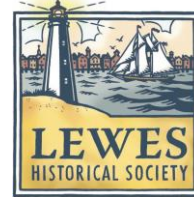


# PRESS RELEASE



**April 17, 2024**



## **Annual Maritime Day Celebration at the Lightship Overfalls Free Public Event Set for Saturday, May 18 on the Lewes Canal Waterfront**

**LEWES, Del.** – Experience and celebrate maritime history and its impact on the region at the annual Lewes Maritime Day celebration at the Lightship *Overfalls* and Canalfront Park on Saturday, May 18, 2024 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Lewes, known as the First Town in the First State, enjoys a heritage that is rich in both its maritime history and its current maritime interests.

Co-organized by the Cape May – Lewes Ferry and the Overfalls Foundation, supported by the Zwaanendael Museum, the Lewes Historical Society, the Lewes Chamber of Commerce and the City of Lewes, this celebration includes maritime exhibits and demonstrations, boat rides and vessel tours, and other activities and is free for children and the young at heart.

New Jersey's official Tall Ship, the Sailing Vessel – A.J. Meerwald, will be a special guest vessel at the event. This 1928 restored oyster-dredging schooner will be available for dockside tours on Saturday from 11:00A – 3:00P as well as a public sail on Sunday, May 19 at 10:00A. The A.J. Meerwald is owned and operated by the Bayshore Center at Bivalve, a non-profit organization located in Port Norris, NJ. Reserve your ticket to set sail at [www.bayshorecenter.org](http://www.bayshorecenter.org).

A brief ceremony will be held at 10:00 a.m. to kick off the event and reopen the Lightship Overfalls (LV-118) for the season. The ceremony will include proclamations by local officials, remarks by a keynote speaker, and the laying of wreaths to honor and remember local mariners and Overfalls Foundation members who have “passed over the bar.”

“Lewes has a unique place in the annals of American maritime history of which the Ferry is a proud participant,” said Heath Gehrke, Director of Ferry Operations. “The festival is a fun and interactive way to learn more about maritime history, industry, and its many vocations. Come join us as we celebrate the U.S. Merchant Marine, its historic support of the Nation’s military, and the many careers it offers.”

“Part of the community’s rich maritime history includes that of the U.S. Lighthouse Service and U.S. Lifesaving Service, precursors to the U.S. Coast Guard,” said Michael Safina, President of the

Overfalls Foundation. “Lightships played a major role in the safe navigation of ships throughout our nation’s history and our guides are excited to help in bringing that story to light. We look forward to having the community help us reopen the ship for the 2024 season.”

The Lightship Overfalls and museum property will be open for free tours throughout the day. Various maritime participants will have displays at Canalfront Park, adjacent to the Overfalls. It is a great way for scout groups, school groups, along with parents and kids of all ages to spend the day. Other activities include a water cannon display by the Lewes Fire Boat, a life raft demonstration by the Ferry, and Lewes Historical Society interpreters portraying unique historical figures from the U.S. Lifesaving Service at the Canalfront Park and at the Lewes Maritime Museum-Cannonball House.

Additional exhibitors include Cape Water Taxi, Delaware River and Bay Lighthouse Foundation, Fort Miles Historical Association, Freedom Boat Club, Groome Church, the Lewes Yacht Club; the MERR Institute, Military Sealift Command, the New Hope Canoe Club Ministry, the Pilots Association for the Bay and River Delaware, Sea Scouts, The Pirates of Lewes, University of Delaware, U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, and Zwaanendael Museum.

In 1933, the United States Congress declared May 22 as National Maritime Day. The designation honors the contributions of the American merchant marine – civilians who have defended the freedom of the United States since 1775 and who executed the largest sealift the world has ever known during World War II. Observance of National Maritime Day also honors the maritime industry and the benefits it brings Americans in terms of transportation, jobs, goods, and recreational opportunities.

Owned and operated by the Delaware River and Bay Authority, the Cape May – Lewes Ferry is open year-round and has carried more than 50 million passengers since its inception on July 1, 1964. As an integral transportation system connecting the communities and economies on both sides of the Delaware Bay, the Ferry service is a significant catalyst for economic growth and regional tourism activity in New Jersey and Delaware. Its operations sustain over 4,000 jobs while generating tens of millions of dollars in local taxes and hundreds of millions in regional economic activity. For schedules and rates, please visit [www.CMLF.com](http://www.CMLF.com) or call 800-643-3779.

The mission of the Overfalls Foundation is to preserve, teach and honor the lightships and their sailors of the United States and the maritime history of our community through the preservation and display of the Lightship *Overfalls* (LV-118) and its collection of associated maritime artifacts.

**We are still seeking exhibitors and sponsors! For Media and Sponsorship information, please contact:**

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