



## Growing oysters for a cleaner Bay

<http://www.oystergardener.org/>

### Winter 2023-24

### Announcing the Annual TOGA Membership Meeting at VIMS

~ Sue Borra, TOGA President and Karen Hudson, Shellfish Aquaculture Extension Specialist, Marine Advisory Program, VIMS

Mark your calendar to attend the **TOGA Annual Meeting** to be held Saturday, January 27, 2024, at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) Gloucester Point Campus, Watermen's Hall Auditorium. You can register at: <https://forms.office.com/r/J45UyriTbE>

We encourage everyone to participate in-person, but a virtual option will be available. Your membership dues can be paid at the meeting. Non-TOGA members are also encouraged to attend to learn more about TOGA.

This is an extremely important event as TOGA members will be voting on the Slate of Candidates for the TOGA Board and the Revised TOGA Bylaws. In addition, we will have updates from key agency representatives and VIMS and a presentation by Dr. Roger Mann from VIMS.

Please bring a potluck dish to share and enjoy meeting with your fellow oyster gardeners from the tidewater area.

#### TOGA Annual Meeting Schedule

Saturday, January 27, 2024. 1:00-5:00 pm  
Virginia Institute of Marine Science, Gloucester Campus, Waterman's Hall Auditorium

#### 1:00 –1:30 pm Check-in

Meet with agency representatives from the Virginia Marine Resources Commission and the Virginia Department of Health and informal Q&A with experienced Master Oyster Gardeners.

#### 1:30 pm Welcome and Introductions

Sue Borra, President TOGA, Karen Hudson, VIMS

#### 1:35 – 2 pm Agency Updates for Gardeners

- Savannah Longest, Shellfish Aquaculture Specialist, Virginia Marine Resources Commission, Shellfish Management Division
- Adam Wood, Growing Area Manager, Virginia Department of Health, Shellfish Safety

#### 2:00 – 2:45 pm TOGA Business Meeting

- Treasurer's Report - Brian Ingram, Treasurer
- 2023 TOGA Highlights - Sue Borra, President
- 2024 TOGA Goals -Sue Borra and TOGA Board members
- Election of Officers – Carl Zulick, Secretary
- Vote on TOGA Bylaws Changes – Sue Borra
- Madison Boyd Award 2023 – Carl Zulick
- Other TOGA Business (TBD)

#### 2:45 – 3:00 pm TOGA Fellowship Endowment at VIMS Update-

Susan Maples, Director of Development, VIMS

#### 3:00 – 4:00 pm Education Session

- Featured Speaker: Dr. Roger Mann, Professor, Virginia Institute of Marine Science
- Topic: Virginia's Oyster Productivity Over the Past 25 Years

#### 4:00 – 5:00 pm Social Hour

Potluck- oyster dishes and snacks

**REGISTER TODAY:** If you plan to attend the meeting, please pre-register online:

<https://forms.office.com/r/J45UyriTbE>

If you plan to participate virtually, a link will be sent to the email address you entered on your registration form.



## ITEMS FOR MEMBERSHIP VOTE DURING THE TOGA BUSINESS MEETING:

TOGA members will vote on the following items of TOGA business: The TOGA Bylaws revision and the slate of TOGA Board of Directors Members and Officers for 2024.

### TOGA Bylaws Revised

Since TOGA's establishment, 25 years ago, the Bylaws have gone through a variety of updates. This year the TOGA Board conducted a thorough review and revision of the Bylaws to bring them up to date to meet current needs and also had the revised version examined by outside counsel. Below are the revised TOGA Bylaws for your review and approval.

The key updates to these Bylaws include:

- Updating the membership criteria and voting status
- Updating the election process
- Updating the Standing Committees
- Including a new section on Notices and Use of Technology to conduct business.
- Updating the nondiscrimination section

To compare these restated Bylaws to the current Bylaws, go to the current Bylaws posted on the TOGA website:

[https://www.oystergardener.org/\\_files/ugd/9d48db\\_57bde4becb794904840f315817c30555.pdf](https://www.oystergardener.org/_files/ugd/9d48db_57bde4becb794904840f315817c30555.pdf)

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## TIDEWATER OYSTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION BYLAWS

Restatement January 27, 2024

### ARTICLE I: NAME AND PURPOSE

Section 1. The name of the organization shall be the Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association.

Section 2. The purpose of this organization shall be:

- To educate interested citizens in oyster aquaculture methods.
- To promote oyster garden aquaculture in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.
- To promote the environmental health of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries through oyster cultivation and by other means.

## ARTICLE II: MEMBERSHIP AND DUES

Section 1. Membership in the Association shall consist of two levels. Those with dues fully paid, and in good standing shall be considered as full members with the right to vote, and all others shall be non-voting, guest members.

Section 2. Voting rights of full members having family memberships shall be limited to one vote per household.

Section 3. Dues for the Association shall be determined by the Board and are payable for the current or upcoming calendar year. Those with dues paid on or before January 31<sup>st</sup> are considered full members with the right to vote, and all others are considered non-voting guest members until paying the dues for the current calendar year, at which time they will be considered full members with the right to vote in that year.

## ARTICLE III: ORGANIZATION, ELECTION AND DUTIES

Section 1. Officers, Executive Board and Term of Office

- The officers of this association shall consist of a President, Vice- President, Secretary and Treasurer.
- The Executive Board shall consist of a minimum of five (5) and a maximum of twenty (20) directors, which number shall include the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and immediate Past President. All directors must have full membership status, with dues fully paid.
- The term of office for all officers and directors on the Executive Board shall be for one year, running from the date of election at the Annual Membership Meeting through the date of the next Annual Membership Meeting.

Section 2. Elections

Officers and directors on the Executive Board shall be chosen from a slate of candidates presented by the Association's Nomination committee for approval to the Executive Board, and upon approval of the slate given by the Executive Board, the slate as a whole shall be

presented for an up-or-down majority vote by those in attendance at the Annual Membership Meeting.

in the planning, preparation, and presentation of Association programs and activities.

4. Present reports of activities and plans at the Association membership meetings.
5. Approve reports from standing or special committees, including but not limited to annual budget recommendations of the Finance committee and slates of candidates recommended by the Nomination committee.

### Section 3. Duties of Officers

The duties of the officers shall be as follows:

- a. The President shall preside at all meetings of the Association and of the Executive Board and shall coordinate the work of the officers and committees of the Association.
- b. The Vice-President shall perform the duties of the President in the event of his/her absence, and such other duties as may be assigned by the President.
- c. The Secretary shall record the minutes of all meetings of the Association and Executive Board and maintain a true and faithful record of each meeting. The Secretary shall also assist in Association correspondence, including but not limited to providing information to members.
- d. The Treasurer shall maintain all funds of the Association, provide regular reports to the Executive Board, and disburse funds for Association activities as directed by the budget and the Executive Board. The Treasurer shall prepare and present a proposed annual budget to the Executive Board in a timely manner so that approval may be given at least thirty days prior to the end of the calendar year. In the event of dissolution, the Treasurer shall dispose of assets pursuant to Executive Board direction.

- c. The Executive Board meetings are open to the general membership and shall meet at the call of the President as often as necessary to carry out the Association business, but in any event shall meet at least biannually.

### ARTICLE IV: ANNUAL AND GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

Section 1. The Executive Board will establish the date and venue of an Annual Membership Meeting, as well as any General Membership Meeting deemed appropriate, with notice given to all members at least thirty (30) days in advance.

Section 2. Upon proper notice given to all members of the Association, business at the Annual Membership Meeting or any General Membership Meeting may be conducted upon majority vote of those full members of the Association, who are present in person, by proxy, or such other virtual manner deemed appropriate at the discretion of the Executive Board.

Section 3. Procedures for the conduct of all meetings will be in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order.

### ARTICLE V: COMMITTEES AND VACANCIES

Section 1. Standing Committees shall be created to manage and/or conduct ongoing operations and responsibilities of the Association and shall be appointed by the President to serve for a term that coincides with the term of the elected officers of the Association.

Section 2. The Standing Committees shall be a Nominations Committee and a Finance Committee.

Section 3. Special Committees shall be created to manage and/or conduct special activities and shall be appointed by the President. Special

### Section 4. Operation of Executive Board

A majority of the membership of the Executive Board participating in person or virtually by telephonic or electronic means shall constitute a quorum.

- a. All action and business conducted by the Executive Board shall be by a majority vote of the Executive Board members constituting a quorum.
- b. Duties of the Executive Board shall be to:
  1. Transact necessary day-to-day business in the intervals between Association membership meetings.
  2. Make decisions regarding the allocation of resources and the initiation of projects and activities.
  3. Provide guidance, oversight, and assistance

Committees shall function until the activity or task for which they were appointed has been completed or until terminated by the President.

Section 4. Committee or Executive Board Vacancies shall be handled as follows:

- a. Committee chair vacancies shall be filled by the President in consultation with the remaining committee members.
- b. Executive Board vacancies, other than officers, may be filled by majority vote of the remaining directors, or may remain unfilled until the next Annual Membership Meeting if there are at least five (5) remaining directors after the occurrence of the vacancy.
- c. Officer vacancies shall be filled by those serving on the Executive Board at the time such vacancy occurs and shall be elected on a majority vote of the remaining directors.

## ARTICLE VI: NOTICES AND USE OF TECHNOLOGY

Section 1. Any notice required to be sent to any member shall be deemed to have been properly sent either by e-mail or by U.S. mail, postage prepaid, when addressed respectively to the last known email or postal address of the member as reflected on the records of the Association at the time of such mailing.

Section 2 Use of Technology

- a. Any notice required to be sent, or any signature, vote, or consent required to be obtained under any provision of these bylaws may be accomplished using electronic means, provided a record is of such notice, vote, consent, or approval is maintained as long as would be required if in nonelectronic form.
- b. In any instance in which consent or approval is required to be obtained by secret ballot, the electronic means shall protect the identity of the voter; otherwise, some other means of voting shall be used.
- c. Any meeting of the Association, its Executive Board, or its committees, including the Annual Membership Meeting, may be held entirely or partially by electronic means, at the discretion of the Executive Board, provided that persons entitled to participate have an opportunity to do so.

## ARTICLE VII: AMENDMENTS

Section 1. These by-laws may be amended by a majority

vote of those full members of the Association who are present in person, by proxy, or such other virtual manner deemed appropriate at the discretion of the Executive Board, provided notice of the proposed amendment, and notice of the meeting have been submitted to all members of the Association at least thirty (30) days in advance.

## ARTICLE VIII: NONDISCRIMINATION

Section 1. This Association will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, military status, or disability.

ADOPTED AND APPROVED by the membership this date of January 27, 2024.

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President - Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association

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ATTEST: Secretary - Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association

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## 2024 TOGA Board of Directors Nominees and Slate of TOGA Board of Directors and Officers

*~Carl Zulick, Nominating Committee Chair*

In November 2023, the TOGA Nominating Committee recommended to the Board of Directors a slate of candidates for the 2024 Board of Directors. Following the ByLaws of the Board, TOGA can have up to 20 Board Members. In 2023, the Board had 14 members after Vice President Mark Besore regrettably resigned due to health concerns. All other Board members remain on the slate for 2024. Three new candidates were identified after a call to all TOGA members and the public. The three nominees were presented to the Board by the Nominating Committee Chair and subsequently unanimously approved. The 2024 slate of the Board of Directors and Officers will be brought to a membership vote at the TOGA Annual Meeting in January. The new Board and Officer must be confirmed by vote from a majority of members attending in person, virtually, or by

mail/email. Below, the slate of candidates is listed and a brief introduction to the new candidates is presented for member review:

**Slate of TOGA Board of Directors and Officers for 2024**

**Officers:**

Sue Borra	President
Carlton McFaden	Vice President
Carl Zulick	Secretary
Brian Ingram	Treasurer
Doug Schaefer	Past President

**Directors:**

Stephanie Antonijuan  
 Lou Castagnola  
 Kent Eanes  
 Ken Hammond  
 Russell Mait  
 Galen Salgado  
 Richard Siciliano  
 David Singletary  
 Terry Lewis, President Emeritus  
 Mike Sanders, President Emeritus  
 Vic Spain, President Emeritus  
 Brian Wood, President Emeritus

**Meet the New TOGA Board Nominees**

The Board is pleased to introduce the following candidates who we believe will bring new skills and expertise, increase diversity on the Board, and enhance our ability to expand our footprint to the Lower Bay and Eastern Shore.

**Stephanie Antonijuan.**

Arts & Heritage MA from Maastricht University, History of Art B.A. from Florida State University, current Youth Programs Manager of the Rappahannock Art League Art Center in Kilmarnock.

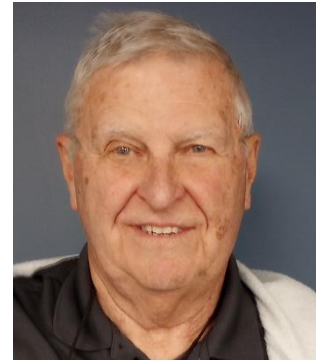


Dedicated marine science enthusiast and impassioned maritime history scholar. New resident of the Northern Neck, but daughter of dedicated TOGA oyster gardener. Lifetime scholar, impromptu sous chef, and aspiring world traveler.

“I am enthusiastic about serving on the board to make an impact on TOGA's mission of raising awareness, promoting education, and driving

conservation initiatives. My commitment is to dive deep in TOGA's educational programs, where community engagement forms the heart of learning. I am passionate about weaving the intricate networks of oyster fisheries and Chesapeake Bay preservation organizations, creating lasting partnerships throughout the region. I'm passionate about learning opportunities, working with youth summer camps or adult lecture series to spread information and fascination for the aquatic world we're fortunate to enjoy.”

**David Singletary.** Structural Engineering degree from Old Dominion University, served in U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, retired teacher, currently business owner in advertising. Served on Board of Directors of Colonial Virginia Council, many jobs in Scouting, and previous Board Member of Newport News Green Foundation.

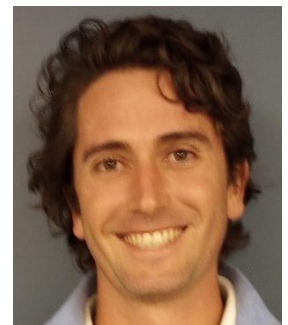


Master Oyster Gardener, James River Rat, JRA, Chesapeake Bay Capt., Certified Peninsula Master Naturalist, Tree Steward, Chesapeake Urban Stormwater Professional. In Scouting, I have been involved in Eagle conservation projects, running events, building Living Shorelines, NRA Instructor in Rifle, Shotgun, RSO. USAA Level II Archery for Scouting events.

“My interests are in conservation, water quality, and youth education. I believe the only real solution for cleaning the Bay waters is oysters. I've put in living shorelines, recycled oyster shell for seven years for the CBF, VCU/OSR on the Piankatank River. I have done numerous education displays on the value of oysters. I've helped build floats and attended a number of TOGA events. I want to continue to further my involvement in the educational mission of TOGA.”

**Galen Salgado.**

“I am a South African Yachtmaster currently living in Deltaville, VA with my wife who I met while sailing around the World. I started growing oysters in



the summer of 2022 and have enjoyed being a part of TOGA, especially the float builds at Camp Kekoka. I look forward to participating in the Master Oyster Gardener Course, as well as expanding my oyster garden.”



**Annual Meeting Featured Speaker:  
Roger Mann to speak on Virginia’s oyster  
productivity over the  
past 25 years**



Dr. Roger Mann is a professor at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science where he served as Director for Research and Advisory Services for nine years. He has also held scientific positions at Woods Hole before

arriving in Virginia in 1984. Dr. Mann oversees VIMS’ Molluscan Ecology Laboratory where he conducts population assessments, physiological and ecological studies of bivalve molluscs and other molluscan species, as well as ecological restoration of oyster reef communities.

Dr. Mann is the Site Director for the Science Center for Marine Fisheries (SCMFIS), an Industry-University Cooperative Research Center of the National Science Foundation, where he uses his expertise along with industry members to develop research projects that provide information to maintain sustainable fisheries.



**Recap: TOGA’s Fall ’23 Float Sale at Camp Kekoka, Kilmarnock, VA**

~Vic Spain, Brian Wood, MOGs, past presidents



Floats ready for pick up at Camp Kekoka’s red barn.

October 14, 2023 was a rainy day at Camp Kekoka, but we had a very successful float sale. Thanks to YMCA Director Ana Mae Morrow, we were able to use the big red building at the camp to get out of the rain part of the time. We sold 141 cages, spat tubes and benders total. We also sold accessories such as spat bags, crab pot line, wire mesh, t-shirts, and hats. Some deliveries were made after the sale, and a few leftovers were sold at Good Luck Cellars, Kilmarnock, on November 11<sup>th</sup>. More than 30 aspiring oyster gardeners were treated to an interesting 90-minute *Basics of Oyster Gardening* course (OYS-101) taught by Master Oyster Gardeners Bob Eadie, Sue Borra, and led by Richard Siciliano, a project that has become a valuable educational opportunity for new TOGA members.

Thanks also to the hard-working high school students at the Hampton High School Maritime Academy and the Hampton Floating Classroom project for building 36 Rough Rider cages, giving our volunteers some needed relief. TOGA donated appropriately to the Hampton City Schools for their contribution. The Maritime Academy has just been trained to build Bottom Cages for Spring 2024.



Students at Hampton High Maritime Academy, and Teacher Connor Dunn (4<sup>th</sup> from left), finishing their first bottom cage

TOGA float orders and sales have grown dramatically in the past three years, from about 130 in 2020, to about 300 in 2022 and 2023. Thanks to the float-building volunteers, buyers who helped build their own floats, and all the members who bought floats and supplies. This fall, volunteers started building in the August heat, continued through the October rain, and finally finished mop-up operations in the November drought.



## Give the Perfect Gift for Oyster-Loving Families and Friends

If you are hunting for that ideal Christmas or birthday present, or just to say you care, please consider giving a membership to TOGA. For only \$25, you get a year of membership, three newsletters, email oyster gardening tips and notifications of importance, free access to the oystergardener.org website, Oysters 101 training, workshops, and events held throughout the year.

We are sure someone you know will want to attend our free-to-members training in 2025 to become a *Master Oyster Gardener* and earn the privilege of having "MOG" after their name. The bragging rights are also free. In addition, you will know you have helped our non-profit's ability to meet our goals of education, conservation of the Bay, and getting more oysters in the water. The larger our membership, the more influence and exposure we can have with State and local governments and in our communities.

So jump online to register a loved-one at <https://oystergardener.org/become-a-member> and make your holiday shopping easy!



## The Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association (TOGA) Fellowship

~ Susan R. Maples, Director of Development  
Virginia Institute of Marine Science

Income from the Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association (TOGA) Fellowship endowment is used for graduate student fellowship support for one or more students enrolled in the School of Marine Science of William & Mary at VIMS. The fellowship may support students researching oysters, [other] shellfish, and Chesapeake Bay ecological restoration. In the VIMS Foundation's last fiscal year (July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023), gifts totaling \$9334.93 were donated to this fellowship. As of June 30, 2023, the endowment had a book value of \$206,201.31 and a market value of \$206,182.25. To contribute to the TOGA Fellowship Endowment, send a check made payable to the VIMS Foundation, with TOGA Fellowship Endowment (3506) in the memo. Mail to: Office of University

Advancement, Gift Administration, PO BOX 1693, Harlan, IA 51593-1993. To make a gift online, visit [www.vims.edu/giving](http://www.vims.edu/giving). Click "Give Now" and type "3506" in the "Search for a Specific Fund" box. Choose Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association (TOGA) Fellowship, complete the form, and submit. Contact Susan Maples, VIMS Director of Development, at 804.684.7846 with any questions or for help making your gift.



## TOGA Middle School Essay Contest Deadline Draws Near

~Terry Lewis, MOG, past president

The Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association Middle School Essay Contest deadline is near: **December 15, 2023**. Students are encouraged to show off their writing skills and win substantial prizes.

After very successful Middle School Writing Contests the past ten years, TOGA is offering prizes of \$500, \$250, and \$100 for first, second and third places respectively for the top essays. A prize of \$200 will also be awarded to the school of the top entry. The theme of the essays is "Consider the Oyster" a wide-open category that must include an essay that has anything to do with oysters.

The competition is open to all Virginia students in grades 6, 7, and 8. Home-schooled students are welcome to enter.

Winners will be announced at the TOGA Membership Party on March 16, 2024 at the Freeshade Community Center in Middlesex County. The three top winners will be published on the TOGA Web site, and may be published in other publications or web sites.

The essays should be written in Microsoft Word format, or PDF, and attached to an e-mail. The submissions can be made between now and the December 15, 2023 deadline. For more information, to view the entry form, and to see last year's winners and their essays, go to: <https://www.oystergardener.org/youth-writing-competition>



## The TOGA Speakers Bureau

~Brian Wood, MOG, past president

Did you know that many TOGA members like to talk about Oysters? Oh yes, we have a group of public speakers, many of whom are Master Oyster Gardeners (MOGs), who are eager and willing to come to your club, group, or community organization and talk about oysters and the Chesapeake Bay. Topics include oyster gardening, the history of oysters in the Bay, the Potomac River oyster wars, and oyster biology.

TOGA is often invited to speak to many diverse groups throughout the Northern Neck, Middle Peninsula, and the Lower Tidewater Area, including Williamsburg.

If you would like a TOGA member to talk at your upcoming event, contact Vic Spain at [vicspain@rocketmail.com](mailto:vicspain@rocketmail.com) or (804) 413-1020 or Doug Schaefer at [subiceguy@hotmail.com](mailto:subiceguy@hotmail.com) or (804) 580-1456.



### Are your Dues due for 2024?

If you received this newsletter in the mail, please check the year next to your name on the address label. If it is 2023 or earlier, then 2024 dues are due for your membership to remain current.



If you believe there is an error, please contact Vic Spain at [vicspain@rocketmail.com](mailto:vicspain@rocketmail.com) or 804-642-6764. Annual membership dues are \$25 (per family) for one calendar year (January through December), not 12 months from the date of your payment.

### TOGA Member Benefits:

- Receive newsletters with the latest oyster gardening information
- Participate in educational events sponsored by TOGA.
- Learn about innovations in oyster gardening techniques

- Benefit from the expertise of hundreds of others interested in growing oysters
- Opportunity to enroll free-of-charge for the live seminar: *OYS-101: Basic Oyster Gardening*

**To become a member, visit the TOGA website:** <https://www.oystergardener.org/become-a-member>, or use the form at the back of this newsletter to update your membership. You may also use the link or the form to update your information. It is important that your address and email address are correct as that is our primary way of communicating with members. Please share this membership form with a friend.



### **Too many oysters? Too many shells? What to do?**

O-Gardeners: If you find that you have grown more oysters than you can consume, or you have run out of float space, consider donating your live oysters back to TOGA so they can re-populate our sanctuary reef in Camp Kekoka. And while you're at it, turn in any spent shells you may have accumulated. Drop off those excessive bivalves (and shells) at one of TOGA's float sales or education outreach events. Or, call for a local pick-up of your over-stock. For details, contact Richard Siciliano: [rjsiciliano@yahoo.com](mailto:rjsiciliano@yahoo.com) or Carl Zulick: [czulick@gmail.com](mailto:czulick@gmail.com)



TOGA members on grill duty at the Alexandria (VA) Police Officers Weekend Oyster Roast, Camp Kekoka, September 9, 2023. (L-R: Doug Schaefer, Richard Siciliano, and Vic Spain): photo by Kent Eanes





**Upcoming: All TOGA Members and Supporters Invited to Appreciation Party  
March 16, 2024**

~Terry Lewis, MOG, Past President

The eleventh annual TOGA Appreciation Party will be held Saturday, March 16, at the Freeshade Community Center, 1544 Regent Road, Syringa, Virginia (near Topping). The party will start at 1:00 and end about 4:00. This year, ALL TOGA members and supporters are invited to attend what previously had been listed as our volunteer appreciation party. Since all TOGA members and supporters help place more oysters in the Bay waters, and help spread the word of the many benefits of oysters to the Bay ecology, the party is now open to all members, supporters, and their guests.

This event will be the day before St. Patrick's Day, so be wearing some green and be ready to answer some quiz questions for fabulous prizes! Whoever wears the most green will also win a great prize.

This will also be the first year that winners of the TOGA Middle School Writing contest will read their winning essays at the party. The winners of the past contests submitted fabulous essays, and their readings were always a highlight of the Annual Membership Meeting. This year their readings will instead be featured at the Appreciation Party.

As in the past 10 years, TOGA will supply plenty of local and delicious unshucked and shucked oysters for your enjoyment. We ask you to bring the fixings for your favorite oyster dish, and you can prepare them for others to share at the party. There are stoves and ovens at the facility. If you don't have a favorite oyster dish, please bring a side dish or desert to share with your TOGA friends. TOGA will also provide soft drinks. If you would like an adult beverage, please bring your own.

We're fortunate to again have Stacey on-site to prepare some of the best fried oysters on the east coast. She'll also make some delicious gluten-free fried oysters, if requested.

We'll have lots to discuss with fellow oyster gardeners in a relaxed atmosphere. Plus, there are some exciting developments in the oyster industry that you might want to share with fellow members.

Mark your calendar now to attend this all you can eat oyster extravaganza. Please RSVP to Terry

Lewis no later than March 1<sup>st</sup>, so appropriate supplies can be acquired. Email [lewistmn@msn.com](mailto:lewistmn@msn.com) or call 804-693-2687.

This is TOGA's way of expressing our appreciation to our many great members and supporters who make this such a successful organization. We look forward to seeing you there for a great time and to help celebrate St. Patrick's Day.



**Recap: Deltaville Maritime Museum Events,  
Deltaville's 2023 Taste of Middlesex, October 21  
and Holly Point Market Day, August 26**

~Carl Zulick, MOG

TOGA held a spat sale and provided information on how to grow your own oysters at the Deltaville Maritime Museum's Holly Point Market on Saturday August 26<sup>th</sup>, from 9 am to noon. Master Oyster Gardeners Richard Siciliano and Kent Eanes led a 2-hour "Oysters 101" training with 22 trainees attending. This popular course provides everything a new oyster gardener needs to know to start an oyster garden and grow their own oysters.

Local spat vendors Oyster Mama Bay-bies and Captain Tom's sold almost 100,000 Triploid and Diploid spat (baby oysters) which when mature will filter about five million gallons of Bay water a day in the summer months.

Displays at the TOGA tent featured equipment such as cages and floats, tumblers, spat bags, and the high-velocity water cages needed in some fast-flowing rivers and shorelines subject to storm waves. Two popular aquariums displayed how oysters clear cloudy water and showed several native critters that inhabit oyster cages. This display containing blue crabs, fish, mud crabs, and shrimp is always a big draw for children.





*The TOGA aquariums entertain kids while Mike Ballato and Vic Chapman provided information to Holly Point Market Day visitors. Photo by Carl Zulick*



*Pat Rabb Zulick serves up a tasting of Seaglass Pinot Grigio while Carlton McFaden talks oysters. Photo by Kent Eanes*

An all-volunteer crew from TOGA consisting of Carlton McFaden, Richard Siciliano, Kent Eanes, Carl Zulick, and Pat Rabb-Zulick worked an informational tent with display, an “Oysters 101” training, and a Seaglass Wine Tasting at the Deltaville Maritime Museum during the museum’s Taste of Middlesex on Saturday October 21. 10 thousand spat were sold at the event by Oyster Mama Bay-bies Judy Ambrose and Justine Kendrick. FYI: 10,000 mature oysters will filter about a half million gallons of Bay water on a summer day.



*Judy Ambrose of Oyster Mama Bay-bies provides spat information and advice. Photo by Kent Eanes*

Fourteen enthusiastic future and current oyster gardeners turned out for the Oysters 101 course, which offered the opportunity to hear the latest permitting requirements and see various cages and devices being used to grow oysters.

The free **Seaglass Wine** tasting station worked its magic and drew hundreds of happy folks to the TOGA display. People sampled six red and white varieties from TOGA’s largest corporate sponsor while hearing from Pat about the virtues of not only each wine, but also putting oysters in the bay!



*The TOGA and Seaglass tents stayed busy with over 300 visits during the event. Photo by Kent Eanes*

**Recap: Deborah Pratt Holds Court at  
Urbanna Oyster Festival Education Day,  
November 2, 2023**  
~Richard Siciliano, MOG

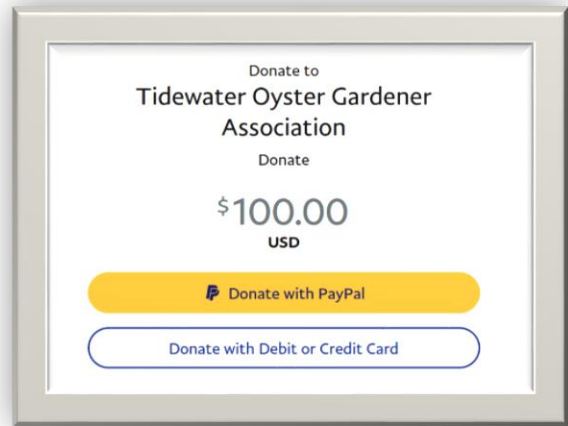


Champion Oyster Shucker Deborah Pratt taught Middlesex County students the fine art of oyster shucking at TOGA's exhibit during this year's edition of the 2023 Oyster Festival Education Day on the Thursday before the annual festival in Urbanna, Virginia. This event was the largest Education Day to date, according to Clark Laster, Urbanna Oyster Festival Marine Legacy Program Coordinator, with 22 exhibit stations serving more than 750 students from the 4th and 7th grades in Middlesex County public school, Chesapeake Academy, Ware Academy, the Aylett Country Day School, and a Homeschool student group from the surrounding areas.

The featured speaker at the event was Deborah Pratt, world champion oyster shucker, who taught youngsters how to shuck oysters at TOGA's oyster gardening exhibit. Also showing the youngsters the contribution that oysters make to the health of the Chesapeake Bay were Master Oyster Gardeners Doug Schaefer, Kent Eanes, Camille Grabb, Mike Ballato, and Richard Siciliano.



**Donate to TOGA before December 31<sup>st</sup>**



Close out the year 2023 by sending a tax-deductible donation to TOGA so our volunteer Master Oyster Gardeners can continue to provide valuable resources to ecology-minded oyster enthusiasts. In the past year, TOGA has supplied more than 300 oyster cages, floats, and other oyster gardening gear at cost to our membership. In addition, TOGA's volunteer Master Oyster Gardeners met with and conducted educational programs to hundreds of elementary, middle, and high school students throughout the Northern Neck and Tidewater region, from Kinsale to Hampton. MOGs have conducted personal consultations with dozens of beginning oyster gardeners, free of charge, including in-person site visits to answer their questions about oyster gardening. TOGA, in its effort to meet the needs of all oyster gardeners – from novice to expert – offers a 90-minute course for oyster gardeners entitled *OYS-101: Basic Oyster Gardening* to interested clubs and associations throughout the year, free-of-charge to current TOGA members.

TOGA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, and all donations are tax deductible. All proceeds from TOGA's float sales go towards TOGA/VIMS Endowed Fellowships that support graduate students who are researching shellfish and Chesapeake Bay ecological restoration at William & Mary's School of Marine Science at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS). To donate to TOGA so the organization can fulfill its mission, we urge you to go to the TOGA website and make your pledge before December 31, 2023:  
[https://www.paypal.com/donate/?cmd=\\_s-xclick&hosted\\_button\\_id=7CMYLUAVKLRP2&source=url](https://www.paypal.com/donate/?cmd=_s-xclick&hosted_button_id=7CMYLUAVKLRP2&source=url)

## Volunteer to be a TOGA Oyster Float and Cage Builder

~Vic Spain, MOG

This past year, TOGA members and volunteers, including students and teachers from Hampton High School Maritime Academy and the Hampton Floating Classroom project, built over 300 floats/cages for sale to fellow oyster gardeners, by far the most ever for the organization. Many thanks to the hard-working TOGA volunteers and to all the float builders who worked tirelessly to accomplish this feat. As a result, the TOGA/VIMS Fellowship Endowment and other important projects are supported as never before, and thousands of bivalves can have homes in oyster gardens throughout the Tidewater and Northern Neck of Virginia.

If you are interested in joining the float-building team, contact: [vicspain@rocketmail.com](mailto:vicspain@rocketmail.com)



Above: Brian Ingram guides students in the cage building  
Photo by Kent Eanes



### Newsletter News: Call for Articles and Photos



The TOGA Newsletter is published three times a year and is mailed to all TOGA members. Full-color copies of this edition and past newsletters are available on the website at <https://www.oystergardener.org/newsletters-1>

The deadline for articles for the Spring '24 newsletter is March 1, 2024. TOGA members who wish to submit articles may do so by the deadline date. Articles will be printed as space allows. Email your article to Vic Spain at [vicspain@rocketmail.com](mailto:vicspain@rocketmail.com), or Richard Siciliano at [rjsiciliano@yahoo.com](mailto:rjsiciliano@yahoo.com)

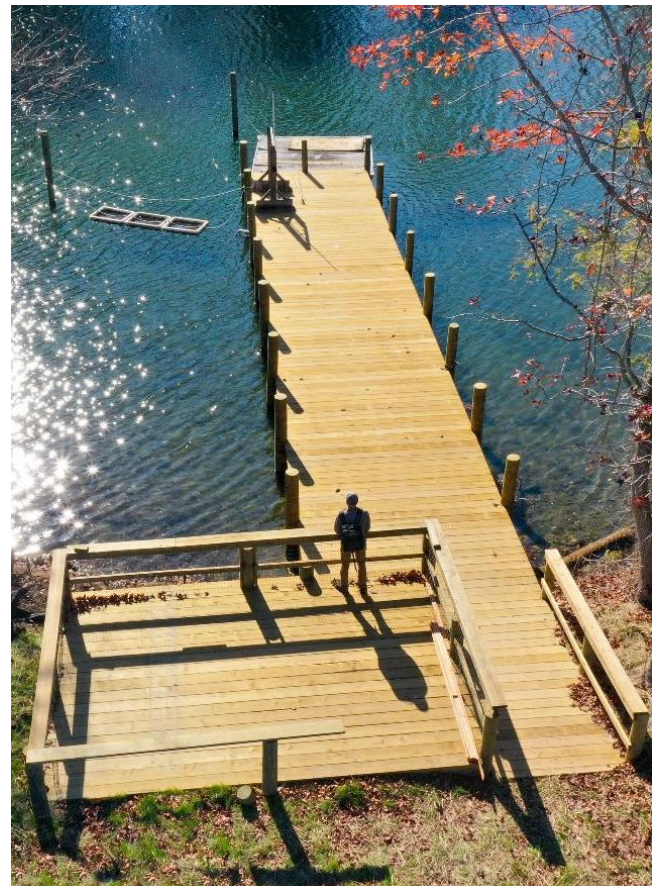
**Thanks go** to our past and present members of our Board of Directors, the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS), our partners including Seaglass Wines, and all TOGA members who made this newsletter possible.



Vic Spain looks on as students from the Hampton Floating Classroom project build one of the 30+ Rough Rider oyster cages.  
Photo by Kent Eanes



*With guidance from Master Oyster Gardeners Brian Ingram, Vic Spain (2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> from left), and Kent Eanes (behind the camera), the oyster cage-building team from the Hampton Floating Classroom project shows off Rough Rider oyster cages*



*Before and After: TOGA's Madison Boyd Memorial Pier Project, Camp Kekoka, Kilmarnock, Virginia.  
A formal dedication will be announced for the spring of 2024.  
Photos by Kent Eanes*

## TOGA Winter 2023-24 Events

(as of December 1, 2023)

For an up-to-date calendar: <https://www.oystergardener.org/schedule/>

### TOGA Opportunities and Events of 2023, and early 2024

#### TOGA Board of Directors Meeting

- **December 12, 2023:** 10:00 – 11:30 AM, Virginia Institute of Marine Science, Davis Hall Room 101, 1370 Greate Rd, Gloucester Point, VA 23062
- **December 15, 2023: Middle School Writing Contest Essays due.** Event Coordinator: Terry Lewis, [lewistmn@msm.com](mailto:lewistmn@msm.com). Go to the TOGA Website for details: <https://www.oystergardener.org/youth-writing-competition>
- **TOGA Annual Membership Meeting Live and Virtual (free-to-all oyster lovers)**
  - **Where:** Virginia Institute on Marine Science (VIMS), Waterman's Hall, 1370 Greate Rd, Gloucester Point, VA 23062
  - **When:** Saturday, January 27, 2024, from 1 to 4 PM.
  - **More details** are posted on the TOGA website in December 2023.
  - **Pre-Register** online to select how you would like to attend the annual meeting: in-person or virtual (See page 1 of this newsletter)



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# TOGA Membership Form

P.O. Box 2463, Gloucester, VA 23061

**We prefer that you join and pay online:** <https://www.oystergardener.org/become-a-member>

If joining online, your payment will be processed via PayPal.  
(A PayPal account is not required; a credit card may be used instead)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Please check one:  New Member  Renewal

Annual Dues (Check one):  \$25 (1 yr.)  \$50 (2 yrs.)  \$75 (3 yrs.)

Check here if you use this form only to update your information (and not to pay dues)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

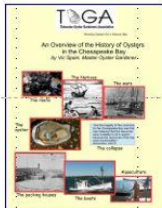
City, State, and Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email (please print clearly) \_\_\_\_\_

Body of water where oysters will be grown: \_\_\_\_\_

Growing site (street address) where oysters will be grown: \_\_\_\_\_

## Be a Proud TOGA Volunteer



## Sign up to Volunteer

Please fill out the TOGA volunteer form at:  
<https://www.oystergardener.org/volunteer>

Tell us what you enjoy doing so we can let you know of volunteer opportunities.

PO Box 2463  
Gloucester, VA 23061

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*season's greetings*



*Growing oysters for a cleaner Bay*