

## 2009 STATE OF THE CITY

We look to the year ahead, by reflecting on the year past. 2008 was a banner year because it marked the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Oakwood as a recognized, independent community. In creating and developing a proper celebration for our centennial year, the richness of our history and the timeless lessons embodied in that history were recalled, refocused and celebrated. Our attention is on the future but we are guided by the past. The menu of celebration events, intended to echo the strengths of our community as they have evolved over the years, were created and guided by the leadership of our two outstanding Co-Chairs Madeline Iseli and Dick Good:

- Our opening event featured the Oakwood Rotary Centennial That Day in May. Citizen volunteers and participants created a greatly enhanced traditional celebration under the leadership of the Oakwood Rotary Club. The shared participation in community events celebrates our strength and identity as a city.
- Excellence in Learning followed on the menu. The outstanding quality of our Oakwood schools was the focus of this weekend. Time capsules created by students were filled with memorabilia which await examination by citizens 100 years from now.
- Celebrating our city owned natural areas was the theme for the “Hike to Houk” outdoor activities. This Sunday afternoon event allowed citizens to examine our preserved natural areas up close with educational material to extend their appreciation. Maintaining city owned property as natural areas is an ongoing practice with overwhelming community support.
- Our rich, revered history was celebrated extensively. The remarkable historic documentary video *Oakwood: Our Home on the Hill* was enjoyed by over 700 people at its weekend premier. This film represented years of dedicated research and composition by the citizen committee. The availability of a DVD version of the film allows repeated return visits to the documentary. Through the generosity of the Wright Family Foundation and the assistance of Dayton History, 525 citizens enjoyed a guided tour of the Wright family home, Hawthorn Hill. This was a welcome opportunity for Oakwood citizens to be inside the house they had for so many years admired from afar.
- The formal ending of our Centennial celebration lengthened and embellished our traditional Ice Cream Social to include a fabulous talent show of Oakwood performers. The grand finale was a concert by the United States Air Force Band of Flight. An army of volunteers were recruited to plan and execute this celebration enjoyed by hundreds of Oakwood citizens.

Adding to the celebration are more lasting mementoes. *From Acorn to Oak Tree* is a magnificent commemorative book created by talented volunteer citizens led by Dick Good. The generosity of our business community allowed this treasure to be presented as a gift throughout our community. Our Centennial Club recognized people who had called Oakwood home for a significant number of years. Membership included more than 650 people. A mural created by children in Oakwood and depicting our history hangs in the entrance to city hall to remind us of our centennial celebration. Centennial Park was created as a legacy for the future. At the urging of citizens, the city purchased land and through volunteer effort and private contributions Centennial Park at Houk Stream came into being. The building of the Rotary Bridge through the efforts of the Oakwood Rotary Club and the gifts of many private contributors enhanced the Park and made it more accessible. This passive park will serve as an educational facility for Oakwood students and a source of enjoyment for our citizens. Our centennial year celebrated 100 years of

excellence. It was marked by volunteers offering their time, talent and financial contributions. It was enjoyed by all and will long be remembered.

The year's calendar records the many community events traditional to Oakwood. We began 2008 by awarding prizes to the holiday decorations winners. The beauty and good cheer offered by these creative additions are most welcome. In mid January we joined the city of Kettering in sponsoring the 5<sup>th</sup> annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, Breakfast. A sell out crowd again renewed their commitment to the teachings of Dr. King by attending. The winners of the Student Contest, designed to encourage young people to learn about Dr. King, were there to receive prizes for their entries in the Student Contest. Both Oakwood and Kettering were well represented. Our Business Appreciation Breakfast also took place in January. This annual event allows the city to express our appreciation for the benefits we receive from our business leaders. It is also an opportunity for them to socialize and network with each other. In March City Council and staff met with senior staff from the University of Dayton. Along with enjoying breakfast together, this annual gathering allows us to update each other regarding current events and future plans for our respective communities. Open communication is part of the positive working relationship we maintain with our University of Dayton neighbors. Later in the month we welcomed new Oakwood residents to the Oakwood Community Center for breakfast. This gathering allows us to welcome new families and inform them about our city. They also have an opportunity to meet other new residents. As we welcomed spring we also greeted senior citizens at the Oakwood Community Center for a luncheon program. This event and a similar one in December invite our senior citizens to be our guests for a festive meal and program. It is a grand opportunity to honor them as part of our community. A special event this year was the gathering of over 150 Tree City USA members from our region for their annual meeting. The city of Oakwood hosted this event with a luncheon at the Oakwood Community Center. This marked Oakwood's 26th consecutive year as a Tree City. During the summer months Shafor Park was the site of the employee picnic in July. Games and a picnic lunch combine to produce a fun "time out" for our fantastic city employees. The "Giving Strings" concert and fundraiser moved to Shafor Park in August with the Hofeldt family accepting the baton from the Judge sisters. It was a pleasure to see this unique event continue. Good weather greeted all three of the concerts held at Smith Gardens. Families gathered to enjoy the variety of offerings this series presented. Fall weather ushered in preparations for "Scarecrow Row." Shafor Blvd. was decorated with even more creative entries than in years past. The display is truly a community attraction. The games and activities at the Family Fall Festival brought a happy gathering of families to Shafor Park. Halloween costumes were the dress for the day. Also in the fall, we recognized the City Beautiful award winners. After viewing the beautiful film showcasing the winning landscapes, each winner was presented with a photographic record of their beautification efforts. We appreciate these prize winning displays for their benefit to the entire community and for the inspiration they provide to others. A joint meeting of city, school and library representatives took place in October. We periodically gather as staff and elected representatives to discuss common interest and concerns. This face to face, open discussion among these three civic leadership organizations assists us to cooperatively work for the benefit of our citizens. With the coming of the winter holiday season we prepared for the Holiday of Lights celebration. Once again, the Environmental Committee lined our streets with luminaries to celebrate the season. The beautifully renovated Long-Romspert Historical House was open for tours and refreshment in the afternoon. In the evening, Shafor Park was the gathering place for tree lighting, wagon rides and a visit from Santa Claus. Good

cheer abounded along with hot cocoa and popcorn. Also in December, city employees gathered for their traditional holiday lunch at the Community Center. This is a welcome opportunity to express appreciation for the quality of their performance.

The past year marked special occasions. In May we welcomed Beth Abraham Synagogue to the community as they dedicated the beautiful synagogue at Sugar Camp. The renovated Orchardly Park was completed in June. The state of the art equipment welcomes children with disabilities to play along with their peers. This new facility was celebrated at its opening and continues to receive enthusiastic praise and use by the neighborhood and entire city. The Finance Department welcomed a new Director in June. Cindy Stafford, CPA assumed this position at the end of the month and has expertly guided the operations of the department since. Her selection to manage Oakwood finances brings continuing strength to this important staff position.

Fall of 2008 will long be remembered for the devastating wind storm Ike. Although the damage done by this unprecedented storm was enormous, it was overshadowed by the grit exhibited by our citizens. The loss of power by almost the entire city, more than a week long for some, tested endurance levels to the nth degree. However, with neighbor helping neighbor, and a city staff on the job 24/7 seeking solutions, we found our way through the storm and back to normalcy. Once again, our community addressed a severe challenge and found the way to a successful conclusion.

More positive events also occurred in the fall. A delegation of city staff and council traveled to San Antonio as part of a regional project regarding the BRAC relocations. We showcased our region and city in a day long event organized and directed by the Dayton Development Coalition. This unified effort seeks to successfully capitalize on the BRAC decisions to bring new residents and economic growth to our region. We continue to pursue all possible means of accomplishing this end. Two honors came to our superior Oakwood schools. They received the prestigious designation of School of Excellence with Distinction from the state and were cited as an outstanding school in national ranking by *U.S. News & World Report*. These awards further evidence the quality of education that attracts families to live in our city. Representatives from Oakwood, both city and the schools, supported and attended the 2008 Dayton Conference on Youth in October. This two day event focuses on innovative ideas and best practices in guiding our young citizens. We continue to pursue all opportunities to better serve our youth. In November several council members and the city manager attended the National League of Cities Conference in Orlando, Florida. Our membership in NLC gives us the opportunity to attend this annual event. While there we can select from a myriad of offerings to attend workshops devoted to issues pertinent to our city. Vendor displays show us the latest offerings as aids to city management. Networking with city government representatives from across the country is another beneficial aspect of this conference.

A retrospective view of the city also includes projects and issues that required our attention in 2008. Sugar Camp and the adjacent Pointe Oakwood development continued to receive major attention. Progress continues at a steady pace but with minimal drive-by evidence. Construction in the commercial Sugar Camp section is basically complete. The parking areas were reconfigured and finished and a new traffic signal at Schantz and Kramer installed. Tenant business space is being rebuilt according to need and new tenants secured. Development of

Pointe Oakwood concentrated on the periphery. The relocation of power lines and minor realignment of Far Hills occurred along side massive earth moving work needed to define the residential area. The entrance road to the development that also branches to serve the Oakwood Old River playing fields is under construction. A new traffic signal at Far Hills and Springhouse is part of this development. We were able to secure \$175,000.00 in ED/GE grants for the commercial area project. The Far Hills/Schantz intersection redesign brought minor changes to Huffman Park. In restoring the park, improvements to the landscaping were incorporated. The initial draft landscaping plans for Pointe Oakwood drew the attention of a group of concerned citizens. With their help, a detailed plan has been approved which incorporates plant species indigenous and appropriate to the site. We expect the current economic environment to slow the completion of Pointe Oakwood but the development moves forward at a healthy and secure pace.

The ongoing concern with the emerald ash borer was addressed. Over 750 ash trees on city controlled property were given preventative treatment. Citizens were offered access to this treatment program at city rates and many chose to enlist in the program. In response to citizen suggestion and request, seven doggie stations have been installed throughout the city to aid the control of pet waste. Also in response to expressed citizen interest, discussion began regarding creation of a park for dogs. Oakwood dog owners frequently travel to other communities to utilize such an opportunity for their pets. The project remains under consideration while possible locations are explored and evaluated.

A reoccurring issue concerning our sign ordinances was addressed and resolved. Through legislative action, temporary signs remain limited in size but no longer are limited in number permitted. Although applauded by some citizens there are many people who object to yards full of signs. We are advised that Constitutional law favors freedom to erect multiple signs. Also of note, is federal legislation seeking inclusion of Hawthorn Hill in the National Park System introduced in the spring, this legislation has been approved by the Senate and is now being considered by the House of Representative where it is expected to be well received. Still to be written is the agreement for operation which requires Oakwood involvement. We look forward to participating in the creation of that important document.

At the end of 2008 we began a process of assessing our recreational facilities city wide and gathering information from citizens as to unmet needs and desires. We continue this process as the new year begins. It will continue to be a major focus throughout the year.

There are a number of regional organizations in which we hold membership and representation. Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission, Miami Valley Communications Council, South Suburbs Teen Drug/Alcohol Committee, First Suburbs Consortium are all included in that list. Participation in these organizations keeps us informed concerning regional issues, provides opportunities for us to represent and promote action consistent with Oakwood priorities, and perhaps most importantly, to work cooperatively with our neighbors to benefit all.

The year ahead promises to be economically challenging. Our citizens will not be immune or exempt from the financial crises that surrounds our country. Awareness of this environment is important to the work of council and staff as we, as always, keep the interests of our citizens in the forefront. Each Council member brings knowledge and skills to the decision making process.

We work together with equal responsibility and authority. Each of us seeks the greatest benefit for our citizens and is not swayed by personal bias. Carlo McGinnis, Steve Byington, William Duncan and Stanley Castleman comprise a dynamic team and it is my great honor to serve with them. When decisions are made, we are assured of quick, efficient and effective action by an exemplary staff lead by City Manager Norbert Klopsch. The capability of our city staff and the administrative leadership provided together make our city of excellence possible. They provide outstanding value for the public dollars entrusted to them. As we perform our duties, we are all inspired to maintain the standards of excellence demanded by our citizens because they in turn participate to assure success. As in the past, I end this report with the reminder that the citizens of Oakwood remain our greatest asset.