

KALAMAZOO ABRAHAM LINCOLN INSTITUTE

Annual Report, September 18, 2020

Since the last annual reporting of the activities of the Kalamazoo Abraham Lincoln Project in May of 2019, the board of directors has made significant steps toward advancing its three-point Lincoln-legacy plan for Kalamazoo. To help ensure the viability of the organization's long-range plans, the board voted to change the name of the organization to Kalamazoo Abraham Lincoln Institute (KLI) effective September 18, 2020. As the community, state and nation sheltered against a world-wide pandemic during the early months of 2020, board meetings were temporarily halted, yet critical planning for the KLI proceeded.

A special event highlighting recent Kalamazoo/Lincoln related research by Director Tom George was planned in coordination with the Zhang Legacy Collections Center, but due to the pandemic, the program was put on hold until the Center re-opens its doors. Mr. and Mrs. Charles Zhang have pledged their support.

A successful house-party fundraiser was hosted in February by Barb Rider and Fred Sammons. Many local residents attended, and contributions were received from attendees throughout the ensuing months. The two hosts now serve as members of the newly created advisory committee.

The composition of the KLI board underwent some changes during this period. Directors Sherry Thomas-Cloud and Robert Cinabro transitioned to the KLI Advisory Committee, and long-serving member Vice President Marge Kars tendered her resignation, while retired educator Steven Fryling joined the board. Condolences were conveyed to the Moses

Walker family upon the loss of one of Kalamazoo's most celebrated community leaders and KLI Capital Campaign Honorary Co-Chair.

The KLI continues to receive donations from a diverse group of people including many individual contributors, the Kalamazoo Sunrise Kiwanis Club, the Greater Kalamazoo Community Service Club and a pledge of support from the Abraham Lincoln Association in Lincoln's hometown of Springfield, Illinois.

The board has established a promising relationship with the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil (SUVCW)-Department of Michigan. The SUVCW's state leadership has endorsed the KLP and ordered the creation of a special committee to assist in fundraising efforts among state SUVCW camps. Directors Gary Swain and Cameron S. Brown, both SUVCW members, were appointed to the committee. There are 22 SUVCW camps in Michigan and over 200 nationwide.

In commemoration of the 164th anniversary of Mr. Lincoln's Kalamazoo visit, a "Lincoln Chat" on Zoom featuring Director Dr. Tom George and hosted by Secretary Chris Praedel was held on August 27, 2020. Director George gave a spirited talk on the backstory regarding Lincoln's 1856 visit. A Q&A period followed. Other "Lincoln Chats" are being planned.

The possibilities for this fledgling non-profit to positively impact the life of Kalamazoo and southwest Michigan remain boundless!

—Submitted by Cameron S. Brown, President