

AMERICAN VETERANS HERITAGE CENTER, INC.

2007 ANNUAL REPORT

Our all-volunteer event planning committee, once again pulled off a bigger and better ***Walk with Giants/Reliving Veterans History*** festival on the Dayton VA Medical Center grounds over Memorial Day weekend. An estimated 10,000 people attended the 2007 version of the festival. Among the activities were Civil War re-enactors with cavalry, infantry, artillery and camp life demonstrations, historic displays (including two Vietnam era helicopters), a 5K Run/Walk with 197 participants, a Volksmarch with over 100 participants, a Pancake Breakfast put on by the Red Cross Emergency Response volunteers. The rousing opening key note address was presented on Saturday morning by AVHC board member and U.S. District Court Judge Walther H. Rice. The 2007 event also benefited from improved publicity through a special insert that was included in the *Dayton Daily News*. Thanks once more to the hard, hard work of everyone who contributed to the success of this event, including **Carolyn and David Burns, Mark Conrad, Cindy Dafler, Bill Kruckemeyer, Ron Patrick, Dr. Fred Peterson, Robert Selman, Janet Stange, Janice Wagner**, the re-enactors from the **35th Ohio Volunteer Infantry** and **Lee's Ranger Cavalry** and the **Red Cross**, to name but a few. We offer special thanks to **VFW Ohio Charities** for their very generous support of the Walk with Giants event. Our Board set as a goal making this event self-sustaining in the next several years, and we appear to be well on the way towards reaching that goal.

In an effort to determine what guests like about the Walk with Giants event and what improvements can be made, we arranged for Dr. Judy Douglas to conduct a marketing survey of event participants. Of those responding to this survey, fully 93% indicated that they intended to return in 2008. The organizing committee learned other valuable information from the study, which undoubtedly will lead to an even better event in 2008. The committee is already at work on plans for the 2008 event, to be held on the Dayton VA Medical Center grounds on May 23-25. More information is available on our website, www.AmericanVeteransHeritage.org.

During 2007, AVHC continued to advocate for the Dayton Veterans Affairs Historic District by reviewing and commenting on the second draft of an assessment of significance of the 11 branches of the historic National Soldiers Home, including the Dayton campus. We had helped sponsor a Memorandum of Understanding between the National Park Service and the Department of Veterans Affairs to conduct the assessment. While the study ultimately did not recommend National Landmark status for the Dayton campus (in large part, we believe, because the period of the study ended in 1930), we feel that our comments added to the accuracy of the study. Subsequently, the National Park Service agreed to conduct a second study (announced at a January, 2008 event in Dayton attended by Congressman Turner and representatives of the VA and National Park Service) covering a longer period of history, which will allow consideration of many more of the innovations in veterans care that originated in Dayton and will, we believe, lead to a recommendation of National Landmark status for the historic Dayton campus.

In July, many of our board members attended a public hearing concerning a proposal by the Volunteers of America to lease Miller Cottage from the VA for transitional housing. Although we were initially opposed to the proposal based on the impact on the campus, by attending the hearing, we were able to obtain additional information from both the VOA and the VA that made us more comfortable that the proposal would, in fact, offer additional options that would complement veterans care at the Medical Center.

AVHC also used 2007 to develop a closer relationship with **Director Guy Richardson** and his staff at the Dayton VA Medical Center in an effort to identify areas in which we can work together for the benefit of the Medical Center. We have also sought to partner with other local organizations, such as the Dayton Chamber of Commerce, Dayton Visitor's Bureau, Dayton Development Coalition, City-Wide Development Corporation, the National Park Service, the veterans service organizations and volunteer groups such as the Blue Star Moms, Boy Scouts and Civil Air Patrol.

In November, the AVHC board met off-site for a strategic/tactical planning session facilitated by **Steve Nutt** of City-Wide Development. The Board concluded that an important mission of the organization is to continue to seek partnering opportunities with the VA. Director Richardson shared with the Board his vision for working together with AVHC and possible joint projects. We identified ongoing AVHC initiatives (such as advocacy for historic preservation on the historic campus, increasing public awareness of veterans' issues, the Walk with Giants festival, veterans' history and fundraising for operational expenses), short-term initiatives (such as our priority projects of completing the renovation of the Protestant Chapel, developing a Master Plan for landscaping of the historic Grotto area, and furthering the Veterans History Project) and long-term initiatives (such as developing the National Veterans Hall of Fame and renovating the Patient Library, Clubhouse, Headquarters Building and Earnshaw home).

As part of the tactical session, we also laid out a plan for developing a larger Board, with an active Executive Committee. We appointed a Governance/Nominating Committee, consisting of trustees **Judge Rice, Dennis Samic** and **Harry Seifert** to work on developing the proposed structure, and we plan to meet in early May of this year to move forward with this effort.

As always, the organization could not have made it through the year without its many dedicated volunteers. In addition to those who helped with specific projects as described above, we offer special thank to the handful of volunteers whose continuing efforts kept our office and organization going throughout the year, including **Mark Conrad, Jake Dailey, Gilla Farrell, Jim Fortune** and **Robert Kincses**.

Respectfully submitted

David A. Neuhardt, Secretary