



STAR ISLAND CORPORATION

MEDIA RELEASE
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Star Island's Oceanic Hotel is Bustling with Guests Visits Reminiscent of the Past Fundraising Underway to Protect the Island's Future

ISLES OF SHOALS, NH — It's a place reminiscent of the days gone by.

Swaying in a wooden rocking chair on the long porch of the Oceanic Hotel with a lime ricky in one hand and a green bag of Miss Vickie's Sea Salt & Malt Vinegar Potato Chips in the other, it's easy to see why people keep coming back to Star Island year after year.

"For me, it's the pull of the island," said Debbie Redding-Sampson, 51, a conference guest of Kennebunk, Maine, who returns each year with her 16-year-old son, Michael. "Everyone has a different sense of what the island means for them. It transcends religion. It's just a spiritual place."

It is one of only a handful of places in the region where groups, individuals and families can come together for a quintessential New England getaway. Free of typical traveling nuisances such as traffic, Star Island is a tranquil destination known for its traditional environment. Offering a rare glimpse at the grand hotel era when Star Island – home to the extraordinary Oceanic Hotel - attracted such notable artists and writers as Childe Hassam and Nathaniel Hawthorne, the island reopened its facilities to planned guests and visitors recently.

Some are drawn back to the island for its serene setting and old-time feel encouraged by the presence of historic buildings and the absence of modern-day appliances. One of Star Island's most prominent features is the chapel, a simple stone meeting house built in 1800 on the highest point of land. Others are attracted to the companionship of friends and family who return each year, and the time-honored lobster dinners and weekly softball games featuring a cemetery in left field and a newly-constructed green monster.

The value of such a place is highly underestimated with a draw for children and adults, Redding-Sampson said. "It's a relaxing and free time for congeniality. It's like the days gone by."

The educational and religious conference center reopened for personal retreats and conferences July 22 following a delayed opening and now begins a major fundraising effort to contend with an anticipated budget shortfall of \$1.1 million, which represents twice the annual fundraising dollars required in a normal year to support the operations and maintenance of the island's historic buildings and grounds.

"We are excited to see the return of so many of our beloved guests and long-time visitors with the reopening of the Oceanic Hotel and grounds," said David Boynton, of South Hamilton, Massachusetts, a long-time Shoaler, and acting executive director of the Star Island Corporation. "We hope to see more of you in the weeks ahead and during the 2008 summer season. Meanwhile, we hope you will join us in preserving this scenic island by supporting our fundraising efforts to ensure guests will be able to come back year after year for a tranquil family retreat, a religious or educational conference or to simply reflect on the days gone by."



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Hotel guests rise each morning to the melody of the morning singers and the delivery of hot water and the weather forecast. A polar bear dip in the cove follows shortly thereafter for the brave. A frequent conference location for university educators and religious leaders, the island is a place for stimulating intellectual exchange. The lobby is adorned with reupholstered furniture and card tables, enticing visitors to relax and socialize in multi-generational games of scrabble, puzzles or hearts.

The Pink Parlor attracts artists who display their musical and theatrical talents for other guests in the evenings. Meals are served in the main dining room of the hotel when the porch bell tolls. The snack bar is open for hotel guests and day visitors. The Rutledge Marine Lab offers bird walks, botany walks, star gazing and touch tanks for visitors. A silent walk to the stone chapel is a time for reflection. And, the Pel Shows hosted by the seasonal staff are also a favorite past-time for most.

There are many opportunities to visit Star Island. Families or individuals may sign-up for one of the many conferences or retreat offerings. Others with private boats in Gosport Harbor are welcome to tie up a dinghy to the dock for a day visit. In addition, other boat companies offer day or evening cruises to Star Island. For those interested in visiting the island as an overnight guest in 2008 with a conference, group, as a family or an individual, inquiries may be made via email by contacting the Island Registrar at office@starisland.org.

The nonprofit Star Island Corporation has owned and operated Star Island for religious, educational, and kindred purposes since 1916, providing affordable individual and family retreat. While Star Island is founded on the liberal spiritual ideals of Unitarian-Universalism and the United Church of Christ, people of many denominations and faiths (including none) attend conferences regularly. Each of the Star Island conferences is self-administered by a dedicated group of volunteers and the island is staffed in the summer season by over one hundred young people, affectionately known as Pelicans.

For more information about Star Island conferences, events or fundraising, log on to its official website at www.starisland.org. To speak with the development team directly about its fundraising efforts, contact Karen Muldoon via email at kmuldoon@starisland.org or by calling the Star Island office at 603-430-6272.

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