On my desk is a colorful coaster reminding me everyday that life is subject to change without notice. A universal truth of 2020. As the world begins to reemerge from months of closures, we look forward to places beginning to reopen with a mixture of excitement, a twinge of uncertainty, and perhaps curiosity. Since our closure in March, there have been numerous changes at the Calvert Marine Museum, but our one constant has been the unwavering dedication to our staff, volunteers, members, and visitors. Here is a peek at some of our behind-the-scenes activities as we plan for reopening …

1. We’ve been painting! Drum Point Lighthouse and Cove Point Lighthouse sites have undergone considerable construction efforts during the past few months. Most notably, the Drum Point Lighthouse roof has been treated and painted red. This project was slated for later in the summer, but we took advantage of the closure to complete the project prior to reopening. The same is true at Cove Point Lighthouse. The U.S. Coast Guard has been involved in an arduous, three-year process to do an environmental assessment of the site prior to turning it over completely. The good news is, they fix whatever they find, including lead paint. They have completed abatement of lead paint and the fog signal building will be repainted this month.

2. Masks are all the rage at CMM! Not only have masks been a standard health and safety precaution for our staff to return to the museum, our volunteers have been busy sewing masks for front line workers in Calvert County. In addition, our Paleontology and Exhibits Departments have converted our 3D printer from producing replica fossils to producing mask extenders as well as face shields for front line workers and CMM staff. Finally, our staff received an extremely generous donation of aquatic themed masks for our protection when we reopen.

3. We have discovered hidden talents of our staff! It’s hard to compete with the otters, but there are hidden stars among us. As we transferred almost all our programming to virtual platforms, videographers emerged, talented spokespersons from each department volunteered to appear on camera, and our social media accounts blossomed with new followers. Kevin introduced us to unusual fossils, Kate taught us the
Powering Through a Pandemic and Keeping the Lights Burning

Summer is upon us once again. Normally I would end that statement with an exclamation point because summer is such an exciting time at the museum. But this summer is unlike any we have experienced. By the time you read this, the museum will have either reopened to the public or be in the process of announcing the reopening. The very fact that this is still in flux underscores the uncertainty of these times. However, I can guarantee you that we are looking forward to welcoming you back in the very near future. You are the reason we exist! But that reality has changed significantly since closing on March 13. To keep everyone safe, we will introduce personal protective equipment requirements, physical barriers, social distancing, and a timed entry system to limit the number of visitors inside the museum at any given moment. Our goal — and challenge — one that I know staff members are ready to take on, is to remain a welcoming place despite the changes.

When the world around you experiences a seismic shift in an unanticipated direction, it is up to leadership to re-evaluate current strategies, creatively think on the fly, and predict as best we can what the near and long-term future might hold for the museum. In the spring issue I thanked the previous directors and board members for putting the museum in a strong position to weather a crisis like this one. However, despite our reserves, budgets still required immediate adjustments to ensure continued fiscal sustainability. During the past few months we made those necessary updates and will continue to monitor our financial situation very closely moving forward.

With our traditional avenues of income — admissions, program fees, facility rentals, and of course, concerts, suspended, support from our members is more critical than ever. We also got to work securing available grants and a federal Personal Paycheck Protection (PPP) loan for the Calvert Marine Museum Society, Inc., that has helped us to keep our employees working. Forecasting future revenue is probably the most difficult thing to do in this environment, and I want to thank staff and the members of the Board of Governors for their support and wisdom through the process of overhauling our predictions for the future. Board Treasurer Chip Jackson and the members of the Budget and Finance Committee have been great friends of the museum during this process. Never before has board leadership been more essential than it is right now, and with their guidance the plans have come together. It will be a challenge to manage the budgets over the coming months, but I feel very confident given the strength and commitment of our board.

Life also doesn’t stop for a pandemic. As you’ll read elsewhere in this issue, we were able to move two construction projects up and complete them while the museum has been closed. The iconic Drum Point Lighthouse now has a brand-new roof structure, and the Cove Point Lighthouse grounds have been cleared of any remaining lead particles in the soil that were left behind by decades of Coast Guard and U.S. Lighthouse Service activity at the site. Getting these projects done now means less disruption for the public and potentially additional revenue once we’re able to reopen.

Staff members continue to telework as much as possible in order to reduce potential exposure to the virus, although reopening will mean that more of them will be back on campus attending to the day-to-day business of staffing the museum. When the pandemic hit it became a priority to keep our staff and volunteers as safe as possible, and I take solace in the fact that, to my knowledge, no member of the CMM family has tested positive for COVID-19. This includes staff members, board members, volunteers, and their family members.

Finally, during the closure that has now lasted for more than three months, I have come to two very strong realizations. The first is that CMM staff members are just as creative, inventive, and enterprising in a crisis as they are when things are moving along at a normal pace (perhaps even more so). For instance, our Education Department has retooled many of their programs so that they can happen virtually, beginning with this year’s summer camps! The second is that we really, really, REALLY miss our volunteers! Throughout the campus there are so many projects just waiting for volunteers to take the reins, it simply reinforces the fact that OUR VOLUNTEERS TRULY CHANGE THE WORLD FOR THE BETTER EACH AND EVERY DAY AT THE CALVERT MARINE MUSEUM!

Come join us at the reopened Calvert Marine Museum in the very near future — I look forward to seeing you here once again! 🌲
When Ralph Eshelman retired as director in 1990, the county conducted a nationwide search for a replacement. At that time, I was directing a statewide historic house preservation organization in Connecticut, but I was intrigued and so applied for the job. I distinctly remember the first time I saw the museum — a Friday in October, 1990. The whole museum campus was in action setting up for the Patuxent River Appreciation Days festival. It was all very exciting, and I fell in love with the place. (Little did I know how many PRADs were in my future!) I was offered the job and started on January 2, 1991. My P.T. Barnum days had begun. This was my dream job.

When I started, the Exhibition Hall was open, but only the first of the three permanent exhibits, “Maritime Patuxent: A River and its People,” as well as the Discovery Room and Museum Store were completed. The museum, at that time, was mostly things moved from the old museum and a lot of space promising more to come. Definitely a work in progress.

The first master plan was in place and my job was to complete the work started by Ralph Eshelman and Paula Johnson (interim director). This would involve completing the remaining two theme exhibits in the new Exhibition Hall, paleontology and estuarine biology, and renovating the old museum to serve as the Administration Building. This sounded like a piece of cake. How long could it take?

Renovating the old museum, formerly the Solomons School, was a major undertaking. I was learning the ins and outs of being a county government employee, while simultaneously working with the contractor and architect. Towards the end of this $900,000 plus project, I remember asking the architect about a certain electrical control on the wall. He said, “Oh you’ll appreciate this, when I turn it on it activates a fan up in the attic to take the cigarette smoke out, so it doesn’t make any noise in the room.” I looked at him in disbelief and said, “We don’t allow smoking in our buildings.” To which he replied, “Well we always install a smoke vent whenever we design a conference room.” Lesson learned. Assume nothing! Ask lots of questions! Communicate! Lessons that were put to use later in my tenure.

The renovated schoolhouse opened as the museum’s Administration Building on April 1, 1993. Until this time the Administration offices were on the first floor of the white house.

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where the Development Department is now located, with Exhibit staff on the second floor. After living in such tight working conditions, everyone was thrilled with our new offices and professional working space.

Meanwhile, the second permanent exhibit, “Estuary Patuxent: A River and Its Life,” opened to the public on May 3, 1992. I quickly learned about the disconnect between the museum world and that of county government. As part of the water filtration system, each fish tank has a column of “bio balls” — hundreds of white, hollow plastic balls 1 ¼” across that allow an area for bacteria to grow, purifying the recycled tank water. The bio ball purchase order led to a phone call from the county Purchasing Department. An annoyed voice asked, “What do you think you are doing, buying $5,000 worth of plastic balls?” I patiently explained. It was not the last time I was called to defend a strange purchase, but eventually, they got used to us. Even a purchase order for 100 pair of pantyhose, which are used for cheap filtration material, was not questioned.

The decision to include North American river otters in our live collection was quite an undertaking for us, as housing and exhibiting river otters was not a common undertaking by many zoos or aquariums at that time. The original Estuarium had an inside holding area, but otters need an outside habitat. Curator Ken Kaumeyer became the project manager and invested literally hundreds of hours designing and overseeing the project.

The habitat fell behind schedule, and by the time we were ready to accept two female otters, they were nearly a year old. At the licensed otter farm in Louisiana where they came from, the routine was to capture pregnant otters in the wild, then release the mothers after the pups were born. Our females had been held since birth, waiting for us to be ready to take them. The pups were air freighted and not very happy when we picked them up at BWI. Not only that, without a mama to teach them, they wouldn’t go into the water! So, there we were, a week before the opening reception, the only ones who had been hurt by the teeth of a saber tooth tiger? I guess do you fill out a workman’s compensation report to explain that a person had been hurt by the teeth of the saber tooth tiger fossil. Needless to say, this was quite painful. But it was the paperwork that made it even worse. How do you fill out a workman’s compensation report to explain that a person had been hurt by the teeth of a saber tooth tiger? I guess this made Skip the last person on Earth to have been attacked by this fearsome predator.

Dealing with the bureaucracy of county government is an aspect of this job that each museum director has had to come to terms with. Museums are not like most county departments and county staff and elected officials do not always understand the museum’s mission and functions. For the director, getting the message through takes patience and perseverance. Recognizing that it is the administrative assistants who really run the world, I would come into an office and say, “I just need this memo initialed so it can go up the chain. And please, have a Hershey’s Kiss.” I learned that carrying chocolate smoothed many an interaction and I soon became known for my “kisses.” I’d been on the job for about six months when I walked into the Economic Development Department office where an attractive young lady at the copy machine turned to me and said, “Doug every time I see you, my mouth waters.” All eyes turned on me and I walked into the room holding a Hershey’s Kiss. She impaled the top of her head on the canine teeth of the saber tooth tiger fossil. Needless to say, this was quite painful. But it was the paperwork that made it even worse. How do you fill out a workman’s compensation report to explain that a person had been hurt by the teeth of a saber tooth tiger? I guess this made Skip the last person on Earth to have been attacked by this fearsome predator.

Outdoor otter habitat construction, 1994. (Photo by Ken Kaumeyer)

“The Mermaid’s Purse” exhibit, and raise baby sea horses and jellyfish. By the spring of 2000, a new 2,000 square-foot addition was completed on the south side of the Exhibition Hall.

The third and final permanent exhibit, “Treasures from the Cliffs,” opened to the public on March 20, 1997. This exhibit represented a collaboration between the Exhibits and Paleontology Departments. Dr. Mike Gottfried was the curator of paleontology at that time and he and his team worked with Exhibits on the project. It was also when we first encountered the talented Tim Scheirer, later a CMM Exhibits staff member, who was contracted to create the murals. This is where Tim started his tradition of “hiding” figures, animals, and people in his murals.

The dangers of working in a museum are never talked about enough. The Exhibits staff was installing fossil specimens on the wall. Skip Edwards, a big burly bald guy, was bent down working, and when he stood up, he impaled the top of his head on the canine teeth of the saber tooth tiger fossil. Needless to say, this was quite painful. But it was the paperwork that made it even worse. How do you fill out a workman’s compensation report to explain that a person had been hurt by the teeth of a saber tooth tiger? I guess this made Skip the last person on Earth to have been attacked by this fearsome predator.

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many staff and volunteers would partake of. I found, if they were eating, they couldn’t complain as easily.

A phone call from Ralph Eshelman around 1994 alerted me to another opportunity that turned into a decade of work, but a wonderful addition to our collection and a money maker for the museum. Ralph had gotten word that the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) was looking to downsize and decommission the Cove Point Light Station in Lusby. Built in 1828, I think Ralph had his eye on CMM acquiring this important historical landmark, at least since 1974. The USCG was planning to transfer the property to the General Services Administration for transfer to another federal agency, state or local government, or even private ownership. Tourism Director Herman Schieke and I made a presentation to the Board of County Commissioners. We stated that it was not only our preservation responsibility to acquire Cove Point, but that it would be a tourism draw for lighthouse lovers across the country and the world. The commissioners agreed and the long acquisition process began.

After much negotiation with the Coast Guard, staff from Congressman Steny Hoyer and Senator Paul Sarbanes’ offices, and Calvert County Government, a ceremony was held at Cove Point on October 23, 1996, to mark the pending transfer to county government. But it wasn’t until nearly four years later, September 13, 2000, that the deed was signed. The transfer was celebrated at Cove Point on October 31, 2000, and the real work began.

Renovations and repairs were needed to the buildings, seawall, and grounds. Being exposed to the bay, Cove Point is prone to storm damage, flooding, and harsh weather. Funding was received from federal, state, and local governments to secure the seawall and do the initial repairs. In 2001, the lighthouse was opened on a limited basis. Orientation exhibits were planned and installed and finally, on May 1, 2006, the Cove Point Light Station opened to the public on a regular basis, manned by our hard-working volunteers.

The general thinking had been that the keeper’s house could be a wonderful B&B, but a marketing study recommended that we focus on developing it as a weekly rental. There is no other working lighthouse on the east coast where people can stay overnight. Director of Development Vanessa Gill took this project on, quickly seeing the income potential for the museum. Maritime History Curator Richard Dodds oversaw the meticulous work of restoring the building to meet Maryland Historical Trust standards and approved all of the interior alterations to ensure that nothing jeopardized the historical integrity of the building. After six years of fundraising, planning, and renovations, the duplex lighthouse keeper’s quarters were transformed into a charming weekly rental facility. Cove Point Light Station is a wonderful example of adaptive reuse, preserving this historic site for the future and being an important source of income for the museum.

Volunteers have always been integral to the museum. Early in my tenure, the Volunteer Council was established. This organization has been an important link between the volunteers and the administration, departments, and staff. I cannot say enough about the contribution volunteers have made to the museum’s success. We have always been good at recognizing our volunteers, and I took particular pleasure in serving as the MC for the annual Volunteer Recognition Dinner. To jazz up the affair, I suggested that we literally roll out the red carpet for an Oscar-like event — which we did. I wore my tux and one of the ladies on staff donned a gown to be my ‘Vanna White.’ Each year I presented “the Otter,” a hand carved, gold painted otter sculpture by master carver Skip Edwards, to the Volunteer of the Year. And of course, our mascot otter was on hand to present the envelope. And, every year I recited the “Volunteer Credo:”

We the willing, led by the unknowing, are doing the impossible for the ungrateful, and have done so much, for so long, with so little, are now qualified to do anything with nothing.

It was always a great night, and most of the credit goes to Sherry Reid, Volunteer and Events Coordinator extraordinaire, who has built the museum’s program to 500 strong.

There have been many volunteers I have gotten to know and appreciate over 25 years, but two stand out in my mind. James LeRoy “Pepper” Langley, one of the museum’s founders, started working in the model shop in May, 1974, and retired in 1999. He was an icon, a local treasure known and loved by many. We were all saddened by his passing in 2001. We had a memorial service for him in the over packed auditorium.

Another icon who was a constant fixture, friend, colleague, font of knowledge, and remarkable editor was Paul L. Berry. Former CMM board member and long time librarian, we had the opportunity to honor him by naming the CMM library after him, before his death in 2013 at age 92. No other volunteer has come close to volunteering as much time as Paul did — over 27,000 hours.

As part of my P.T. Barnum approach of doing what you can to get visitors through the doors, I agreed to Development Department staff’s proposal to host a rock and roll band in our

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The eclectic Danny Gatton Band during its 1991 performance in the CMM auditorium. (Photo by Alan Manuel)

The museum had been hosting an outdoor annual music concert near the boat basin for ten years. We brought the maritime music of Schooner Fare from Maine to Solomons, moved the Tennison into the boat basin, and placed the band on her deck while hundreds of music lovers sat in chairs around the basin. By 1995, attendance was waning and we decided to try our successful rock and roll series in an outdoor setting. We built a temporary raised stage to the left of the Exhibition Hall doors, against the railing, overlooking the Drum Point Lighthouse.

On May 25, 1995, our new Waterside Music Festival hosted Los Lobos from Louisiana to an audience of 1,500. It was a modest financial success but not without controversy. I got an earful from people who had expected Mexican folk music and that I had ruined the museum and they would never come again. Not the last time I would handle concert complaints. But this gamble turned out to be a major financial and entertainment success that has made a lot of money for the museum and been an economic engine for Solomons’ businesses. The concerts brought many people to Solomons who had never heard of CMM. They visited, liked what they saw, and became members. Over the years, many famous artists have graced the Waterside Music Series stage and I look forward to the planned exhibit celebrating 35 years of CMM sponsored concerts. Look for me with my signature ball cap and ponytail.

The Wm. B. Tennison received National Historic Landmark status in 1994 and celebrated her 100th birthday in 1999. Formerly a buyboat for the J.C. Lore & Sons oyster processing house, it was purchased by the county, along with the oyster house, from Alton and Joann Kersey in 1979. It is an iconic part of Chesapeake Bay history. Though much of her wood has been replaced, the Tennison has all of her main hull, up to the waterline, composed of nine large hand shaped pine logs that are original to her 1899 launching. The fact that for a small fee, our visitors can take a cruise on the river in a boat that is over 120 years old is remarkable.

The skipjack Dee of St. Mary’s was transferred to CMM in 2013, and I immediately envisioned that she would make a great “director’s yacht” with lunch time sails. I was quickly put in my place, but I did get to crew on her in September, 2014, for the annual skipjack races at Cambridge. She now serves as a floating/sailing education center.

When Ralph Eshelman was director, he talked about the “Three-Sided Pyramid” of museum collections, research, and education. Setting this course proved very sound for CMM’s future. Following our first accreditation in 1981 by the national American Association of Museums, we continued to follow best practices and meet international professional standards, and we were reaccredited by the AAM in 1996 and 2009. This vigorous process of self examination and review of museum operations by our peers from other museums ensures that CMM is following the expected practices for collecting and collection care, research, and educational programs, as well as administrative and financial operations. I take particular pride in the fact that CMM achieved three accreditations, two during my tenure. It is the gold standard for museums.

By 2000, ten years into my tenure, the museum had grown, and along with it, more buildings, more staff, and greater complexity. It was becoming harder and harder to feel I had a handle on everything. I had known Sherrod Sturrock for years, having worked with her in her capacity as Capital Projects Coordinator with the county. She had a background in museums, education, and non-profit management and we talked about how it would be great to get her down to Solomons and work at CMM. The opportunity presented itself in 2004, and I convinced the county that I needed a Deputy Director. Coming from the county, it was an easy transition and she started in April. Sherrod and I made a great team. Like Abbott and Costello, she the cool, intelligent one and I was the comic relief.

There are many aspects of CMM that make me proud. CMM publications, many by our own curators, is an important aspect of the work, making the original research available to the public. The Paul L. Berry Reference Library and CMM archives house an extensive collection that is available to researchers. The Patuxent Small Craft Center, where the Patuxent Small Craft Guild, under
the direction of Boatwright George Surgent, repair, build, and restore wooden boats, was originally an open shed. But in 2003, energetic volunteer support and fundraising allowed us to build the two-story facility that stands on our campus today.

Having a major marine fossil collection distinguishes CMM from other museums on the bay. From the very beginning, the presence of Miocene fossils at Calvert Cliffs was part of the mission. In 2000, the Clarissa and Lincoln Dryden Endowment made a major behest to the Paleontology Department that completely altered the landscape. These dedicated funds have allowed staff to travel around the world to attend conferences, present research papers, and become part of the international paleontology community. Researchers from around the world come to CMM to study our collections and collaborate with our staff.

In my last years at CMM, Dr. Stephen Godfrey was working on a comprehensive book about the fossils of Calvert Cliffs. I know Stephen appreciated my encouragement over the ten years this endeavor took, when monthly I would stick my head in his office and say, “Have you finished the darn book yet?” It was the least I could do. *The Geology and Vertebrate Paleontology of Calvert Cliffs, Maryland, USA*, is a major contribution to the field, and one that the museum was proud to support. It is one of the many significant accomplishments from this department.

Over the years, it seems like we were always raising money and building something. After the three theme exhibits were built, they all underwent renovations and updating. Curator of Exhibits Jim Langley oversaw all three exhibit updates. In 1998, we refurbished the bulkhead and boardwalk at the J. C. Lore & Sons oyster house, which was designated a National Historic Landmark in 2001. Some years after that, we stripped the interior and designed and installed new exhibits. The Discovery Room was updated and new displays installed in 2006. In 2007, an unexpected donation by the Corbin family lead to the creation of the Corbin Nature Pavilion, a much-utilized educational space.

By 2011, a new master plan was approved for a major updating of the Exhibition Hall’s lobby, expanded Museum Store, the conversion of the fixed seat auditorium to a multipurpose space, and plans to create a second level for a new learning center. For the first time in the museum’s history, we launched a capital campaign to raise the private funds needed to augment county and state funding. We met our goal, raising over $750,000, but the bids came in high, forcing the project to be phased. The classrooms would have to wait.

There was a six-month construction period, starting January 2014, during which the museum was closed to the public for the first time since it opened. We took advantage of the closure to completely renovate the Estuarium, thanks to a grant from the Institute of Museums and Library Services and the hard work of Curator of Estuarine Biology Dave Moyer. The grand reopening of the refurbished entrance area, Harms Gallery, Museum Store, and the “River to Bay” exhibit that May was an exciting event after an exhausting year.

During my 24-year tenure, I did hundreds of formal and informal gallery talks and behind-the-scenes tours. Going through the galleries, regaling visitors with stories about our “figureheads, fish, fossils, food, and fun” and bragging on the talent, skill, and professionalism of the staff. I would point out with my laser pointer hidden creatures and people in the murals — courtesy of the aforementioned Tim Scheirer. Calling this “the world famous, museum director’s behind-the-scenes tour with bad jokes, puns, and chocolate,” I would also take folks behind the scenes to “fondle the fossils, frighten the fish, and ogle the otters.” Yes, I even achieved the ultimate honor of having Tim paint my face onto the skeleton of an extinct whale, which is on the curved wall opposite the Paleo Prep Lab. I can be found on the arm bone called the humerus, pun intended.

It was my privilege to have been at the helm of this wonderful museum for a quarter of a century. Now the Calvert Marine Museum is celebrating half a century. A lot has happened in the past fifty years; may the next fifty bring even more experiences, learning, excitement, joy, friendship, and even love. I am proud to have led such a dedicated, professional, hard working group of staff and volunteers and to have experienced the grateful and constantly positive feedback from those whose lives we have touched. So “Rock On!” and hey, who’s got the chocolate? 🍫

Tim Scheirer’s rendering of Doug Alves’s face hidden in the mural of a whale.
intricacies of knot tying, Perry answered questions about otters, and Melissa shared a secret family crab cake recipe. READ MORE: http://calvertmarinemuseum.com/Virtual-Resources

4. We continue to celebrate our volunteers! Even though our volunteers have not been able to join us on-site, they have been working tirelessly at home to help support our programs. From sewing masks to cutting out paper shapes for our crafts, CMM volunteers are dedicated to our museum community. And while we cannot celebrate our volunteers with traditional festivities, we honored them with a Volunteer Appreciation Parade highlighted in our activities section of this issue, during which our staff donned ridiculous costumes, turned on bubble machines, painted signs, played loud music, and cheered as our volunteers drove through the parking lot.

5. We cannot wait to welcome you back! Your safety is our priority when planning to reopen the museum. We established a Reopening Task Force comprised of staff from all departments to navigate these uncharted waters. Staff have observed changes implemented in grocery stores, participated in Zoom calls with local business owners, calculated capacity limitations based on square footage, poured over CDC guidelines, and considered the many types of exhibit spaces we offer to the public. After careful deliberation on these details, we invited a team of experts to tour the museum and walk through our plan. We are extremely grateful to our colleagues at Calvert County Tourism, Economic Development, Buildings and Grounds, Inspections and Permits, and the Health Department for their review of our reopening plans.

The Passing of our Good Friend Bob Platt

By Stephen Godfrey, Curator of Paleontology

Austin P. “Bob” Platt was born in Evanston, Illinois, in 1937 and received a PhD in Zoology from University of Massachusetts, Amherst, in 1965. Bob taught at the University of Rhode Island and Wesleyan University in Connecticut before joining the faculty of University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) in 1969. He taught biology at UMBC until his retirement in 2000. He was a founding member of the Maryland Geological Society (Fossil Club) and joined the CMM Fossil Club in the 1980s.

Bob is survived by his wife of 57 years, Pamela C. Platt of Bozeman, Montana, and their children and grandchildren, in addition to his adopted Calvert Marine Museum family. In 2018, Bob suffered a stroke while visiting his family in Montana and was never able to return to the museum. His ashes will be spread in the foothills of the Big Horn Mountains of Wyoming on ground that his family has traversed on foot and horseback for over one hundred years. We have missed him and Pam, but his spirit is with us.

Bob Platt cataloging our modern shell collection. Photos by S. Godfrey

Bob Platt of the Calvert County Health Department visited the museum in June and assessed the facilities and plans for reopening. (Photo by Danita Boonchaisri)

While we may not know what date we will reopen, we will reopen. In the meantime, check us out on Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter to follow all our most recent programming and announcements. And, in case you haven’t heard, the Museum Store is open for curbside pick-up! 🛒
“Y ou have one of the coolest jobs!” We in the Estuarine Biology Department hear this often. Yes we do, but it comes with a great responsibility. As everyone has struggled with personal challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, we aquarists must put them aside so we can make sure the living collection at the Calvert Marine Museum continues to receive the best care we can provide. For the months of April and May, the Estuarine Biology staff was broken down into two person teams, so we would minimize exposure to each other as much as possible. Each team reported to CMM on their scheduled days, to make sure that all of the animals from otters to seahorses and stingrays to turtles were properly fed and other necessary tasks were performed.

We all hope that the COVID-19 pandemic is an anomaly, but our staff are very familiar with our “essential” label. The animals at CMM must be cared for 365 days a year, meaning that an aquarist must be here on holidays including Christmas, Thanksgiving, and New Year’s. There is food to be prepared and dispensed, vitamins and medications to be administered, water changes to perform, records to complete, every day, day in and day out.

Then there are the snowstorms. This is where the aquarist who lives closest to the museum usually draws the shortest straw. While we do take precautions for the safety of the staff, someone needs to make it through the snow and weather to take care of the animals. There have been times when the storms were not even to be challenged by 4 wheel drives, so we packed bags with food and other necessities, and hunkered down at the museum before the storm arrived and stayed until it passed — talk about “Night at the Museum!”

We are also here when hurricanes threaten. In the event that a hurricane is predicted to strike our area, most of the animals will shelter in place, requiring our care as long as we can safely provide it. We also have agreements with other facilities to house our three North American river otters if it becomes necessary to evacuate them temporarily.

So, yes it is a cool job, but do you have what it takes to be an Essential Aquarist? 🦦
Drum Point Lighthouse Roof

If there is a silver lining to the cloud of the COVID-19 virus crisis, it is that it has allowed us the opportunity to restore the roof of Drum Point Lighthouse without having to close the lighthouse and the boat basin to the public during a normally busy season. The workers of Colossal Contractors used a chemical stripping protocol that has effectively removed the old paint while protecting our marine environment in and around the lighthouse.

After the paint was removed, there was only minor damage to the original tin alloy standing seam roof which was easily remedied. The coating itself, a product called Acrymax, is an elastomeric paint that permeates a fibrous mesh cloth yielding a tough yet semi-flexible coating over the original metal roof. The priming, laying of the fabric mesh, and final painting has all been completed. Deputy Director Rachelle Green and I inspected the interior of the roof recently and found no evidence of leaks or other problems. A final inspection by the manufacturer in June ensured that the application of the Acrymax coating conforms to industry specifications—thus validating our warranty. When you return to the museum, I hope you will take a moment to admire the lighthouse roof, returned to its former glory.

Lighthouse Keeper’s Boat

Prior to the coronavirus interruption, I was able to finish the lofting for the light keeper’s boat — a boat that would have hung in the davits at Drum Point Lighthouse. In the next few weeks, George Surgent, CMM's able boatwright, and I will begin making the molds for the boat. George has finished a sail plan for the boat from which we will finalize the position of the centerboard box. We are also working on the proportions and final shapes for the pieces that will comprise the keel, stem, deadwood, and stern area. We hope to begin construction on the boat this summer.
Unable to host our annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner in April due to restrictions, Volunteer/Events Coordinator Sherry Reid got creative. On June 19, 2020, staff gathered along the museum’s driveway and parking lot to celebrate our volunteers with a Volunteer Appreciation Parade!

(Photos by Kathleen Porecki, Rachelle Green and Rob Hurry)
CMM Volunteer Appreciation Parade

Activities & Events

(Photos by Kathleen Porecki, Rachelle Green and Rob Hurry)
Activities & Events

CMM Volunteer Appreciation Parade

(Photos by Kathleen Porecki, Rachelle Green and Rob Hurry)
Virtual Summer Camps

This summer, join the Calvert Marine Museum for a Virtual Summer Camp experience! We decided to expand our offerings by going virtual while at the same time keeping our campers safe and healthy at home. The CMM Education team will provide packaged kits containing materials for each program that can be safely picked up from the museum campus. Each day of camp, campers will chat with their museum counselor and fellow campers via Zoom. Activities include virtual tours, Q&A sessions with curators, crafts, and other uniquely designed lessons that will be fun for the entire family. We have campers joining us from California, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Florida, Virginia, and Maryland! Our team is busy packing craft kits and setting up camp websites. From pirates to paleontologists … our virtual adventure awaits! 🏴

These “Half and Half” cartons will be transformed into boats during the Pirates and Scallywags camp. (Photo by Rachelle Green)

CMM Education staff are busy prepping daily craft activities for the Scales, Tails, and Sails camp. (Photo by Rachelle Green)

HERstory: Celebrating Southern Maryland Women

We have developed a virtual exhibit to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment that gave women the right to vote. Download a digital version of our exhibit highlighting women who have made significant impacts in Calvert County, Southern Maryland, and the state. From Margaret Brent to Margaret Dunkle, we invite you to share in the accomplishments and triumphs of Maryland women during this very important celebration.

READ MORE: http://calvertmarinemuseum.com/474/Virtual-Exhibits

Suffrage Events at Chesapeake Beach

“The 19th Amendment … and a world of Thanks!” by Kris DeGrace, Collections Manager for the Chesapeake Beach Railway Museum, traces a local connection to the early 20th century suffrage movement to Calvert County. Read her article and learn about what is happening at the museum in the current issue of The Chesapeake Dispatcher.

READ MORE
Volunteers Answering the Call
(Adapted from The Anchor, May/June 2020)

Though the museum is closed, our volunteers (and staff) have been busy volunteering their time, talent, and energy to help others during this very difficult and crazy time. I would like to share some of the wonderful things the CMM family is doing to help their family, friends, and neighbors. The caring and kindness I am hearing about is what makes the CMM family so very special.

Marianne Harms has been purchasing material to make masks for the local hospital. She is packaging up the materials to get out to volunteers who are making the masks. Janet Addiss helped round up volunteers to do the sewing. Janet picks up the packages, delivers them to the volunteers, and then picks them up and delivers the finished product back to Marianne. Several of our volunteers are helping with this particular project including Alexa Peterson, June Moody, Bonnie Grimes, and Judi Kane. Together the volunteers completed approximately 5,400 masks — WOW!

Nan Suydam pulled out a lot of fabric she already had on hand and started making masks for Asbury. She set up an assembly line and she has single handedly made and donated 110 masks — WOW! She and Alan are also making (and receiving) many phone calls to check on friends.

Judi Kane has offered to make masks for anyone in need. She has also been baking goodies and sharing them with her friends and neighbors. Nancy Wieck is also baking goodies and sharing them with others to make their day brighter.

The Paleontology Department is pitching in too! Chrystal Godfrey has also been very busy making masks. John Nance and Rachel Reese have been using the 3-D printer to make the plastic pieces for masks and face shields that have gone to several hospitals. Rachel has also been sewing the fabric to the plastic pieces to make masks.

Ken Anderson and Christa Conant have been volunteering some of their time with Meals on Wheels. Bernice Lawson, Dee Hoofnagle, and Marja Gandy are volunteering at the SMILE pantry. Sherrod Sturrock and her husband have been picking up bread for the SCAN Food Pantry. All of these programs are essential to the well-being of our community. Lisa McDaniel has been giving out grocery and pet store gift cards to people that are out of work due to COVID-19 and she is also checking on her family and friends.

Tyler Bell and Jane Kostenko have been very busy volunteering their time. They are usually part of the mail party that membership has each month. Since the mail party had to be canceled, Lisa dropped off all of the items for the mailing to Tyler and Jane and they did the entire mailing by themselves. They also volunteered for the Tobacco Barn Distillery in Leonardtown to put labels on empty bottles that were then filled with hand sanitizer for distribution to the local EMS. They credit the skill they used on what they learned from the mail parties at CMM — LOL!

I know there are soooo many other members of our CMM family that are doing wonderful work to help us through these tough times. I want to thank you for all you do to make life in Southern Maryland the best it can be, especially under the circumstances we are dealing with each and every day. Whether you are making phone calls, sending cards, texting, or emailing people to check in on them and to let them know you care — you are making a difference.

CMM Volunteers, Staff, and Board of Governors Helping the Charlotte Hall Veterans

CMM has been sending packages to military personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan monthly since December, 2009. Currently we do not have anyone we know serving in either location so we have not sent packages for the last several months.

After learning that Charlotte Hall Veterans Home is not allowing visitors, and all trips to the store have been suspended, the vending machines disconnected, and the onsite store closed, we decided to switch our monthly giving to the veterans at Charlotte Hall. As always, the volunteers, staff, and Board of Governors at CMM jumped into action. An email went out on Sunday, May 17, and by Friday, May 22, my entire car was packed to the brim with snacks and cards to deliver to the veterans. More deliveries were made on June 11 and July 1, and again my car was filled to capacity! Not only did the staff at Charlotte Hall accepting the delivery thank CMM for the gifts but I saw a couple of veterans walking outside and they also thanked us for the snacks.

The snacks go on a cart that the staff at Charlotte Hall take around to the veterans and they can pick the snacks they want. It sounds like something so small but it makes a huge difference when you have no other way to get something to make you smile. We will continue to take snacks over each month through the pandemic so we can serve those who have courageously served our country. I can’t thank our volunteers, staff, and the Board of Governors enough for their help and generosity with this program. Together we make a difference. I am so honored and privileged to be part of the CMM family.

By Sherry Reid, Volunteer and Events Coordinator
Discover Your Museum Store!  By Maureen Baughman, Director of Retail Operations

Welcome back to the Museum Store –
We are so glad you’re here!

... And, we’d like to give a great big thank you to all of you who shopped via email, text, or phone during the closure! Whether you knew exactly what you wanted or we texted you photos of what we thought you wanted, or you just allowed us to choose the perfect gift for you, please know that every sale was appreciated. We celebrated birthdays, anniversaries, Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, and a few “just because it’s Tuesday days” during the closure. We loved wrapping your gifts in pretty paper and seeing your faces when we delivered them curbside, or getting a kind note from you if we shipped your gift by mail. You were taking care of us during the closure even while we were taking care of you. It has always been the people who visit us, and the staff and volunteers who work here, that make the museum such an incredible place and that was very much in evidence during our long closure.

We look forward to the store reopening and we are working hard to ensure that you feel safe and comfortable while you shop. By limiting store capacity we think you’ll feel more relaxed and we’ll all be wearing face masks to keep each other safe. We will be sanitizing the store and our hands throughout the day, and we’ve got plenty of hand sanitizer for you, too.

Curbside service and package mailing are always available.

Give us a call at 410-326-2750 or email Maureen.Baughman@calvertcountymd.gov

Membership

By Lisa Howard, Membership & Development Associate

Welcoming You Back to the Calvert Marine Museum

Our members are our most loyal guests. We truly cannot wait to welcome you back — and we will do it with great thought and care.

During the unprecedented closure period, we have introduced a policy adjustment to your membership. Museum membership will be extended for the number of days the museum is closed due to COVID-19. The new expiration date will be reflected in the members’ database account. New membership cards will not be sent out, but rest assured, the extension will be reflected in your onsite file.

When the museum reopens, please be aware that capacity will be limited. Based on guidance from health experts to promote social distancing and the limitations of our space, that may continue for a period of time. For example, members (and all visitors) will be required to make an advance reservation to enter the museum due to our new timed entry system. Slots will be set aside at each entry time, specifically for members.

We understand how much excitement, thought, and time goes into planning your Calvert Marine Museum visit. Please know we will be here to help you as we remain focused on delivering a wonderful and safe experience for everyone who visits the Calvert Marine Museum.

If you have any questions, please contact the membership office at 410-326-2042 x16.
From Our Screen to Yours
By Anjelica Eitel, Communications & Marketing Coordinator

Over the past few months, so many of us have had to change how we operate. If you’ve read the preceding articles in this issue of the Bugeye Times, you know that CMM and its various departments are no different. This temporary closure has not only impacted how we promote, but also what we promote.

Since March 13, the last day our doors were open to the public, our outreach strategy has moved to primarily digital, relying heavily on social media to stay connected to our supporters, like you. A newfound value was placed on virtual offerings and, I have to say, the CMM team met this challenge head on.

Our staff has been able to collaborate in new ways to bring you digital versions of children’s programming and gallery tours. In some cases, entire events moved online, like Maritime Week and World Otter Day, to help make up for lost experiences associated with the Solomons Maritime Festival and OtterMania. Existing online resources, like our otter cams and virtual tour of Drum Point Lighthouse, have also experienced a fresh wave of viewership.

We’ve stepped up our video production and even started several fun new series on YouTube, like Paleo Prep Lab with Kevin and Knot Tying with Kate. Speaking of YouTube, did you know that CMM has a rapidly growing channel on this platform? Since March, we’ve more than doubled our subscribers and are now publishing original content on a weekly basis.

Even with a growing audience, it’s important to remember that not everyone is (or wants to be) on social media. This is why we’ve also created a robust Virtual Resources page on the CMM website. Here, you’ll find links to everything mentioned above, plus virtual puzzles, Southern Maryland Mad Libs, and downloadable Zoom backgrounds.

DISCOVER MORE: http://calvertmarinemuseum.com/Virtual-Resources

Moving to a mostly digital format over the past three months has been quite an adventure! Like so many other organizations, we’ve been forced to become VERY creative in how we stay connected to our supporters. Even after CMM reopens, we’re looking forward to continuing efforts to educate, entertain, and inspire you, from our screen to yours.
To all who have renewed your membership during the closure, donated to our #GivingTuesdayNow campaign, signed up for virtual camps, continued to sponsor us, or reached out to let us know that you will be back as soon as our doors open again, the Calvert Marine Museum Society would like to say a very special Thank You! These thoughtful and generous acts mean so much to us. With your support, we will get through these difficult times so that CMM can get back to doing what we do: educating, preserving, and engaging with our community.

Most of the museum’s fundraising efforts occur during the summer months and the revenue generated from these events amounts to roughly 50% of the museum’s annual operating budget. As you can imagine, having to cancel all of our spring and summer events is extremely challenging for us. But necessity is the mother of invention, and we are reinventing, rescheduling, and rethinking just about everything we do.

Our communications and marketing coordinator has worked with the Education staff to create a new digital library that brings the museum right into your home. We work to keep you connected through online experiences and behind-the-scenes tours. And as our membership and development associate reported, your memberships will be extended to make up for the time the museum has been closed. To streamline our processes, the museum will be introducing digital ticketing when we reopen. This means you will be able to schedule your visits and receive tickets immediately through digital barcoding. You will also be able to book your boat cruises online instead of coming to the museum to purchase them the day of the cruise.

The Waterside Music Series productions are a big part of the museum’s summer events and we have been able to reschedule this year’s canceled concerts to next year. Thankfully, all our sponsors are on board for next season. Stay tuned for an exciting line-up to be announced in the spring of 2021.

Rentals of museum spaces for special events, an important source of revenue, have also been suspended during the closure — but again, we turned lemons into lemonade. As reported elsewhere in this issue, we were able to complete major construction projects on the Cove Point and Drum Point Lighthouses. Our facilities and events coordinator has already started renting the Cove Point Lighthouse Keeper’s House and is gearing up to begin hosting weddings and private events at the museum again as soon as it is deemed safe. These two beautiful waterfront locations provide the perfect place to come together and social distance for your special event.

As we pivot and explore different ways to raise money in support of the museum’s mission, we hope you will continue to be there with and for us. We believe that this challenge will help us evolve into an even more wonderful place to visit, and we look forward to seeing you here again soon!

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Staff UPDATE

Farewell to Bob Fehn

Bob Fehn is retiring from the position of weekend coordinator after fifteen years of service. Bob is preparing to retire from his full-time job as Information Technology Director for the St. Mary’s County Metropolitan Commission and he and wife Betsey have a lot of travel plans in their future.