

## Honoring Yesterday - Living Tomorrow

**ASHTABULA**-The organizing committee of Mariner Memorial Park Association, Inc., has been jumping through hoops for several weeks now, all in preparation for developing a park on the land where Harbor High School sat for 98 years. In a matter of a few more days the bulk of the old school will have been razed and within another three weeks, the spaces beneath the school will begin to sprout green grass.

While nothing is completely certain about Mariner Memorial Park it is our vision that it will become the product of an exciting and cooperative public/private partnership of sorts between the Ashtabula Board of Education and the Mariner Memorial Park Association Inc. In other words, it is destined to become a private piece of land on which a public park will be developed; it will also become an outdoor classroom to which our teachers may take their students for lessons in the out of doors and into one of the finest green spaces within the community.

Mariner Memorial Park will not be a city-owned or city-operated park but a public park on private land funded and maintained by private individuals. It will also be owned by a not-for-profit organization who will hold non-taxable status and be controlled by a volunteer board of directors. In its statement to the State of Ohio for incorporation as a not-for-profit organization the following mission statement was presented and accepted:

"Mariner Memorial Park Association, Inc., will own and maintain a public park and memorial ground in Ashtabula Harbor connoting the contributions of Ashtabula Harbor citizens to the growth and development of our community and indeed the nation as a whole. Further, we will do all acts necessary to conduct these activities."

To further glue these ideals together, the Mariner Memorial Park Association has developed the motto of "Honoring Yesterday - Living Tomorrow."

While Mariner Memorial Park is planned to be a park complete with Victorian lampposts and LED lighting, park benches, stylish trash receptacles, perennial shrubbery and plantings and sidewalks laid out in the circular shape of a ship's wheel illustrated with a variety of monuments honoring all our veterans of foreign wars and those Harbor High School students and teachers who contributed significantly to the growth and development of our American nation, it will be a new location for learning and research of an entirely different kind that will boost the tourist interest and benefit our lakefront community. It will be a place where we can learn from and indeed remember, recall and honor our very significant historical past and through that experience live for all the days of today and our tomorrows yet to come.

Wynton Marsalis, Artistic Director of Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York City recently stated his views on how jazz novices should look at jazz. Here is a paraphrase to what he said:

As with anything anyone might have an interest in learning about, he/she needs to spend a lot of time with it. For example, someone might view a painting rendered in a modern art form and then exclaim they just don't like it. "It isn't realistic enough for me," they might comment. Or, they might sit through a four-hour drama on World War II and then say, "it's too long for me." In American music which is a genre all it's own, different from the music of the world as we know it, one needs to get into the story of how it came about and learn the history of it, you need to get into the very soul of it and spend a great deal of time with it. "The more you study, as anything of value, the more you read, the more you experience, the more you hear, the more you appreciate." It becomes a legacy that you pass on to your kids and grandkids and all the people around you. This is a treasure in your life you cannot afford to pass up.

Thus it is with the aims and goals of Mariner Memorial Park. There are hundreds if not thousands of individuals who attended and graduated from Harbor High School who went into our America and gave back to a very young nation. Their contributions to our society were necessary and important and while they may have been small or gigantic, they were indeed significant. These are the people we want to recognize and honor from yesterday so that we might live better for tomorrow. It should also be noted that the very best place to conduct local Harbor area research is just across from HHS at the Harbor-Topky Memorial Library. There is no other place in the County for locating vast materials such as what concerns Mariner Memorial Park.

The Mariner Memorial Park Association held its first kick-off meeting at 3 p.m. on Sunday, May 17, 2009 in the Finnish American Cultural Center at 1330 West 8th Street. This meeting was used to map out the future and set down our goals as an outdoor classroom where our contemporary people can learn from our past. By so doing we will be better prepared for the rest of our days. Pro-tem (interim) officers were also elected. They are Charles Altonen, president; Jim Bordeaux, vice president; Penny Behrendt, secretary and Dick Peura, treasurer.

Chuck Altonen  
President Pro-Tem