

KALAMAZOO ABRAHAM LINCOLN INSTITUTE

Annual Report, November 4, 2022

In the months following the Kalamazoo Abraham Lincoln Institute's (KLI) last annual report of November 5, 2021, the Institute has made tremendous strides toward realizing several of its key objectives, namely its flagship project of placing a privately-funded bronze statue of Abraham Lincoln in Bronson Park where he spoke on August 27, 1856 (of which the KLI's capital campaign goal of \$150,000 has been exceeded), and initiating an educational curriculum based on Mr. Lincoln's Kalamazoo visit and speech that is tied to Michigan K-12 Standards for Social Studies.

The Institute's four-member KLI Statue Committee consisting of Directors Gary Swain (Chair), Robert Hencken and Dr. Al Jackson, and President Cameron S. Brown was assisted by the KLI's Artistic Advisory Committee comprised of Professors Patrick D. Wilson and Vince Torano of Western Michigan University's Gwen Frostic School of Art. After establishing a timeline for completion of the statue, tailoring a call for artists' narrative, and identifying an appropriate promotion strategy, the committee issued RFQs nationwide. Over a dozen responses were received from which the committee selected five semi-finalists and then three finalists who separately presented their maquettes in a meeting with board members and various members of the community. The full board made a final selection of Terre Haute, Indiana sculptor William Wolfe, which was unanimously approved by the Kalamazoo City Commission on July 5th. A contract was signed with Mr. Wolfe who is now engaged in sculpting the Bronson Park Lincoln statue, which is set for dedication on August 27, 2023, the 167th anniversary of Mr. Lincoln's visit to Kalamazoo. The work of the committee has been engaging and deliberative, and the open process of selecting a sculptor was transparent and competitive.

Director Steve Fryling spearheaded the KLI Education Committee's initiative to create an original Lincoln-in-Kalamazoo related curriculum for area students. Director Fryling has been assisted by Directors Fred Colgren and

Dr. Al Jackson, and President Cameron S. Brown. The committee hired five area teachers led by Mrs. Mary Burke to fully develop the committee's initial draft curriculum framework. The curriculum is now being field tested. A collateral video is also planned.

The KLI held a successful February 12th Lincoln's birthday celebration event at the historic Kalamazoo Ladies' Library Association building. Sponsored by Charles and Lynn Zhang, the evening program featured Vice President Dr. Tom George's presentation, "Who Had Tea with Abraham Lincoln" based on the published article in the "Michigan Historical Review" by Dr. George and President Brown. One of the KLI's capital campaign honorary co-chairs, Mrs. Zhang was presented with a framed copy of artist Richard Schlatter's original Lincoln Word Portrait. The event also included a premier showing of the KLI's short promotional film titled, "Come to the Rescue."

In November of 2021, the Institute launched an email newsletter edited by Vice President Dr. Tom George to keep contributors and interested public current with the Institute's progress. The newsletters are archived on the KLI's website.

Long-serving board member Betty Lee Ongley notified the board of her desire to resign. With her approval, her membership was transitioned to life-time Honorary Member. In the fall of 2022, Kalamazoo Attorney Matthew Zwart was added to the board. His scholarly talents will be a perfect complement to the KLI's twelve-member board.

The Institute looks forward to planning the August 27, 2023, statue dedication with all the flare and public participation possible. The board thanks the many contributors who helped advance the Institute's Lincoln legacy plans for Kalamazoo over the past year.

—Submitted by Cameron S. Brown, President