



*Growing oysters for a cleaner Bay.....[www.oystergardener.org](http://www.oystergardener.org)*

**WINTER**

**NEWSLETTER**

**2016**

## **TOGA Annual Meeting Set for Saturday, January 14, 2017**

Mark your calendars and be sure to attend the TOGA Annual Membership Meeting to be held Saturday, January 14, at the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences Watermen's Hall Auditorium. Registration will begin at 1:30 and the meeting will kick off at 2:00 p.m.

During the business portion of the agenda, Treasurer Charles Yarbrough will review TOGA's finances and present a top level budget for 2017. President Mike Sanders will briefly review 2016 accomplishments and present plans for next year. Mike will also conduct the election of officers for 2016. The Board has recommended the following slate:

<b>President:</b>	Terry Lewis
<b>Vice President:</b>	Jennifer Palazzo
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Charles Yarbrough
<b>Secretary:</b>	Mike Sanders*
<b>At-Large Board Members:</b>	Robert Morgan, Ben Smith, Trey Sowers, Vic Spain
<b>Past President:</b>	Brian Wood* (not elected)
<b>President Emeritus:</b>	Jackie Partin (not elected)
<b>VIMS Liaison:</b>	Karen Hudson (not elected)

\*Mike Sanders has graciously volunteered to be Secretary, so Brian Wood would continue to serve as Past President.

Additional candidates may be nominated by any TOGA member.

Following the business meeting, we will be honored to hear Dave Miller, Director/Producer, and Joni Carter, Co-Producer, give a glimpse of their wonderful new movie entitled Journey on the Chesapeake Bay. This movie traces the history, culture and cuisine of the Bay. It has already been shown on Public Broadcasting Stations after debuting at a few select community events. Dave and Joni will show about the first 15 minutes of the movie, which centers primarily on the history of the Bay and then take questions from the audience.

TOGA's endowment recipient, this year from France, Jennifer Beckensteiner, will follow with a brief introduction and short discussion about her studies. See more about Jennifer in a story below.

The TOGA Middle School Writing Awards will round out the program with the recipients reading their winning essays. This has been a highlight for us at the past two Annual Meetings, and with the substantial increase in interest, this year will be no disappointment. Please plan to attend to give your support to these talented young writers and naturalists.

After the meeting adjourns, we'll have time for some excellent food and camaraderie. Please bring a dish to share. Various oyster dishes are most welcome, but finger foods and desserts are also needed. Should you desire to bring something for the potluck, please email Brenda Sanders (bksanders54@gmail.com) and let her know what you will be bringing, so she can ensure we don't have too much duplication.

On behalf of the TOGA Board, we very much look forward to seeing you and hope you'll join us at this special meeting.

## **Update on the TOGA/VIMS Fellowship Endowment (Honoring Jackie Partin and Mike Osterling)**

The TOGA endowment funds for June 30, 2016, were book valued at \$112,212 and the market value was \$120,881. Every gift of support, be it through donations from the float building efforts or individual gifts from TOGA members toward the TOGA Fellowship, makes a huge difference for the students who benefit from it. Thank you, from all of us, to all of you, for making the endowment a reality and for continuing its growth for future students. All charitable gifts to the TOGA Endowment held in the VIMS Foundation (a 501c3 organization) are tax deductible. The TOGA Endowment supports graduate students of the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, researching oysters and shellfish and more broadly the ecological restoration of the Chesapeake Bay, which ultimately impacts shellfish. To learn more about VIMS, please check out our website [www.VIMS.edu](http://www.VIMS.edu), or call Jennifer Dillon at 804-684-7226.

--Jennifer Dillon, VIMS Associate Director of Development

*Note- If you would like to donate to the Endowment on-line, please go to [www.oystergardener.org](http://www.oystergardener.org) and click on TOGA/VIMS Endowment at the bottom of the home page. To donate by mail, please make checks out to "VIMS Foundation," noting "TOGA Fellowship Endowment (3506)" in the memo section, and mail to Virginia Institute of Marine Science Foundation, c/o The College of William and Mary, P.O. Box 1693, Williamsburg, VA 23187-8779. The TOGA Board wishes to express its gratitude to all who have supported this effort.*

-- Vic Spain, MOG

## **From the Current TOGA/VIMS Endowment Recipient**

Greetings! My name is **Jennifer Beckensteiner**. I am coming from France, and I am currently starting my third year at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science as a PhD student. I am working with David Kaplan and Andrew Scheld from the Fisheries Science Department on the determination of the success or failure of marine spatial management and the effectiveness of property rights for fisheries management.

The overarching goal that spans my academic, research, and career pursuits is to better understand how people impact marine environments and how we can mitigate negative impacts. This long standing interest in marine resource management is central to the two vocational degrees I have received in France, as well as my ongoing research at VIMS. The first master's degree that I received was from the University of Montpellier II (Montpellier, France) in the field of practical ecology and biodiversity management. I then pursued a second MS in fisheries science in the grande école Agrocampus Ouest (Rennes, France). This combination of degrees has given me cross-disciplinary skills with my overall research profile being situated at the research / management interface. My current doctoral work requires integrating these cross-disciplinary skills to elucidate the effectiveness and conservation value (if any) of spatial property rights for fisheries management. Specifically, my research involves identifying potential challenges or inadequacies related with Territorial Use Rights for Fisheries for the effective management of benthic resources.

Current eastern oyster fishery production in Virginia is a fraction of what it was a century ago due to overfishing, habitat destruction, disease, and pollution. Exclusive access rights such as leased areas are a tool used frequently in management of shellfish beds that has been considered successful at increasing oyster yields. However a large number of these oyster-leased areas in Virginia waters are thought to be under-used or under-productive, and it is not clear why. By developing an understanding of spatial and temporal trends in private oyster lease use and productivity in the lower Chesapeake Bay, drivers and barriers behind these trends will be uncovered through my research in order to enhance lease rights' efficacy for management of the eastern oyster fishery. A model that includes potential drivers such as environmental parameters, time series of catch, lease area and turnover, oyster seed and hatchery costs, and regional socio-economic time series will predict how productive a particular leased ground could be. It will also provide a metric to compare actual production against and will be valuable to oyster managers and growers trying to understand and visualize bay oyster production. The information generated through this research will clarify current trends in leased area use, as well as determine what factors limit current and future industry growth and productive use of leased grounds.

## **Middle School Students Encouraged to Write an Essay to Win Fabulous Prizes**

The December 15th deadline for the third annual TOGA Middle School Essay contest is fast approaching, so please encourage any aspiring young students to get their pens out and send in an entry!

After very successful Middle School Writing Contests the past two years, TOGA is again offering three prizes of \$150, \$100, and \$50 for first, second and third places respectively for the top essays. The theme of the essays is "Consider the Oyster"--a wide open category that must include an essay based on oysters. The competition is open to all Virginia students in grades 6, 7 and 8. Home-schooled students are welcome to enter.

Prizes will also include gear from outdoor sports businesses and Supporting Members of TOGA. Winners will be announced and awards presented at the TOGA annual membership meeting at the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences on January 14, 2017. The winners' parents, a mentor, or a teacher may be guests of TOGA for the presentation event. The winning entries will be read by the students at the awards program during the Annual Meeting.

The three top winners will be published on the TOGA website and may be published in other publications or websites, including the Virginia Outdoor Writers Association website.

The article should be written in WORD format and attached to an e-mail. The submissions can be made between now and the December 15, 2016, deadline. For more information go to [www.oystergardener.org](http://www.oystergardener.org).

## **People's Community Bank Agrees to Co - Sponsor Middle School Writing Contest**

Peoples Community Bank (PCB) of the Northern Neck and Fredericksburg of Virginia has agreed to provide \$300 for prize money for the TOGA Middle School Writing Contest, plus \$100 for literature and banners to promote the contest.

"This promises to be a great partnership," said Terry Lewis, TOGA Writing Contest Chair. "We certainly welcome PCB's assistance and very much appreciate their community involvement," he said.

Peoples Community Bank was founded over a century ago in 1913. Five locations offer service to customers along the Route 3 corridor from Warsaw to Fredericksburg. "Our customer's success is our priority as we focus on integrity, personal service, and the financial well-being of our clientele," said Jennifer Dixon, PCB Branch Manager. "We are committed to our customers, shareholders, and the communities we serve; and because our employees live, work, and volunteer in these areas, Peoples Community Bank is truly that... a Local Community Bank," she said.

With this new partnership, TOGA hopes to continue to improve and increase participation in this very popular contest, which directly helps teach students about the importance of oysters in the Bay's ecology.

--Terry Lewis, MOG

## **Teaching Environmental Stewardship**

Many of TOGA's Outreach events receive considerable publicity and attention, but many of our efforts with school children are largely unheralded. Teaching environmental stewardship to the next generation is a very important component of TOGA's mission, yet this work does not always get the recognition it deserves. Small teams of volunteers who have developed relationships and rapport with educators work fairly independently from the larger TOGA organization to bring our message to the kids. The exception that proves the rule is our annual middle school essay contest which is attracting considerable media coverage. Other efforts, many of which have been going on for years, are "below the radar." The following paragraphs are intended to highlight some of these programs. It is nowhere near a complete list, but illustrates a variety of different activities with the hope that more TOGA members may identify opportunities and take the initiative to build new programs.

**Kilmarnock Boys and Girls Club**- Every Friday afternoon during the school year, Madison Boyd, Nick Ferriter and Klaus Boese mentor an Oyster Club at Camp Kekoka, where the kids tend to their own oyster garden.

**Belle Isle State Park**-Working with park rangers, a TOGA team led by Brian Wood conducts hands-on tonging simulations, storyboard talks and oyster anatomy lessons for multiple annual field trips from various local county school systems.

**Chesapeake Bay Day**-Bob Morgan and friends support an annual all-day program at Mathews Middle School where sixth graders rotate through different stations in small groups, learning about their unique heritage. TOGA's station includes critter-filled aquariums illustrating how oysters filter the Bay and provide marine habitat.

**Earth Day**-Fort A.P. Hill hosts an annual Earth Day field trip experience for over 800 school children. Mike Sanders organizes TOGA's participation replete with outreach tent, aquariums, storyboards and oyster grow-out equipment.

**Elkton Field Trip**-TOGA's mission of helping to educate young people about oysters doesn't stop at the water's edge, but is being felt throughout the Commonwealth and beyond. This spring students, teachers and chaperones from Elkton, VA spent several days at a camp on the Piankatank River. Their studies led the "Bay Bound" class to an increased awareness of what impacts agricultural practices in the "Breadbasket of Virginia" can have on the Bay and its ecosystem. After an outstanding tour provided by Mike Congrove and staff at the Oyster Seed Holding Company, the students spent the rest of the afternoon at TOGA Vice President Terry Lewis's residence, learning about blue crabs, pulling a few pots, and bringing in some oysters from the Lewis oyster garden. A few oysters were shucked and eaten right on the beach, and others were taken for an oyster roast that evening at camp.

**Richmond County Middle School**-This fall Jennifer Palazzo explained the Lifecycle of an Oyster in a presentation to 105 Richmond County Middle School Students. She filled two aquariums with sea water and about a dozen live oysters (and even some sea squirts and mussels!) to show their filtering capabilities. The bulk of the presentation was in a question and answer format. Many of the students had first-hand

experience via friends or family members who have exposed them to oyster gardening. The students were enthusiastic and participation was fantastic. They were encouraged to participate in TOGA's essay program. Interested and informed youth are the future of TOGA!

**St. Mary Star of the Sea School**-Sister Mary John, Principal at St. Mary Star of the Sea School in Hampton, found out about TOGA because of the 2015 TOGA-sponsored writing contest which some of her students entered. The teachers and students needed a little help managing the oysters they were gardening for donation to the Chesapeake Bay Foundation for restoration. They had a new dock with rails for safety, but that made it hard to recover their floats for cleaning and harvesting. So Terry Lewis and Vic Spain made some flip floats and a light-weight davit so they could safely get the floats onto the dock. They also enjoyed talking with the students who were excited to be helping restore the Bay oysters.

**Longwood University's Camp for Environmental Exploration**-This summer Laura Todd organized a TOGA educational oyster aquarium display for elementary school campers from Westmoreland County. That exercise also served as a "train the trainer" session for Longwood University students who observed with the intention of including the material in future camp sessions they hope to conduct next year with continued TOGA assistance.

## **Camp Kekoka Oyster Reef Project, We have a Reef – The Project Continues**

At the time of the previous update on the Camp Kekoka oyster reef project, the shells to be seeded with oyster larvae had been bagged, washed and assembled on the dock in Pittman's Cove. They were ready to be seeded with larvae. We had bagged about 150 bushels of shell into 225 bags. Each bag was about 2/3 of a bushel and held roughly 335 shells.

TOGA member Dudley Biddlecomb recommended a method he successfully uses to set spat on shell. It involves placing the bagged shell in silos--circular wire cages lined with filter cloth that are set directly in the water. This method allows water flow, but prevents the larvae from escaping. It contrasts with commercial operations that place the shell in tanks on land and then circulate water through the tanks. TOGA did not have the space or the funds to duplicate that method.

Dudley loaned the reef project three of his silos. Volunteers increased two in height to allow for the greater water depth at Pittman's Cove. With the help of TOGA volunteers, the two silos were successfully placed in the cove on August 25th, only to discover that when filled with about 100 bags each, the uppermost bags would be out of the water at low tide, killing any set larvae. Thus, the third silo was hastily made ready with filter cloth and ten bags each from silos one and two transferred into it. An additional 25 bags were placed on the existing reef shell base. These were to serve as a control to determine whether any natural strike was occurring in the cove at the time the silos were seeded.



In the late afternoon of August 26, Karen Hudson of VIMS released 3 million wild diploid larvae into the silos (see photo on left). A week later a bag was pulled from a silo and examined for evidence of strike. Using a magnifying glass, Karen was able to see some spat on shell, but recommended waiting another ten days to re-examine the bags and then determine the date to lift the bags out of the silos. At that time, a sample count of the strike would be made and the spat on shell distributed over the shell base of the reef.

The counting of the strike, lifting of the bags from the silos,

and distributing the shells over the reef occurred on Friday and Monday, October 7th and 10. In silos one and two, two bags were sampled from three levels of the silo: top, middle, and bottom. From silo three (containing only 20 bags), bags were sampled only from the two levels. Fifteen shells were taken at random from each bag and counted for strike, i.e. a total of 240 shells. The result of the sampling was that we had a setting efficiency ratio of 3.6 % or roughly 110,000 spat on shell. Compared to a “good” commercial setting efficiency ratio of 12% our ratio is low. However, our cages were not sealed on the bottom and many of the shells that were sampled showed multiple scars. That was an indicator that predators, most likely mud crabs, were having a feast on our spat. In contrast, the bags that had been placed on our reef base showed no evidence of strike, indicating that there were no wild larvae present and, also, that none our larvae had escaped from the silos.

Apart from the bags of shell that went into the silos and onto the reef base, in early July we had hung a bag from the side of the dock in Pittman’s Cove. When we examined it in September, we were pleasantly surprised to note that we had a good number of healthy strike. That is a strong indicator that in future seasons the reef will attract significant wild strike and that we can expect a healthy growth of our reef.

In October, while we were busy with the working on the establishment of the reef, through contacts made by Dave Turney, we had the good fortune of receiving two significant donations, which will be of great help in the ongoing project of expanding the reef over the four acres of bottom leased in Pittman’s Cove. Jack Blaine donated a floating dock. It will be essential for moving and distributing oyster shell going forward. Up to now we have had the use of a dock on loan to us from Ben Smith. He had originally wanted it returned by July, but graciously consented to let us use it for the remainder of the season. Without Ben’s dock, our progress could not have been accomplished. Additionally, Curt Bluefield donated a small barge to us. This gives us our own boat and we will no longer have to borrow the skiff belonging to Camp Kekoka. They were most generous in making it available to us for the past two years. The floating dock and barge were located up in the Western Corrotoman. Madison Boyd and John McConnico towed them down to Carters Creek where they handed them off to Ken Hammond and his son, who had boated down from Reedville. The tow from Carters Creek, down the Rappahannock and through the Bay into Indian Creek and Pittman’s Cove turned out to be more than they bargained for. Increasing winds and oncoming seas turned a difficult tow into an ordeal. Our thanks to Ken and his son for the extraordinary effort they made. Finally, Albert Pollard donated a silo float to TOGA. This is a very special structure designed to hold ten silos that are about two feet in diameter and four feet high. They can be raised and lowered via a hoist on the float. Going forward we will be able to use the float for our efforts to set spat on shell. TOGA is extremely thankful for these generous and very useful donations.

In conclusion, we have established the beginnings of an oyster reef that will provide a living lesson of oyster aquaculture in the Chesapeake Bay area to the members of the Oyster Club members of the Boys and Girls Club of the Northern Neck. We have an initial success, but much needs to be done to further expand the reef to the full four acres of our bottom lease. In particular, we need to find additional large quantities of shell, and a small outboard motor to power our newly acquired barge would be nice. Anyone who has information on where to obtain shell or an outboard, or would like to volunteer, should contact Madison Boyd, the project coordinator. He can be reached by email at [triteceng2@live.com](mailto:triteceng2@live.com) , or by phone at 1 (703) 946 4945.

--Klaus Boese, MOG



Our newsletter was paid for by funds generated from the sale of Chesapeake Bay license plates. These funds also help pay for the Spring Fairs and the MOG course.  
See <http://dmv.virginia.gov/exec/vehicle/splates/info.asp?idnm=CB>



## Bio-Reefs Are Growing Oysters in a Big Way



Several years ago, when I moved to my home on the Chesapeake Bay in Mathews County, I knew that I wanted to do something about the shoreline, which was eroding in a dramatic way. A ledge of soil and sea grass hung over the water, and each new tide and storm, it seemed, took more of the soil with it. Because the water is fairly shallow near the pier, low tides and winds create a high-energy impact on the shoreline. Storm tides wash more into the grass but then pull soil out as they recede.

At the same time, I noticed that little oysters were growing here and there on some old chunks of concrete that had been put along the shore near my pier. After researching the various materials and theories regarding erosion control, it was clear to me that a living shoreline of sorts was the way to go. One weekend, I happened to hear about an “oyster fair” being sponsored by the Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association (TOGA) on Gwynn’s Island. Curious, I attended, and saw several presentations that really caught my interest. I purchased two floats with some baby oysters and made plans to be an oyster gardener. And I also saw a display by Ready

Reef, a company that builds concrete pyramids into which oyster shells are imbedded. The shells provide an optimum surface for “strikes” of oyster spat. I talked with Chris Davis, who is a principal in the company, and asked if he would come look at my shoreline. I was certain that the artificial reef could be a successful approach to controlling erosion along my shoreline, with the major additional benefit of growing oysters! That was almost three years ago (correction- installed Nov. 2014). Today, I am an enthusiastic member of TOGA, I have thousands of wild baby oysters growing on approximately 150 feet of concrete reef structures along my shoreline, with an opening for kayak and canoe access. The eroding ledge is filling in with sand, soil and sea grass. Ready Reef handled the permit process and monitors the results of the reef as it evolves. I envision the day when the oysters grow into a continuous reef habitat for crabs, shrimp, minnows and other sea creatures, while providing the filtering impact for the Bay that is so critical for cleaner water. In addition, at a recent TOGA event, I also bought two bottom cages, along with hundreds of seed oysters, both diploid and triploid, to grow in the years to come. I still have about 150 oysters from my first visit to the oyster fair (about 200 of them have been eaten!) and they are happily getting to be 7 and 8 inches long in the bottom cages.

People have long since destroyed the massive oyster reefs and pristine Bay waters of past centuries. But I can see progress being made with living shoreline policies administered by the Virginia Marine Resources Commission and through new technologies like man-made oyster reefs that give private waterfront owners better tools to stop erosion and promote healthy populations of the amazing delicious oyster!

-- Chris Bridge

*Your best source of TOGA information is at*

[www.oystergardener.org](http://www.oystergardener.org)

## TOGA on Display

When Terry Lewis visited Jonathon Putt at the **Mathews County Visitor and Information Center** (<https://visitmathews.com/mathews-visitor-center/>), they agreed that TOGA should have an Oyster Gardening Display there. So Vic Spain constructed it and here it is! Please stop by the visitor center and take a look. If you would like a PDF copy of the posters with the educational content, go to <http://www.oystergardener.org/toga-static-display>. The 12 posters are updated versions of those we use at our community events, and include 3 posters each on TOGA, How to Grow Oysters, Predators and Designs and Devices. The content is printed directly on 1/4 inch thick PVC board. The swing-panel arrangement allows for a great deal of content in a limited space.

-- Vic Spain, MOG



## Stratford Hall 2016

The weather was great for both days (Sept. 17 and 18) of this year's Stratford Hall Wine and Oyster Festival. While attendance did not surpass previous years, there were still over 4,000 patrons over both days! Everyone's spirits were high as they strolled through the different booths of arts and crafts, oysters, wine, spirits, and a plethora of other food and drinks. There was **certainly** something for the entire family especially the youngest patrons who were thrilled to ride in handmade train cars pulled behind a lawn tractor. This year vendors recorded record sales with two vendors totaling a combination of 5,300 oysters, 65 pounds of shrimp, 240 pounds of crab meat, and 800 clams!

On behalf of Brian Wood, Laura Todd, and all of TOGA, we would like to extend a special thank you to the many volunteers. Your outstanding support and commitment truly

-- Barrett Nicks (Longwood University)



keeps the festival a great time for everyone!

## Wine & Oyster Tasting Event October 2016



On October 29, 2016, the Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association (TOGA) and the Good Luck Cellars Winery teamed up to sponsor their first Wine & Oyster Tasting event at the beautiful winery location on 1025 Good Luck Road, Kilmarnock, Virginia. It was a fantastic fall day, bright sunshine and cool breezes that allowed many attendees to thoroughly enjoy all the different choices of raw and cooked bivalves from the four local growers (Great Wicomico Oyster Company, Morattico Creek Oysters, Rappahannock River Oyster Company and Ward Oyster Company). The other-than-oyster festivity fare choices were gourmet chicken salad

sandwiches, BBQ sandwiches, chicken noodle soup and corn chowder from the Car Wash Café of Kilmarnock.



Along with the many tummy temptations to sample, people could visit the Good Luck wine tasting bar and lounge. There they found knowledgeable and friendly servers keeping pace with the many happy partakers of the vineyard's best wines. With the large fireplace ablaze and comfortable seating areas near the lengthy bar, much laughter and good cheer filled the expansive room.

Once desired foodstuff and beverages were gathered, folks could relish their yummy repast on the cozy veranda overlooking the event or at the many tables set up just for that purpose. Being able to speak with the four diverse oyster growers about their products was also a fun part of the day's experience. When so much pride and passion goes into the items, it is a pleasure to share the many stories behind the work. Those who wished to learn even more about the many improvements of the Bay's bivalves stopped by the TOGA tent to speak with the helpful MOGs (Master Oyster Gardeners). Some attendees even got the detailed instructions and best gear (Taylor and flip floats) to assist their own waterfront home gardening efforts.

TOGA also sponsored entertaining raffles during the afternoon with a donated "downunder" oyster cage, many TOGA hats and shirts, special handmade oyster shucking blocks with knives, artsy beach glass mobile and jewelry, and some wine-related goodies.

All in all, this first ever Wine & Oyster Tasting at this venue was a great occasion for the winery, the TOGA folks and the growers. Matter of fact, it was so good, that we are looking forward to a repeat in the spring of 2017. Hope to see you there!  
-- Ann Wood

## 2016 Fall Oyster Float Workshop

The Oyster Float Workshop was on the beautiful first Saturday of October at the VIMS Hatchery. TOGA sold pre-built floats and supplies, answered questions and provided educational material. In addition, vendors selling accessories and oyster spat (seed oysters) were in attendance and over 100,000 spat were distributed. TOGA built and sold over 60 floats and cages. As a result of this workshop, TOGA has sent a check for \$2,100 of proceeds to the TOGA/VIMS Endowment from the sale of pre-built floats.



For oyster gardeners wishing to build their own floats, learn to build floats, or just help TOGA prepare for the Workshop, they were invited to pre-build workdays at Charles Yarbrough's house in Weems, VA. The education included how to build Taylor Floats, Flip Floats, Downunders and Bottom Cages. After a few hours learning and working, a hearty pot luck lunch was enjoyed by all. About 15 folks joined our core TOGA team of float builders over the workdays; several new friendships were made.

### *Preparation for Float Workshop*

Please come out and join us for next year's Oyster Float Workshop on the first Saturday of October at the VIMS Hatchery. We welcome everyone who wants to participate in the pre-build workdays.

--Charles Yarbrough, MOG

## **TOGA Dues for 2017**

TOGA membership dues of \$15 per family are due in January 2017. Dues are per calendar year regardless of when during the year you actually pay. Members may pay up to 3 years ahead if they wish. Non-profit organizations depend upon their membership to sustain the efforts of the group. Volunteers give of their time and others provide resources as they best can. In many ways the standard membership fee is a simple and easily understood base for the association to build upon.

TOGA truly appreciates that in today's world every dollar counts and the dues are used in the most efficient manner to get as much out of each contribution. All members are more than welcome to provide their input when visiting the TOGA website or our monthly board meetings.

Some have paid their dues early, or may be VIPs not owing dues, but if the address label on this newsletter shows the year 2016 or earlier, your 2017 dues are due in January 2017. While it's on your mind, please fill out the form on the following page and mail it in soon. Or go to <http://www.oystergardener.org/#!/join-toga/clrtd> and update your membership online. For questions about your membership, please contact Vic Spain at [vicspain@rocketmail.com](mailto:vicspain@rocketmail.com) or 804 642-6764. -- Vic Spain, MOG

### **Please Share this TOGA Membership Form**

You are invited to become a member of the Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association, a group of people interested in growing oysters for fun, for delicious food, and to help restore the health of the Chesapeake Bay. You may also use this to renew your membership.

Members...

- 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

Membership is \$15.00 for one calendar year, individual or family. This ensures that you will receive regular newsletters and notice of upcoming events.

### **NOTES**

- Annual membership has increased to \$15 for 2015 and beyond, as approved by the membership.
- The number by your name on this newsletter address block indicates the latest year for which your dues have been paid.

Please fill out membership form below and send to TOGA, PO Box 2463, Gloucester, VA 23061 with a check for \$15 membership dues, payable to TOGA. If you want, you can make an additional donation to support TOGA's educational activities. You can include it in the same check.

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TOGA Membership

Check  New member or  Renewal  Additional Donation

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, and Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Body of water where oysters will be grown

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***Happy Holidays from all of us at TOGA***