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PRESS RELEASE

Annual Maritime Day Celebration at the Lightship Overfalls
Free Public Event Set for Saturday, May 16 on the Lewes Canal Waterfront

LEWES, Del. – Experience and celebrate maritime history and its impact on the region at the annual Lewes Maritime Day celebration at the Lightship Overfalls and Canalfront Park on Saturday, May 16, 2026 from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Lewes, known as the First Town in the First State, enjoys a heritage that is rich in both its maritime history and its current maritime interests.

Co-organized by the Cape May – Lewes Ferry and the Overfalls Foundation, and proudly sponsored by the Freedom Boat Club, Beach Flooring Designs, Children's Beach House, Midway Motion and Fitness, Greater Good by Children's Beach House, Groome Church, the Lewes Chamber of Commerce, and the City of Lewes, the event features exhibits and demonstrations, boat rides and vessel tours, and other activities and is free and open to the public.

A brief ceremony will be held at 11:00 a.m. to kick off the event and reopen the Lightship Overfalls (LV-118) for the season. The ceremony will include proclamations by local officials, Overfalls Scholarship Awards, and a remembrance of Overfalls Foundation members who have "passed over the bar." Andrew Lyter from Historic Lewes will be the guest speaker.

Enjoy live music this year with *the Sussex Shanty Singers* and *Minus 2 Plus 1* – while experiencing boat tours and demonstrations throughout the day. Exhibits will include an active pilot boat, the Lewes Fireboat, a life raft opening demonstration and a Sussex Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) live radio station. Taco Reho and Kona Ice food trucks will also be available.

"Lewes has a unique place in the annals of American maritime history, and the Ferry is proud to be part of it," said Heath Gehrke, Director of Ferry Operations. "The festival is a fun and

interactive way to learn more about maritime history, industry, and its many vocations. Come join us as we celebrate the U.S. Merchant Marine, its historic support of the Nation’s military, and the many careers it offers.”

“Part of the community’s rich maritime history includes that of the U.S. Lighthouse Service and U.S. Lifesaving Service, precursors to the U.S. Coast Guard,” said Michael Safina, event co-chair and Overfalls Foundation representative. “We’re particularly delighted to have so many new exhibits and participants this year and we look forward to having the community help us reopen the ship for the 2026 season.”

In 1933, the United States Congress declared May 22 as National Maritime Day. The designation honors the contributions of the American merchant marine – civilians who have defended the freedom of the United States since 1775 and who executed the largest sealift the world has ever known during World War II. Observance of National Maritime Day also honors the maritime industry and the benefits it brings Americans in terms of transportation, jobs, goods, and recreational opportunities.

Owned and operated by the Delaware River and Bay Authority, the Cape May – Lewes Ferry is open year-round and has carried more than 50 million passengers since its inception on July 1, 1964. As an integral transportation system connecting the communities and economies on both sides of the Delaware Bay, the Ferry service is a significant catalyst for economic growth and regional tourism activity in New Jersey and Delaware. Its operations sustain over 4,000 jobs while generating tens of millions of dollars in local taxes and hundreds of millions in regional economic activity. For schedules and rates, please visit www.CMLF.com or call 800-643-3779.

The mission of the Overfalls Foundation is to preserve, teach and honor the lightships and their sailors of the United States and the maritime history of our community through the preservation and display of the Lightship Overfalls (LV-118) and its collection of associated maritime artifacts.

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