

A little lighthouse in the bay is ready to shine again



By Michaela Kennedy

A rusted, deteriorated lighthouse tower stands at the southernmost tip of Dutch Island in the West Passage. The 42-foot shell of a bygone beacon has withstood the storms of time, and new life is about to be resurrected from the stony cliff. The Dutch Island Lighthouse restoration project has finally begun.

The Dutch Island Lighthouse Society, formed by a group of caring neighbors in Saunterstown, has spent the last few years securing funding for restoration and preservation of the lighthouse. Transportation Enhancement funding of \$120,000 was awarded under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). The money covers about 75-percent of the base restoration costs.

DILS has raised close to \$150,000, \$45,000 of which will go towards completion of the initial phase of the venture. The rest is earmarked for an endowment fund for maintenance, half-way clear of the society's goal of \$200,000.

Keith Lescarbeau, of Abcore Construction, won the bid for the project. Dutch Island is his fifth lighthouse rebuilding effort since 2003. A seasoned historic restoration specialist for 30 years, Lescarbeau has woven his magic at notable sites like Plum Beach Light and Rose Island. The 16-inch walls on the bottom and 1-foot thick walls on top of the Dutch Island tower make it a good bet for rebuilding. "It's structurally sound," he notes.

Richard Ventrone, Jr., an architect from Newport Collaborative Architects, designed the Dutch Island exterior rehabilitation in a fashion that would restore the structure and its historic appearance. The first phase of the



Working together to restore the Dutch Island lighthouse are Craig Amerigian, committee member, builder Keith Lescarbeau, and Olga Bachilova, an architect from the Newport Collaborative.

Photo by Sam Bari

project focuses on structurally stabilizing and weatherproofing the building, preventing unauthorized access, restoring the building's historic exterior appearance and preserving as much of the original fabric as possible.

Future phases of the undertaking will address interior rehabilitation of the tower and a possible reconstruction of the original keeper's house.

Olga Bachilova, director of preservation at NCA, eyes the lighthouse as an artist studies a work of art. She points to various spots of deterioration and offers details of the work. The initial goal is to prevent moisture from further damaging the tower. "There will be a replacement of beams on the exterior, and new glass installed on top," she says. Bachilova motions to the upper edge of the light tower and notes that a top rim sealing will be added. The rehabilitation is NCA's

fourth lighthouse project.

Lescarbeau expects his construction crew to finish the exterior renovations before cold winter winds force them off the island. But a long-term vision still shines for the lighthouse society. A long-term endowment fund, established for permanent maintenance of the lighthouse, is targeted at \$200,000.

A Fresnel lens, which could throw a light 20 or more miles into the ocean, was installed in the mid 1800s. Due to repeated vandalism and expensive upkeep

costs, the light was extinguished almost 30 years ago. Luckily, money has been donated above and beyond the project amount for a solar panel and light, building committee member Craig Amerigian noted. Light shall shine again from the lantern housing atop the tower.

Key fundraiser Ken Newman in Jamestown gives credit to Al Potter and others in North Kingstown for spearheading the project. "Al has gotten the project to its present state," he notes. Potter is chairman of the DILS building committee.

Newman stands on the edge of the old stone well and reflects on the next stage of rehabilitation. "I would like to see the island open for recreation like it used to be," he says as his eyes roam over the 81-acre chunk of land in the bay. Opening Dutch Island is an expensive consideration, nevertheless. The state closed the island about 15 years ago, because of continued vandalism and liability concerns. "It still needs insurance for attractive nuisance," Newman adds. The term refers to something on a piece of property that attracts children, but can also endanger their safety. An attractive nuisance could hold the landowner liable for accidents and injury.

Realizing a larger vision for Dutch Island may take a lot longer than originally anticipated. The early years of the new millennium boasted a stronger economy and promises for noble construction projects. The Transportation Enhancement Program under the national TEA-21 put the island goals at the top of the list for federal and state support. The deeply thought out project in West Passage was pegged to receive \$7.8 million for the major overhaul, according to Newman. But with post-9/11 expenses, major natural disasters and failing bridge infrastructure across the country, the island haven has been put on the back burner.

Newman has not lost hope, however. "It's not uncommon for lighthouse enthusiasts to provide private lighthouse grants," he notes. The society currently has a mailing list of 800, and it continues to grow.

To follow the mission of Dutch Island Lighthouse and learn about its history, visit online at www.dutchislandlighthouse.org.

Apply to be an intern for Senator Reed

U.S. Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) announced that his office is accepting internship applications for the 2007 fall semester. College and graduate students are welcome to apply for paid internships in the Rhode Island or Washington, DC offices.

"These internships provide students with valuable work experience and educational opportunities," said Reed. "Students participate in the day-to-day run-

ning of a Senate office and get a firsthand look at how the federal government works."

Interns learn about the workings of a Senate office by participating in a combination of legislative and administrative work. In the Rhode Island offices, interns help the staff with constituent assistance, policy research, and special projects. Washington interns help research legislative issues,

give tours of the U.S. Capitol, attend committee hearings, and provide administrative support to Senator Reed and his staff.

Part-time internships are available in the Rhode Island offices. Full-time and part-time internships are offered in the Washington, DC office.

The application deadline is Friday, Sept. 7. Interested students can obtain an application by visiting Senator Reed's website: <http://reed.senate.gov>. Early application is encouraged.



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LEGAL TIP

A driver could not recover uninsured motorist benefits for an apparent "road rage" assault, the Delaware Supreme Court has ruled.

While stopped at a red light, the driver was approached by an unidentified man from the pickup truck behind him. The man said something about rocks flying up and hitting his truck, and then struck the driver with a metal object believed to be a tire iron.

The driver, who suffered a fractured skull and detached retina because of the attack, attempted to recover uninsured benefits from the vehicle he was operating and from his own coverage.

Both insurers denied the claims and the court upheld the denial stating the attack did not involve the "operation, maintenance or use" of the vehicle.

It should be noted RI has reached the opposite result allowing the claim.

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