



A Future of Promise...

The American Veterans Heritage Center & Dayton VA Campus Appendix to 2016 Strategic Plan

While several components of the AVHC Strategic Plan (those described in the basic document) are on-going, many others are beyond the reach of our current resources, and thus remain aspirational, or, at best,

long-term in nature. As work is completed on current projects, the AVHC will turn its attention to those projects described in this Appendix to the Strategic Plan. These projects fall into categories B, C and D introduced in the basic plan:

B. Additional Public Facilities and Activities

American Veterans Hall of Honor – An initial step in establishing a Hall of Honor is to seek a Congressional Charter, thus confirming it as THE National Hall of Honor for American Veterans. Although Congress grants few charters, they do make exceptions for projects of great national significance. Although Veterans Halls of Honor have been attempted by several groups over the years (including one initiated several years ago by AVHC board

members), no effort has ever made it past the planning stages. This particular American Veterans Hall of Honor would exist first as a “virtual facility” which could be online before the end of 2018 thus “planting the flag” on its existence and confirming that such a national organization now has a permanent home – in Dayton, Ohio on the VA campus. This would provide a visible development tool for raising the funds and awareness necessary to establish the physical facility. Options for the physical location include either the Freedom or Liberty houses, or, alternatively, should The National Department of Veterans Affairs History, Research and Heritage Center (hereinafter referred to as “The Center”) be put on hold, the former Clubhouse which offers considerable space and a unique multi-level interior floor design that would allow for innovative galleries, theaters and educational activities.

Prior to the induction of the first class of Honorees, this site would offer an exciting “cyber museum” (or webseum) that spotlights the contributions of American veterans to our way of life and standard of living. This virtual facility will offer vivid stories, images, and educational opportunities for the entire family, and will be directly linked to an interactive educational website with educational materials developed by the AVHC. This facility and its sister organization, The Center, will also spotlight and preserve the documents, achievements, and recollections of the men and women who have fought to preserve America’s unique vision of freedom for over 200 years. Soon after the cyber facility is unveiled, individuals will be able to nominate veterans for the first induction, which could take place as early as 2019.

America has halls of fame for aviators, musicians, race car drivers, inventors, baseball players, football players and even toys, but there is no such national facility to honor those who protect and defend America’s freedoms. There is also a lack of understanding among the non-veteran, non-military population as to the contributions of America’s veterans, the historic value of military training, and the impact that our veterans and our military have had on our daily lives in America. This distance between civilians and our Armed Forces continues to grow as fewer Americans are actively or even indirectly involved in the military. The following points underscore the need for a Veterans Hall of Honor.

As the concept of a “draft” has receded from the American consciousness, so has the average citizen’s intimate knowledge of the military. Gone are the days when almost anyone could wind up in uniform. As a result, many segments of the population have no grasp of how military service shapes an individual or benefits a society.

There are many fine facilities that preserve military history – the National Museum of the United States Air Force, the West Point Museum, the Naval Air Museum at Pensacola, the Military Vehicle Museum, numerous regional military museums, state veterans halls of fame, and a myriad of preservation organizations that preserve unit, regiment, wing and squadron histories. There are fabulous “living history” projects that preserve “snapshots” in time and personal recollections. However, there is no national “Hall of Honor” facility that inducts individuals and seeks to preserve their colorful, compelling and inspirational life achievements, before, during and after military service. The emphasis on individuals – versus equipment or units – is essential because this inspires young people and provides a colorful and inspiring commentary on our nation’s history.

Every combat veteran has a story to tell; many tell their stories through the written word, often self-publishing a memoir or simply putting the words on paper, but never seeking a publisher. Frequently, these men and women have journals, letters, diaries or audio/video tapes kept during combat and military service. As the veteran ages or dies, his or her family members don’t know what to do with these documents, and don’t always see their historic value. However, these veterans’ stories represent the rich tapestry of America’s military service as seen through the eyes of those who lived it. By preserving and cataloging these recollections, future historians will be able to paint a picture of what we believed in, how we fought for it and why.

Since the dawn of the 21st Century, America has been engaged in a war on terror that promises to be an ongoing, if not permanent, conflict. It is unlike any war we have ever fought and the implications to American society are staggering. Having learned the lessons of Vietnam, America currently celebrates its soldiers and welcomes them

home. However, it is a response that could just as easily reverse itself as the war continues and the lessons of Vietnam fade into the history books. As a reminder of the significant contributions of our men and women in uniform, the Hall of Honor will seek to spotlight the courage and achievement of America's veterans, thus promoting the concept of our GIs as individuals who enrich society before, during and after their military service.

The current vision for the American Veterans Hall of Honor was developed by the founders of the American Veterans Institute ("AVI"). While the AVI is no longer an active non-profit organization, former AVI officials continue to work closely with the AVHC and VA officials to translate their vision into a concept that is viable on the VA campus.

The goal for the Hall of Honor and The Center is to portray and preserve the individuality of the American GI . . . to honor our veterans for their group dedication to preserving liberty, and to underscore that essential American ingredient of individual initiative that has long set our citizens apart from those of all other nations. Those honored by this facility will constitute a true snapshot of America. They will come from all ethnicities, races, religions and geographic regions. They will be men and women of courage and conviction. They will be dreamers and doers, people who understood the importance of military structure and discipline, but also knew when to veer onto "the road less taken" for the good of their troops or their country. Our honorees' ability to serve and to lead will provide the foundation for a dynamic leadership curriculum tied to the AVHC/VA campus education program, which has been developed by the American Veterans Institute and features learning materials for students as young as kindergarten age.

The veterans' stories, which will span the individual's military and civilian endeavors, must be preserved in order that America understands the dynamic forces and individuals that shaped this country and its defenses. Inductees will be chosen NOT based on how many medals they acquired during their service, but on how they took the lessons and experiences of that service and later applied them in the civilian world. A classic case in point would be Wendy's founder Dave Thomas, an orphan whose military career led him to Army Cook and Baker School, where he learned discipline and a profession, and later used his success to underwrite foundation support for adoption programs and children's issues. Another example is former Georgia Senator Zell Miller, who acknowledges that he was on the fast track to prison before joining the Marines and becoming a productive member of society. However, an AVHOH inductee does not have to have made a national impact; he or she might just as easily be the banker down the street or the teacher down the hall.

An annual "Honors Ceremony" will recognize and install veterans in a variety of categories. Their personal histories will then be preserved and promoted by the Hall of Honor through The Center and its education program components. The Hall of Honor will initially exist as a "webseum" – a virtual facility that is accessible to everyone with a web browser. In fact, the awards ceremony should be televised, as well as streamed onto the AVHC & VA websites, among others. The founders of AVI already work with several digital media resources in Washington, D.C., Austin, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio, which can help make the digital presentation a reality.

The Hall of Honor displays, awards, and inductees would fall into several categories. Eras covered include:

- 1776-1850 Revolutionary to Pre-Civil War

- 1850-1915 Pre-Civil War to WWI
- 1915-1960 WWI to Vietnam
- 1960 – present Vietnam to Current Era

Awards will include:

- Community Service
- Valor in Uniform
- Lifetime Achievement
- Business Leader
- Advocate of the Year
- Military Entertainer of the Year
- Role Model for Young People
- Unsung Heroes
- Legacy (a tribute to military families)
- Sharing the Vision (memoir recognition) and more . . .

Other Awards presented by the Hall of Honor would include:

- An annual “American Eagle” Award to an organization that best represents the interests of veterans by supporting and celebrating them or advocating on their behalf.
- An annual “Corporate Legion of Honor” Award will go to a company that historically supports the American military, and its veterans, and personifies the patriotism, achievement and work ethic of the American GI/veterans.

Veterans Research Library

Until now, there has been no formal facility or even a definite location for this initiative. If the VA campus is to be home to the library, it will be much easier to accept donations of books and related materials. The first step is to meet with Dawne Dewey, Director of Special Collections at Wright State University (WSU) concerning development of a cooperative access relationship that would allow WSU to archive the donated materials until such a time as the renovation of the Putnam Library is complete. In the meantime, a digital presence could be established in tandem with the virtual Hall of Honor. In fact, we should work closely with Wright State to develop an online access system that complements their already impressive research database. This type of cooperative relationship also ties in with the “Collaborative Digital Community” concept outlined in the cyber projects section of this proposal. Once again, by developing an online presence, we would be “staking a claim” to the Research Library and

the Hall of Honor in a way that builds credibility, encourages giving, and deters less organized efforts from muddying the waters.

Documents accepted by the Research Library will include published books by and about veterans, as well as non-traditional library materials, including unpublished manuscripts, booklets and stories, vignettes, journals, diaries, letters, video and audio tapes, photographs, log books, or other documents related to the veteran's military service. The goal of the Research Library is to offer a comprehensive collection and searchable database, that allows future generations of authors, students, researchers and average American citizens to look up details on specific conflicts, units, battles, or individuals, as seen through the eyes of those who lived the history, as opposed to those who merely interpret it.

Through these personal histories, tomorrow's Americans will better understand and relate to the GI experience at the individual level, as opposed to grouping our veterans according to units, battalions or branches of the military. In addition to collecting, preserving and digitizing veteran materials, the Research Library will interact with the Hall of Honor and the campus-based educational initiative to utilize the preserved materials in developing classroom content tied to state academic content standards for grades K-12.

The Hall of Honor and Research Library will stand as a sacred tribute to all those who have served and sacrificed on behalf of the many freedoms we enjoy as Americans.

Commercial Facilities – If the VA is considering the potential of complementary commercial facilities on the campus, as per the Citywide Development plan, it would be logical to keep the commercial enterprises within the mission of the VA, by encouraging and/or limiting the businesses to veteran-owned or service-disabled veteran owned companies. This discussion should include the concept of reduced rent for veteran-owned businesses, contracting the commercial development work to veteran-owned companies, developing a veteran business enclave incubator, spotlighting this innovative communal concept regionally and nationally, as well as working with the VA at the federal level to make this a project that can be replicated in other depressed communities with VA facilities.

Public/private ventures have been explored on other VA campuses, including one in Leavenworth, Kansas, where the Pioneer Group successfully negotiated a 75-year Enhanced Use Lease from the Veterans Administration for 38 vacant and under-used buildings situated on 72 acres of the VA's hospital campus. All but one of these buildings were historic with most of them having been constructed in the 1880s to house Civil War veterans. This development, known as Eisenhower Ridge, currently features sixteen historically renovated buildings that have been converted into 45 affordable apartment units known as Eisenhower Ridge Apartments.

The VA Medical Museum – This facility should be a cooperative effort between the VA local historic preservation groups, the Miami Valley medical community and medically oriented academic institutions.

The museum would reflect not only the evolution of the VA and its service to veterans over the years, but also explain how military and combat medicine has evolved and how it has influenced civilian medical practices. The necessities of battlefield medicine have led to dramatic advancements in civilian medicine, just as R&D in military aviation and the American space program have led to similar technological advancements. The museum would focus on primarily military medicine since the establishment of the VA and Dayton's key role in the birth of VA medicine.

Potential exhibits and projects at the museum would include:

Tools of the Trade – A contrast between combat medics of the Civil War and those of the modern military and the instruments they use(d) to save lives. This exhibit would drive home the dramatic medical advances of the past 150 years.

The Final Frontier – An intimate and sometimes hilarious and/or shocking look at the medical research that preceded the American space program. Most of this research was done by the military, specifically the Air Force, and much of the groundwork was laid in the aeromedical program at Wright Field. From the medical testing on dogs and monkeys to the humiliating physiological and psychological hoops that the famed “Mercury Seven” were forced to jump through in the name of science, this display will make us more fully appreciate the advancements of modern medicine.

*From Field Dressing to M*A*S*H** – A walk through history as visitors tour the primitive “field hospitals” of the Civil War, and progress through WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam and today’s more advanced battlefield life-saving techniques and technologies.

Starting Over – An exhibit that illustrates advances in treatment of serious combat injuries, from the debilitating impact of mini-ball wounds during the Civil War to the profound head trauma issues created by modern IEDs, will address stateside improvements in care, prosthetics, and treatments that allow soldiers to return to productive lives despite suffering what once would have been fatal injuries.

As with all contemporary museums, the focus is no longer on static displays, but rather on interactive elements, and on compelling stories and vignettes that drive visitors toward an educational outcome. A vibrant outreach and educational program are essential to this facility’s success, as are unique displays that underscore the contributions of military and VA medicine to the greater medical community. A location for this facility has not been determined though it would be appropriate either in one of the structures on Doctor’s Row or in sharing the Liberty House with The Center.

Public Activities:

Annual Hall of Honor Induction – Once again, the induction criteria is currently being developed, as is the appropriate nomination paperwork. This event should be one of national prominence.

Elder hosting – A popular tourist activity for those age 50 and up, elder hostels emphasize both travel and education. Seniors purchase packages that involve a specific topic or region; they travel to that location and visit historic facilities, attend educational sessions, lectures or related activities, and meet folks in their age range with similar interests. They also stay in hotels, eat at restaurants and purchase souvenirs. The VA campus – the entire Miami Valley region – should consider the best way to take advantage of the elder hosting trend. Elder hostels and heritage tourism go hand in hand, and the age range of those who attend elder hostel activities puts them squarely in the demographic that traditionally has the greatest disposable income and spends most on heritage tourism.

Inter-organizational activities – Such activities should be encouraged at the VA campus between regional non-profits such as the National Museum of the United States Air Force, the American Veterans Hall of Honor, The Center, the Boonshoft Museum, the WACO Air Museum, the Dayton Aviation National Historic Park, the Paul Laurence Dunbar House, as well as VFWs, American Legions, DAVs, etc., across the Miami Valley.

C. Public Education/Information, K-12 and Adult – (Inspire & Educate)

The components of this dynamic education project are as follows:

- A K-12 veteran-based educational program tied to state standards in: History, Language Arts, Civics, Government, Science & Technology and Math. The project includes books, handouts and activity sheets, and DVDs (two AVI-scripted DVDs, *Vietnam: A Nation Remembers* and *D-Day: A Crowning Glory* are already being utilized in classrooms across the United States).

- A Special K-12 Leadership curriculum, based on inductees to the Hall of Honor and the assets of The Center.
- Special adult business leadership seminars, based on the achievements of Hall of Honor inductees, the assets of The Department of VA, and related military organizational models.
- Mentoring Camps for at-risk youth from the Greater Miami Valley --- Camps led by veterans & teachers, focusing on themes such as *Leadership for Young People*, *Running Your Own Business for Students*, or local history themes --- *Dayton: Birthplace of Aviation*; *Black Military Leaders: A Vision of Excellence*; *Women in the Military: Smashing the Glass Ceiling* and more.
- Summer Youth Programs on the campus (which would be supported by available grants and by inter-organizational staff, depending on the specific program). Educational initiatives designed to build inter-generational connections between disadvantaged Dayton youth and our veterans. Initiatives would include service projects such as maintaining the grounds, working with various organizations, collecting the stories of individual veterans, etc. The Center will work with a reading teacher in the Dayton Public Schools who will be a valuable tool in developing service programs that target and motivate inner-city youth.

Grant monies are available for such programs, for example, the grant listed below:

“*Summer of Service*” grants support collaborative efforts to implement community-based service-learning projects during the summer months. Eligible programs will engage middle school students in community-based service-learning projects that are intensive, structured, supervised, and designed to produce identifiable improvements to the community. This opportunity should provide youth, particularly those from disadvantaged circumstances, with service-learning experiences that will motivate them to become more civically engaged and aspire to obtain higher education. Program participants must complete at least 100 hours of service within the summer program. For this competition, service activities should address environmental and/or disaster preparedness issues relevant to the community served. Future funding is contingent upon appropriations, and is estimated to be \$1,000,000 for approximately 5-7 grants.

Today’s educators rightly target math and reading as classroom disciplines in need of immediate attention and emphasis. Literacy is the foundation of learning, while math promotes reasoning skills that allow young people to analyze data and information more effectively. However, history and social studies cannot be ignored as we struggle to prepare our students for competition and leadership in the global arena. The triumphs and tragedies of America’s past must be studied, absorbed, and preserved, so that future generations are better equipped to avoid or expand upon the actions and decisions of yesterday.

The key to teaching children is to capture their attention and relate to their experiences and surroundings . . . an increasingly daunting task in today’s high tech, multi-sensory world. The collaborative AVHC-VA campus program could effectively unite the very best of old and new by harnessing modern technology in order to share and preserve stories of past triumphs and struggles, and to pay tribute to the heroes in our own homes and neighborhoods.

As we all work to create a more collaborative and involved nation, we must illustrate the impact of service and sacrifice by means of examples from our past. There is a reason why Hollywood continues to spotlight the achievements of groups like the Navajo Code Talkers and Tuskegee Airmen of World War II, or General Hal Moore in the Battle of La Drang during the Vietnam War. These courageous individuals exemplify America at her best, as “one nation” determined to preserve and promote freedom. Their stories paint a life-affirming portrait of citizens called on to protect and defend freedom, even when the liberties they are fighting for are sometimes sadly missing from their own lives. And yet generation after generation has stepped forward to fight and die in the name of building a “more perfect union” for their children and grandchildren. There is a uniquely American story, a story that reflects all facets of American life and the individual struggles therein.

By exposing students to relatable people and situations --- i.e., “people who look like me” --- they can begin to embrace the study of history, which, in turn, will enhance literacy, critical thinking skills and a myriad of interpersonal skills. By using a multi-media approach and interactive lessons, this project will be entertaining and stimulating, as well as educational.

This project is essential to the revitalization of the Miami Valley region. The ability to learn from the past and to enjoy learning is a vital component to building a dynamic future. With the declining emphasis on history, we are losing something more precious than we know. A recent Purdue University study noted that the average Indiana teacher spends only 12 minutes a week on history and social studies. Other states report similar findings. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), known as “The Nation’s Report Card,” reported that only 17% of eighth graders and 11% of twelfth graders performed at or above the proficient level in U.S. history. The loss of history is the loss of our own individual footprint. It is the loss of those who can inspire us, motivate us, and lead us toward a clearer understanding that each of us has the ability to change the world. It is the loss of a guidebook to overcoming our weaknesses and capitalizing on our strengths. The loss of history is not simply the loss of our past, but of our future, as well. This vital education program will present personality-driven history lessons, and will use them as a springboard to the study of science, technology, engineering and math, as well as providing leadership training and enhanced literacy skills.

D. Cyber Initiatives (Inspire and Educate)

Virtual Hall of Honor – A dynamic virtual interpretation of the eventual permanent facility, this digital initiative can be brought online in as little as six months and at a relatively low cost (under \$20,000 for web development, content and basic structure). By establishing the digital Hall of Honor, AVHC is planting a flag once and for all on the establishment of a national facility honoring veterans. For under \$2,500, we can secure the URL, set up a hosting structure, drop in place holder content (such as specific details from this strategic plan) and even establish a PayPal donation page. Former AVI personnel will assist with start-up and structure, but the site itself will be tied directly to the AVHC and VA campus. Likewise, this site will offer a dynamic presence that will inspire the community and motivate potential funders and partners. The promise of an annual induction ceremony that attracts veteran luminaries from government, business, entertainment and the military should be a strong promotional tool for the region, especially when paired with the promise of a permanent physical location amid a revitalized and thriving VA campus and Miami Valley.

Virtual Research Library – This would be tied to the Hall of Honor and would initially feature instructions on donating hard copy and/or digital materials. It would also feature instructions on preservation programs, such as the Gift of Remembrance and the school-based SOS project, which focus on creating student authors/researchers. Ultimately, the goal is to digitize most of the facility’s collection and to create a searchable online database that will be made available across the country and in classrooms nationwide. We should seek to enlist Lexis/Nexis participation as well as support from Wright State University in database development.

Comprehensive Education Website – Shared with AVHC and other partners. This site will feature downloadable lesson plans, virtual field trips to multiple facilities, community and VA campus activities for students and student groups, student-authored history projects (see complete education plan), teacher bulletin boards for innovative means to blend classroom disciplines for maximum impact, and key leadership initiatives for schools and youth organizations. The site is under development and can go live in a matter of weeks, upon securing the appropriate funding.

Collaborative Digital Community – One compelling long-term goal is to work toward establishing a “collaborative community” within the Miami Valley that ties together the interest of military, the VA, local business and industry, academia, veterans services offices, veterans organizations and non-profits. San Antonio, Texas, offers

a great template for this vision with its “silicon circle” concept. San Antonio officials used cyber warfare and cyber operations as the cooperative centerpiece of their multi-industry alliance. The result has been a revitalization of the community and the military presence, which had been compromised by base closures and military downsizing/reorganization. Additionally, the focus on cyber technology has a “green” appeal to it that invites investment from forward-thinking entrepreneurs.

A similar rallying point in the Dayton region could be digital information services, the preservation and dissemination of information by way of digital means. This broad spectrum approach embodies a range of existing Miami Valley strengths, as well as tying directly to the ongoing efforts of the AVHC and the Dayton VA campus. Likewise, it provides support for locating The Center in a community that is exploring cutting-edge digital preservation initiatives. This approach would involve cooperative efforts to expand on the following focus areas:

- Preservation of the history of America’s veterans and the VA itself via digital resources;
- Providing digital educational resources through a cooperative between our non-profits, museums, and schools;
- Providing digital leadership development for schools and businesses by means of a cooperative effort to define and implement leadership training (especially at the K-12 level) based on the achievements of Miami Valley and state/national veterans and their individual histories;
- Utilizing a variety of digital tools to fulfill the Dayton Chamber of Commerce’s key initiative of workforce development;
- Preservation and dissemination of cutting edge medical technologies and information by means of the VAMC and other regional medical facilities such as Premier Health Partners and Kettering Medical Network;
- Making office space available on Dayton VA campus grounds to veteran-owned businesses that specialize in technology or utilize it in innovative ways;
- Harnessing the digital research resources of Wright State University;
- Promoting the impressive cyber resources and technology emphasis of Wright Patterson AFB’s Material Command and Dayton defense contractors, among others;
- Developing a digital network of Miami Valley veteran’s services offices that allows for better dissemination of resources and information on various veterans benefits. Provides links to outside information that can make the Veterans Service officer’s job easier and give local veterans more detailed and timely information. One example would be the VetAssist site developed by the American Veterans Institute. This site has been lauded as a valuable national resource for researching the VA’s improved pension plan. Veterans Services Officers frequently utilize the site and refer others to it.
- Emphasizing the preservation and dissemination of materials and information through the National Museum of the United States Air Force, as well as other non-profit and historic entities in the region.