure. General Samic was appointed Chair of the Committee, which worked throughout the year and presented its conclusion at the 2008 AVHC tactical session in December.

A very important event occurred in January 2008 when a kickoff ceremony was held on the Dayton campus (attended by **Congressman Michael Turner** and representations of the **Department of Veterans Affairs** and the **National Park Service**) for a new study to consider the eligibility of the historic Dayton VA Medical Center campus for **National Historic Landmark** status. We hosted a reception for ceremony attendees at AVHC's headquarters in the Putnam Library following the event. The new study, being conducted by the National Park Service, will consider the significance of the many innovations in veterans care originated and developed at the campus from its opening through 1960. The study, which is in its final phases, not only will focus attention on the amazing history of the facility but will, we hope, also lead to National Landmark status by the end of 2010 or early 2011. Our Board continues to monitor this process closely.

Preservation of the key historic buildings on the Dayton VA Medical Center campus and designation of the campus as a National Historic Landmark will help us recognize and honor, and continue to educate the public about, the very substantial contributions made by our veterans (thousands of whom have passed through this facility since its founding). In addition, both activities will serve to promote heritage tourism through the preservation and development of the historic campus.

Our **Walk with Giants Festival** committee once again hosted a very successful event on the Dayton VA Medical Center grounds over Memorial Day weekend in 2008. The volunteers who put on this event each year devote a tremendous amount of time and effort to the festival – its truly a labor of love and respect in honor of our veterans and their families. The festival includes Civil War reenactors (including Civil War infantry, artillery and cavalry demonstrations), an Abraham Lincoln look-alike, an equestrian drill team, educational displays, 5K and 10K runs, a pancake breakfast, a genealogy workshop, prayer services, an adjacent carnival, food and other vendors and much more. A major focus of this event is education of the public--particularly the many children who attend--with regard to the history of their country and the contributions of our veterans.

The organizing committee for the event, which spent much of the remainder of 2008 planning for the 2009 festival, has chosen a new name (**Patriot Freedom Festival**) and logo for the 5th annual edition of the celebration, which will be held on **May 23 and 24, 2009**. In addition, through the generosity of **Margaret Kruckemeyer**, event planner **Emma O'Neal** has been engaged to assist with the planning for the 2009 event.

Later in May, representatives of the **Ohio Historic Presentation Office** and the **National Trust for Historic Preservation** toured the VA Medical Center campus as part of a bus tour of Dayton area sites, bringing more attention to the wonderful historic resources on the campus. We seek every opportunity we can to educate state and local officials and representatives of organizations such as these with respect to the history of the Dayton campus and our mission and vision.

During the summer of 2008, **Jake Dailey**, who had recently retired after many years of service to the VA in Dayton, began regularly opening our office and museum in the historic Putnam Library to the public. We are very grateful to Jake for his work as well as his long dedication to AVHC's mission.

We also were very pleased to learn that the Medical Center, under the leadership of **Director Richardson**, was able to secure funding for several projects that will significantly benefit the historic campus. Among these projects were commissioning a preliminary landscape design for the Grotto area, hazardous materials abatement in the historic Headquarters building, painting the bandstand on the parade ground, stabilization work on the doctors' row houses and design work for replacement of the roof of the Protestant Chapel. In addition, after consulting with AVHC, the Medical Center installed new signage with a distinctive historical flavor throughout the campus.

In November, we were honored to have two individuals associated with our organization, **Dale Huffman** (whose *Dayton Daily News* articles were instrumental in raising awareness critical for the preservation of the Protestant Chapel and who was elected early in 2009 as an **honorary trustee** by the AVHC Board) and AVHC President **Margaret Kruckemeyer**, were inducted into the **Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame**.

We also began work on a long-term plan to restore the Pilcher pipe organ in the Protestant Chapel. This will be an expensive project (estimated cost of \$144,000), but we are undertaking it in stages, with the initial steps being cleaning and stabilizing the instrument, using funds remaining from our Save Our America Treasures grant for the Chapel and additional contributions designated for that purpose. One of our principal goals is to see the historic Chapel once again open to the public and serving the purposes for which it was constructed so many years ago.

In December, we spent a Saturday moving in our annual "tactical" planning retreat, facilitated once again by **Steve Nutt** of **City-Wide Development**. Based on recommendations made by the Governance Committee we established following the 2007 retreat, we determined to elect an Executive Vice President with responsibility for day-to-day tasks, with a number of vice presidents, each of whom will have a specific "portfolio" to be assigned. Using this model, we elected the following officers for 2009:

President	Walter Rice
President Emeritus	Margaret Kruckemeyer
Executive Vice President	Dennis Samic
1st Vice President	James Snyder
2nd Vice President	Clay Dailey
Vice President	Edward Mechenbier
Treasurer	Larry Munz
Secretary	David Neuhardt
Operations Manager	Jake Dailey

Following the election, new President **Judge Rice** thanked **Margaret Kruckemeyer** for her extraordinary service as President of AVHC and as the force behind the Walk With Giants/Patriot Freedom Festival and for her willingness to continue on the Board and as President Emeritus. The Board will be considering the assignment of "portfolios" to the Vice Presidents as we move in 2009.

As a result of Board development work conducted during the tactical session, we also elected long-time AVHC volunteer **Robert Kincses** as a trustee. We also determined to invite **Col. Colleen Ryan**, USAF retired and a Vice President with the **Dayton Development Coalition**, to join the Board, and were honored in early 2009 when she accepted our invitation.

We were pleased with our progress in 2008 and look forward to an even more productive 2009.

Respectfully submitted,

David A. Neuhardt, Secretary

565669