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Lighthouse

Continued from page 1

said. "We've solved the water intrusion problems, and we're replacing the gutters on the two houses, but we have significant moisture problems and damage in the basement. We have furnaces that are old and need replacement. There's an immediate need to replace the oil tank, which is loaded with bottom sludge. We need to finish replacing the treads in the tower. So, there's a variety of urgent needs and significant expenses just around the corner."

An additional Phase 1 priority "has nothing to do with the buildings, but actually has to do with the foundation of the 1749 tower," said BLMA Board member Varoujan Karentz. The round, fieldstone foundation is perched at the edge of a grassy embankment overlooking sea-washed rocks below.

"No one knew the foundation was there until the 1938 hurricane exposed it," Karentz said. "Radar imaging has revealed that the original 1749 tower had an octagonal base, so this is a very important piece of history. But the southwest side is crumbling, and we'll be looking at several options during Phase 1: Doing nothing; dismantling the structure and reconstructing it; or building a revetment to protect it."

Fortunately, a different kind of "foundation" — the Rhode Island-based Champlin Foundations — has become an ardent supporter of the Beavertail restoration, having already provided a \$227,000 grant for tower restoration. In addition, \$50,000 of the \$150,000 goal for the Save the Buildings campaign will be matched by the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission.

The first phase of the effort to reach the \$150,000 goal will be a series of wine-and-cheese parties in Jamestown, said BLMA Board member Tony Antine, who is directing the campaign. The kick-off party was held recently at the home of BLMA Board member Guy Archambault, who said, "The lighthouse is near and dear to the hearts of everyone in Jamestown.

It's probably the most identifiable structure on the island, if not southern Rhode Island, so it's extremely important that we save it."

Antine said that "the parties will make our neighbors in various areas of the island aware of what we're doing. We think it's a noble task. Beavertail could have become one of those lighthouses that's virtually impossible to restore. But we all have a passion for this landmark. We think everyone on the island should be involved with the BLMA, so we are also starting a membership drive."

In the second phase of fundraising, the BLMA will send brochures and personal letters to local businesses via the Jamestown Chamber of Commerce. Those materials, Antine said, will be sent in mid-August. The third fundraising phase will launch on Aug. 1, when the BLMA expands its fundraising push far beyond Rhode Island.

This phase, known as the Mariner's Capital Fund, is aimed at those who depend on the beacon for safe passage through Rhode Island Sound, Antine said. "We will be mailing about 280 brochures to people and businesses who use our waterways: Shipbuilders, tug-boat operators, yacht clubs and foreign companies that send their products to [Rhode Island] ports. We will be reaching out all over the world," he said.

Beavertail is already a destination for tourists visiting the U.S., but its profile will be significantly raised once Phases 2 and 3 are complete. As illustrated in architectural drawings displayed in the Beavertail museum, the BLMA envisions such additions as a movie theater and a lamp-light museum, along with a courtyard and an aquarium.

"Barring any unforeseen circumstances, I am optimistic that we will complete the final phases in three to five years," Sullivan said, adding that he is also optimistic about the fundraising target. "I think the \$150,000 we need to raise this year is very do-able, and I think a lot of people — once they're aware of the urgency of our needs — will respond."

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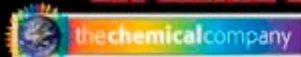
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