

# Currents

*The newsletter of the Four Rivers Heritage Area*

ANNAPOLIS

LONDON TOWN

SOUTH COUNTY

## Four Rivers Helps Partners Weather the COVID-19 Storm

This issue of our Spring newsletter is dedicated to sharing some “good news” stories of how Four Rivers and our partners are working together to overcome the challenges presented by the closures and restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The difficulties experienced by those who have lost loved ones or have been severely sickened by the virus, by the government entities that quickly outlined and implemented resources, policies, and actions to support the residents and frontline workers, and the financial hardships encountered can hardly be adequately appreciated. Our local leaders, business owners, nonprofits and residents have proven themselves to be amazingly resilient, creative, and quick-thinking, and now after months of virtual meetings and behind-the-scenes planning, our destination is beginning to reopen.

Like so many of our counterparts, Four Rivers staff quickly moved to working remotely, conducting meetings via Zoom and similar platforms, hosting webinars and online training, and convening our committee members together despite the challenges of working from home. Four Rivers would especially like to thank Hope Stewart, our website content writer, whose numerous blog posts have shared much-needed resources with our stakeholders, and Jody Christian, our Communications Coordinator, whose

whose graphic design skills have transformed our online presence with powerfully-appealing images. At the same time, our Story Project continued with a new video, “Experience the Wooden Boat Models of South County,” shot before the pandemic but finished and posted on April 30. Our work with Anne Arundel County Cultural Resources Division to develop a Boundary Amendment proposal also continued, although the in-person visits to sites have had

to be postponed. We expanded the listings on our website to include virtual experiences (*see below*), and continued to work in partnership with our Destination Marketing Organization (DMO), Visit Annapolis and Anne Arundel County, to make our heritage tourism efforts more effective (*see our interview with Acting Executive Director, Dani Bottcher, also on our website.*) In addition, our collaborative event, Maryland Day Celebration 2020, was canceled only one week before its

opening day, but our partners have creatively pivoted to a “rebooted” event entitled “Maryland Day: Unpaused.” We appreciate the many local, unheralded heroes who have worked together to weather a difficult and unforgettable challenge with tenacity and optimism, and salute the spirit of collaboration and partnership that makes our area so worthy of a visit, virtual and in person, as we reopen to the public.



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THE HERITAGE AREA OF  
ANNAPOLIS,  
LONDON TOWN,  
AND SOUTH COUNTY

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## MHAA Offers Emergency Grants and Financial Relief to Heritage Nonprofit Organizations

On May 18, 2020, the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) awarded a "first round" of Emergency Grants to nonprofit heritage organizations located in Maryland's 13 Certified Heritage Areas. Fifty-nine matching grants totaling \$600,440 were awarded statewide; a total of \$50,000 in Emergency Grant funds was awarded to organizations in the Four Rivers Heritage Area. The grant funds support emergency operating costs that will help keep these nonprofit organizations afloat, as the COVID-19 public health crisis and the associated economic ramifications continue.

According to Jennifer Ruffner, MHAA Administrator, "This was one of the hardest grant review processes that we have ever participated in, with many worthy organizations in great need of support going un-funded, and the applications are still coming in." She clarified that unless an applicant was determined to be ineligible, they will be considered again for funding in a future grant round, if additional funds become available in FY 2021. Awarded organizations

within the Four Rivers Heritage Area include:

- Annapolis Maritime Museum and Park, in Annapolis
- Captain Avery Museum, in Shady Side
- Historic Annapolis, Inc., in Annapolis
- Historic London Town and Gardens, in Edgewater

In addition, MHAA offered additional financial relief to organizations holding existing grants; not only were project deadlines extended, but an emergency policy allowed that unspent grant funds could be reallocated to an organization's operating costs, as another means of financial relief for struggling sites. This move was unprecedented for MHAA, which acted quickly after early survey responses revealed a growing need due to closed doors, canceled events, and postponed fundraisers. Many thanks to all, and especially to MHAA staff, Jennifer Ruffner and Ennis Smith, for crafting proposals and achieving approvals that brought much-needed relief to many of Maryland's challenged heritage organizations.

## "Maryland Day: Unpaused" Events Support Partners Affected by COVID-19

The Maryland Day Celebration event, originally scheduled for March but postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, is now back, as our partners strive to offer entertaining and appropriate events during the month of June. This new collection of events is called "Maryland Day: Unpaused." The first phase of the "Unpaused" events will take place June 5-29; additional events remain to be scheduled later in the year. These new experiences include new online content, virtual experiences, recorded lectures and presentations, and outdoor venues that are ready to invite the public to safely return. Please check back to the event website

often, as updates are added to the "Maryland Day: Unpaused" pages with great family activities to share. Visit [www.marylandday.org](http://www.marylandday.org) for details.

The Maryland Day Celebration is funded by the Four Rivers Heritage Area and our funders (MHAA, the City of Annapolis, and Anne Arundel County), and participating venues to highlight our historic, natural, and cultural sites.



## Virtual Experiences Bring Heritage to Home Screens

On April 28, Four Rivers announced a new section of our website, the Virtual Experiences listings pages. While our heritage sites are currently closed to the public, or offer limited availability to indoor spaces, many of our partners



FOUR RIVERS HERITAGE AREA

have gone “virtual,” offering online exhibits, educational resources, activities, webinars, video tours, and more! There are more online experiences being developed each month, some of which were in the planning stages even before the COVID-19 pandemic, such as an online tour of the William Paca House, and various online exhibits. The new section of our website highlights our partners’ extensive efforts to remain accessible to you wherever you are. At last count, 18 of our local heritage attractions had added virtual experiences online, through YouTube or by posting new experiences on their own websites. Visit our all-new Virtual Experiences page to enjoy heritage programming on your own home screens, on demand!

## Newly-Revised Water Trail Resources Available

Plan your next paddle or hike by exploring the annotated maps posted on a new page on our website (see below). Several maps of segments of the Anne Arundel County Water Trail (AACWT) have recently been updated, making this resource more useful than ever! The weather and the water are getting warmer, and it's a great time to get outside, enjoy the fresh air, and practice safe social distancing with friends at a local park or on the water. Take advantage of our proximity to the bay and local rivers, to access all the beauty, serenity, and amenities that our parks and waterways have to offer. There are miles of coastline to explore along Anne Arundel County's Water Trails!

Find the new Water Trails webpage by using the link, <https://fourriversheritage.org/partners/resources/water-trails-of-anne-arundel-county/>, or type “Water Trails” in the search box. Additional maps of the Anne Arundel

County Water Trail are available at [www.aacwt.org](http://www.aacwt.org).

One of the newest parks to open to the public is Jack Creek Park, located at 1600 Snug Harbor Road in Shady Side, which has just undergone two years of renovation. Access to the park is limited; there is a gate and combination lock at the entrance. Instructions to access the park are on our website. It's worth the effort to experience this beautiful, 60-acre waterfront park (pictured below).



Photo credit: Lisa Arrasmith

## Accessibility Workshop Recording Available

On Tuesday, May 12, Four Rivers hosted a webinar entitled, “Strategies for Making Heritage Sites Accessible.” The webinar featured Robert Forloney, Program Developer & Cultural Institution Consultant, who led a discussion on the key aspects of planning for accessibility, the ethical and legal requirements of ADA compliance, strategies to serve audiences with special needs, the WHY of planning for all audiences, and how these efforts can improve the visitor experience for all. The webinar was recorded, and is available to view on Four Rivers’ YouTube Channel.

Robert Forloney has worked in the museum field for almost twenty years as an educator, administrator, and consultant. He has created accessibility programs for institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art, Museum of the City of New York, South Street Seaport Museum and the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, as well as trained interpreters about methods of engaging visitors with different needs. Working with educators at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art, he coordinated a group called the Museum Access Consortium.

To access the recording, the slides from the presentation, and an extensive list of additional resources, use this link: <https://fourriversheritage.org/resources-on-accessibility-recorded-webinar/>, or type “recorded webinar” in the search box.





# May Day Spirit continues in Annapolis!

This year in Annapolis, May Day almost didn't happen. Due to an empty downtown during the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing mandates, the event, which is usually one of the most beautiful days of the year in our area, seemed impossible. It appeared that its 65-year run would come to an end in 2020.

Fortunately for all involved, the May Day spirit continued to inspire hope and goodwill, and a new idea for continuing the tradition took hold in downtown Annapolis and beyond. A partnership between the Garden Club of Old Annapolis Towne and Visit Annapolis and Anne Arundel County (VAAAC) extended an online invitation to Annapolis residents to put May Day baskets in front of their



They also encouraged interested folks in other locations join. The Visit Annapolis May Day webpage shared video demonstrations on how to arrange flowers, create May Day baskets, and experience May Day virtually. Participants were encouraged to share their creativity on social media using the hashtags, #AnnapolisMayDayAtHome, #maydayannapolis2020, and #65thannapolismayday. The results were as lovely as ever, although fewer in number, and very much appreciated, as the spirit of May Day in Annapolis continued uninterrupted. Many thanks to the planners and workers who pulled off this amazing event!



All photos courtesy Jody Christian



homes or businesses by 10:00 a.m. on Friday, May 1st as a salute to healthcare and frontline workers and as a source of beauty and joy for the community.



Please remember the **Four Rivers Heritage Area** (legal name ALTSCHA, Inc.) in your charitable donations. Visit our website, [www.fourriversheritage.org/support](http://www.fourriversheritage.org/support) for details on how you can support the organization.



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Four Rivers is a 501 (c) 3, charitable non-profit organization. Your contribution supports the heritage sites and organizations that make a difference to our region's quality of life.

