

## AMERICAN VETERANS HERITAGE CENTER, INC.

### 2012 ANNUAL REPORT

2012 was a very exciting year for **American Veterans Heritage Center, Inc.** (“AVHC”) as several long-term projects came to fruition.

#### **Renovation and Reopening of Protestant Chapel**

After months of closure, a years-long effort to renovate the Dayton VA Medical Center’s historic Protestant Chapel was completed with the rededication of the Chapel on May 3, 2012. Stirred to action by a 1998 **Dale Huffman** column in the *Dayton Daily News*, the project began with a \$130,000 Save America’s Treasures matching grant from the **National Park Service** used to shore up and replace the deteriorated floor system, which allowed the building to be stabilized and reopened to the public. An initial rededication ceremony was held in 2005. Extensive subsequent exterior and interior renovation funded by the VA (including a new roof with a design echoing the 1870’s original, removal of the deteriorating remnants of an earlier misguided interior “stucco” remodeling and the addition of carpeting and a new restroom) allows the nearly 150-year old Chapel to once again serve an active role in the healing mission of the Dayton VA Medical Center. Speakers at the 2012 reopening and rededication included Congressman **Michael Turner**, AVHC Board President Hon. **Walter Rice** and **Frederic Gagel**, great-grandson of Chaplain Earnshaw of the Central Branch, National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers (the forerunner of the Dayton VA Medical Center). Particular thanks go to former Dayton VA Medical Center Director **Guy Richardson**, Interim Director **William Montague** and current Director **Glenn Costie**, all of whom were instrumental in the completion of this project. AVHC continues to seek the anticipated \$170,000 needed to fund the renovation of the Chapel’s organ.

#### **National Historic Landmark Designation**

As cautiously predicted in the 2011 Annual Report, 2012 saw successful conclusion of another multi-year effort in which AVHC played a leading role, as the historic portion of the Dayton VA Medical Center campus was designated a **National Historic Landmark**, the highest level of national significance awarded by the National Park Service. The designation process, which had more twists and turns than the street system on campus, seemed to stretch on and on, but in May 2012, the **National Park System Advisory Board** approved the nomination and, after months of further waiting, the Secretary of Interior signed the designation in October. The area covered by the National Historic Landmark designation includes 266 acres and 51 buildings of the campus. The designation recognizes the significant contributions of the facility to the development of healthcare for veterans. The VA currently is developing appropriate signage, and a formal ceremony to celebrate the designation will be announced later in 2013.

#### **Grotto Renovation**

A third campus project advocated by AVHC made visible progress in 2012 as work began on the renovation of the historic Grotto. This once beautifully landscaped area was a favorite of both veterans residing on campus and visitors and likely was the most photographed portion of the campus. The repair work and removal of overgrowth already has almost miraculously revealed long hidden features, and new plantings will surely do much to bring these gardens back to the point where they can once again serve as a relaxing and therapeutic oasis for many of the veterans served by the Medical Center. **Robert Kinces**, AVHC trustee, continues to serve as AVHC’s principal liaison to the Grotto project, and is seeking to engage a team of volunteers who can assist in the ongoing maintenance of this beautiful and historic feature.

## **Patriot Freedom Festival**

The **9th Annual Patriot Freedom Festival** was held on Memorial Day weekend in 2012. An estimated 4,000 guests attended the event, sponsored by **Hospice of Dayton**. The event, which includes reenactors, displays, programs, music, food and other entertainment, has brought thousands of visitors on to the Dayton VA campus during its nearly decade of existence. Once again, the Student Art Contest, organized by volunteer **Bridget Federspiel**, was one of the highlights of the Festival.

## **Publication of *The Mother Home***

Another milestone in the preservation of the history of the Dayton VA Medical Center was achieved in 2012 with the publication by AVHC of trustee **Curt Dalton's** wonderful book ***The Mother Home: A History of the Dayton Soldiers' Home in 3-D***. The 134 page book contains over 220 color and black-and-white photographs of Dayton's Central Branch, including more than 150 stereoviews from the 1870-1910 period. The photos are accompanied by text describing the many historic features and structures shown in the photos. A special pair of glasses that come with each copy of the book allow these photos to be seen in three dimensional form. Thanks go to Dayton's **Standard Register Co.** for supporting the initial publication of the book, the profits from which will benefit AVHC.

## **Follow Up on Community Covenant**

As described in the 2011 Annual Report, on Veterans Day in 2011, AVHC organized and sponsored a ceremony at which many governmental entities and other members of the Montgomery and Greene County community signed a **Community Covenant** which included specific commitments to our veterans. In 2012, AVHC purchased and presented framed copies of the signed covenant to the Montgomery and Greene County Commissions and the Veterans Services offices of the two counties as a reminder of the commitments made in the Community Covenant. Representatives of AVHC, including trustee **Dennis Samic**, who led the committee that organized the signing ceremony, have been working with the local Ohio **Regional InterService Family Assistance Committee (RIFSAC)** to establish a mechanism for monitoring compliance with the Community Covenant.

## **Concerts at the Bandstand**

The historic bandstand opposite the old Headquarters building at the Dayton VA Medical Center is one of the oldest structures on campus, having served veterans and visitors since the early 1870's. AVHC trustee **Robert Kincses**, working with **Kenneth Spann** and **Louis Long** of the Medical Center's Recreation Therapy program, organized a "test" community concert for residents of the Medical Center in October using the bandstand—the first such concert to be held at the bandstand in many years. Featuring the **Dayton Shrine Band**, the concert was a great success, and it is expected that at least two concerts will be scheduled in 2013.

## **Ohio Honors AVHC Volunteers**

AVHC was very honored to learn that three out of the fifteen 2012 inductees to the **Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame** were veterans who are associated with our organization. Our congratulations to volunteer and former office manager **James P. Fortune** and trustees **Kathleen A. Hayes** and **James W. Snyder** for this well-earned recognition.

## **Other Events**

In April, 2012, AVHC recognized **Donna Simmons**, Assistant to the Director and Public Affairs Officer, for her valuable assistance to AVHC as a connection between the group and the office of the Medical Center's director.

On August 25 and 26, 2012, AVHC's events committee hosted the second annual **Eastern Woodland Gathering** on the Medical Center grounds, for the purpose of honoring veterans.

In September, AVHC presented a Certificate of Appreciation to **Brent Davidson**, Chair of the AVHC Events Logistics. The Events Committee has been relying on Brent's dedication as a volunteer for many years, most recently for his willingness to take on the hard work of orchestrating event logistics.

A 5K run/walk/roll fundraiser has long been a part of the annual Patriot Freedom Festival in May. This year, a second successful run/walk/roll was held on the Medical Center campus on Veterans Day, November 11, 2012.

## **AVHC Board and Officer Changes**

In June, hard-working and much appreciated AVHC Treasurer and trustee **Larry Munz** stepped down from both roles as he prepared for retirement and a move from the Dayton area. The organization owes many thanks to **Sally Easterling** and **Phil Ruter**, who very ably filled in for Larry on an interim basis to take us through most of the remainder of 2012. We were extremely lucky, however, to wind up the year with yet another great Treasurer, **Tim Pritchett**. Tim is a retired Chief Master Sergeant and Financial Management Manager for the Air Force Materiel Command at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. Tim also was elected as an AVHC trustee at the Board's annual strategic planning session in December.

The Board elected two other trustees at the December meeting. The two new trustees are **Mark Conrad**, long-time AVHC volunteer and proprietor of the Miami Valley Military Museum (co-located with AVHC in the Putnam Library), and **Walt Harrison**, one of the founders of AVHC and founder and past President of Friends of the Dayton Soldiers Home.

At its strategic session, the Board also organized three new Board committees to pursue specific goals, consisting of a committee to investigate the possibility of organizing an AVHC foundation, a governance/organizational structure committee and a marketing committee.

At the end of 2012, indefatigable AVHC volunteer and office manager **Jake Dailey** chose to step down as AVHC's office manager, although he remains active with the organization. Volunteer **Laura Wills** has stepped up to fill in for Jake in the AVHC office.

Respectively submitted,  
David A. Neuhardt  
Secretary  
March 1, 2013