

*Maryland begins here!*

# the finer points

A newsletter from the Friends of the  
St. Clement's Island and Piney Point Museums

Fall 2010

*The Friends support historical interpretation, educational programs and special needs of the sites managed by the Museum Division of St. Mary's County Department of Recreation and Parks: St. Clement's Island Museum, the Little Red Schoolhouse, the Piney Point Lighthouse, Museum and Historic Park, the Drayden African-American Schoolhouse, and the U-1105 Black Panther German submarine shipwreck preserve. A non-profit organization, the Friends sponsor special events, assist with acquisitions and publish this newsletter to broaden understanding of and interest in these important historic sites.*

*Inside: Terrapin Whisperer, Out of the Dust, Friends News and more!*

## New Building Finished Collections building makes 'microenvironments' possible

By Sheila Gibbons Hiebert, Friends President

Our two-year campaign to design, fund and erect a Collections Management Facility was a success, thanks to the Board of County Commissioners of St. Mary's County and the generous support of people in our community.



We salute Commissioner Tom Mattingly, who originated the county funding initiative that set aside \$150,000 for the building – a measure the commissioners approved unanimously. As part of that initiative, the Friends of the St. Clement's Island and Piney Point Museums agreed to raise additional funds and dip into our treasury to cover the remaining costs and begin the process of equipping the building. The Friends also agreed to oversee the design, construction, and financial and administrative aspects of the project in collaboration with Museum

Division Manager Debra Pence and Recreation and Parks Director Phil Rollins, with the able assistance of Executive Coordinator Kathy Bailey. Friends Vice President Lewie Aldridge Jr. was involved in the early planning, and Friends member Larry Hyatt was

our "boots on the ground" observer as CMI General Contractors, Inc., built the facility.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony and reception to thank donors was scheduled for October 31.

Having a facility designed and built expressly to protect the Museum Division's collections resolves "so many things that have been issues for the museum," says Chris Barbour, St. Clement's Island Museum site supervisor and collections curator. Among these were overcrowded storage areas, variable humidity and temperature in some of those spaces, and inability to expand exhibit areas because of the storage crunch. The beauty of the new building, Chris says, "is it will be easier to create microenvironments" for objects, such as those made of wood, metal and fiber, which

*See Building Complete, page 4*

*Groundbreaking ceremony in February. Pictured left to right: Delegate Johnny Wood, St. Mary's County Commissioner President Francis Jack Russell, Museum Division Trustee Jim Banagan, Museum Division Manager Debra Pence, Trustees President Shirley Leyland, Friends President Sheila Hiebert, Commissioners Dan Raley and Tom Mattingly, and John K. Parlett of CMI General Contractors, Inc. (Photo by Kim Cullins)*

**The Friends of the  
St. Clement's Island and  
Piney Point Museums**

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Site Supervisor

April Havens  
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Site Supervisor

Kimberley A. Cullins  
Marketing and Development  
Specialist

Carol Cribbs  
Museum Stores Manager

Greg Mora  
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Specialist

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# Corporate Giving Helps Us Thrive

*By Sheila Gibbons Hiebert, President*

We're happy to count among our members corporations known for their generosity and support of local institutions and initiatives. In addition to paying annual dues at one of two corporate levels, they frequently come through with other forms of assistance: event sponsorships, in-kind donations, discounted services and more. That kind of help is invaluable and makes our resources go farther.

You can tell a lot about a community's overall health by how involved its business leaders are with activities outside their companies. We are fortunate that so many corporate leaders value our museums and support them through the Friends. Here they are, with our profound thanks:

## CORPORATE PATRONS

Accent Accounting Services

Brick House Realty

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Combs Drury Reeves  
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## CORPORATE BENEFACTORS

The Stephen and Renee Bisciotti Foundation

NuStar Foundation

PNC Bank



**10%  
OFF for  
Friends!**

This holiday season, use your 10% Friends membership discount when you shop at the Lighthouse Lens and Crab Claw Museum Stores. New items include wine cooler crocks (\$25), jewelry boxes (\$21.95) and porcelain ornaments customized with the Piney Point Lighthouse and the Blackistone Island Lighthouse (\$14.95). Each museum store is a treasure trove of unique gift items, home décor, children's items (from pirate coins to shark tooth necklaces), cookbooks, history books, jewelry, and more. Call Museum Stores Manager Carol Cribbs for special orders or for more info at 301-769-2222.

# The Terrapin Whisperer

Some people just have the knack for making the connection – the connection between humans and animals – that seems extraordinary. Caesar Milan has “it” with dogs. Frank Bell has “it” with horses. And Piney Point Lighthouse site supervisor April Havens has “it” with Maryland terrapins.

On a spring day in 2009, April found a baby terrapin scooting along on the concrete sidewalk of the Piney Point Lighthouse Museum. Moments later, someone brought her a paper cup with yet another baby terrapin they had found. Knowing that she had an available aquarium, donated previously by Museum Division Manager Deb Pence, she thought these little guys would be of great interest and an educational tool for museum visitors. She decided to keep them – if just temporarily.

One baby was the size of a quarter – the other, the size of a half dollar. From her previous experience as a ranger at Point Lookout State Park, having conducted “turtle education” classes there, April knew immediately that these were Maryland terrapins and not common box turtles that live only on land. She prepared the aquarium with water, a well-working filter, light, heater, and a dry platform. Little did she know how much these creatures would come to look for her and respond to her interactions with them.

The aquarium was set up in the museum’s orientation room and the little terrapins became an instant attraction. After the “oohs” and “ahhs” waned from watching them paddling around the water, April or another staff person would tell visitors interesting facts about Maryland’s Diamondback Terrapin, chosen in 1994 as the official state reptile. The terrapins did not receive names as they were not considered pets and it was April’s goal to release them back to their natural habitat. Every day she fed them tasty morsels that they came to look forward to – dried turtle food or dried shrimp, live crickets, and eventually minnows. She took them on daily excursions to exercise them and dry out their shells to prevent rot. She made sure they had a balance of life on land and water. It was to April that the terrapins would rush if she came near the aquarium or heard the sound of her voice. Her dedication to their care was gallant, especially during the winter when three blizzards made getting to the museum for feedings more than a challenge.

At the end of July 2010, they were the size of coffee cup saucers. April decided that they were big enough to go out on their own and live out their destiny in the wild. In the presence of museum staff and a handful of volunteers, April gathered her charges for a teary good-bye at the end of the kayak launch. She released the terrapins into the warm and inviting waters of the creek behind the Piney Point museum building and watched them swim away. It’s what a terrapin whisperer is supposed to do.



## *A Letter From Debra*

Dear Friends,

What a great summer season! Our capital projects intersected with a very busy tourist and event season. All the activity helped to make up for a dismally slow winter!

As you visit our sites I hope you’ll notice the new kayak launch and landscaping at Piney Point and new Collections Management Facility at St. Clement’s Island Museum. You can stop by and see the results of NuStar Energy’s assistance in power washing the Drayden School and the Museum Division staff’s work to restore some of the weathered siding and paint the entire building.

These are important improvements for the Museum Division, not only enhancing the visitor’s experience, but also enhancing our accreditation status for the curatorial care of our collections and buildings.

This winter will certainly be busy as we install additional shelving in the new collections building and begin moving in artifacts. Piney Point will have a new dory boat exhibit installed on the grounds and all the site signage re-installed after the construction is completed. The Drayden Schoolhouse is slated for window restoration work and new interpretive panels. Overall, a lot is going on while we maintain public services!

Although stretched very thin, the staff has pulled together to keep operations and programs running smoothly while covering the additional duties normally performed by retired site coordinator Lydia Wood. We hope to get Lydia out of retirement to help with some special exhibit projects in the new year.

One thing is for sure, we would not be able to continue operations at the level of quality we are accustomed to without the dedication of our volunteers. Thank you one and all... individuals, organizations and board members for your stepped-up support these past several months.

Thank you for your continued support!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Debra Pence". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

# Collections Management Facility Now Complete

*Building Complete, continued from page 1*

have different tolerances for heat and humidity.

The building meets the collections storage standards of the American Association of Museums. It will not be open to the public or used for exhibits. Researchers and historians who wish to examine items in the collections will view them, with Chris present, next door in the Conservation Lab.

## **How are decisions made about what to collect?**

Like other accredited museum groups, the St. Mary's County Museum Division has a policy that guides acquisition choices. "We base our collecting on the interpretive goals and mission statement for each site we curate," Debra says. "At the St. Clement's Island Museum, we focus on the historic landing, Potomac River activity and commerce, things that would have affected the Island over time.

"Collecting for Piney Point is similar, with exhibits on life on the Potomac and the Chesapeake Bay, but we can broaden out because we also have the military connection, U.S. presidents using the area for their summer leisure, and the environmental components we've brought in. And the lighthouse is the nugget at the center of all that," she says.

"If we begin collecting for the Drayden African-American Schoolhouse, we'd be collecting textbooks, teachers' journals, furniture, equipment – anything that would have been used by the community it was built for." The same applies to the Charlotte Hall Schoolhouse, moved to the St. Clement's Island Museum campus in 1991.

Collecting occurs in several different ways. "The Museum Division does not purchase or seek to purchase artifacts," Debra says. "We occasionally have people coming to us to sell us something they believe relates to our museums. We don't cultivate that. We do, however, search neighboring museums, contact community members, and occasionally look on eBay to find representative pieces to complete exhibits. This way, we might locate an historic artifact or a prop to help us tell the site's story."

Current exhibits sometimes prompt donations of artifacts. "The family of a teacher who had taught in the Charlotte Hall Schoolhouse brought us several boxes of items she actually used while teaching there. It's divine to get them because you get that firsthand experience," Debra says. "Coast Guard men have come into our Piney Point museum and say, 'I've got great photographs,' or 'I have my uniform,' or other things they had from their time there. When those primary artifacts come in, we get pretty excited. It gives us the story to build on."

When people offer items that have value but don't align with the Museum Division's interpretive focus, "We work really hard to help them identify museums or archives that would be appropriate for the artifact they want to find a home for," Debra says.

Most loan offers are respectfully declined, she says. "Loans aren't accepted anymore unless we can incorporate the item

into a current exhibit. We won't hold items for future use. It's a huge responsibility. We will, however, make careful notes about what people have and tell them we'll contact them if we find we can use an item in a future exhibit." And finally, Debra says the museum declines to accept items that it cannot exhibit and cannot care for.

## **What's in the collections?**

A lot – nearly 5,000 items! Some of the objects are huge, such as the boats that once worked the Potomac, on display at Piney Point and St. Clement's Island. Smaller but still prominent pieces are items such as the torpedo at Piney Point and intricate models of the Ark and Dove at the St. Clement's Island Museum. Some can be held in your hand, such as a thimble, pottery and glass from the 17th-century Abell's Wharf collection, excavated in the 1970s. The Museum Division also has a collection of Native American artifacts. "It's amazing to think you have something that someone made thousands of years ago," Chris says. "We have projectile points at least 7,000 years old that were found here in St. Mary's County."

Among other treasures are oyster cans that harken back to a time when oysters were king, and a composition book once owned by Marie Mattingly. Inside was an assignment she completed as a young student, describing what she could see from her classroom window at St. Mary's Academy in Leonardtown, which served students from 1885 to 1981, and for many years, accepted boarders as well as day students. That building is now part of the College of Southern Maryland campus.

Documents make up an important portion of the collection. Among these are postcards of vanished hotels and resorts, land surveys, commercial and personal invoices, insurance records, and letters, all of which offer snapshots of people who once lived and worked near the present museum sites. These fragile paper documents require special care, Chris says.

If Debra could add just one single item to the collections, what would it be? "A can from the St. Clement's Island tomato cannery!" she says. The cannery was an early 20th century operation, and like many of the structures that had been on the Island, it's long gone. Island artifacts from its time are rare.

Maybe one day someone will walk in with that one.



*Collections Management Facility (Photo by Kim Cullins)*



1) Chef Leo Dilling of Island Bar & Grill serves up gumbo at the Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours in July. The Friends co-sponsored the event with the Island Inn/Island Bar & Grill and SunTrust Bank. *(Photo by Kim Cullins)*

2) St. Mary's County Sheriff's Deputy Michael Butler pins a new "junior deputy" during Children's Day at the St. Clement's Island Museum. *(Photo by Kim Cullins)*

3) Jazz guitarist Matt Marshak gets up close and personal with the audience of the Potomac Jazz & Seafood Festival in July. *(Photo by Kim Cullins)*

4) Always a local favorite, the Blessing of the Fleet parade! This float led the parade with museum and community volunteers in colonial attire. *(Photo by Sheila Hiebert)*

5) Crystal Ellington (played by Kim Cullins) cracks up during the interactive murder mystery dinner fundraiser as sleazoid Slade Slickwater (portrayed by Joe Janus) ad-libs his script. *(Photo by Robin Richards)*

6) The Chesapeake Bay Running Club's 10-mile race on 10-10-2010 began and ended at the Piney Point Lighthouse Museum. The first one off the block, John Piggott (white cap and shirt) took off and didn't look back, winning the race in 57 minutes and 8 seconds! *(Photo by Kim Cullins)*

7) St. Mary's County artist George McWilliams returned to his native home to sell prints and original paintings at the Blessing of the Fleet in October. George, a descendent of the McWilliams family who were lighthouse keepers on Blackstone Island in the 19th century, painted the mural hanging in the St. Clement's Island Museum. George's painting of the Blackstone Lighthouse is available by mail order through the St. Clement's Hundred. Proceeds from its sales fund maintenance of the replica that opened on St. Clement's Island in 2008. *(Photo by Kim Cullins)*

8) A lovely carpet of blooming cacti will make you do a double take! St. Clement's Island provides a perfect environment for this hardy plant that withstands heat, drought, harsh winters and celebrates its survival every year with gorgeous yellow blooms! *(Photo by Kim Cullins)*

9) Stalwart Museum Division supporters Larry Hyatt, Louanne and Bo Bailey, and Mary Hyatt, a member of the Friends Board of Directors, enjoy the festivities at the Blessing of the Fleet. *(Photo by Sheila Hiebert)*

# Summer Events



# 2010



# Out of the Dust

The long-awaited site enhancement project at the Piney Point Lighthouse, Museum and Historic Park was a summer-long flurry of activity by site prep crews, dirt movers, concrete pourers, asphalt layers, dump truck drivers, backhoe operators, and landscapers, not to mention the diligent attention of the project manager and Museum Division staff.

The dust has finally cleared and settled. All the construction crews have gone – each one having completed its role in a multi-faceted project of parking lots, sidewalks, retention ponds, exhibit pavilion, boardwalk and landscaping. It is now a masterpiece of contemporary touches that complement the historical integrity of the site. Now all it needs is you!



*1) The former museum in the south campus area, damaged by Hurricane Isabel in 2003, is demolished. 2) Crews install curbing for the new museum entrance. 3) Workers install a new boardwalk made of recycled plastic in the south campus. (Photos by April Havens)*

## UP AND COMING . . .

### Set a course for these exciting events

Visit [www.stmarysmd.com/recreate/museums](http://www.stmarysmd.com/recreate/museums) or call 301-769-2222 for more information on these events.

#### December 1 through January 2 – 25th Annual Doll & Train Exhibit

The St. Clement's Island Museum celebrates the 25th Anniversary of this much-loved exhibit. Enjoy the antique dolls, collectible toys and miniature trains in holiday settings sure to delight everyone from one to 101!

This exhibit is open from Dec. 1 through Dec. 22, Wednesday through Sunday, noon to 4 p.m. To coincide with the schools' holiday recess, the museum has extended hours and days from Dec. 23 to Jan. 2, open daily, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Closed Christmas Day and New Year's Day. Admission. Free for museum members.

#### December 12 to January 2 – Piney Point Lighthouse Holiday Exhibit

The Piney Point Lighthouse, Museum and Historic Park will host a special Piney Point Historical Christmas Exhibit featuring various military themes, including the War of 1812 and a profile of the U.S. Colored Troops. The exhibit will be open Dec. 12, 18 & 19

from noon to 4 p.m. Extended holiday hours: Dec. 23-24 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. and Dec. 27-31 from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

#### December 11 – St. Clement's Island Museum Christmas Open House

'Tis the season of giving and the St. Clement's Island Museum is offering FREE admission for visitors to enjoy the Christmas Doll & Train Exhibit from noon to 4 p.m. Santa and Mrs. Claus will be on hand from noon to 2 p.m. to hear children's holiday wishes and pose for photos. Bring your camera! The 7th District Optimist Club has donated boy's and girl's bikes for a free raffle! Need not be present to win! Enjoy holiday refreshments and shopping in the museum store!

#### December 12 – Piney Point Lighthouse Museum Open House

The Piney Point Lighthouse, Museum and Historic Park will host an open house on Dec. 12 from noon to 4 p.m. Visitors can walk the newly installed boardwalk to tour the Keepers Quar-

ters and view the special Piney Point Historical Christmas Exhibit. After the tour, shop for special Christmas items in the Lighthouse Lens Museum Store and enjoy free refreshments. There will be activities for the kids as well!

#### January 22 – Appraiser Fair

"What's it worth?" Bring your family heirloom, yard sale curiosity, or antique treasure to the St. Clement's Island Museum between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. and find out! Expert appraisers will be on hand to offer estimated values and background information about your items. Appraisal categories include jewelry, antique dolls, U.S. coins, and fine art items such as ceramics, glassware, pottery, paintings, small hand-carried antiques, and more! Fees and limits apply. Call 301-769-2222 for more information.

#### SAVE THE DATE!

#### March 25 – Maryland Day

Celebrate Maryland's birthday at the St. Clement's Island Museum! 11 a.m.

# Member News

## Welcome Aboard New Members!

### *Senior*

Nancy Bennett, Ormond Beach, FL  
Barbara Russello, Mechanicsville, MD

### *Individual*

Father William Gurnee, Avenue, MD

### *Family*

Carolyn Drake, Piney Point, MD  
Mr. and Mrs. Adrian Hill, Mechanicsville, MD  
Youlander Hilton, Suffolk, VA  
Mr. and Mrs. Jeb Morris, Bushwood, MD  
Ronald Medford & Suzanne Barone, Bethesda, MD

### *Heritage*

Jean Maddox, St. Mary's City, MD

### *Corporate Benefactor*

Stephen and Renee Bisciotti Foundation,  
Millersville, MD  
NuStar Foundation, San Antonio, TX

## FRIENDS APPOINT NEW BOARD MEMBER

Mary Hyatt joined the Friends Board of Directors in October, succeeding former director Sharon Balenger. The Board is also seeking a successor to Pat Cooke Weiland, who recently left the board. We thank Sharon and Pat for their service, support and dedication.

## WEDDING ANNIVERSARY DONATION

Thank you, Leanne and Tim Mertz of Rockville, for donating \$100 in honor of Pam and Larry Hicks, who recently celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary.

## MEMORIAL GIFT

Family and friends of Margaret Slingerland, a dedicated museum volunteer who passed away this spring, made generous donations in her memory: Barbara Hayes of Alexandria, VA donated \$300, and Mr. and Mrs. John C. Harris of South Bristol, ME, \$50.

## LIGHTHOUSE SUPPORTERS DONATE

The Friends thank the Chesapeake Chapter of the U.S. Lighthouse Society for their \$60 donation. The Chesapeake Chapter will present the Maryland Lighthouse Challenge in September 2011.

## GIFT MEMBERSHIPS

Friends member and Museum Trustee Helen Dorsey purchased family gift memberships for Mr. and Mrs. Jeb Morris and Mr. and Mrs. Adrian Hill. This is always a wonderful gift for family, friends, and newcomers to the area. Thank you, Helen!

## TAKING NEIGHBORLINESS TO A WHOLE NEW LEVEL

The folks at the NuStar Energy L.P. terminal in Piney Point, MD prove time and again that not only are they good neighbors, they're good friends. Staffers at the terminal, located only a few miles from the Piney Point Lighthouse, Museum and Historic Park, take pride and interest in supporting our Piney Point museum complex and the Museum Division itself. The NuStar Foundation donated \$2,000 to support the enhancement projects at the Piney Point Lighthouse campus. We're also grateful for NuStar's in-kind contribution of muscle and equipment to power wash the Drayden African American Schoolhouse. NuStar staffers also participated in the Potomac River Clean Up. Thank you, neighbors!

## CHAMBER OF COMMERCE CO-SPONSORS

The Friends co-sponsored the St. Mary's County Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours in July with SunTrust Bank and Island Bar & Grill of St. George Island. Many thanks to Bob Eaton of SunTrust Bank and Bree Whitlock and her staff from the Island Bar & Grill for implementing the "Potomac Islands Palooza" with great eats and drinks, steel drum band, and boat rides to St. Clement's Island.

## AUCTION DONORS FOR "MURDER AT THE YACHT CLUB"

The Friends would like to thank everyone who contributed a service or item to the live and silent auctions held during our murder mystery dinner fundraiser in September: Aleck Loker, Kevin Thompson (Kevin's Corner Kafe), Jerry Bohle (Heritage Printing and Graphics), Caroline Baldwin (Port of Leonardtown Winery), Becky Boyles (Traditions of Loveville), Joe Orlando (Fenwick Used Books & Music) Rosemary Jarvis (The Remington), Janine Heath (Potomac Hospitality Services/ Notti Bianche Restaurant), Mary Hyatt, Chris and Debbie Soussanin (Morris Point Restaurant), Pensacola and Robert Jefferson (Nekadesh Farm Bed & Breakfast), Joann McKeown (Quality Street Kitchen & Catering), Amy Wathen Cooksey (Port Tobacco Players), Heather Maertens (Maertens Fine Jewelry & Gifts), Carol Cribbs, Ellen Zahniser (The Dry Dock Restaurant), Doug Alves (Calvert Marine Museum), Tim Meyer and Jennifer Blake (Brewing Grounds), Dana Rebarchick Spicuzza (D.B. McMillan's Irish Pub), Barbara Lewis (Paint by Fire Artwear), Ray and Sheila Hiebert, Greg Callaway (Gridiron Grill), Shelby Oppermann (Shelby's Custom Framing and Art), Bree Whitlock (Island Inn & Suites), Anne Ridenour and Valerie Deptula (Good Earth Natural Foods Company).

## POTOMAC JAZZ & SEAFOOD FESTIVAL SPONSORS

Many thanks to the generous sponsors of the PJ&SF who provided financial or in-kind support: The St. Mary's County Arts Council, The Show Place Arena, Sleep Inn & Suites/Lenny's Restaurant, Bozick Distributors, Café Des Artistes, Gutter Helmet, W. M. Davis General Contractors, Community Bank of Tri-County, Law Office of A. Shane Mattingly, and Brothers' Johnson Portable Restrooms. The Friends also greatly appreciate the vendor donations from Bruster's Real Ice Cream, Cedar Point Federal Credit Union, and Hawaiian Joe's Italian Ice.

## CHILDREN'S DAY SPONSORS

The Children's Day event held annually in August at the St. Clement's Island Museum is totally funded by the sponsors who underwrite the cost of 100 free T-shirts, magic show, craft supplies and prizes for the children. The Friends are grateful to Delegate Johnny Wood, Cullins Pool Water, Checkers Restaurants, Combs Drury Reeves Insurance Agency, Colton's Point Marina, Chesapeake Custom Embroidery, Tidewater Dental, GTMR, Inc., Avenue Flags and Flagpoles, and PNC Bank. Thank you for making this event not only possible but also an amazing success!

## FRIENDS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_MC \_\_Visa Card #: \_\_\_\_\_ Expires \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to Friends of the St. Clement's Island and Piney Point Museums. Your membership is tax deductible.

\_\_New Member \_\_Gift Membership

### MEMBERSHIP LEVELS:

- Senior (\$25)
- Individual (\$35)
- Family (\$50)
- Heritage (\$100)
- Patron (\$200)
- Benefactor (\$500)
  
- Corporate Patron (\$200)
- Corporate Benefactor (\$500)



PROUD CORPORATE BENEFACTORS



*Stephen and Renee Bisciatti  
Foundation*

The Friends of the  
St. Clement's Island and Piney Point Museums  
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