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Preserving America's Heritage

Dayton Grotto Receives ACHP Chairman's Award

Washington, DC—The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) bestowed its Chairman's Award for Achievement in Historic Preservation tonight honoring an extraordinary example of teamwork between government and nonprofit organizations seeking a common goal. The rehabilitation and renovation of the Dayton Veterans Affairs Medical Center's (VAMC) historic gardens and Grotto is the praiseworthy project.

For the past four years through budget cuts and overgrown foliage, partners worked to restore the healing grounds for the benefit of veterans and visitors.

At a reception hosted by the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers in Washington, D.C., ACHP Expert Member Robert Stanton presented the Chairman's Award to the Dayton VAMC; the American Veterans Heritage Center (AVHC); and the Ohio State University Extension, Montgomery County Master Gardener Volunteers.

"Dayton, Ohio, has a stunning history of American ingenuity and patriotic support. I am inspired by the cooperation of the partners to persevere to restore the Grotto space and the historic landscape at the VAMC," said ACHP Chairman Milford Wayne Donaldson, FAIA. "Their work on behalf of veterans, spanning from the Civil War to today, is commendable, and the talent involved in this successful project makes it a showpiece for the state as well as the entire country."

Former Dayton Mayor and current U.S. Representative Michael Turner said, "I would like to congratulate the Dayton VAMC on this prestigious award for their work to restore the Grotto space and the historic landscape. Established in 1865 by President Lincoln, the Dayton VAMC began as a home to Civil War veterans and continues to work tirelessly on behalf of our area veterans. As the Co-Chair of the Congressional Historic Preservation Caucus, I continue to support the Dayton area's dedication to historic preservation for generations to come."

Accepting on behalf of VA Secretary Robert McDonald was Stella Fiotes, Executive Director, Office of Construction and Facilities Management, and Office of Acquisition, Logistics and Construction.

Accepting on behalf of the VAMC was Glenn Costie, Director.

Accepting on behalf of the AVHC was Margaret Kruckemeyer, President Emeritus.

Accepting on behalf of OSU Extension was Bob Neff, Master Gardener.

The VAMC is a National Historic Landmark in Dayton, Ohio, also known as the Central Branch and the National Soldiers Home. The Grotto and surrounding gardens were developed by resident Civil War veterans in the area surrounding a limestone quarry. By 1900, 25 acres of ornate gardens had become a garden paradise which was considered more beautiful than Central Park in New York City. It was a national resort destination attracting more than 600,000 visitors a year. The site was an integral part of the social life of Dayton for more than 60 years. Through the years, the attention to the well-being of the historic landscape faded with reductions in funding and maintenance. In 2012, the VAMC and the AVHC initiated the current reclamation of the historic Grotto Gardens landscape. The Ohio State University

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Extension Montgomery County Master Gardener Volunteers joined the team in 2013 to provide expert support, develop and maintain new gardens, and continue the reclamation process. Along the way, other volunteers have joined the team, and there have been significant financial and in-kind donations by individuals, organizations, garden clubs, and garden centers. Because of this kind of outside interest, the restoration is progressing much faster than anticipated. In the spring of 2014, 32 memorial trees were planted. A 35-foot fountain, almost identical to the one that existed in 1900, is currently being installed in one of the lakes.

For more information please visit:

<http://daytongrottogardens.org/>

http://www.dayton.va.gov/features/Dayton_Historic_Tours.asp

<http://www.dayton.va.gov/museum/grotto.asp>

About the ACHP: An independent federal agency, the ACHP promotes the economic, educational, environmental, sustainability, and cultural values of historic preservation and advises the President and Congress on national historic preservation policy. It also influences federal activities, programs, and policies that affect historic and cultural properties. See www.achp.gov for more information.