

# AMERICAN VETERANS HERITAGE CENTER, INC.

## 2013 ANNUAL REPORT

2013 was yet another very productive year for **American Veterans Heritage Center, Inc.** (“AVHC”).

### **Memorandum of Understanding**

AVHC has had a mutually beneficial relationship with the Dayton VA Medical Center for many years, but the relationship was very informal, including the use by AVHC of the Putnam Library on campus for its offices, meetings and the Miami Valley Military History Museum. This relationship has now been formalized with a Memorandum of Understanding between the Dayton VA Medical Center and AVHC which spells out the understanding between the two organizations and establishes a framework for future collaboration. The document, initially crafted by Judge **Walter Rice**, President of AVHC, was signed by Judge Rice, on behalf of AVHC, and Director **Glenn Costie**, on behalf of the Dayton VA Medical Center, in December, 2013. The new “MOU” will enable AVHC to continue to provide important support to the critical mission of the Dayton VA Medical Center.

### **Teamwork Supporting the Historic Grotto**

The core renovation of the historic Grotto area of the Dayton VA Medical Center was completed in the spring of 2013, with pathways in this scenic area once again passable, drainage put back in the proper channels and the jungle-like landscaping tamed, with intrusive plants removed and new plantings added. A ribbon cutting ceremony was held on July 3, 2013. Once again, the Grotto and gardens can provide a beautiful and peaceful place of reflection for veterans and visitors alike.

All gardens require ongoing maintenance and care, and AVHC trustee **Robert Kincses** (who has been serving as AVHC’s principal liaison to the Grotto project) very successfully recruited an enthusiastic and knowledgeable team of Master Gardeners, associated with the Ohio State University Montgomery County Extension Service, to assist with spring and fall cleanup and weekly maintenance and monitoring during the summer. Advised by Extension Education Specialist **Suzanne Mills-Waszniak**, at least 16 Master Gardeners and interns participated in the effort prior to the onset of winter. These gardeners have whole-heartedly adopted the Grotto and gardens as a project, and in coordination with the Medical Center staff will help to assure the continued health and beauty of the renovated Grotto. Their enhancement projects include a butterfly garden, a vegetable garden and a program of memorial trees which will add carefully selected native varieties to the landscape.

### **Dayton VA Medical Center Master Planning**

In March, the AVHC Board received an update on the comprehensive master planning effort being conducted for the Dayton VA Medical Center campus. The plan, presented by **Mark Permelia**, includes a number of different tracks and planning concepts, including reorganization of the patient tower for greater efficiency and refocusing certain areas of the campus. The AVHC trustees were invited to contribute feedback to the plan. The trustees were enthusiastic about the plan and particularly appreciated a proposal to eventually return the historic campus parade ground to its original status as open space. The loss of the parade ground had been cited by the

National Park Service as a key factor for not approving the campus for National Historic Landmark status during an initial consideration several years ago (the Dayton VA Medical Center eventually did receive that recognition in 2012). The Master Planning Effort will help to assure that the Medical Center remains in the forefront of veterans' care for another 150 years.

### **Initial Printing of *The Mother Home* Sells Out**

In 2012, AVHC published, as a gift for contributors to AVHC, the wonderful book *The Mother Home: A History of the Dayton Soldiers' Home in 3-D*, researched and written by AVHC trustee **Curt Dalton**. In 2013, the demand for the book, which contained 220 photographs, many in color, exhausted the limited initial printing. As this report goes to press, AVHC is expecting to receive a small second printing, which also is expected to sell out very quickly. Many thanks are due to **Standard Register Co.** for their very generous support of the publication of the book.

### **AVHC Website Given Update**

Thanks to AVHC trustee and volunteer **Mark Conrad**, the AVHC website, found at [www.americanveteransheritage.org](http://www.americanveteransheritage.org), received a much anticipated upgrade in 2013. The clean and modern new look of the site is refreshing. Mark continues to work with the website, and further improvements can be expected in the future.

### **Military Book Author Signing**

On April 27, 2013, AVHC's Event Committee and the Miami Valley Military History Museum hosted a dozen authors for the first Military Authors Book Signing Event. Many authors were present at the event to meet attendees, answer questions and sign their books (which ranged from biographies to campaign histories to novels, covering topics ranging from the Civil War to Vietnam), which were available for sale.

### **Patriot Freedom Festival**

The Dayton VA Medical Center once again hosted the Patriot Freedom Festival, AVHC's premier outreach and educational event, on Memorial Day weekend in 2013. Attendance was estimated at 4,500 for the two day event. The opening ceremony included Medical Center Director **Glenn Costie** and keynote speaker **Ken Williamson**, a Korean War veteran, who spoke about that sometimes forgotten war. A number of other veterans on the stage were honored during the ceremony. As always, exhibits, tours, re-enactors, music, art, entertainment, good food and fellowship combined to make the 2013 Patriot Freedom Festival a very successful event. The AVHC Events Committee already is hard at work preparing for the 2014 festival, which will be celebrating its 10th anniversary.

## **Another AVHC Volunteer Honored by the State of Ohio**

In November, 2013, AVHC trustee **Harry Seifert** was inducted into the Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame at a ceremony in Columbus. Harry joins six previous inductees who have been associated with AVHC, surely a record for any organization of our size in the state.

## **Other Activities**

In the spring of 2013, AVHC worked with the Dayton Aviation National Park Director **Dean Alexander** to nominate Montgomery County native Major General George R. Crook for the **Dayton Walk of Fame**. Although our nominee was not selected for recognition in 2013, the nomination did serve to highlight General Crook's key role in obtaining the first legal recognition of American Indians as persons under U.S. law through the test case of *Standing Bear v. Crook* for which he acted as "friendly" defendant.

In 2010, after an extensive planning effort, AVHC developed a Strategic Plan under the title "*A Heritage of Service; A Future of Promise.*" Through the efforts of several Board members, the Plan was updated in 2013 to reflect, among other things, AVHC's multiple successes during the intervening three years. A copy of the updated 2013 Strategic Plan is available on our website, [www.americanveteransheritage.org](http://www.americanveteransheritage.org).

The second annual Veterans Day 5-K race/walk/roll sponsored by AVHC was successfully held in November, 2013. The event helps to raise funds for AVHC.

The renovated Protestant Chapel at the Medical Center was rededicated in 2012, but a much appreciated enhancement was completed in 2013 when the Medical Center arranged for the repair of the clock in the Chapel's tower. Once again, the great bell is chiming the hours and the lighted clock face accurately displays the time. Regular Sunday services were reinstated in the Chapel in 2012 and the renovated building is once again being used for many other activities, including Sunday school classes and weddings. AVHC continues to seek the necessary funding to complete the renovation of the Chapel's historic organ.

## **AVHC Board and Officer Changes**

In February, 2013, **John Gower**, who has an extensive background in historic preservation and urban planning through a career in planning with the City of Dayton, was elected to the Board of Trustees.

**Tim Pritchett**, who very ably gave us a year as Treasurer and trustee, stepped down at the end of 2013 due to educational commitments. We were very lucky, however, to find as his replacement Major General USAF (Ret.) **Everett G. Odgers**, who was elected as a trustee and Treasurer in December. General Odgers served as the chief financial officer of the Air Force Materiel Command at Wright-Patterson AFB prior to his retirement from the Air Force.

Trustee **Curt Dalton**, who used his background in history in many ways for the benefit of AVHC during his time on the Board (including authorship of the **Mother Home** book), stepped off the Board at the end of 2013. Curt's knowledge and enthusiasm will be much missed.

Respectfully Submitted,  
David A. Neuhardt  
Secretary, AVHC

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