

HEART OF THE
CIVIL WAR
HERITAGE AREA

YEAR-IN-REVIEW

July 2024 - June 2025

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Elizabeth Scott Shatto,
Executive Director



Gary Candelaria, President

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD

Looking back on fiscal year 2025, we are grateful for a strong foundation that allowed the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area to serve historic, cultural, and natural resources, despite an increasingly complex political and economic climate. We continued mission-based work and made progress on our strategic plan, as you will read in the pages of this report.

When we asked for help to keep the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) fully funded for fiscal year 2026, you showed up with letters and testimony. When our state legislators and the Washington County Lobbying Coalition sought a statute change, to make possible a greater share of restricted funds to support MHAA grant funding for all Maryland heritage area projects, you rallied. Ultimately, a bipartisan bill sponsored by our own Senator Corderman (R, District 2) and Senator Jackson (D, District 27) passed the General Assembly with near-unanimous support but was one of many that were vetoed before the final bill signing. We are confident that a revived effort will succeed in the upcoming General Assembly Session, as the return on investment is well established, as is the increasing need.

By the time you read this, we will have launched a major initiative - a US 250th GeoTour that leads participants through 250 years of history in each of our three counties. If you've never tried geocaching, it's a fun, free, family-friendly treasure hunt, and a great way to explore the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area. Likewise, our partners in three counties and 27 municipalities invite you to discover familiar and less-familiar layers of history, culture, and nature. Whether the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area is home or a place you are drawn to visit from afar, there's always something new to discover and we look forward to greeting you.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Scott Shatto
Executive Director

Gary Candelaria
President of the Board

GRANTS

MARYLAND HERITAGE AREAS AUTHORITY (MHAA) PROJECT GRANTS

The Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) Grant Program is a source of funding designed to assist and encourage the **preservation of historical, archeological, natural, and cultural resources** and support **economic development** through heritage tourism within heritage areas certified by MHAA.

A total of \$419,271 was awarded to projects in July 2024 to the following partners:

- American Battlefield Trust
- Catoctin Furnace Historical Society, Inc.
- Community Foundation of Carroll County, Inc.
- Historical Society of Carroll County
- National Museum of Civil War Medicine, Inc.
- Town of Sharpsburg, Maryland
- Washington County Historical Trust, Inc.



HCWHA MINI-GRANTS

The HCWHA administers an annual mini-grant round, **supporting non-capital heritage tourism-based projects in the region.**

A total of \$29,672 was awarded to the following partners in December 2024:

- The Catoctin Furnace Historical Society
- City of Hagerstown
- Corbit's Charge Anniversary Committee, Community Foundation of Carroll County
- Friends of Cunningham Falls and Gambrill State Parks, Inc.
- Friends of the Washington County Rural Heritage Museum
- Friends of Tolson's Chapel
- Main Street Middletown, MD Inc.
- Thomas Kennedy Center
- William Winchester Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution



**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE GRANT AWARDS, VISIT
[HEARTOFTHECIVILWAR.ORG/STAKEHOLDERS/GRANTS-OTHER-BENEFITS/](https://heartofthecivilwar.org/stakeholders/grants-other-benefits/)**

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

What makes the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area special is simple: the people. The people who tell our stories, welcome visitors, and do the everyday work necessary to preserve our natural and cultural heritage.

Every day our staff works with the people who are the grassroots of preservation and heritage tourism: connecting sites with project and capital funding, making introductions to experts, talking through problems and offering solutions, hosting trainings, marketing events and attractions, participating in planning sessions, and much more.

Recently, Executive Director Elizabeth Shatto was invited to assist Quinn Chapel AME in downtown Frederick, a historic African American church that has been serving the community since before the Civil War. She assisted the congregation's leadership with guidance and letters of support that helped secure grants totaling \$750,000 from the Maryland African American Heritage Preservation Program and the National Trust for Historic Preservation Preserving Black Churches program.

This is just one example of the ripple effect Heritage Area technical assistance has on the region.



Groundbreaking at the Frederick African American Heritage Center, a project of AARCH supported by Heritage Area funds.

TESTIMONIALS

"We are extremely grateful to have received a grant from the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area. My thanks to you, Miss Emily, for your professional and timely assistance as we navigated the grant process."

DAVID BLOOM

Pipe Creek Civil War Round Table

"After spending time with our team in Brunswick, Liz Shatto helped clarify a visitor-centered approach to numerous initiatives underway. With her help, we connected with an expert who is helping us make it easy for the public - whether they arrive by way of the C & O Canal towpath, by train, or by car - to engage with many facets of Brunswick's history and culture."

NATHAN BROWN

Mayor, City of Brunswick, MD

"It was great joy when I opened my email the other day to find the notification the Trust had received the grant for the flooring! Thank you so much for all the help preparing & supporting our request."

ANN ALDRICH

Washington County Historical Trust

"The HCWHA team has done a tremendous job organizing stakeholders in Carroll, Frederick, and Washington Counties to prepare for and engage in the 250th. Their in-person and virtual convenings offer important information and resources, and opportunities for networking. I will never forget that the seeds for our MD Two Fifty Fellows grant program were planted at a meeting with HCWHA staff in June 2023; this grant helps 250th stakeholders throughout Maryland pay interns to work on a meaningful project related to the 250th alongside a mentor. As Director of the MD Two Fifty Commission, I am grateful for the leadership of the HCWHA team."

MICHELE JOHNSON

Director, Maryland Two Fifty Commission



Emily Huebner presents on the Crossroads of War and Freedom project at the Small Museum Association Conference.

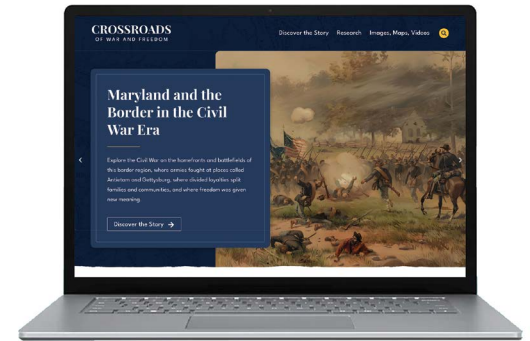
PROJECTS & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

CROSSROADS OF WAR AND FREEDOM WEBSITE

Over many years, the Crossroads of War website was an invaluable resource for anyone interested in researching nineteenth century history in mid-Maryland and neighboring communities. When Heritage Area staff heard the website was scheduled to go permanently offline, they jumped into action.

Working with Dean Herrin, who led the creation of the original website, the Heritage Area acquired NPS American Battlefield Protection Program funding for the future hosting of the newly-renamed Crossroads of War and Freedom website and engaged historian Edie Wallace to add new essays and primary source entries, focusing especially on strengthening African American history content. Project Manager Emily Huebner presented on the update at the Small Museum Association Conference in Gaithersburg.

The website has a new visual identity and remains a user-friendly research tool. This project has ensured that the site's essays, historic newspapers, firsthand accounts, and more will remain accessible online for years to come.



MD 250 FELLOW

Thanks to Kitri Post, the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area's Maryland 250 Fellow, for her hard work over the summer of 2025! This position was funded by a MD 250 Fellows grant. A graduate of UMBC's Masters in historical studies on the public history track, she was a key addition to the team as the Heritage Area juggled a number of projects, including launching the Heritage Area's new website, preparing the US 250th GeoTour, hosting the in-person 250th convening in Mt. Airy, and much more. The Heritage Area is grateful for her diligent and excellent work!



HCWA Maryland 250 Fellow, Kitri Post.

GEOTOUR AND GEOWOODSTOCK

Director of Operations and Programs, Emily Huebner, traveled to Morgantown, WV to promote the US 250 GeoTour to a national geocaching audience. Geocachers from 27 states, 3 Canadian provinces, and even Australia expressed interest in the Heritage Area's new GeoTour. The GeoTour includes over a dozen hidden geocaches across Carroll, Frederick, and Washington counties; planned to last for five years, it's expected to result in overnight stays as geocachers explore the Heritage Area and find geocaches at historic sites. This project is supported by a TRIPP Grant from Visit Frederick, a MAERDAF Grant from the Rural Maryland Council, and a generous donation from the Maryland Geocaching Society.



(R-L) Director of Operations and Programs, Emily Huebner and Geocaching consultant to the Heritage Area Mark Neuberger chat with legendary geocache maker WVTim at GeoWoodstock.

HCWHA VISITOR CENTER AT THE NEWCOMER HOUSE

This is the **15th year** the historic Newcomer House on Antietam National Battlefield has served as the Heritage Area's Visitor and Exhibit Center, often being the **first stop for battlefield visitors**.

This restored home is the only private dwelling on the battlefield that is open to visitors on a regular basis. Here, they will be met by one of our more than 35 National Park Service Volunteers in Parks who are specially trained to describe a civilian family's experience as war descended on their home, help orient battlefield visitors for their larger park stay, and share information about the marvelous sites within the three-county heritage area's boundaries they can explore in the same or subsequent visits.

Monthly Porch Programs engage guests in a wide variety of Civil War-related topics through lectures, demonstrations, and hands-on learning experiences. This past year we have hosted many programs including an authentic wet-plate photographer who talked about early women in photography while allowing guests to make their own cyanotypes (sun-prints). Quilt-making, the historic Pry Family Quilt, and a how-to for basic home sewing techniques kept participants' hands busy and gave them new skills; and a former park ranger, now a Newcomer House docent, led an interpretive hike focusing on the rarely described actions surrounding the Middle Bridge right beside Newcomer House.

Sporting a new roof this year, the Newcomer House presents a unique opportunity to walk on the same floors as the Newcomers and reflect on the experience of our country's bloodiest day of battle.



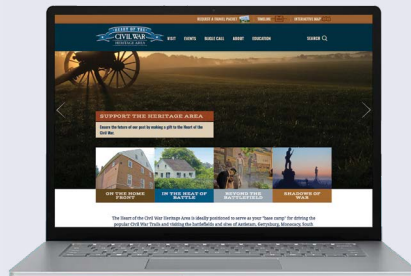
HCWHA Board members and friends set up for the annual illumination at Antietam National Battlefield.



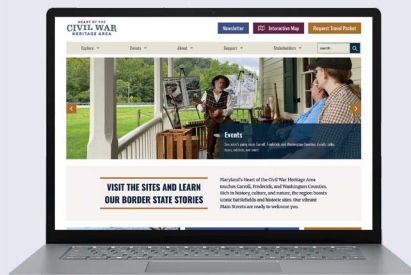
A Porch Program included a hands-on sewing activity with Molly Elspas from Rose Hill Manor Park & Museum.

HCWHA WEBSITE UPDATE

This past summer, the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area launched a major update to the website (heartofthecivilwar.org), which **prioritizes user experience and accessibility** while staying consistent with the organization's new branding identity.

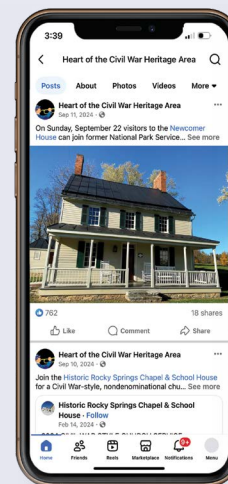


OLD WEBSITE

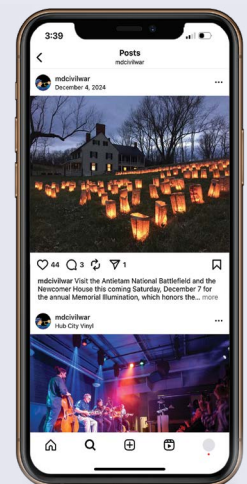


UPDATED WEBSITE

TOP PERFORMING SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT



FACEBOOK



INSTAGRAM

CURRENT FOLLOWER COUNT

FACEBOOK
3,409 followers

INSTAGRAM
1,944 followers

Spielman Farm hosts, Linda and Jim Clement, brought the property's early history to life for tour-goers. Photo credit: Scott Cantner

MARYLAND HOUSE & GARDEN PILGRIMAGE

Ten spectacular Washington County historic properties participated in **HCWHA's inaugural tour** with the Maryland House & Garden Pilgrimage (MHGP) on June 7, 2025.

Under the leadership of Tour Chair Robyn Sumner we introduced hundreds of visitors from across the Mid-Atlantic and beyond to special places, most of which are rarely available to the public. We are immensely grateful to all the property owners and volunteers who helped make the tour a success (see p. 11). A generous donation from MHGP, based on HCWHA sales of tour book ads and ticket sales, helps to support our visitor center operation at the historic Newcomer House and our ongoing services to support preservation efforts.

The success of our pilot year set the stage for HCWHA to adopt a regular three-county rotation of MHGP tours. Next up – Frederick County on June 13, 2026, under the leadership of co-chairs, Becky Axilbund and Beth Gura.



Tour-goers lined up early at the Beaver Creek School Event Center. Fortunately, morning showers gave way to the proverbial "beautiful day in Washington County."



Williamsport's Banking Mansion was a stunning addition to the suite of ten locations participating in the June 7 tour. Photo credit: Scott Cantner



Cool Hollow Flower Farm's lovely paths welcomed visitors. Photo credit: Scott Cantner

STRATEGIC PLAN PROGRESS

HCWHA completed the third year of our six year plan in fiscal year 2025. We continue to reach benchmarks in the four strategic areas: Product Development, Building Partnerships, Regional Identity, and Organizational Development.

HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:



Historical Society of Carroll County

GOAL: Support capacity building through technical assistance for heritage and cultural tourism organizations in the Heritage Area

HCWHA hosted in-person and virtual grant workshops for mini-grants and project grants. Introduced partners to resources to preserve and develop heritage tourism products.



Heritage Area staff at the Small Museum Association Conference

GOAL: Support and coordinate the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the United States across the Heritage Area

Regularly hold in-person and virtual 250th convenings to gather partners from all three counties to discuss programs and share resources. The Heritage Area covered the expense for local partners to participate in the virtual 250 Con held by the American Association for State and Local History.



Legacy Leaders gathering at the Visitation Hotel

GOAL: Align the human resources of the Heritage Area with its future needs

HCWHA was awarded a MD 250 Fellows grant to fund a summer intern. The addition to Heritage Area capacity allowed the organization to keep up with a considerable summer project load.



Newcomer House tintype photography program

GOAL: Develop and implement a plan for sustainability for the Heritage Area

Continued annual Legacy Leaders Circle event. Legacy Leaders donors include HCWHA in their estate planning. Accepted to the Combined Federal Campaign. Engaged in advocacy in Annapolis to lift the cap on Heritage Area funding to increase project and management grant amounts; the legislation passed but was unexpectedly vetoed. We remain dedicated to renewing these efforts.



Maryland House and Garden Pilgrimage promotion at the Maryland Iron Festival



Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area: Strategic Plan Update 2022-2028



Funded by the



**SCAN TO VIEW AND DOWNLOAD
OUR STRATEGIC PLAN.**

GOAL: Facilitate/support platforms and methods to connect and weave assets of Heritage Area together into cohesive experiences and products

Acquired funding for five years of a US 250 GeoTour to feature geocaches at historic sites across all three counties, creating a new visitor experience.



*Meeting of MHAA and Coalition of
Heritage Areas in Chestertown*

GOAL: Engage local residents in knowing, preserving, and promoting the Heritage Area themselves

Provided comment on local planning document updates. With Advisory Council and Board assistance, created a statement in opposition to the Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project. HCWhA contributes to Section 106 requests with the guidance of our county advisors.



*Durbin House consultation with historic
furnishings expert Andy Chamberlain*

GOAL: Provide support for vulnerable collections and sites

Heritage Area staff consults one on one with historic sites and museums regarding their collections challenges, providing access to free and low cost tools. Active in local discussions about future proofing collections storage among local repositories.



*Frederick Visitor Center exhibit
updates (MHAA-funded) highlight
the Heritage Area*

GOAL: Examine how digital technologies can help the Heritage Area address the future needs of audiences in sustainable and relevant ways

Crossroads of War and Freedom website now live, featuring essays, historic documents, and more highlighting Heritage Area history.

New Heritage Area website now online to introduce visitors to all the region has to offer.



*Antietam Memorial Illumination
HCWhA Board, staff, and family set up
and clean up 250 of 23,000 luminaries*

GOAL: Ensure that experiences in the Heritage Area are appealing and welcoming to diverse audiences that reflect future visitation trends

This commitment internally and to our partners is steadfast. The HCWhA US 250th GeoTour will feature diverse stories from over 250 years of history in the region. 250th Fellow research over the summer delved into new untold stories at local sites.

SUPPORT HCWHA, SUPPORT OUR COMMUNITIES



(L-R) Robyn and Jon Sumner, Elizabeth Shatto, Shuan Butcher, Kristen McMasters, Brianna and Gary Candelaria. Woodley Farm with St. Mark's Episcopal Church-Lappans hosted Legacy Leaders for a rare opportunity to see this historic property.



(L-R) Stacey Crawford (CEO for the Community Foundation of Washington County), Al Martin (HCWHA Treasurer), and Elizabeth Shatto. On winning a 2024 People's Choice award for volunteerism, Al chose HCWHA for the endowment set up in his honor.

When you give to our nonprofit organization, you **open possibilities** for the communities and organizations that **preserve and share authentic experiences** of Carroll, Frederick, and Washington counties.

Without your support, \$544,217 in direct FY25 grant dollars from MHAA could have been lost to nonprofits and local governments, because eligibility for those grants requires a viable certified heritage area. You didn't let that happen! Your support, financial and otherwise, also contributed to jobs, tax revenues, and visitor spending.

However, to sustain our work in FY26, your annual fund contributions are needed more than ever. Please give so we may continue our public service. You might find it helpful to set up a recurring monthly donation. Does your employer match charitable gifts? That's a great way to double the impact of your gift, and we are prepared to facilitate corporate matches.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Our **20th year** as a certified heritage area coincides with the **nation's 250th anniversary in 2026**. Help us celebrate the milestone with multiples of \$25! Consider:

- \$25 monthly would result in \$300 annually.
- \$250, perhaps in addition to your traditional annual fund donation.
- \$2,500, a leadership gift.
- Yes, even 25 cents a day would make a meaningful difference, something for new donors to consider (roughly \$8 per month or \$96 annually).

Our Legacy Leaders Circle is widening and you are invited! No matter where you are on life's path, this emerging community welcomes you to consider ways you may help provide for HCWHA's future. Let's talk about ways you can include HCWHA in your estate planning.



GIVE TO HCWHA TODAY!

heartofthecivilwar.org/support/donate/



Thank you to all who contributed to our success in the last fiscal year, July 1, 2024–June 30, 2025.

LEADERSHIP GIFTS OF \$500 AND MORE

Diane Boettcher

Matching gift from Microsoft via Benevity

Brianna and Gary Candelaria

City of Brunswick

Linda and Jim Clement

Elizabeth Comer

Dennis Frye

Kathryn Hauser and Shaun Donnelly

Renée and Brian Huard

Mallory Huard

Gary Kennedy

Alfred E. Martin

Kristen McMasters

George Messner

Winona and Steve Peterson

Saida Russell

In honor of Jim and Linda Clement

Carolyn and Mitchell Scott

Matching gift from Boeing via the Blackbaud Giving Fund

Elizabeth Scott Shatto

James Shriver

Dan Spedden

Marlene and Mike Young

Dave Ziedelis

GIFTS OF \$499-\$100

Mary Ann Ashcraft

Becky Axilbund

Joanne and Richard Baum

Cindy and Shuan Butcher

Andrew Chamberlain

Katie and John Fieseler

Thaddious Goodman

Beth Gura

Dennis Kubicki

Robert A. McCune

Thomas B. Riford

Barry Salisbury

Robyn and Jonathan Sumner

Town of Mount Airy

GIFTS UP TO \$99

Auni Gelles

Linda Kearns

Edward McCutcheon

Rick Peters

Alyssa Poulin

Martha (Babs) and Robert Savitt

John Schildt

Scott Shatto

UNRESTRICTED GRANTS AND MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Carroll County Economic Development
and Carroll County Tourism

City of Frederick

City of Hagerstown

City of Westminster

Hagerstown-Washington County
Convention and Visitors Bureau

Maryland Department of Housing
and Community Development
Technical Assistance Grant

Maryland Humanities
Marilyn Hatza Memorial SHINE Grant

Maryland House and Garden Pilgrimage

Maryland State Arts Council,
Maryland Touring Grant

Tourism Council of Frederick County

Washington County Hotel Tax Funding

RESTRICTED GRANTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Hagerstown-Washington County
Convention and Visitors Bureau

Maryland Geocaching Society

Maryland Heritage Areas Authority

Maryland Two Fifty Fellows Grant

Rural Maryland Council

Tourism Council of Frederick County

MAJOR IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

Antietam Guest House, Vernell
and Timothy Doyle

Antietam National Battlefield

Elmwood Farm B&B, Selena and Lettie Wilkes

Google Grants

Hagerstown-Washington County
Convention and Visitors Bureau

Ken Keppler

Live at Hub City Vinyl, Lloyd Thoburn

Mark Neuberger

Newcomer House Volunteers

Visitation Hotel Frederick

LEGACY LEADERS CIRCLE

Shuan and Cindy Butcher

Brianna and Gary Candelaria

Sylvia and Dennis Frye, *Founding Members*

Alfred E. Martin

Kristen McMasters, *Founding Member*

Robyn and Jonathan Sumner

WASHINGTON COUNTY TOUR, MARYLAND HOUSE & GARDEN PILGRIMAGE

In addition to the host of volunteers who welcomed visitors on the day of the tour, the following made significant contributions to planning the tour and/or opening their homes for the day:

Robyn Sumner, Tour Chair

Tina Angle

Becky Axilbund

Jonathan Barr

Brianna and Gary Candelaria

Linda and Jim Clement

Ellen Davis

Vernell Doyle

The Rev. Stuart Dunnan

Dick Ebersole

Jane Edwards

Tracie Felker

Tom and Ben Freeman-Tinsley

Sarah Hall

Charissa Hipp

Laura Kearns

Ken Keppler

Carroll Keyfauver

Connie Lenhart

William Maharay

The Rev. Brandt Montgomery

Dan Nelson

Greg Slick

John Shatto

Connie Spong

Sam Stribling

Oliver Tessier

Lettie and Selena Wilkes

Sarah Wolfe

Laura and Claire Zimmermann

ON THE COVER

A knee slappin' and foot stompin' good time was had at the HCWhA Annual Meeting in Hagerstown on November 12, 2024.

Each year, this annual gathering is an opportunity to look over a year of accomplishment while also focusing on a facet of our identity. Live at Hub City Vinyl, one of the region's most exciting places to experience live music, opened their venue for the Heritage Area's 2024 Annual Meeting. The Knuckle Dusters, a string band with local roots, entertained and educated the assembled crowd with historical Civil War-inspired tunes, as well as some festive old-time fiddle music. Performing arts have a place in the spectrum of traditions and experiences supported by the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area.



HEART OF THE CIVIL WAR HERITAGE AREA



heartofthecivilwar.org
info@heartofthecivilwar.org

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Keedysville, MD 21756



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COVER ILLUSTRATION:
The Knuckle Dusters perform at the Annual Meeting on November 12, 2024. Photo Credit: Scott Cantner

GET TO KNOW THE HEART OF THE CIVIL WAR HERITAGE AREA!

The Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area, Inc. (HCWhA), is an independent non-profit organization, certified by the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA). As such, HCWhA's services include eligibility to compete for MHAA project grants extended to nonprofits and government agencies within our Carroll, Frederick, and Washington county boundaries.

MISSION – the heritage area's reason for existing.

The Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area—with its partners—preserves and promotes the historic sites, towns, cultural landscapes, and diverse stories in Carroll, Frederick, and Washington County, Maryland.

VISION – a future in which the Mission has been accomplished.

A vast and diverse audience engages meaningfully with the past and present in the HCWhA, carrying their experiences here into the future.

VALUES – standards we will not compromise in pursuing our Mission.

- **INTEGRITY:** of ourselves, of our organization, and of the resources.
- **WELCOMING:** of visitors, of residents, of diversity, and of varied viewpoints.
- **COMMITTED:** to responsive public service, to making a lasting difference, to the value and relevance of Civil War history.
- **INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE:** in all aspects from our governance to our staffing, from programming to partnerships.
- **CONNECTING:** partners, resources, information, assistance, visitors, residents, stories, experiences, and ideas.