



Akron Bicentennial Commission

In January 2022 Akron Mayor Dan Horrigan announced that planning is underway for the City's 200th Birthday in 2025. The Akron Bicentennial Commission, a mayoral advisory board, has been established to oversee the planning and programming surrounding Akron's Bicentennial celebration. The citizen-led initiative will eventually have representatives from neighborhoods, special interest groups and every ward in the city.

On December 6, 1825 General Simon Perkins filed the plat of Akron at the courthouse in Ravenna. Akron's 200th year begins December 6, 2024, and in line with prior commemorations of city anniversaries (1925, 1975, 2000), the Akron Bicentennial Celebration is scheduled to take place in July, 2025. Special events would also mark Dec. 6, 2025, Akron's actual 200th anniversary.

Four long-time Akron residents, all distinguished members of the community, have been appointed by Mayor Horrigan to be Honorary Chairs of the Akron Bicentennial Commission. They are:

- Marco Sommerville, Senior Advisor to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor for Intergovernmental Affairs
- Hon. Elinore Stormer, Judge of the Probate Court of Summit County
- Dr. Cynthia Capers, Emeritus Dean and Professor of the University of Akron, College of Nursing
- Ernest Pouttu, President and CEO, Harwick Standard Distribution

Learn more about each of them below.

Marco Sommerville *has been a public servant and business owner in Akron for more than 30 years. In 1982, he founded Sommerville Funeral Services. In 1987, he was elected to serve as Councilman for Akron's Ward 3, and in 2000, was elected Council's president. In 2012, he resigned from City Council to serve as Akron's Planning Director.*

Since 2016, he has served as Senior Advisor to Mayor Dan Horrigan, and as Deputy Mayor for Intergovernmental Affairs.

As Ward 3 councilman, he led more than \$60 million in neighborhood redevelopment in his ward that included Edgewood Homes, Helen Arnold Community Learning Center and the Akron Urban League. He has provided leadership in establishing the Akron Criminal Expungement Program, youth anti-violence initiatives, and support for community policing. He played an instrumental role in retaining Goodyear and Bridgestone operations in Akron.

Sommerville's contributions to the Greater Akron community also include Chairmanship of the Joint Board of Review, which provided oversight to Akron's \$900 million school rebuilding project. He has served on the Boards of Directors of the Akron Summit Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Downtown Akron Partnership, the Akron Branch NAACP and Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity.

Judge Elinore Marsh Stormer *was elected to the Akron Municipal Court in 1991, 1993 and 1999 and started the first Municipal Drug Court and the first Mental Health Specialty Court in the state of Ohio.*

She was elected to the Summit County Court of Common Pleas in 2004. Judge Stormer began Summit County's first Reentry Court to assist felons returning from prison become productive citizens.

After her 2012 election to Summit County Probate Court, Judge Stormer started a Mediation Program and a free Help Desk. She created the Senior Visitor and Volunteer Guardian Programs, both serving indigent wards under the Court's jurisdiction.

Judge Stormer currently serves on the national Board of Directors of the Treatment Advocacy Center, a U.S. non-profit organization dedicated to eliminating legal and other barriers to the effective treatment of severe mental illness.

Judge Stormer has served the boards of Akron Children's Hospital, Women's Network, Weathervane Playhouse, Oriana House Advisory Board, and The Salvation Army Advisory Board as well as the Supreme Court of Ohio Advisory Committee on the Mentally Ill in the Courts, and numerous other community organizations.

Dr. Cynthia Flynn Capers was Dean of the University of Akron's College of Nursing (now School of Nursing) from 1997 through 2006 and then served as Interim Dean of the College of Education and Special Assistant to the Provost prior to retiring in 2011. She has been a nurse, educator, researcher, and administrator.

She has been a national advisor to the Johnson & Johnson Campaign for Nursing's Future, a board member of the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education, and Chair of the Pennsylvania State Board of Nursing. Dr. Capers completed her diploma in nursing education at Freedmen's Hospital School of Nursing in affiliation with Howard University, a Historically Black College in Washington, D.C. She graduated with her bachelor's degree in nursing in 1968 from the University of Maryland. She then attended the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry graduate nursing program at the University of Pennsylvania.

She received her PhD in 1986, the first African American student to graduate from the School of Nursing's PhD program. She was a Fellow of the American Nurses Association, Minority Fellowship program for her doctoral studies and post-doctoral experiences. She completed the Harvard University Institute for Management and Leadership in Education program and is a member of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated.

In retirement she was a senior advisor for the Austen BioInnovation Institute of Akron, program facilitator for Leadership Akron's Community Leadership Institutes, and coach coordinator for Leadership Akron's Diversity on Board program. Dr. Capers is founder Cameos of Caring for Northeast Ohio to celebrate nurses; a proud recipient of the 2006 ATHENA Award Akron in recognition of her leadership; and the 2013 United Way of Summit County Distinguished Service Award in recognition of her community leadership and service. As a community activist, she has served on several nonprofit boards and committees within the Greater Akron area.

Ernest E. Pouttu is President and CEO, Harwick Standard Distribution. After getting his start as a tax supervisor at Ernst & Young, Ernie joined Harwick in 1984 as a corporate controller and was promoted to vice president of finance in 1997. In 2007, he was named President and CEO.

Ernie is Vice Chair of Member Services for the Greater Akron Chamber and treasurer for the Akron Civic Theatre. He has been a Board Member of Akron Community Foundation since 2021, Leadership Akron and has volunteered for the Bridgestone Invitational Professional Golf Tournament for 43 years. He was the 2020 recipient of the David H. Franklin award at the Bridgestone Invitational. He has served on the boards of Akron Children's Hospital, University of Akron College of Business Advancement Council, the Akron Symphony Orchestra, ArtsNow, Ballet Excel Ohio, and the Boys & Girls Clubs. He is a member of the Akron Marathon Founders Club.

He earned degrees in accounting from Kent State University, a master's degree in taxation from the University of Akron and an MBA from Kent State. He was a 2009 recipient of the Dr. Frank L. Simonetti Distinguished Business Alumni Award from the University of Akron.

Additionally Mayor Horrigan also announced that he has selected civic activist and former Deputy Mayor of Akron Dave Lieberth to serve as the volunteer Executive Secretary of the Bicentennial Commission, who will provide the initial staffing for the planning group.

Dave Lieberth was Deputy Mayor of Akron, 2002-2012. Over a span of 32 years - he was a broadcast journalist, a lawyer, and an ardent civic activist. In 2019, Akron Community Foundation named him the 52nd recipient of the Bert M. Polsky Humanitarian Award for volunteering thousands of hours and raising hundreds of thousands of dollars for Akron civic, cultural, and charitable organizations.

He is an Akron historian and immediate past chair of the Summit County Historical Society. He has written three books: *The story of Greater Akron over the last 30 years* (2013); *The history of the Akron Roundtable* (2014), and *the history of Akron's Sisler-McFawn Foundation* (2018).

In 2001 Dave directed Akron's Centeseptequinary celebration, producing more than 40 events. He produced two television documentaries for PBS 45/49 marking the city's 175th anniversary. Dave directed the monumental Marking of the Trail of the Portage Path in 2001 and was instrumental in the designation of North American First People's Day in Akron. In 2020, he was commissioned by the University of Akron to prepare a six-part video series celebrating the Sesquicentennial of the school.

Dave chaired Akron's successful efforts in 1995 and 2008 to be selected as an "All-America City." In 1999, he directed Imagine.Akron: 2025, which brought together 400 volunteers. He is one of the founders of Leadership Akron and was the founding president of Inventure Place, which attracted the National Inventors Hall of Fame to Akron. He has been part of LeBron James' philanthropy since producing the first Bikeathon in 2005 and is a charter member of the LeBron James Family Foundation Community Advisory Board. He served as a director of Summa Health System for 17 years, and currently chairs Summa Health's Community Engagement Committee. He is chairman of the board of directors of the Akron-Summit Convention & Visitors Bureau.

The Commission - with input from neighborhood groups, community organizations, nonprofits, and individuals - will plan a series of events that speak to four Bicentennial themes:

- Akron History
- Civic Pride
- Innovation
- Legacy

By the Summer of 2022, the Mayor expects to appoint the 24 members of the larger Akron Bicentennial Commission, and to announce the Workgroups that will do the actual planning.

The Commission will establish a process to request applications from community organizations (schools, churches, neighborhood groups, associations) to create programming that will be open and accessible to the public and to ensure that the year-long commemoration is inclusive and reflective of Akron. Workgroups will be established that will create opportunities for hundreds of citizens to participate in Bicentennial activities.

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