



Growing oysters for a cleaner Bay

Winter 2017

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

TOGA Annual Meeting Set for Saturday, January 13, 2018

Mark your calendars and be sure to attend the TOGA Annual Membership Meeting to be held Saturday, January 13, 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 2018. President Terry Lewis will briefly review 2017 accomplishments and present plans for next year. Mike Sanders will conduct the election of officers for 2018. The Board has recommended the following slate:

President: Terry Lewis

Vice President: Brian Wood

Treasurer: Charles Yarbrough

Secretary: Jennifer Palazzo

At-Large Board Members: Robert Morgan, Louis Castagnola, Brian Ingram, Terry Halkyard,

Past President: Mike Sanders (not elected)

President Emeritus: Jackie Partin (not elected)

President Emeritus/Engineer: Vic Spain (not elected)

VIMS Liaison: Karen Hudson (not elected)

Note- Trey Sowers has graciously volunteered to support TOGA as an expert adviser. Trey is a member of the 2017 TOGA Board and the

owner/operator of Chapel Creek Oyster Company.

Additional candidates may be nominated by any TOGA member.

TOGA By-Laws Proposed Amendment- Vote Conducted by the TOGA President

In accordance with the TOGA By-Laws, this proposed amendment is included in the newsletter as required for written notification at least 30 days in advance of the Annual Membership Meeting, scheduled for January 13, 2018.

The Board is proposing to amend Article 111: Organization, Election and Duties, Section 4. The current Section 4 says "The Executive Board shall consist of the elected officers of the Association, the Past President of the Association, the President Emeritus, and four members-at-large."

The new Section 4 will say "The Executive Board shall consist of the elected officers of the Association, the Past President of the Association, the President Emeritus, the President Emeritus/Engineer, and four members-at-large. All of these positions will have full voting privileges."

The Board is proposing to add the President Emeritus/Engineer position to honor the outstanding dedication and service of Vic Spain. Vic has been a long time member of

TOGA, has served as President, and is very well known to almost all TOGA members. He has been responsible for the TOGA website as well as the TOGA newsletter for many years. He has tirelessly worked at most of the TOGA workshops and special projects. He recently completed *An Overview of the History of Oysters in the Chesapeake Bay*, which will be used in museums, as well as visitor centers. You can download a copy at <http://www.oystergardener.org/toga-static-display>.

If there is a job to be done, Vic is there to help complete it. TOGA would be a much smaller organization in most ways if it weren't for Vic Spain. To recognize his superior work and dedication, the Board proposes that he be named the President Emeritus/Engineer.

Terry Lewis, President

The keynote speaker for the educational program will be Karen Hudson, VIMS Shellfish Specialist and TOGA Liaison. She will give an



overview of the status of Virginia's aquaculture industry – trends on growth, challenges facing the industry and research in support of

sustainable growth. It's always an interesting and enjoyable learning experience when Karen teaches.

TOGA's current endowment recipient, Joey Matt, will follow with a brief introduction and short discussion about his studies. Joey grew up learning about oysters in a local TOGA family, and we are looking forward to learning more about him and his studies. See his introduction below.

The TOGA Middle School Writing Contest awards will round out the program with the recipients reading their winning essays. This

has been a highlight for us at the past three 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.



Last year's winners with Jackie Partin

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

Introducing Joey Matt, TOGA/VIMS Endowment Recipient 2017

Hello, TOGA members! I'm Joey Matt. Thank you for your support through the TOGA



Fellowship Fund. I've been involved with oyster aquaculture since 2012, when I attended my first TOGA meeting with

my father, Dennis Matt. It was there that I met Stan Allen, director of the Aquaculture Genetics and Breeding Technology (ABC) program at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS). Months later, I was fortunate to land a summer internship in his lab as a part of the Research Experience for Undergraduates program, and after graduating

from Wake Forest that spring, started working at ABC. After a few years of employment at ABC, I entered into the master's program at VIMS with Stan Allen as my advisor. I am now nearing the end of my stint as a master's student, during which I've been investigating spring mortality events on oyster farms in Virginia.

There are several usual suspects when oysters die, such as disease, poor husbandry, or drastic changes in salinity. For the past several years, we've received reports of oysters dying in the late spring on commercial farms in Virginia, but none of the usual suspects seemed to be to blame. To determine what may be the cause, the ABC team and I performed a controlled field study, growing several different strains of oysters on commercial farms and investigating some *unusual* suspects that may be responsible. Our experiment provides a foundation for understanding these mortality events and points to how crop losses from spring mortality may be mitigated in the future.

Again, thank you for your support, and I look forward to sharing our findings with you all at the annual meeting in January.

Joey Matt, VIMS Masters Student

Note- *If you would like to donate to the Endowment on-line, please go to 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



Deadline Nears for Middle School Writing Contest

The December 15th deadline for the Fourth Annual TOGA Middle School Essay contest is fast approaching! Aspiring Middle School students are encouraged to get their pens out and send in an entry!

After very successful Middle School Writing Contests the past three years, the TOGA and People's Community Bank are 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". The competition is open to all Virginia students in grades 6, 7 and 8. Home-schooled students are welcome to enter.

A promotional banner for the Middle School Writing Contest. The text reads "Middle School Writing Contest!!!", "TOGA 'Consider the Oyster'", "\$150, \$100, \$50 cash prizes plus outdoor oyster gear for winners", and "For details check out www.oystergardener.org". It includes the TOGA logo (Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association) and the Peoples Community Bank logo.

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 13, 2018. 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 email. The submissions can be made between now and the December 15, 2017, deadline. For more information go to <http://www.oystergardener.org/youth-writing-contest>.

Terry Lewis, MOG

Stratford Hall Wine and Oyster Festival, 2017 Version

**Record Breaking Super Weather
Phenomenal Atmosphere Never Better**

These are just a few ways to describe this year's festival held the weekend of September 16th and 17th.

Bright sun, moderate temperatures and even a light breeze -- the weather could not have been special ordered any better. The record breaking 5500 plus attendees definitely required the support provided by our 63 TOGA volunteers across the 2 days. This level of volunteers was a 7% increase over 2016. It was great to see that some TOGA members turned the festival into a family affair by having their kids and grandkids volunteer with them. Special thanks to our 16 first-time volunteers and the 10 volunteers who worked both days.



No wonder the TOGA volunteers at ticketing passed out almost 2400 wine glasses. Our oyster growers were amazing in meeting the needs of the unexpected Saturday attendance and sold most, if not all, their planned weekend supply just on Saturday. The growers went

to extraordinary measures to obtain more for Sunday.

The Education Tent had larger crowds than ever before. The new mid-day, 11 am to 3 pm volunteer time slot proved very beneficial to staffing positions during the peak periods and was the most popular for the volunteers. It will definitely be continued next year.



Despite all the hard work, it was great to hear from the volunteers as well as other festival attendees about how much fun they had. The



diversity of both craft and food vendors appealed to the crowds. The diversity of beverage offerings (wine, beer and cider), the expanded music performances and additional dining tent all proved to be crowd pleasers.

Stratford Hall was very appreciative of TOGA's efforts. They even gave us a 12.5% tip above their normal generous donation. We look forward to the 2018 Festival!

Laura Todd, Brian Wood, MOGs



2017 Fall Oyster Float Workshop

The Oyster Float Workshop was on the beautiful first Saturday of October at the VIMS Hatchery. TOGA focused on the sale of pre-built floats, accessories and answering questions. Without building floats at the workshop, there were more opportunities for MOG's to discuss topics, questions and answers in greater detail with new and returning oyster growers.

This year's workshop had several vendors in attendance, who also answered questions as they sold their products and spat. TOGA will be sending a check to the TOGA-VIMS Foundation for over \$2,400 from the proceeds of the pre-built floats sales.



The build-your-own floats, done on workdays, were successful with several floats built, good food enjoyed and friendships made.



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 on the pre-built workdays in September. Thank You.
Charles Yarbrough, MOG

Wine & Oyster Fair, October 28, 2017, Good Luck Cellars Winery

On October 28, 2017 the Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association (TOGA) and the Good Luck Cellars Winery teamed up to sponsor a second annual Wine & Oyster event at the beautiful winery location on 1025 Good Luck Road, Kilmarnock, Virginia. The fair began at 11AM and lasted until 4PM, and the close-by easy parking was most appreciated. Ample food choices included different raw and cooked bivalves (and what special recipes, like fried oyster tacos!) from the local grower Great Wicomico Oyster Company.



They managed the crowd pleasing tasty treats in a most remarkable way.

Also, there were various oyster seeds (diploids and triploids) and different caging & accessories for sale; from the small and easy-to-handle Downunder to the larger and heavier Taylor floats. Those who wanted to learn more about oysters went to the TOGA tent and spoke at length with the many helpful MOGs (Master Oyster Gardeners). In addition, Brian Wood provided an excellent oyster shucking demonstration using an array of knives that were at the TOGA supply tent; which helped many in the crowd to enjoy a fuller bivalve experience.



available oyster spat & equipment, there were many crowd pleasing items raffled all day long, solely for the benefit of the non-profit TOGA. It was so much fun.

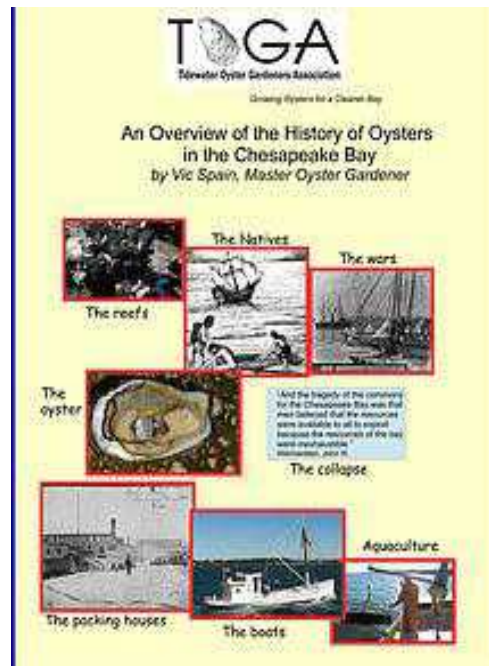
Ann Wood, MOG

TOGA Displays

Toga now has an educational display at the Mathews County Visitors Center and Museum



Many went home with a new skill. This was also the first public showing of TOGA's new display: *An Overview of the History of Oysters in the Chesapeake Bay*. TOGA welcomed several new members that day, and no wonder with such fun and friendly oyster talk all around them. Getting more of the Northern Neck and surrounding areas public educated and For the full vineyard experience people gathered in the comfortable Good Luck wine tasting bar and lounge where knowledgeable and friendly servers expertly kept pace with the crowd. They had a most special blend available just for this occasion. Favorite bottles were brought out onto the large covered veranda with many tables overlooking the oyster related fun. Congenial laughter filled the air, and the sunshiny day was perfect for this affair.



An Overview of the History Oysters in the Chesapeake Bay has been prepared for the Deltaville Maritime Museum.

More details can be found at <http://www.oystergardener.org/toga-static-display>

In addition to the Chesapeake Bay bivalves, the Good Luck winery activities and all the

Catch Your Own Wild Spat

This fall I had a request from a local school teacher (Suzi) whose students wanted to learn more about oyster spat and she wanted to learn to speak oyster. This was my response:

Dear Suzi,

I've attached a picture of some wild spat I collected this summer. I hung bags of shell in the water (Severn River off Mobjack Bay) in May and pulled them up in October. Wild oysters usually spawn from June to September when the water warms up. When ready, eggs and sperm are released into the water and join up, forming larvae that swim for up to 2 weeks to find a hard surface (usually oyster shell) to strike on. At first they are so small as to be invisible. As you can see in the photo, by October these spat are small oysters about 1 inch in length. I had 5 to 10 large spat on each shell. In recent years, the wild oysters are doing a little better after almost all had died out in the 1990s.

Aquaculture oysters are spawned in tanks in a hatchery and strike on tiny shell fragments. They have been bred to be resistant to disease which kill many wild oysters. Most aquaculture oysters are sterile because they grow fast, can be harvested in the summer and some other more complicated reasons.



Please share with your class. I hope this helps get you started speaking oyster.

Vic Spain, MOG

TOGA/VIMS Endowment recipient in 2014, Ann Arfken, was recently highlighted in an October 17 Daily Press article by Tamara Dietrich.

<http://www.dailypress.com/news/science/dp-nws-oyster-nutrient-pollution-20171017-story.html>

Ann and her team mates are doing breakthrough work on how oysters help denitrify Bay waters. The following excerpt is from the article:



“Most studies addressing denitrification associated with oysters have focused on sediments in and around oyster reefs,” said VIMS doctoral candidate Ann Arfken. “Ours is the first to explore the capability for denitrification by microbiomes living inside and on the oysters themselves.”

Congratulations Ann! TOGA members are always interested in what our Endowment students at VIMS are doing, and especially new science about how oysters clean the Bay of excess nutrients.

Vic Spain, MOG

TOGA Dues for 2018

TOGA membership dues of \$15 per family are due in January 2018. 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 2017 or earlier, your 2018 dues are due. While it's on your mind, please fill out the form below and mail it in soon. Or go to <http://www.oystergardener.org/#!/join-toga/c1rtd> and update your membership online. For questions about your membership, please contact Vic Spain at vicspain@rocketmail.com or 804-642-6764.

Vic Spain, MOG

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.

You may make an additional donation to support TOGA's educational activities. It may be included in the same check.



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 for Chesapeake Bay restoration.

. 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



TOGA Membership Form Please Print Legibly

Please enclose dues (\$15 per year per family) Return to TOGA, PO Box 2463, Gloucester, VA 23061

Amount submitted \$ _____ Comment _____

_____ New member or _____ Renewal _____ Additional Donation

Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City, State, and Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Body of water where oysters are grown _____

When a group of oyster growers have Thanksgiving dinner together, what do you think the appetizer is?



Bob Morgan, MOG; Charles Yarbrough, MOG; Sue Morgan; Kathy Haurand, MOG; Brian Wood, MOG and Ann Wood, MOG

Our newsletter and many of our activities are funded by the sale of **Chesapeake Bay license plates**



<http://dmv.virginia.gov/exec/vehicle/splates/info.asp?idnm=CB>

Newsletter News

The newsletter is published 3 times a year and is mailed to all TOGA members. Full color copies of this and past newsletters may be seen on the website at

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

The deadline for the next newsletter is March 12, 2018. Any TOGA member who wishes to submit an article for the newsletter may do so prior to the deadline date. Articles will be printed as space allows. Email to either Vic Spain at vicspain@rocketmail.com and/or Kathy Haurand at kathaurand@aol.com

Happy Oystering!!

Kathy Haurand, MOG



Calendar of Events- 2018

Contact the Event Coordinator if you would like to participate

December

Happy Holidays

January 2018

*13th - Annual Meeting - Event Coordinator: Terry Lewis, lewistmn@msn.com WIMS Gloucester Point, 2pm-4pm

February

TBD

March

TBD

The Annual Meeting is the only 2018 event planned as of this printing. Planning for the upcoming year will take place at the February and March meetings. These will be posted in the Spring newsletter or you may check for updates at our online calendar- <http://www.localendar.com/public/MikeSanders> and at the Major Annual Events Page at <http://www.oystergardener.org/>. Also, look for our MailChimp emails to all TOGA members. (* indicates a major TOGA-sponsored or co-sponsored event).

Love, Peace and Joy
come down on earth on Christmas day
to make you happy and cheerful.
May Christmas spread cheer in your lives!
Merry Christmas!



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