

THROUGHOUT 2011

County to mark Civil War's sesquicentennial

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ThisWeek Contributor

3,932 Licking County men reported for duty in 1861 to serve their country in the American Civil War, according to Chris Evans of the Licking County Historical Society.

150 years later, Licking County will seek to honor these men, as well as the families who helped on the home front.

To celebrate the sesquicentennial — that's the 150th anniversary — of the beginning of the American Civil War, businesses and organizations throughout the county are collaborating to hold a yearlong commemoration, complete with events and special programming in Licking County schools.

Licking County played a significant role in the Civil War, according to Samantha Harris, director of marketing at The Works in downtown Newark, making next year's commemoration particularly important for the community.

"It was one of the largest areas to supply troops and also generals to the Civil War," she said.

The Civil War itself lasted slightly more than four years, and Licking County's celebration potentially could do the same, Harris said.

"We talked about doing it for the duration of the war period but wanted to start out with 2011 and see how that goes," she said. "Depending on the response we get from the community, we might continue for as long as the Civil War lasted."

Thus far the public's reaction seems favorable.

"It's spreading by word of mouth," she said. "More and more organizations are wanting to be involved. I think every time we talk about something and get more and more people involved I always get a positive reaction."

With the participation of such organizations as the Licking County Convention and Visitors Bureau, The Works, the Licking County Historical Society, the Licking County Library and the Downtown Newark Association, involvement and awareness are growing.

The celebration in 2011 will begin with a lecture series at The Works, in partnership with Denison University, to discuss the time period leading to the Civil War. Because the war officially began in April, the lectures will run from January through March.

"(Denison will) be able to bring in some real top-notch and well-known speakers and experts in the Civil War history," Harris said. "I'm sure they're going to be very good and thorough speakers."

A three-day re-enactment scheduled for June 10-12 is another major event. The Great Circle Earthworks in Newark will be the site of cannon launches, drills and cooking demonstrations.

The school systems of Licking County also will be involved throughout the year. Harris said the commemoration committee is working closely with area teachers to coordinate special programs, such as an essay contest.

Much of the yearlong commemoration still is in the planning stages, but a complete list of events, as well as the businesses and organizations involved, will be published in September. According to Harris, there will be at least one large event for each month of the year. Anyone interested in participating in the

planning process may attend the committee's next meeting at 9 a.m. Friday, July 9, at The Works in downtown Newark.

"Our goal is to reach as many across Licking County and beyond as we possibly can," Harris said.