

AMERICAN VETERANS HERITAGE CENTER, INC.

2010 ANNUAL REPORT

2010 was another banner year for **American Veterans Heritage Center, Inc.** (“AVHC”), with very real progress on several important projects.

Working with **Mike Jackson** and **Tara Dixon Engel** of **American Veterans Institute** of Tipp City, and its for-profit affiliate, Integrity Marketing, the AVHC board spent much of the early part of 2010 developing a detailed strategic plan and an associated marketing plan for the organization. After a thorough review by the Board and volunteers and numerous revisions, the Strategic Plan, entitled *A Heritage of Service; A Future of Promise . . .*, was formally adopted by the Board in late February. The Strategic Plan describes AVHC’s vision and its mission and lists the organization’s strategic priorities. It also sets forth a number of possible public facilities and activities that support the strategic priorities. The Strategic Plan is available on AVHC’s website, www.americanveteransheritage.org.

In order to introduce AVHC and the new Strategic Plan to decision makers within the community, members of a subcommittee of the Board spent much of the remainder of 2010 meeting with various local business, civic and educational leaders to review the Strategic Plan and AVHC’s mission. The subcommittee also committed to meet regularly to discuss implementation of the Strategic Plan.

During 2010, AVHC continued to follow with much interest the nomination of the historic district on the Dayton VA Medical Center campus as a **National Historic Landmark**. While the very deliberate speed of the nomination process has been quite frustrating to those of us who are anxious to see this very significant recognition come to the Dayton VA, significant hurdles were overcome in 2010. First, the **Midwest Region of the National Park Service** finalized a very comprehensive study of the historic district which also served as the nomination document. Then, the new administration in Washington completed the reconstitution of the federal advisory board that considers the nominations at meetings held twice a year so that board was able to proceed with its mission. Finally, the Dayton nomination was placed on the agenda of the advisory board for consideration. We are now quite optimistic that the process will be completed in 2011, and the campus will receive the very significant historical recognition it rightfully deserves as a National Historic Landmark.

Early in 2010, the National Park Service also launched an on-line travel itinerary featuring the 11 branches of the historic **National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers**, now part of the nation’s VA Medical Centers, including the Dayton VA Medical Center. The site is intended to encourage the public to visit these locations, which also still serve veterans. The site includes essays about the history and development of the National Home system, the nature of life in the Home for veterans in the early years and information on what to see, how to visit and how to serve veterans and assist at the facilities. The itinerary can be found at <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/>. Check out the “Central Branch” for information concerning the Dayton facility.

Thanks to AVHC volunteers **Mark Conrad** and **Andrea Foreman** (AVHC’s webmistress), AVHC made its own itinerary, in the form of a new and improved Driving Guide to the 143 year old Dayton VA Medical Center, available to the public on the home page of AVHC’s website, www.americanveteransheritage.org. You will particularly enjoy the color picture section of the new Driving Guide!

We are also proud to point out the very significant improvements to the historic Protestant Chapel on the Dayton VA Medical Center campus that were made during 2010, with more to come in 2011. Preservation of the Chapel was one of the principal reasons for AVHC's organization, and restoration of the building so that it can be put back into active use remains one of our top priorities. Thanks to the leadership and commitment of **Guy Richardson**, the former director of the Dayton VA Medical Center, a new roof and copper flashing and gutters were installed on the Chapel in 2010, using roofing materials designed to recreate the look of the original slate. The new roof spectacularly features a design that appears in photographs of the building taken not long after it was constructed in 1869. AVHC was given the opportunity to consult on this project.

In late summer, AVHC also completed the first phase of a longer term project to restore the pipe organ located in the Chapel. This work, performed by pipe organ expert **Richard Krewson** and his crew, involved disassembly, cleaning and storage of the pipes and sensitive leather components of the organ. A full restoration of the fragile organ console, while a priority, is quite an expensive proposition and must wait until funding is available.

More good news for the Chapel came later in the year, as design work began for a project to renovate the interior of the Chapel, which will include removal of sprayed-on wall material that was added relatively late in the life of the building, renovation of lighting, addition of ADA-compliant ramps outside of the building and addition of new restroom facilities. Once again, AVHC was graciously asked to provide input into the project. This exciting project will be enhanced by new carpeting which the **Third District of the Ohio VFW** has generously agreed to contribute to the VA in honor of the late **Wesley Willis**, Third District Commander and proponent of the project. Thanks are owed to former Director Richardson for his leadership in securing the funding for this crucial renovation. Work is expected to be completed in the second half of 2011.

AVHC volunteers, led by Board member **Robert Kincses**, are also in the beginning stages of a plan to clean up the historic Grotto area on the campus in preparation for a longer term project to make this area once again a vital part of the campus and the showplace for veterans and visitors it once was.

AVHC once again hosted a very successful **Patriot Freedom Festival** over Memorial Day weekend in 2010. This signature event, which attracted an estimated 5,500 visitors over two days, was made possible only because of the dedication and hard work of 120 volunteers led by AVHC volunteer leader **Cindy Dafler**. The volunteers contributed an estimated combined total of approximately 2,600 hours of their time to make the event a success. In 2010, the event had a slightly different flavor from prior years because a separate Native American PowWow was held concurrently on another part of the grounds. Plans are now being laid for the 2011 version of the event. The Board has engaged marketing guru **Emma O'Neal** for 2011 to oversee AVHC's overall marketing efforts (including the Patriot Freedom Festival), to conduct fundraising for the Festival and to serve as co-director of the Festival with Cindy Dafler.

Since 2009, AVHC has made an effort to hold additional events throughout the year to complement the annual Patriot Freedom Festival. This practice continued in 2010 and included an open house held at the Putnam Library in November.

AVHC also continued to support the Library of Congress' **Veterans History Project** in 2010, with special support for the program at Dayton's Stivers High School for the Arts which is led by history teacher **Bridget Federspeil**, who has been working with AVHC members **Robert Kincses** and **Jake Dailey** to preserve the stories of our nation's veterans. Ms. Federspeil met with the Board in August to discuss other opportunities for AVHC to work together with her students, which led to planning for a teachers in-service training day covering veteran's contributions to our country.

Late in the year, the AVHC Board decided to make the leader of the AVHC volunteers a Board position, which brought volunteer leader **Cindy Dafler** to the Board. Cindy's steady hand with the volunteers and her good sense make her a wonderful addition to the Board, and should enhance the flow of communications between the Board and the volunteers.

At the end of the year, AVHC also celebrated the retirement of AVHC trustee and President Emeritus **Margaret Kruckemeyer** from the VA. Margaret's inspiration, energy, enthusiasm and ideas have, and will continue to, contribute mightily to the success of our organization. Since Margaret is no longer an employee of the VA, the irrepressible Kathleen **Hayes** has also begun attending Board meetings to serve as an unofficial liaison with the employees at the VA Medical Center. We have quickly discovered that, with two former Army nurses at our Board meetings, nothing is impossible!

Respectfully submitted,

David A. Neuhardt
Secretary

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