

AMERICAN VETERANS HERITAGE CENTER, INC.

2011 ANNUAL REPORT

2011 was a year of both successes and challenges for **American Veterans Heritage Center, Inc.** (“AVHC”).

Protestant Chapel Renovation

In late spring of 2011, work finally began on long-needed renovations to the interior of the historic 1870 Protestant Chapel on the Dayton VA Medical Center campus. The project includes removal of the non-original stucco that had been placed on the walls, repair to the floor and lighting, new carpeting, addition of a main floor restroom, and access work to make the chapel ADA compliant. Funding for this work had been arranged by former Medical Center Director **Guy Richardson**.

In another Chapel related project, in late in 2010, AVHC completed the removal and cleaning of the pipes, and cleaning and preservation of the leather, of the historic nineteenth century Pilcher organ located in the Chapel. The work, which was completed by local resident and organ expert **Robert Krewson**, was intended only to do the minimum to keep the inoperable organ from deteriorating past the point of no return until funding can be secured for a complete restoration of the console. Returning the organ console, which is in quite poor condition, to playing condition likely will cost between \$175,000 and \$200,000, and AVHC is actively seeking an angel to help fund this project. Just recently, Mr. Krewson reinstalled the cleaned pipes in the Chapel.

National Historic Landmark Designation

The historic district of the Dayton VA Medical Center campus, the old Central Branch, National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places; however, a long-time AVHC goal has been to see the campus designated as a National Historic Landmark, a very significant national recognition. In 2010, significant hurdles to the designation were overcome when the Midwest Region of the National Park Service finalized a very comprehensive study of the historic district, which also served as the nomination for National Landmark designation, and in its 2010 Annual Report AVHC confidently predicted that the designation would be forthcoming before the end of 2011. Unfortunately and unexpectedly, the nomination was caught in a technical dispute between academic historians within the National Park Service, and the nomination process came to a complete halt during the summer of 2011.

Considerable additional work was required to “unstick” the nomination, but with a team effort involving AVHC, advocates within the National Park Service and Congressman Turner’s office, the “unsticking” finally occurred and, with some minor revisions, the nomination was finally approved by the Landmarks Committee of the National Park Service’s Advisory Board in November. The next step is consideration of the nomination by the full Advisory Board in May or June and, if approved, final designation by the Secretary of the Interior. We are cautiously optimistic that 2012 will finally be the year for this long sought recognition.

Grotto

Another great project that began to move slowly forward in 2011 after some considerable preparation work was a plan to renovate the historic Grotto area of the Dayton VA campus. Former Medical Center **Guy Richardson** was successful in obtaining VA funding for planning and renovation

work for the sadly overgrown area, and AVHC trustee **Robert Kincses** has been mobilizing a team of volunteers to assist with the renovation and ongoing maintenance after the initial work is completed. Contracts for the work are expected to be let this spring. This much photographed and very scenic area was a favorite of both resident veterans and visitors during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and AVHC is excited about the opportunity to see its return to beauty and usefulness.

Personnel Changes

AVHC was sorry to bid farewell to Dayton VA Medical Center Director **Guy Richardson** in the early spring of 2011, when he moved to the VISN headquarters in Cincinnati. Mr. Richardson was a great supporter of AVHC and its mission, and he was instrumental in obtaining VA funds for the renovation of the Protestant Chapel and the Grotto as well as maintenance funds for a number of other buildings in the historic district. Interim Director **William Montague**, who came out of retirement to accept the position, also showed great enthusiasm for AVHC and its work and embraced the organization as he energetically addressed a number of significant issues facing the Medical Center. At the end of 2011, Mr. Montague resumed his retirement and new Director **Glenn Costie** (most recently at a VA hospital in Poplar Bluff, Missouri) took the helm of the Medical Center. AVHC looks forward to continuing the same great relationship with Mr. Costie as the organization has enjoyed with the last several directors.

In April, AVHC experienced another change when trustee **Colleen Ryan**, formerly with the Dayton Development Coalition, resigned from the AVHC Board due to time constraints imposed by her new position as Vice President of Vectren of Ohio. We greatly appreciated Col. Ryan's service on the Board.

In August, in connection with an ongoing plan to further strengthen the Board by adding individuals with skills and experience in key areas, the Board added three new trustees, **Cynthia Ferguson**, **Curt Dalton** and **Kathy Hayes** (who for some time had been serving as liaison with the VA and regularly attending Board meetings). In the relatively short time that the three have been on the Board, each has already made significant contributions through several important projects.

Veterans History Teachers Seminar

In April, with leadership from **Bridget Federspiel**, a Dayton high school history teacher and very strong supporter of the Veterans History Project, AVHC sponsored a continuing education seminar for teachers to learn how to integrate veterans history into their teaching. The 12 teachers who attended the event were complimentary of the curriculum.

Patriot Freedom Festival

The 2011 Patriot Freedom Festival over Memorial Day weekend was undoubtedly the most successful event yet, with attendance of approximately 4,500 guests. The event benefited from the enthusiastic first-time sponsorship of **Hospice of Dayton**. The Festival included the award of prizes to students who won the first-time ever "*How to Thank a Vet*" art contest organized by **Bridget Federspiel** and **Robert Kincses**. Led by co-chairs **Cindy Dafler** and **Emma O'Neal**, over 150 volunteers worked together to make the event a tremendous success.

Community Covenant

On Veterans Day, as part of a broader Operation Welcome Home organized by Mike Jackson and Tara Engel, AVHC organized and sponsored a Community Covenant signing ceremony at the Catholic

Chapel at the Medical Center. The Community Covenant contains specific commitments to our veterans by the local community, led by the Greene and Montgomery County Commissions, the Veteran Services Offices of the two counties, the Dayton VA Medical Center, local colleges and universities, and the Ohio National Guard. In a moving ceremony, the Covenant was signed by, among others, representatives from the two County Commissions, the offices of Ohio's two U.S. Senators, Congressmen Austria and Turner, the Ohio Department of Veterans Services, the VA, Wright State University, the Ohio National Guard, the Air Force Material Command (representing Wright-Patterson Air Force Base), the family of an Ohio National Guardsman on active duty and dozens of others in the audience who stayed after the ceremony to add their own names to the document. The signing, which was well covered by the local media, was organized by a committee led by trustee **Dennis Samic**. A group of dedicated AVHC volunteers assured that the event and a subsequent AVHC open house at the nearby Putnam Library went very smoothly. Framed copies of the signed covenant will be presented by AVHC to the Montgomery and Greene County Commissions and the Veteran Services Offices of the two counties, and efforts are being made to establish a system for monitoring compliance with the promises made in the Covenant on an ongoing basis.

Other Events

At a banquet on June 3, 2011 sponsored by the Dayton Engineers Club, the Dayton Women's Club and the Friends of the Dayton Arcade, AVHC was honored to be named a "***Jewel of the Gem City.***" Among the others so honored that night were President Emeritus **Margaret Kruckemeyer** and trustee **Curt Dalton**.

AVHC issued the first edition of a new electronic newsletter, *The Patriot*, near the end of 2011. It is hoped that the newsletter can be regularly published in the future as a way to keep the organization connected with its many supporters.

AVHC qualified in 2011 for the Combined Federal Campaign. This gives interested AVHC supporters who work at one of the participating Miami Valley federal facilities the opportunity to make financial donations through payroll deductions.

In December, the Board completed 2011 with its regular strategic planning retreat, held at the Dayton Engineers Club. Trustees reelected to the Board at that time include **Walter H. Rice** (President), **Dennis Samic** (Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer), **Larry Munz** (Treasurer), **David Neuhardt** (Secretary), **James Snyder** (Vice President), **Harry Seifert** (Vice President), **Cindy Dafler**, **Curt Dalton**, **Cynthia Ferguson**, **Kathy Hayes** and **Robert Kincses**. In addition, Major General Ret. **Edward Mechenbier** was named an honorary trustee and Vice President, **Dale Huffman** continues as an honorary trustee, **Margaret Kruckemeyer** continues as President Emeritus and **Jake Dailey** continues as Operations Manager.

At the Strategic Planning Event in December, trustee **Curt Dalton** also unveiled proofs of his new book, a compilation of views (primarily stereoviews) of the historic Dayton Soldiers Home. Mr. Dalton, author of numerous books on Dayton history, is contributing this monumental work to AVHC, which hopes to make copies available later in 2012.

Respectfully submitted,
David A. Neuhardt
Secretary