

Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association endows fellowship at VIMS

(June 13, 2011) The Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association (TOGA) has provided the Virginia Institute of Marine Science with an initial gift of \$27,000 to establish the TOGA Fellowship Endowment. When fully endowed, the fellowship will support research by graduate students in the College of William and Mary's School of Marine Science at VIMS.

TOGA president David Turney says his group established the endowment in honor of "two exceptional contributors to TOGA," VIMS fisheries specialist Mike Oesterling and Ms. Jackie Partin. Oesterling recently retired after a 30-year career with VIMS and Virginia Sea Grant, during which he served as the Institute's liaison with TOGA and led the popular Master Oyster Gardener course. Partin is a TOGA founder and past president.

Turney says, "We intend for the TOGA endowment to support students working within a broad spectrum of research, including oysters, other shellfish, and the general ecological restoration of Chesapeake Bay. We trust it will make a lasting impact on the health of oysters and the Bay for future generations."

He adds that TOGA intends to fully fund its endowment "through future fundraising efforts, and to continue to increase the endowment base beyond the required \$50,000 minimum." Mr. Don Beard, a leading member of the Northern Neck Oyster Gardeners Association, made significant contributions to the original endowment.

VIMS Dean and Director John Wells says "we at VIMS are deeply thankful for TOGA's generous gift, which further strengthens the long-standing ties between our organizations and will help in training the next generation of marine scientists to restore oysters to a healthy Bay."

The funds will be received by the VIMS Foundation, a nonprofit 501 (c) (3) organization that supports VIMS' mission of education and research. A committee of VIMS faculty will select the TOGA fellows.

TOGA is a 501(c)(3) organization founded in 1997. Its goal is to educate interested citizens in methods of oyster aquaculture; promote oyster aquaculture in Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries; and promote the environmental



TOGA Fellowship Endowment: TOGA members announced the establishment of the TOGA Fellowship Endowment during a recent visit to VIMS. From L: VIMS Dean and Director John Wells, TOGA co-founder and past president Jackie Partin, recently retired VIMS fisheries specialist Mike Oesterling, endowment contributor Don Beard, and TOGA president David Turney.

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health of Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries through oyster cultivation and by other means. It has approximately 500 members.

VIMS is a leading marine science center and an independent state agency whose research empowers Virginians to protect and restore Chesapeake Bay and the coastal ocean. The School of Marine Science at VIMS is a graduate school of the College of William and Mary.