



St. Nicholas' Bag

The Newsletter of the Baltimore International Seafarers' Center
Summer 2006



Those with whom we minister, may minister to us!



Associate Chaplain Allene Taylor at the Center with crew members from the Grand Cosmos shopping for "new" clothing.



Discovering a flat tire on the Center van a few minutes later, these same seafarers, and minister to the Center by changing the tire.

MINISTRY MOMENTS: What Do Seafarers Ask Us to Do?

Probably the most common requests are for more phone cards and *National Geographics*. Some seafarers ask for Bibles. The lucky ones with U.S. visas and a few free hours generally ask for transportation, calling us "angels" and "blessings" in an environment with limited taxi access. Those who can't go ashore tell us they feel like prisoners on board, but do appreciate our visits and ask for cell phone loans. When we are able to provide a phone, it's a joy to see a seafarer's face light up after a call home.

Some requests are less predictable. One ship visitor was asked to pray and sing hymns with a young man preparing to return to India. We've been asked for information on Mass times and on Seventh-Day Adventist worship.

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The **Port of Baltimore** was established 300 years ago this April and was the cornerstone from which the City was built and now thrives. Indeed it remains one of Maryland's most significant industries today.

The Director and volunteers of the **Baltimore International Seafarers' Center** visit many of the almost 2,500 hundred ships and perhaps 50,000 seamen and women who come to Baltimore each year, to provide a friendly welcome, a listening ear, telephone access, free reading matter, and transportation.

...But the Port of Baltimore and the Seafarers are probably two of Maryland's best-kept secrets...!

You can help us spread the word about the work of the Center staff and volunteers – send a copy of the newsletter to a friend, write an article for your parish newsletter.

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President – Mr. George "Bud" Nixon

Vice President/Associate Chaplain - Ms. Allene Taylor

Photographer – Mr. Pat Arey



NOT ALL SEAFARERS' CENTER VOLUNTEERS VISIT SHIPS...

But they're all helping to put a friendlier face on America in this global economy we all share.

Mr. Jim Johnstone validates the phone cards, which allow seafarers to call home, maintains the clothing room where they can select free garments, and helps track our records of support from the Port community. Ms. Susan Robinson works off-site to edit this newsletter. Mrs. Mary Grippenkerl collects magazines for seafarers from Roland Park Place, and Mr. Bob Miller of Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church collects magazines from churches all over the Catonsville area. Ms. Tatiana Blumenthal of Roland Park Country School and Mr. Nguyen Lam of the Diocese of Maryland provide Russian and Chinese publications.

We welcome new adult volunteers who can give a few hours a week to the Center: answering the phone, receiving donations, filing, and so forth. Office staff must be comfortable greeting seafarers who may speak limited English. Those who can volunteer only occasionally might be able to clean the vans, weed the parking lot, etc.

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VOLUNTEERS

Continued from previous column

Of course, reliable volunteer ship visitors are always needed as well, for blocks 3 hours or more per week, both daytime and evening. Ship visitors must be 21 years or older, have an excellent driving record, undergo a simple background check, be willing to follow security procedures, and above all be good listeners with mariners from around the world. Ship visiting involves climbing gangways and ramps in all kinds of weather, so visitors should be in reasonably good health.

To find out more and to schedule an interview, please call 410-685-1240. Our staffing is limited, so please be patient if your call is not returned immediately.

BENEFIT CRUISE ON YACHT A SUCCESS



"Center Director The Rev. Mary Davisson and Associate Chaplain Allene Taylor during the Center's March 30 Harbor fund-raiser cruise with Arthur Petitpas, who serves as International Transport Workers' Federation inspector in the Port of Baltimore."

The Baltimore International Seafarers' Center is an independent non-profit corporation recognized by the IRS as an exempt organization under Section 501© 3 of the Internal Revenue Code. All contributions are tax deductible in accordance with law. The Center files form 990 which is available at the Center or at www.guidestar.org



NEW BROCHURE UNVEILED AT DIOCESAN CONVENTION

A professionally designed and printed brochure about the Baltimore International Seafarers' Center was unveiled at the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland's Annual Convention on May 3 and 4. A grant from St. Margaret's Church, Annapolis provided the funds for a professional designer, Ms. Rita Brown-Schmidt, who designed the brochure, updated our logos and identified local printers capable of printing a high quality brochure.

The grant from St. Margaret's is just one example of the financial contributions that are so necessary to the work of the Center. We are deeply grateful for support from the following during the first half of 2006:

Dr. Matthew Rogers, Ms. Jennifer Lindyberg, The Rev. Charles Barton, Mr. David Mucci and The Rev. Lura Kaval at St. Christopher's Church, The Rev. Mary Davisson, Ms. Linda Hollis, Ms. Rebecca Fisher, Mr. Harry Hussein of Hoegh Autoliners, Ms. Doris Slater, Ms. Margaret Gibson, Mr. William Waxter, Ms. Allene Taylor, Ms. Bridget Magnin, Ms. Brenda Kovacs, The Rev. Ellie Thober, Ms. Lydia Martin.

Besides the Propeller Club support of our cruise mentioned on page 1, we are also grateful to the North Harford Fellowship of Christian Athletes, who collected over \$1,000 for the Center! In addition, the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland continues to contribute \$1,000 per month toward our work. Finally, Director Mary Davisson has visited the following churches recently, all of which have contributed generously: St. James (Monkton), Holy Comforter, and (together with volunteers Linda Hollis and Leslie Norton) Emmanuel.



Photo courtesy of Seamen's Church Institute of New York/New Jersey

SERVANT OF JUSTICE AWARD TO CENTER BOARD MEMBER

On May 17, Douglas Stevenson, Esq., Director of the Center for Seafarers' Rights at the Seamen's Church Institute, received the Servant of Justice Award, presented by the Episcopal Diocese of New York, following a special Law Day Choral Evensong at St. Paul's Chapel in lower Manhattan. The Seamen's Church Institute, in lower Manhattan since 1834, serves mariners of all nations and has figured prominently in New York history, most recently in the relief efforts' following the September 11 attacks. St Paul's Chapel, across the street from the World Trade Center site, is New York's oldest public building in continuous use and was George Washington's church at the time of his first inauguration. The Law Day service began in 13th century England, based on the ancient custom of a Red Mass offered at Westminster Abbey at the opening of the Michaelmas term of the court. The Law Day Choral Evensong is an acknowledgement and celebration by the Church of the ministry of service performed by all members of the legal profession. (5/17/06). The Rev. Lloyd Burghart

- Interim Executive Secretary –
NAMMA

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For the staff and volunteers at the Baltimore International Seafarers' Center, it is never too soon to begin planning Christmas-at-Sea. This program provides boxes to supplement on-board celebrations for seafarers who may not have seen their families in nearly a year. Some seafarers go 8 years without spending Christmas at home!

Seafarers from many nations and faith traditions have enthusiastically received packages. We welcome donations from both faith-based and civic groups. As you plan your group's participation, please visualize Christmas boxes being carried through dangerous terminal traffic and up steep gangways, mostly retirees. **PLEASE** make your packages manageable, so that your gifts can be delivered to seafarers rather than being discarded!

Boxes should contain as many as possible of the following: a small Bible or New Testament, hat and/or gloves and/or socks, men's toiletries (especially lip balm), writing materials, playing cards, etc. but limit your generosity to what will fit into **medium-sized shoe boxes [bold]**. If shoeboxes are not available, sturdy shirt boxes work if very securely fastened. Cloth bags, if used, should contain no more than would fit in a medium shoebox, and must close tight (otherwise we need to spend precious time re-packaging them in ugly grocery bags!). Unfortunately, boxes or bags, which are bulging open, spilling, or excessively heavy, cannot be delivered. **PLEASE do not include perishables – no cookies, etc.**

Finally, if children wrap packages, a child-made card inside each gift, or a photocopied note such as "Merry Christmas from Mrs. Smith's 6-year-old class," is much appreciated.

To schedule delivery of boxes, please call 410-685-1240. (Packages cannot be left unattended, as this violates our lease and raises security concerns.)

One evening after a late meeting, the Director took a call from a captain at a distant shopping center, who had just purchased for his crew a TV which was much too large for a taxi; when she went to pick him up, it barely fit in the Center's van.

One Chinese captain without a visa was so eager for reading matter that he persuaded four different ship visitors to bring him more and more Chinese newspapers

Sometimes we must hear the unspoken requests. Director Mary Davisson happened to learn that a seafarer who had just joined his vessel in Baltimore was exhausted not only because he had been traveling for 36 hours but also because he was coming from the funeral of a family member. He was too tired to talk much, and the vessel was sailing soon, but in such situations a phone call to the chaplain in the next port ensures a listening ear when the seafarer is ready.

Associate Chaplain Allene Taylor was recently re-united with a seafarer who recalled her sensitivity three years ago. His daughter had just been born, and Allene not only provided the cell phone loan he wanted, but also gave him a stuffed animal to take back to the Philippines. He now carries a picture of his daughter and the stuffed toy as one of his most valued possessions.

ALL AVAILABLE BOATS

If you are visiting New York this summer, you might want to stop in Lower Manhattan at the Seamen's Church Institute to visit a compelling exhibit about September 11, 2001.

The exhibit is a photographic story of the work of crews and boats in New York Harbor during and after the attacks on the World Trade Center.

Photo with permission