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Media Two



MARITIME INDUSTRY EXPOSED

Inaugural Expo and Career Fair Build Public Awareness of Port Opportunities

STORY & PHOTOGRAPHY BY BLAISE WILLIG

While attempting to get a younger crowd excited about career opportunities at Baltimore's port, it helps to have the enthusiastic support of knowledgeable representatives from maritime-related businesses and organizations. Of course, dozens of Lego® ship models can't hurt, either.

Visitors of all ages came to Canton Marine Terminal's Pier 13 on May 18 as the Port of Baltimore observed National Maritime Day and hosted its inaugural Maritime Expo and Career Fair. While a ceremony paying special tribute to merchant marines occurred onboard the 595-foot-long Nuclear Ship *Savannah*, the free, pier-based expo and fair showcased about 30 businesses and agencies that help make the Port the economic heart of Maryland.

"One of our goals was to let the public know about the Port's significant impact on the state's economy and all of the incredible work that's being accomplished here," said Capt. Eric Nielsen, President of the Association of Maryland Pilots and Past President of the Baltimore Port Alliance (BPA), both of which were among

the expo's sponsors. "Another goal was to spread awareness, particularly among younger people, of the many careers available in the maritime industry."

For the expo, "we were able to pull together a wide variety of interests at the Port," said Maizie Cummings-Rocke of the Baltimore & Chesapeake Steamboat Company, another of the expo's sponsors. "The response was overwhelming."

The water alongside Pier 13 was crowded with visiting ships and local working boats, some of which were open for tours. The event also included a display of about 50 ship models constructed with Lego building bricks. Wilbert S. McKinley, Jr., TEACH FLEET Program Director, started building with Legos in 2008 as a way to help spark student interest in an after-school program in Baltimore that focused on STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). "Up until that time, I had never touched a Lego in my life," McKinley said. "The kids were so captivated that I kept on doing it."

By 2010, McKinley had completed about 40 models, some of

which required up to 48 hours to build. Since then, his collection has tripled and he often takes models to events such as the National Maritime Day celebration. "The idea is to connect the ships to STEM and environmental science education," McKinley said.

Lt. Ashley Thomas, a recruiter for the U.S. Coast Guard and Coast Guard Reserve, added that the Lego display is "a great opportunity to attract the interest of a younger age group and plant the seed of maritime careers." Sure enough, many young visitors could hardly keep their hands off the models. Meanwhile, Thomas shared Coast Guard information from a table nearby.

Along with the Association of Maryland Pilots, BPA and Baltimore & Chesapeake Steamboat Company, another expo sponsor was the Baltimore Maritime Exchange. Other active participants ranged from The Belt's Corporation, Maryland Port Administration (MPA) and Mediterranean Shipping Company to O.S.T. Trucking Company, SS *United States* Conservancy and Vane Brothers.

"It was busier than I thought it would be — we had a lot of interest from the general public," said the MPA's Katrina Jones, who serves on the Education and Outreach Committee of the BPA. "Of course, some people also came to find out what kind of jobs are available."

Among the officials in attendance for the National Maritime Day ceremony onboard the N.S. *Savannah* was outgoing U.S. Maritime Administrator David Matsuda, who described Baltimore as "a city whose history flows through its port and waterways." He also put in a plug for merchant marines who "power American trade" and support the nation's economy with their efforts.

The N.S. *Savannah*, a National Historic Landmark that was the world's first nuclear-powered merchant ship, was christened in 1959 and sailed more than 450,000 miles while in service between 1965 and 1970. The vessel, which became a floating museum after its operational service ended, arrived in Baltimore in May 2008 and is the sole responsibility of the U.S. Department of Transportation Maritime Administration. 🌐

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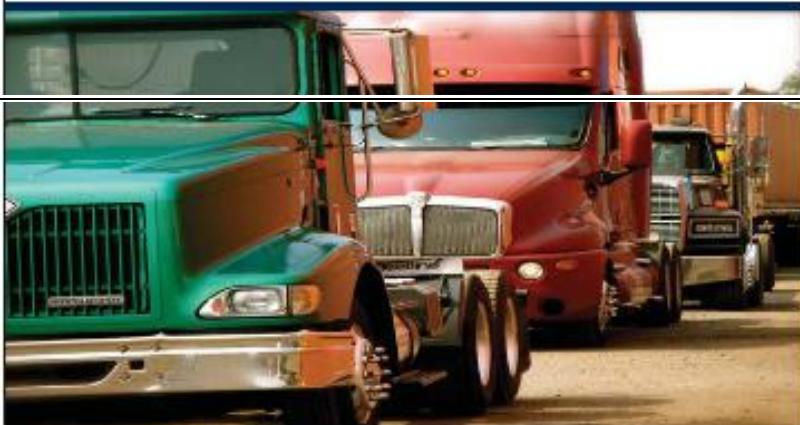
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