



2023 Annual Report

Bayshore Center at Bivalve



WHERE HISTORY AND THE ENVIRONMENT MEET

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Letter from the Executive Director 2

Our Mission, Vision and History 3

Oyster Schooner *A. J. Meerwald* 4

The Delaware Bay Museum 5

Education Programs 6

Community Events 7

Financial Review 8

Board of Directors, Staff, Crew 9

2023 Bayshore Center at Bivalve Members10

A Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Bayshore Center at Bivalve Supporters;

As I near the completion of my first year as Executive Director, I would like to share this report highlighting our achievements in 2023. The Bayshore Center at Bivalve (BCB) Board of Directors and staff are dedicated to building the infrastructure and long-term planning needed. We plan to continue to develop dynamic educational experiences and opportunities for our history and the environment to meet. We hope to continue to create a culture which inspires the next generation of leaders for our waterways and ecosystem.

I am proud to share that 2023 focused on the transition from a multi-year restoration project to on water programs and operations. As of today, we are working to complete some of the initial pieces of the restoration project that were unable to be completed due to the increased cost of materials at the time. Thanks to the support of our donors we are well on our way to completing the Mainsail Campaign and hope to have our new sail in place in Mid-April for up-rigging. *A. J. Meerwald (AJM)* was hauled out in December, scraped, caulked, and has several new coats of bottom paint. So, she is ready for a packed 2024 sailing season.

2023 was the first year since 2019 that *AJM* sailed a full season, moving from port to port. While we had some extremely challenging circumstances related to ports earlier in the year, we were able to work to reestablish relationships with several ports and host organizations. In 2024, we will expand upon these and help support the needed program revenue from public sails, and the advance planning for education sails.

Programmatically, we launched a new field trip program for local schools that includes both shipboard (sailing) and land-based education stations in the museum, engaging youth in all that BCB has to offer. In 2024, we will continue to expand education programming in a systematic way working with local schools and organizations to support the needs of our community.

In 2024, BCB will focus on building and training our volunteer-base. Our port schedule is underway and we will be working to establish commercial partnerships and sponsorships throughout the state that include the maritime industry as well as education institutions. We will also be working towards state support. While we are grateful for the grant support from the NJ Historic Trust & the NJ Historical Commission, ongoing financial support for NJ's Official Tall Ship *AJM* will help the long-term sustainability of the organization.

Thank you for your support in 2023. I look forward to a successful 2024.

Happy Sailing,

Jessica Yorke

Jessica (Servis) Yorke



Our Mission, Vision, and History

Mission

Through the state's official tall ship, the oyster schooner *A. J. Meerwald (AJM)* and historic waterfront museum, the Bayshore Center at Bivalve (BCB) will advance the understanding of the human impact on New Jersey's aquatic environment through education, advocacy, and programming.



Vision

BCB envisions a New Jersey with clean, safe and healthy water for recreation, consumption and commercial fishing.

About

BCB "Where History and the Environment Meet" was founded in 1988. It is an organization focused on using local history featured in our Delaware Bay Museum, combined with hand-on learning aboard our floating classroom, the 1928 Oyster schooner *AJM*. The organization is housed in the historic 1904 Oyster Shipping Sheds & Wharves located in Port Norris (Bivalve), NJ.

BCB was founded by Meghan Wren and John Gandy to save *AJM*, a Delaware Bay Oyster Schooner. In 1996, *AJM* was listed on the National/State Register of Historic Places and was given the title by Gov. Whitman as the Official Tall Ship of New Jersey in 1998, but without funding..

What started out as a grassroots effort has grown into a professional staff of 10 plus a seasonal crew including a well-respected and proficient Museum Curator and a ship's Captain. The organization is a proud ambassador of New Jersey's maritime history both on land and sea.

Where We Work

The Bayshore Center at Bivalve works with schools and organizations throughout the tristate area of New Jersey, Delaware, and Pennsylvania. The majority of youth educational programs come from Cumberland, Cape May and Atlantic County.

Oyster Schooner *A. J. Meerwald* (AJM)

2,983 passengers sailed aboard *AJM* in 2023 experiencing her history, connection with local waterways and the environment and her ongoing support of the oyster industry.



Link: https://youtu.be/zcZEpbGX0T0?si=58bEaYrS_L-sif2F

Through the support of local municipalities and host organizations such as Atlantic Highlands Yacht Club and Independence Seaport Museum, she sailed from eight different ports, with significant time in her home port, the Bayshore Center at Bivalve located in Port Norris, NJ. With a port schedule that came together late in the season for 2023, we hope to build on these.

The biggest challenge in 2023 was the port schedule and dock availability. In April, it became clear that the dock plans to spend the majority of the summer in Cape May had fallen through, leaving a wide open port schedule for the season. A port plan slowly came together. Since the boat had not traveled port to port since 2019, many of the pre-existing partnerships and relationships had to be rebuilt. The lack of advance planning also led to a decreased number of Education Sails when sailing from new ports.

In 2023, *AJM* sailed from her home port at the Bayshore Center in Port Norris, NJ. In June, she sailed up the Delaware River to the Independence Seaport Museum in Philadelphia, PA. Then she headed home for a bit and then up the coast of NJ in July and August and back home for September.



The Delaware Bay Museum

The Delaware Bay Museum had **1,473** visitors this year plus approximately **5,000** that visited during fundraising and community-based events.



Special Projects

- **Premier of [On the Shellpile](#).** After three years the film *On the Shellpile* was completed. More than a story of oyster shucking, it's a story of hard work, family, faith and strength of life tied closely to the changing environment. The film was screened at the Jersey Shore Film Festival in July.
- **NOAA Voices from the Fisheries** now has 27 transcribed oral histories and recordings posted from BCB's collection. Hear first hand accounts of those who worked the water <https://www.bayshorecenter.org/museum/#voices-from-the-fisheries>
- **A.J. Meerwald virtual tour** - People can now explore above and below deck aboard AJM. It will launch publicly in March as a tool for teachers to use prior to school visits, and an opportunity for anyone with an internet connection to explore the vessel and learn about its unique past. Click on video clips and historic photos. Don't forget to go aloft!
- **Meerwald Family portraits and frame restoration project** was completed. In five years the Posomokin Chapter of Questers raised \$7,050 to restore five Meerwald family portraits and the frames. The portraits help tell the story of the family who followed the water until they changed their livelihood. J&J Art Conservator Services in Cape May County performed conservation work.

Collection Highlight

Print of the A.J. Meerwald, 1959

Artist: Florence Errickson Meerwald (1902-1969)

Florence's husband William A. Meerwald and his brother, Augustus C., built and operated *AJM*. Florence and her sister-in-law Edna James Meerwald became owners after a bankruptcy sale in 1935. The original painting was given to Florence's grandson Frank Unkle. His widow, Connie Ross, rediscovered the painting in 2022.

During this time, *AJM* was undergoing a restoration and it was decided to paint the boat the color and order of the stripes used by Mrs. Meerwald. Thank you to Connie and the Unkle family for donating a beautiful print!



Education Programs

The schooner *A. J. Meerwald* is utilized as an asset for public programming and as a floating classroom for youth.

Educational Sails - Approximately **1,000** students and chaperones participated in education-based sails in 2023. Classes from Commercial Township schools, Maurice River Township schools and a few others participated in the new field trip model. Also in 2023, BCB launched a new education program thanks to support from the NJ Council for the Humanities. The project resulted in a new core educational program, combining shipboard programming under sail aboard the *AJ Meerwald*



with shoreside educational programs. The new program description can be found at <https://www.bayshorecenter.org/education/field-trips/>

The new field trip program meets our mission and engages 21st century learners in a more robust and hands-on way. It connects the history of the Delaware Bay, oystering under sail and our local environment. Youth can learn from our deep rooted history while exploring our local rivers and estuaries that need innovative solutions and connecting for the environmental challenges of today as well as for future generations to come.

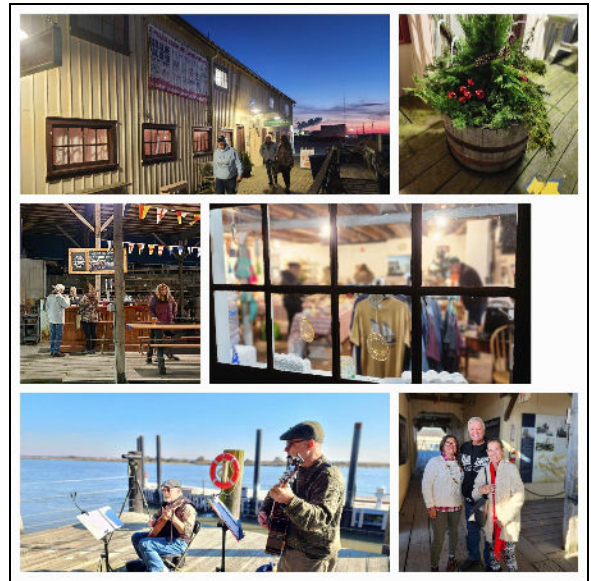
Land Based Education - **830** people participated in land-based educational trips to the Bayshore Center featuring hands-on learning, museum education programs and fieldwork in the surrounding wetlands. Wild About Cumberland returned in partnership with CU Maurice River.

Community Events

Second Fridays

Approximately **1,500** people visited the Bayshore Center for Second Fridays in 2023. These events are when BCB invites the community out on the wharves and opens the museum with the goal of connecting the community with the local environment. It provides the opportunity to walk back in time, learn something new, relax by the water and enjoy fresh oysters harvested by local watermen and women.

Each month an expert presents on a topic connecting and informing the public on our ecosystems, marinelife, and connecting our history to today. 2023 topics included commercial crabbing and the life cycle of Blue Claw Crabs, Atlantic Sturgeon, the Oysterman's Trade - how trade was driven through the waterways of southern New Jersey, and documentaries featuring local history such as "On the Shellpile." Experts also shared current research and innovative solutions to today's challenges of sea level rise, erosion, and coastal resiliency. Special thanks to our sponsors for supporting these events.



Community Partnerships and Education Outreach

Approximately **1,000 people** engaged with BCB through our community programs. As a community based program BCB was able to engage with the community through partnerships with local organizations, education facilities, businesses, and outreach events.

- US Coast Guard Day - Cape May
- South Jersey Bayshore Coalition
- Tabernacle Church, Erma
- Dennis Township Primary School
- Rowan College
- Maritime Day - Lewes, DE
- CU Maurice River - AJM book talk
- Greenwich Artisan's Faire
- Wetlands Institute summer camp
- OceanFirst Bank WaveMakers
- Mauricetown River Festival
- Lighthouse Keepers & Friends Association
- Bridgeton Public Library
- American Littoral Society
- Dennis Township Elem. - Career Day
- Four Seasons (over 55 Community)

Shoreline Cleanup in Honor of International Coastal Cleanup Day

Volunteers gathered on Saturday September 9th and removed **50 lbs of debris** from our local roadside and estuary. Data was collected on each item and reported to the Ocean Conservancy as part of citizen science. The data showed many pieces of older plastics found in drainage ditches where the roadway and estuary meet. Many of them had begun to photodegrade breaking down from a large container such as a bleach bottle into hundreds of microplastics. Special thanks to the volunteers for their help.

Financial Review

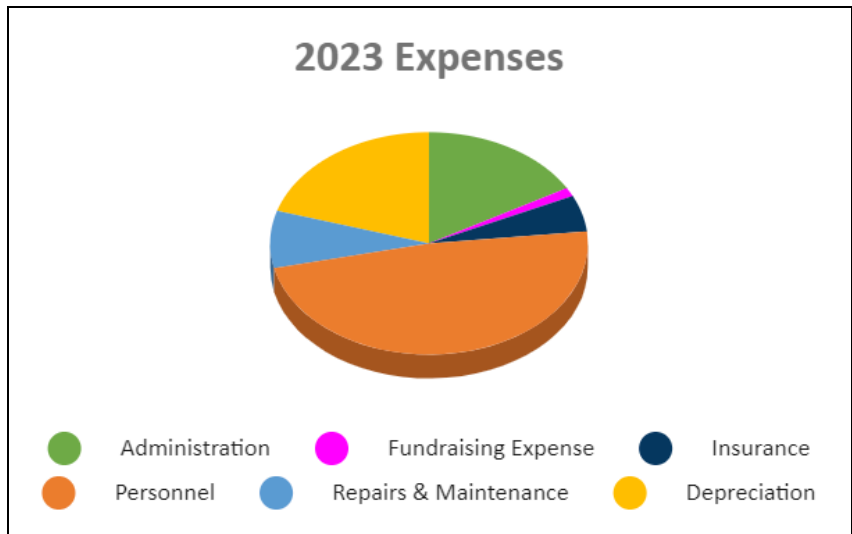
2023 was a banner year for BCB showcasing the newly renovated AJM throughout New Jersey. It was the first year since Covid that the organization was able to earn significant program revenue by taking its educational programs aboard *AJM*.

Programs in its home port of Bivalve were also up and running with schools now able to return to the Bayshore Center for their educational field trips.

There were challenges with reestablishing relationships with various ports of call during this first season back.

In 2024, BCB looks forward to a full year of programming both in its home port of Bivalve and throughout the state with a full itinerary of sailing programs.

-Candace A. Faunce, CFO



Grants

BCB received an operating support grant from the New Jersey Historical Commission, a division of the Department of State. BCB received project grant funds from: New Jersey Arts and Culture Renewal Fund at the Princeton Area Community Foundation (education); State Council on the Arts/Department of State and the Cumberland County Board of Commissioners through the Cumberland County Cultural & Heritage Commission (virtual tour); NJ Council for the Humanities (*On the Shellpile* film and education); and NJ Travel & Tourism destination marketing.



Board of Directors, Staff, Crew

Board of Directors

John Gandy, President
Nils Herdelin, Secretary
Mike Rothman, Treasurer
Anthony Klock, Volunteer Chair

Eliza Braunstein, Partnerships Chair
Kathryn Michel
David Acree
William Sheridan
Patrick (Pete) Slavin

Staff & Crew

Executive Director

Jessica Yorke

Delaware Bay Museum

Rachel Dolhanczyk, Museum Curator
Carl Holman, Docent

Museum Advisors

Dr. Michael Chiarappa, Historian-in-Residence and Research Professor of
Chesapeake Regional Studies, Washington College, Chestertown, Maryland
Pete Leshar, Historian and Ambassador-at-Large, Chesapeake Bay Maritime
Museum, St. Michaels, Maryland

Program

Tristan Metz, Education Intern, Stockton University
Emily Venturi, Education Intern, Rowan University

Operations

Teri Watson, Director of Donor & Volunteer Relations
Candy Faunce, Chief Financial Officer
Diane Stevenson, Bookkeeper
Bethany Snyder, Education Coordinator
Scott Eves, Facilities Manager
Beveran Russell, Oyster Cracker Cafe`

Schooner *A. J. Meerwald*

Patrick Flynn, Captain
Seth Mathews, First Mate
Ken Haney, Engineer
Erik Knudsen, Third Mate/ Bosun
Troy Ingram, Deckhand
John Hancock Jr., Deckhand
Roxy Reece, Cook



2023 Bayshore Center at Bivalve Members

Grand Mariner (\$1,000)

Burt & Jeanne Doremus
Robert Johnson

George F. Phelps
Tom & Catherine Risch

Mark Showers
Wade & Pamela Sjogren

Chief Mate (\$100)

James & Barbara Bovasono
Richard Brail
Ed & Mary Broderick
William Carton
Patricia & Ken Cavender
Robert Conner
Suzanne C. & Ken Kramer
Don & Suzanne Daigle
William & Margaret Daily
James & Wendy Daly
Nancy & Richard Demaree
Ann & Jim Duffy
Robert & Kathleen Familetti
Paul Gray
Nils & Patricia Herdelin

Brandi & Scott Holdren
Barney & Debi Hollinger
Kimberly & William Horseman
Roger & Barbara Justis
Edwin Kay
Karl Kramer
Joanne Meehan
Kathleen Wagner & Jeffrey Menzel
Gordon & Patricia Moore
Rich Moran
Kevin & Kim Noon
Louis Pszwaro
Helen & Bill Reinhart
Barbara Riggini-Guardiola
Ralph & Kathleen Salber

Bruce Sanville
Amy Havens
Raymond Skelly
James Sneathen
Carol Steketee
Walter & Wendy Surdam
John Barton & Jan Tarpine
Anthony & Dorothy Thompson
Elizabeth Thompson
Jane & Tom Verba
Keith & Elizabeth Wasserman
Richard Westergaurd
Carl & Eloise Williams
Michael Wynne

Deckhand (\$35)

Kathleen Arleth
David Bennet
Diane Buzzard
Virginia Campbell
Claud & Marie S. Fajardo
Caudill
William Champion
Theodore Chase Jr
Bob Conley
Fran Cosaboon
Leo Crispi
Gerald Dalzell
Gary DosSantos
Tricia Dufford
James Dunkel
Charles Dupras
Matthew Edson
Pamela Eilenberg
Jerry Ewan
Michael Ferrugi
Judith Gollatz-Morgan
Roy Gormley
Art Gottwald
Joseph Gudonis
Dana D. Hanson

Bruce Harris
Brooks Henderson
Debbie Hickman
Joe Hochreiter
Mike Horan
David Jarrett
Leilani L. Kane
Claudia King
Jane Leonardo
Pat Leonardo
Mariana & Ronald Leshner, Jr.
Nancy Linden
Catherine Loupos
Laura Malquist
Robert Marceluk
Connie McCart
Mac Mcdougal
Diane McVey
Elke Michaelis
Robert Morrisroe
Linda Mur
Carey Nathan
Bruce Nicholson
Michael & Susan Reehn
William Robbins

G.S. Robinson
Gordon Robinson
John Romanik
Peter Saulnier
Brenda Saunders
Rob Sawyer
Suzanne Sawyer
Barbara Shimer
Mark Sibley
G. Bernie Simkins
Douglas Slavic
Patrick Slavin
Janet Somers
Fred & Jill Stoelzl
Richard Taylor
Paul Thomas
Regina Thompson
Gail Tweed
Bob Wheatley
Kavena Wilson
Carol Wolff
Jerry Young
Edward Zeme