

NYSG Facilitates Development of Oswego's New Maritime Center

During the fall of 2008, Oswego, NY's major maritime organizations came together to discuss reinventing the city's Historic Maritime District. Initial discussions included the concept of consolidating the H. Lee White Marine Museum, Oswego Maritime Alliance (OMA), and Oswego Maritime Foundation (OMF) to better provide maritime history, education, and events. The Port Authority of Oswego provided input, and, as discussions moved forward, New York Sea Grant (NYSG) was asked to join the group as facilitator as NYSG had assisted each group individually since their inceptions in developing programs and events.

Representatives of each group met over the course of a year to begin reorganizing into one entity with a healthy respect for each partner organization's history, contributions, ideas and concerns. They agreed to a plan that was set in motion in 2009 with a press conference announcing the creation of the new partnership and the H. Lee White Maritime Center at Oswego Harbor.

In 2010-2011, each group completed an asset and event inventory; the Museum was restructured to become the new "Center," and the OMA and OMF commenced dissolution and transfer of assets and programs.

NYSG played a pivotal role in assisting in what could have been a very contentious process. A NYSG educator experienced with facilitating successfully coalesced the parties' common interests to create a shared vision for Oswego's Historic Maritime District.

OMA Board Member and Secretary and former Oswego County Tourism Director Christine Gray, says, "The tremendous working knowledge and experience with all three organizations that New York Sea Grant brought to the process of



This LT-5 tugboat used at Normandy in World War II is among the historic and educational vessels that will be featured as part of the H. Lee White Maritime Center at Oswego Harbor.

Photo: H. Lee White Marine Museum staff

helping us forge a new path was a true time-saver. The new Center blends our common threads into a cohesive new organization that better reflects our historic maritime resources. That is a positive for our current funders and prospective new supporters."

OMF Board member Richard Bush says, "New York Sea Grant's insight and perspective on tourism in the Northeast offered us models, helped assuage our fears, and inspired us to create something new that is bigger and better than our single selves."

H. Lee White Maritime Center Executive Director Mercedes Niess agrees, "Consolidating our shared passion and interests - through a process made smooth by Sea Grant's facilitation - into this new Center represents great new opportunities for the museum, the maritime district, and the city of Oswego."

This exciting new development is one more success story in NYSG's history of facilitating the interests of New York's Great Lakes coastal community leaders.

This project meets the performance measures Sea Grant's Sustainable Coastal Development focus area.

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